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1998 Freshmen CIRP Survey Results At Mason and Nationally

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Freshmen students enrolled in randomly-selected English 101 sections (and referred to in this report as "Mason" students) (n=271), fall 1998 New Century College students (NCC, n=184) and those enrolled in the Honors program (n=77) were surveyed during the first two weeks of the fall semester, 1998. The questionnaire, a product of the [Cooperative Institutional Research Program \(CIRP\)](#), is a continuing longitudinal study of the American higher education system sponsored by the [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#) and the [Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA](#). In this report, responses of GMU's freshmen are compared to the responses of first-time, full-time freshmen enrolled at public universities across the U.S. (weighted n=312,116).

II. Diversity

GMU freshmen, whether enrolled in NCC, Honors or English 101 courses are more diverse than public university freshmen nationally. They are less likely to be U.S. Citizens and more likely to be non-native speakers of English.

Table 1. Ethnicity, Citizenship Status, English Language, Sex

Ethnicity*	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
African American	7	13	18	5
Asian American	7	19	18	28
Hispanic American	4	9	10	3
Native American	2	2	3	3
White American	83	59	58	68
Other	2	7	4	5

Citizenship Status	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
U.S. Citizen	97	82	86	93
Permanent Resident	3	15	12	7
Neither	0	3	2	0
Student native speaker of English?	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
Yes	94	73	79	81
No	6	27	21	19
Sex	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
Male	45	49	42	30
Female	55	51	58	70
*Percentages may exceed 100 due to students selecting more than one category.				

III. Educational Background



Honors students were somewhat more likely to attend **public high schools** (91%) when compared to public university freshmen nationally, Mason (89%) and NCC freshmen (83%). NCC freshmen were more likely to attend denominational high schools (13%) than other freshmen.

Honors students reported the highest **average high school grades** with 62%, almost two-thirds, reporting an average grade of A+, A or A-. This is well above the proportion of public-university freshmen who reported that grade (44%) and 50% more than Mason freshmen (12%) and NCC freshmen (11%).

All GMU freshmen groups were considerably more likely to report that **community service was required for high school graduation** when compared to public university freshmen. Honors students were most likely (55%) to report such required service.

Table 2.* Educational Experiences, Grades, Community Service

Type of High School Attended	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
public	88	89	83	91

denominational	10	8	13	5
non-religious	2	2	4	4
other	0	1	1	0
Average High School Grade	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
A+, A, A-	44	12	11	62
B+, B	44	59	66	36
B-	7	13	13	1
C+	3	12	9	1
C	1	4	2	0
D	0	0	0	0
High School Required Community Service for Graduation?	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
Yes	20	46	37	45
No	80	54	63	55
<i>*Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.</i>				

IV. What Choice was Mason?



Among public university freshmen the institution they were attending was the first choice of approximately three quarters (74%). Among students enrolled at GMU, Honors students were most likely to say it was a first choice (61%), followed by NCC (59%) and Mason freshmen (53%).

Table 3.* College Choice

	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
This College Was Student's:				
1 st Choice	74	53	59	61
2 nd Choice	19	31	31	16
3 rd Choice or Higher	8	16	10	24
<i>*Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.</i>				

V. College Acceptances and Degrees Planned



At least one third of all freshmen received a minimum of three acceptances to other colleges, with the exception of Mason freshmen for whom about one fourth received that many acceptances.

Honors freshmen were slightly more likely (30%) than public university (24%), Mason (21%) and NCC (24%) freshmen to say that the *highest degree they planned at any institution* was a bachelor's (B.A. or B.S.). They were also less likely to say they planned on earning a Ph.D., Ed.D. or professional degree.

Further, Mason, NCC and Honors freshmen were more likely than public university freshmen to say that the *highest degree they planned to complete at their current institution* was a bachelor's degree.

Students estimated their *chances of achieving certain goals during their college career*. Students were most likely to say that they would earn a bachelor's degree and make at least a "B" average. All GMU students expected to be less satisfied with college than their public university counterparts.

Table 4. College Acceptances and Degrees Planned

# of other Colleges Applied To	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
none	27	17	15	23
# of Other College Acceptances Received	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
none	8	14	15	12
one	25	33	20	32
two	24	26	27	18
three	20	17	18	20
four or more	23	10	20	18
Highest Degree Planned Anywhere	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
bachelor's (B.A. or B.S.)	24	21	24	30
master's (M.A. or M.S.)	43	43	41	45
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	17	19	18	12

Professional (Law, M.D., Divinity, etc.)	15	14	18	12
Highest Degree Planned at This Institution	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
bachelor's (B.A. or B.S.)	60	67	73	71
master's (M.A. or M.S.)	26	19	21	19
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	5	5	3	2
Professional (Law, M.D., Divinity, etc.)	6	1	0	0
Student Estimates Chances are Very Good that He/She Will	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
Get a bachelor's degree	78	76	82	89
Make at least a "B" average	55	52	50	65
Be satisfied with college	51	38	45	35
Get a job to pay expenses	41	38	39	43

VI. Those Reasons "Very Important" in Attending College



The top three reasons for attending college are the same among all freshmen. Only the order differs among groups. The three most important reasons for attending college are to get a better job, gain a general education and to make more money.

