

George Mason University
Fall 2003 Entering Freshmen:
Cooperative Institutional Research Program
Freshman Survey

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Assessment
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Selected Highlights

Background

- English is the native language of 82% of Mason entering freshmen. At public universities nationally, it is 90%.
- Seven percent of Mason freshmen hold a visa status of “permanent residency,” more than twice that of freshmen at public universities.
- Eighty-two percent of Mason freshmen were born in the United States; at public universities, the figure is 92%.
- Six percent of Mason freshmen are Muslim, six times that of public universities nationally.
- Twenty-six percent of entering freshmen live 10 miles or less from Mason compared to 9% of public university freshmen who live 10 miles or less from their institutions.
- One quarter (25%) of Mason freshmen are first-generation college students. (No comparable data are available nationwide.)
- Fifty-one percent of entering freshmen said Mason was their first choice school, down from a high of 57% in 2001. This figure remains lower than the national public universities’ figure of 69%. Among the most important reasons for choosing a particular institution, 44% of Mason freshmen and 57% of freshmen from public universities nationwide select “very good academic reputation.”

Academics

- The percent of Mason freshmen who say they had mostly ‘A’s in high school has increased from 19% in 2000 and 2001 to 24% in 2003.
- Just over one third of Mason freshmen, as well as freshmen at public universities (35%), said they spent at least 6 hours a week studying/doing homework in their last year of high school.
- Since 2000, the proportion of entering Mason freshmen saying they will need tutoring/remedial work in college has decreased in every academic field.
- Over 16% of Mason freshmen (16.3%) plan to major in a social science discipline, nearly double that of public university freshmen (8.8%).
- More Mason freshmen intend to get a bachelor’s degree from Mason (71.4%) than public university freshmen (64.5%) intend to get a bachelor’s from their institutions. At the same time, more Mason freshmen (12%) say the chances are “very good” that they will transfer compared to public university freshmen (5%).
- Sixty-four percent of Mason freshmen said they were late to class at least once during their last year of high school, compared to 63% of public university freshmen. This represents a considerable change from previous years when as many as 75% of Mason freshmen said they were late to class.
- And fewer Mason students (35% in 2003 compared to 42% in 2000 and 41% in 2001) said they overslept and missed a class or an appointment.

Selected Highlights

Expectations

- Nearly three-fourths of Mason freshmen (72%) expect to “develop close friendships with professors,” a substantial increase over 2000 and 2001 (62% and 63% respectively). Two-thirds (66%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that “talking with professors outside of class is important to me.”
- Eight-two percent of Mason freshmen “agree” or “strongly agree” that technology should be included in assignments in most courses and 90% expect professors to use technology as part of class.
- The proportion of Mason freshmen (44%) saying their chances are “very good” that they will participate in student clubs/groups is actually higher than that of public university freshmen (42%).
- Mason students (9%) are more likely to say they will “participate in student protests or demonstrations” than public university students (6%).

Personal

- Mason freshmen (33%) are far more likely than their public university counterparts (23%) to have discussed politics in their last year of high school.
- Mason freshmen (81%) are substantially more likely to have socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group than public university freshmen (68%).
- In terms of their personal objectives, Mason freshmen are quite different than public university students. Mason freshmen are more likely to consider it: “essential” or “very important” to “improve [their] understanding of other countries and cultures” (52% vs. 44%), to keep “up to date with political affairs” (42% vs. 35%), to help “promote racial understanding” (36% vs. 30%), and to influence the “political structure” (26% vs. 20%).
- Politically, nearly half of Mason freshmen (46%) consider themselves to be “middle-of-the-road,” followed by 31% who consider themselves “liberal” or “far left” and 23% who consider themselves “conservative” or “far right.” Public university freshmen are similarly distributed across the political spectrum.

Work

- During their last year of high school, 55% of Mason freshmen worked at least 6 hours per week, down from 66% in 2001. This is comparable to the national figure of 56%.