Table 5.
Top Five Reasons for Attending College

Public University

Get a better job (76%)

Make more money (74%)

Gain a general education (65%)

Prepare for graduate/professional school

(53%) Become a more cultured person (50%)
<u>Mason</u>
Make more money (77%)
Get a better job (71%)
Gain a general education (66%)
Prepare for graduate/professional school (60%)
Improve reading/study skills (53%)
<u>NCC</u>
Gain a general education (79%)
Get a better job (71%)
Make more money (69%)
Become a more cultured person (69%)
Prepare for graduate/professional school (60%)
<u>Honors</u>
Get a better job (85%)
Make more money (82%)
Gain a general education (62%)
Parents wanted me to go (51%)
Become a more cultured person (49%)

VII. Top Five Reasons for Attending This College/Mason



Unlike freshmen at public universities, all George Mason students listed either "low tuition" or "offered financial assistance" among their top five reasons for attending.

<p>Table 6. Top Five Reasons for Attending This College/Mason</p> <p><u>Public University</u></p> <p>Good academic reputation (57%)</p> <p>Graduates get good jobs (52%)</p> <p>Good social reputation (32%)</p> <p>Graduates go on to top graduate/professional schools (31%)</p> <p>Offered financial assistance(26%)</p>
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Mason

Good academic reputation (40%)

Graduates get good jobs (40%)

Wanted to live near home (35%)

Low Tuition (32%)

Graduates go on to top graduate/professional schools (24%)

NCC

Good academic reputation (48%)

Offers special programs (38%)

Graduates get good jobs (37%)

Wanted to live near home (29%)

Graduates go on to top graduate/professional schools (26%)

Honors

Low Tuition (52%)

Wanted to live near home (46%)

Offered financial assistance (31%)

Good academic reputation (30%)

Graduates get good jobs (28%)

VIII. Mother's and Father's Educational Attainment

Fathers of all GMU freshmen are more likely to have some post-baccalaureate experience compared to public university freshmen.

Table 7. Mother's and Father's Educational Attainment

Mother's Educational Attainment	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
College degree	31	25	28	23
Some graduate school	4	4	4	3
Graduate degree	16	15	14	20
Father's Educational Attainment	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
College degree	30	26	25	40
Some graduate school	3	2	6	7

Graduate degree	24	32	31	26
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IX. Rating Academic Skills and Abilities



Ninety percent of Honors freshmen ranked their academic abilities above average or in the highest 10%. Neither Mason nor NCC freshmen listed their academic abilities within their top five skills/abilities. Instead, nearly three fourths rated cooperativeness as their strongest skill (74%), similar to the proportion of Honors freshmen who did so.

Table 8. Student Rated Self "Above Average" or in Highest 10%	
<u>Public University</u>	
Academic ability	(73%)
Cooperativeness	(73%)
Drive to achieve	(72%)
Understanding of others	(66%)
Self-confidence (intellectual)	(63%)
<u>Mason</u>	
Cooperativeness	(74%)
Understanding of others	(73%)
Drive to achieve	(63%)
Self-understanding	(61%)
Self-confidence (intellectual)	(59%)
<u>NCC</u>	
Cooperativeness	(74%)
Drive to achieve	(73%)
Self-understanding	(63%)
Understanding of others	(69%)
Creativity	(62%)
<u>Honors</u>	
Academic ability	(90%)
Cooperativeness	(75%)
Drive to achieve	(68%)
Mathematical ability	(66%)
Understanding of others	(66%)

X. Objectives Considered to Be "Very Important" or "Essential"



Given a list of 19 life objectives, all freshmen chose "being very well-off financially" as their top choice. "Raising a family" was second for all groups but NCC, where "helping others in difficulty" was the second choice.

Table 9. "Essential" or "Very Important" Life Objectives	
<u>Public University</u>	
Be very well-off financially	(75%)
Raise a family	(74%)
Become an authority in my field	(63%)
Help others in difficulty	(60%)
Obtain recognition from colleagues	(54%)
<u>Mason</u>	
Be very well-off financially	(85%)
Raise a family	(75%)
Become an authority in my field	(69%)
Help others in difficulty	(66%)
Obtain recognition from colleagues	(58%)
<u>NCC</u>	
Be very well-off financially	(76%)
Help others in difficulty	(71%)
Become an authority in my field	(70%)
Raise a family	(67%)
Develop a philosophy of life	(61%)
<u>Honors</u>	
Be very well-off financially	(78%)
Raise a family	(76%)
Help others in difficulty	(60%)
Become an authority in my field	(58%)

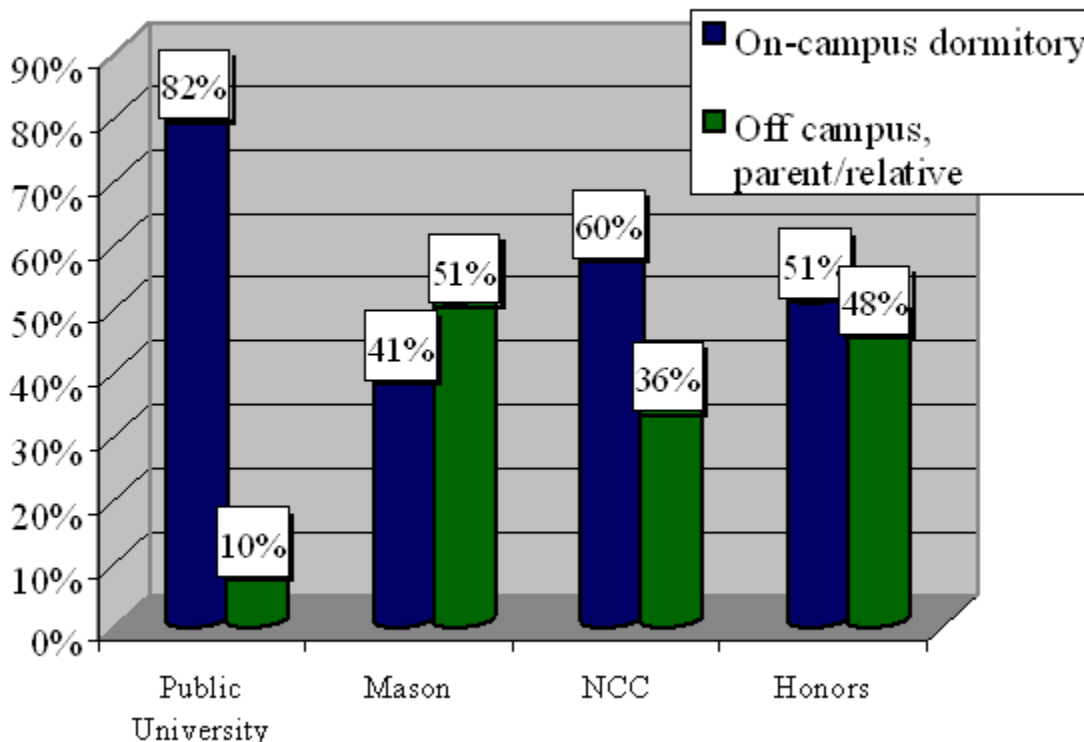
Develop a philosophy of life (45%)

XI. Planned Places of Residence, Fall 1998



While 82% of public university freshmen nationally said they would live on campus in college residence halls for fall 1998, only 41% of Mason freshmen, 60% of NCC freshmen and 51% of Honors freshmen responded similarly. While a majority of Honors and NCC freshmen live in dorms, a majority of freshmen enrolled in English 101 sections said they would live off campus with a parent or relative.

Fall 1998 Planned Residences of Freshmen



XII. Financing College



Parents are the primary source of money to pay for college expenses for all freshmen. Public university freshmen were more likely to use savings than any GMU freshman group.