I. Introduction

The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a national longitudinal study established by the American Council on Education and now administered by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. The CIRP Freshman Survey is designed to provide a detailed profile of the entering freshmen class to the participating postsecondary institutions as well as national normative data for students in similar types of institutions. George Mason University regularly participates in the CIRP Freshmen Survey. The Mason freshmen entering in fall 2003 were asked to complete this survey during summer orientation. Out of 2,192 first-time full-time freshmen enrolled, 1,137 completed the survey for a response rate of 52%. This response rate is considerably lower than in previous years and should be kept in mind when reviewing these data. However, the racial and sex composition of the Mason respondents is very close to the actual composition of 2003 entering freshmen (see Table 1).

This report not only summarizes the characteristics of our entering first-time full-time freshmen in fall 2003 but also compares our students with their counterparts enrolled in other public universities (a total number of 66,163 students). In addition, it provides a trend analysis of our entering classes in 2000, 2001, and 2003.

Percentages throughout this report may not add to 100% due to rounding and multiple selections.

II. Student Diversity

First-year full-time freshmen at George Mason University are ethnically and linguistically diverse when compared to their counterparts nationally. As Table 1 shows, the percentage of white respondents from Mason is 11% lower and the percentage of Asian respondents from Mason is 8% higher than the average of all public universities. Seven percent of the Mason respondents are permanent residents and 2% are non-resident alien. Twelve percent of them (including both alien and non-alien at Mason) came to the US after age 6 – 7% higher than their counterparts. For 18% of the Mason respondents, English is not their native language, 8% higher than the average of all public universities.

Table 1. Diversity of Mason First-time Full-time Freshmen, 2003

	ALL First-time Mason Freshmen (2,251)*	CIRP Respondents	
		Mason Respondents (1,137)	Public Universities (66,163)
Sex			
Male	47%	47%	47%
Female	53%	53%	53%
Ethnicity			
Asian American/Asian	18%	21%	13%
African American/Black	6%	6%	7%
Hispanic American/Hispanic	7%	6%	4%
Native American	.3%	1%	1%
White American/Caucasian	66%	64%	75%
Other**	--	6%	3%
Non-resident Alien**	3%	--	--
Citizenship Status			
U.S. Citizen	Combined = 97%	92%	96%
Permanent Resident		7%	3%
Neither		2%	1%
Place of Birth			
Born in United States	No Data	82%	92%
Came to US before age 6	No Data	7%	4%
Came to US between 6-12	No Data	6%	3%
Came to US after age 12	No Data	6%	2%
Native Language			
English	No Data	82%	90%
Other than English	No Data	18%	10%

* This number includes 2,192 first-time full-time freshmen and 59 first-time part-time freshmen.

**At George Mason University, non-resident alien students are grouped into a separate racial category but CIRP does not. Therefore, all the CIRP racial categories include US citizen, permanent resident, and non-resident alien. CIRP respondents may check more than one category.

Mason students also have a variety of religious preferences. In particular, Mason has a strikingly higher proportion of Islamic students than is found at public institutions nationally. Table 2 shows the diversity of religious preferences among the CIRP respondents from 2000-2003. In 2003, 6% of Mason respondents are Islamic compared to 1% at public universities. Roman Catholic is the single largest religious group both in Mason and in other institutions.

First-year full-time freshmen at George Mason University are ethnically and linguistically diverse when compared to their counterparts nationally.

Table 2. Religious Preference of Mason Freshmen

Religious Preferences	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Baptist	11%	12%	8%	10%
Buddhist	3%	3%	4%	2%
Episcopal	3%	3%	3%	2%
Hindu*	--	--	2%	1%
Islamic	6%	7%	6%	1%
Jewish	2%	1%	2%	3%
Lutheran	2%	2%	3%	6%
Methodist	5%	5%	6%	7%
Presbyterian	5%	4%	4%	5%
Roman Catholic	27%	27%	25%	27%
Other Christian	13%	13%	14%	15%
Other Religion	6%	7%	2%	3%
None	19%	17%	21%	20%

*New item in 2003.