Table 10. Sources of \$1,500 or More to Pay College Expenses

	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %

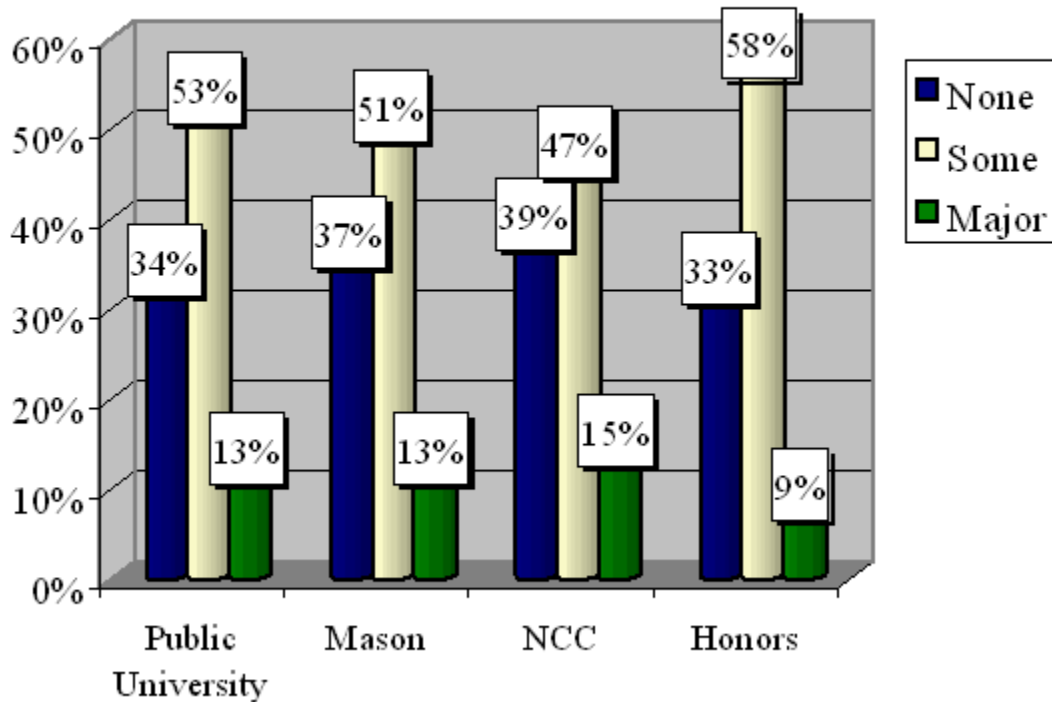
Received \$1,500 or more from:				
Parents/family	65	67	64	78
Stafford/Guaranteed Student Loan	11	13	10	9
Pell Grant	6	5	8	7
Savings from summer work/other savings	23	12	6	16
Other college grant/scholarship	15	7	5	17

XIII. Concern About Financing College



Over 62% of all freshmen report either "some" or a "major" concern about financing college. Approximately one third do not express such concern.

Concern About Financing College



XIV. How Students Spent Their Time During a Typical Week Last Year



Approximately one quarter to one third of all freshmen spent 16 or more hours per week working for pay last year. Between watching T.V., reading for pleasure and playing video games, all freshmen

were more likely to have spent six hours or more watching T.V.

Table 11. How Students Spent Their Time During a Typical Week Last Year

Working for Pay	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
5 or fewer hours per week	36	35	42	44
6-15 hours	27	28	30	33
16 or more	37	37	28	23
Volunteer Work	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
5 or fewer hours per week	92	91	81	91
6-15 hours	6	7	15	8
16 or more	2	3	4	1
Student Clubs/Groups	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
5 or fewer hours per week	86	92	86	85
6-15 hours	11	7	1	13
16 or more	3	1	3	2
Watching T.V.	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
5 or fewer hours per week	72	67	67	66
6-15 hours	22	26	26	30
16 or more	6	7	7	4
Reading for Pleasure	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
5 or fewer hours per week	92	90	88	87
6-15 hours	7	9	10	12
16 or more	1	1	2	1
Playing Video Games	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
5 or fewer hours per week	94	93	92	89
6-15 hours	5	6	6	9
16 or more	1	1	1	1

XV. Political Orientation and Views



Freshmen were most likely to describe themselves as middle of the road in political orientation. NCC and Honors freshmen were more likely to describe themselves as "liberal" compared to Mason and public university freshmen.

Table 12. Political Orientation and Views

Political Orientation	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
far left	2	1	2	7
liberal	24	27	35	36
middle of the road	53	52	48	47
conservative	19	18	15	11
far right	1	2	1	0
Agrees Strongly or Somewhat	Public University %	Mason %	NCC %	Honors %
Man not entitled to sex on date	90	90	87	97
Federal government should do more to control handguns	83	85	90	90
Employers can require drug tests	78	75	75	75
Too much concern for criminals	73	71	60	61
Wealthy should pay more taxes	58	52	51	67
Abortion should be legal	58	65	59	67
Prohibit racist/sexist speech	58	61	63	65
Regulate material on the internet	39	36	46	28
Racial discrimination is no longer a problem	20	20	14	8
Legal status for same-sex couples	55	56	58	67

Other Findings...

... 9% of NCC, 5% of Mason and 3% of Honors freshmen reported a learning disability.

... 98% of Mason, 96% of NCC and 94% of Honors freshmen reported no prior credit at Mason.

... 31% of NCC, 29% of Mason and 21% of Honors freshmen reported Catholicism as their religious preference, while 26% of Honors, 17% of Mason and 15% of NCC freshmen stated no religious preference.

... 34% of Honors, 33% of Mason and 22% of NCC freshmen said Mason was 10 miles or fewer from home.

... 81% of Honors, 68% of Mason and 65% of NCC freshmen said their parents were "living with each other"; this compares to 74% of public university freshmen.

Office of Institutional Assessment, March 1999

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