Six percent of Mason freshmen are Muslim, six times that of public universities nationally.

Table 3 shows the self-reported family social economic status (SES) of Mason freshmen in terms of their parents' total income (before taxes) last year. Twenty-four percent of them are from families with an annual income between \$100,000 and \$150,000, 6% higher than the average of all public universities. Relatively fewer Mason freshmen are from low-income families than their counterparts in public universities. This may be related to the relatively higher salary levels and higher cost of living in Northern Virginia. For 9% of Mason freshmen, their parents earn less than \$25,000 a year – this includes 2% from families with less than \$10,000 annual income.

Forty percent of Mason freshmen are from families with an annual income over \$100,000; at least 9% of them are from families with low SES.

Table 3. Family Social Economic Status (SES) of Mason Freshmen

Family SES	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Less than or equal to \$24,999	9%	11%	9%	11%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	19%	19%	15%	17%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	22%	24%	18%	22%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	20%	15%	18%	16%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	19%	21%	24%	18%
\$150,000 or more	12%	11%	16%	15%

III. Student Academic Preparation

Research indicates that students with higher high school GPAs tend to be more academically successful in college. Mason freshmen generally report lower GPAs than their counterparts in other public universities.

The percent of Mason freshmen who had mostly 'A's in high school has increased from 19% in 2000 and 2001 to 24% in 2003.

As Table 4 shows, 24% of Mason freshmen report a GPA of 'A' - or better, an increase of 5% compared with 2000 and 2001. This figure is significantly lower than the average of all public universities, which is 53%. The majority of Mason freshmen had a 'B' average in high school.

Table 4. Average High School Grades

Average High School Grades	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
As	19%	19%	24%	53%
Bs	75%	75%	73%	44%
Cs	7%	6%	3%	3%

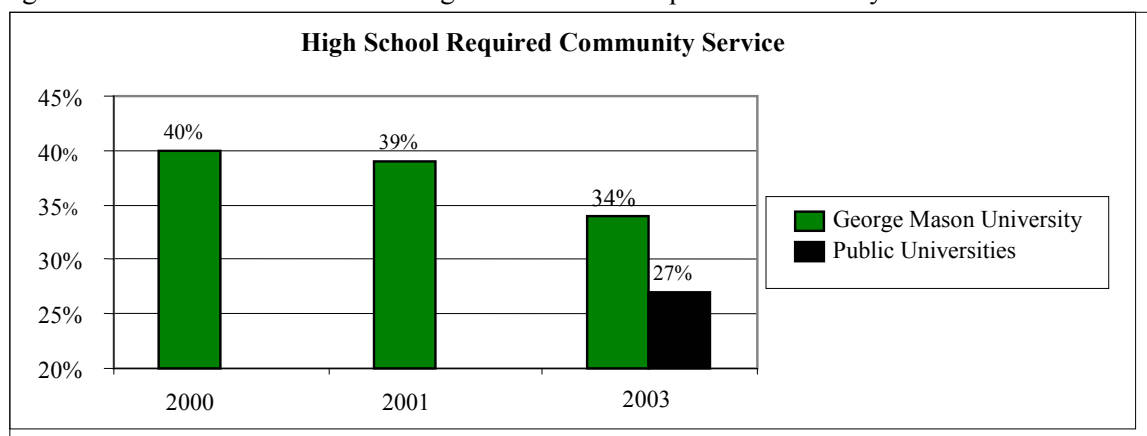
Mason freshmen in 2003 needed less remedial work in high school than previous entering classes. These students look very much like their public university counterparts in the remediation needed and in their expectations for tutoring in college. The percentage of students who feel they will need special tutoring or remedial work in college is consistent over a three year period. In addition, 34% of Mason students report that their high school required community service for graduation, a drop of 6% compared with 2000 but still 7% higher than the average for public universities.

One fourth of Mason freshmen feel they will need math tutoring in college.

Table 5. Tutoring/Remedial Work

Tutoring/Remedial Work	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Needed Tutoring/Remedial Work in High School:				
English	6%	5%	6%	4%
Reading	5%	4%	4%	4%
Math	17%	16%	13%	10%
Social Studies	3%	4%	3%	3%
Science	5%	6%	4%	4%
Foreign language	9%	7%	6%	4%
Writing	4%	4%	4%	4%
Will Need Tutoring/Remedial Work in College:				
English	10%	10%	8%	10%
Reading	4%	4%	3%	4%
Math	28%	26%	25%	23%
Social Studies	4%	3%	3%	3%
Science	11%	10%	10%	11%
Foreign language	12%	9%	10%	10%
Writing	12%	12%	11%	11%

Figure 1. Percent of Students from High Schools that Required Community Service for Graduation



Hours spent studying – time on task – are positively related to student academic success as well. Yet, since 2000, approximately 15% of Mason students spent less than one hour per week studying/doing homework during their senior year of high school. In 2003, 6% of male freshmen reported that they spent NO time studying after school, compared with 2% of female freshmen. Only 35% of Mason freshmen, as well as 35% of freshmen at public institutions nationally, spent more than six hours a week studying in high school. For Mason freshmen, the most engaged activities in high school are as follows (see Table 6): socializing with friends (70% of students spent more than 6 hours a week), working for pay (55% spent more than 6 hours), and exercise or sports (41%).

Since 2000, fewer and fewer high schools require community service for graduation.

Student-faculty interaction is often used as an indicator of student engagement at college. The CIRP data show that nationally student-teacher interaction after class in high school may be a concern. Nationally, as well as at Mason, over 55% of incoming freshmen spent less than one hour a week (among them, 10% spent NO time) talking with teachers outside of class during their last year of high school. Also, notably, the percentage of Mason students who worked at least six hours per week in high school has dropped considerably since 2000.

Table 6. Student Use of Time during Last Year of High School

During last year of high school, proportion who spent at least six hours per week:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Socializing	72%	72%	70%	76%
Working for pay	65%	66%	55%	56%
Exercise or sports	41%	38%	41%	50%
Studying/doing homework	32%	32%	35%	35%
Watching TV	27%	27%	27%	28%
Partying	27%	24%	21%	24%
Student clubs/groups	12%	12%	13%	14%
Playing video/computer games	11%	12%	12%	12%
Volunteer work	12%	9%	10%	9%
Household duties	9%	10%	9%	8%
Reading for pleasure	10%	8%	8%	9%
Talking with teachers outside of class	4%	5%	4%	4%
Prayer/mediation	5%	5%	3%	4%

During their last year of high school, 55% of Mason freshmen worked at least 6 hours per week, down from 66% in 2001. This is comparable to the national figure of 56%.

IV. College Motivations, Choices, and Decisions

Among a list of thirteen motivations to go to college, the top five “very important” ones for Mason students are as follows:

- To learn more about things that interest me (74.5%)
- To be able to make more money (70.1%)
- To be able to get a better job (68.4%)
- To get training for a specific career (66.9%), and
- To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas (62%)

These top five reasons are exactly the same ones chosen by the freshmen from all public institutions, as well as by Mason freshmen entering in fall 2000 and fall 2001.

In 2003, 51% of incoming freshmen said Mason was their first choice school – a drop of 6% from 2001 (see Table 7). This percentage is also significantly lower than the average of public universities, which is 69%. Another 31% of students said Mason was their second choice. The majority of our freshmen (57%) applied for 3 or more institutions other than Mason (see Table 8).

Table 7. College Choice

Is this college your:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
First choice	52%	57%	51%	69%
Second choice	30%	30%	31%	21%
Third or lower choice	18%	14%	18%	11%

Fifty-one percent of entering freshmen said Mason was their first choice school, down from a high of 57% in 2001. This figure remains lower than the national public universities' figure of 69%.

Table 8. Number of Colleges to which Students Applied for Admission

To how many colleges other than this one did you apply for admission this year?	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
None	16%	16%	13%	21%
1-2	33%	32%	30%	28%
3-4	34%	35%	37%	28%
5+	17%	17%	20%	23%

The reasons for students to attend “this particular college” are distinctly different from those that motivate them to go to college. CIRP provides students with 17 possible reasons, and the top five reasons for Mason freshmen are listed in Table 9. “Very good academic reputation” is the single most important reason for Mason students. Approximately 44% of Mason freshmen selected this reason, 13% lower than the average of all public universities. In previous CIRP surveys, “graduates get good jobs” is one of the top reasons. However, this year the results on this item were not reported due to suspected order effects. Instead, “a visit to the campus,” a new item, becomes the second most important reason for all public universities including Mason. A good impression during campus visit carries a lot of weight in students’ enrollment decision. Fifty-six percent of incoming students had visited Mason before they applied for admission and a total of 81% of them had visited Mason before they made the enrollment decision. Low tuition and reputation for social activities are important to all prospective students as well.

44% of Mason freshmen consider our “very good academic reputation” a very important reason to attend Mason.

Being close to one's home is a special factor attractive to Mason students. Over the years, Mason continuously attracts students from local areas – 26% of Mason freshmen live within 10 miles and 38% live between 11-50 miles away from campus. In comparison, nationwide in public universities 50% of freshmen live more than 100 miles from campus.

Table 9. Top “Very Important” Reasons for Attending this Particular College

Top “very important” reasons in influencing decision to attend this college:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Very good academic reputation	41%	41%	44%	57%
Visit to campus*	--	--	29%	32%
Low tuition	28%	26%	26%	24%
Good reputation for social activities	23%	24%	25%	31%
Wanted to live near home	26%	25%	24%	15%
Size of college is right	22%	21%	22%	24%
Offered financial aid	17%	17%	18%	25%
Special education programs	17%	15%	16%	19%
Website	9%	9%	15%	11%
Ranking in magazines	6%	7%	11%	15%
Relatives wanted me to come	9%	9%	11%	8%

*New item in 2003.

Figure 2. First Visit to Mason Campus

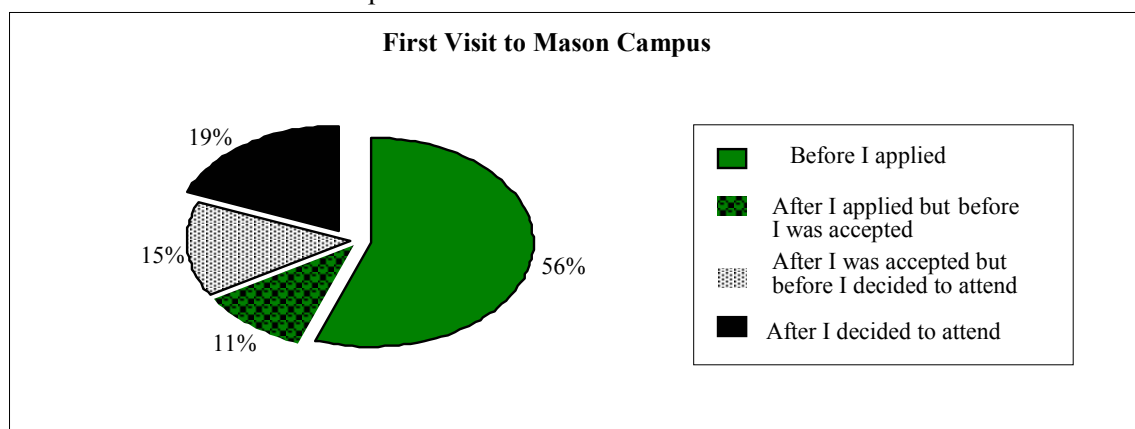


Table 10. Distance between College and Student Home

How many miles is this college from your permanent home?	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
10 or less	25%	25%	26%	9%
11-50	43%	40%	38%	24%
51-100	8%	8%	8%	18%
101+	23%	27%	29%	50%

V. Probable Major Field of Study and Career

Ten percent of entering Mason freshmen haven't decided their major field of study, 2% higher than the students in public universities. Among the list of general fields in Table 11, business (including accounting, business administration, finance, international business, marketing and management) is the most popular field at Mason. Eighteen percent of Mason freshmen have chosen or will probably choose business as their major field. When examining the detailed list of majors, we found the following most popular majors at Mason:

- Political science (9.2% of students have chosen/will probably choose it as their major field)
- Biology (5.9%)
- Management (5.0%)
- Psychology (4.6%)
- Accounting (3.9%)
- Marketing (3.9%)

Table 11. Student's Probable Field of Study

General Fields of Study	George Mason 2003	Public Universities 2003
Business (accounting, business administration, finance, marketing, management, etc.)	18.0%	14.7%
Social Science (i.e., anthropology, economics, ethnic & women's studies, geography, political science, psychology, social work, sociology, etc.)	16.3%	8.8%
Arts and Humanities (fine & applied art, history, journalism, language and literature, music, philosophy, speech, theater or drama, theology, etc.)	11.9%	10.1%
Other Fields (agriculture, communications, computer science, forestry, kinesiology, law enforcement, military science, etc.)	10.6%	7.2%
Engineering (aeronautical, civil, chemical, computer, electrical, industrial, mechanical engineering, etc.)	9.4%	13.6%
Professional (i.e., architecture, home economics, library science, and health sciences)	8.9%	17.3%
Biological Science (general biology, biochemistry, botany, environmental science, microbiology, zoology, etc.)	6.7%	9.2%
Technical (i.e., building trades, data processing or computer programming, drafting or design, electronics, mechanics, etc.)	4.0%	1.5%
Education (elementary, secondary, and special education, physical education, music or art education, etc.)	3.5%	5.1%
Physical Science (astronomy, atmospheric, earth & marine science, chemistry, mathematics, physics, statistics, etc.)	1.4%	2.8%
Undecided	9.8%	8.0%

Among the additional questions provided by the Office of Institutional Assessment at Mason, students were asked to specify the reasons why they had chosen or had NOT chosen their major field of study. For those who had chosen their major field of study, 86% "strongly agree" or "agree" that their decision was influenced by their own personal interest and 78% said they were influenced by the potential for employment. Only 42% of them agreed that their decision was influenced by their parents or a family member. For those who hadn't chosen their major, 59% either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they were unsure about the competencies and qualifications necessary to do well in the majors in which they were interested. Forty-six percent of them didn't know enough about the various majors to make a decision and 40% really had no idea about what major to choose.

Students were also asked to select their probable career among a list of 46 careers. Approximately 15% of Mason freshmen haven't decided their career yet. Another 10% did not find their probable career in the list. For the rest of the students, the most popular careers are as follows:

- Business executive (i.e., management, administrator) – 7.5% of Mason freshmen
- Lawyer (attorney) or judge – 6.1%
- Computer programmer or analyst – 5.7%
- Engineer – 5.5%
- Physician – 4.0%

Nationally the most popular careers among students in public universities are engineer (11%), physician (8%), business executive (7.4%), lawyer (4.3%), and nurse (3.4%).

Business and engineering are the most popular occupations of the students' fathers, both at Mason and other public universities. Mason has about 6% of freshmen whose father works for the military, much higher than the average of public universities. The most popular occupations of students' mothers, both at Mason and nationwide, are business, full-time homemaker, and education (elementary).

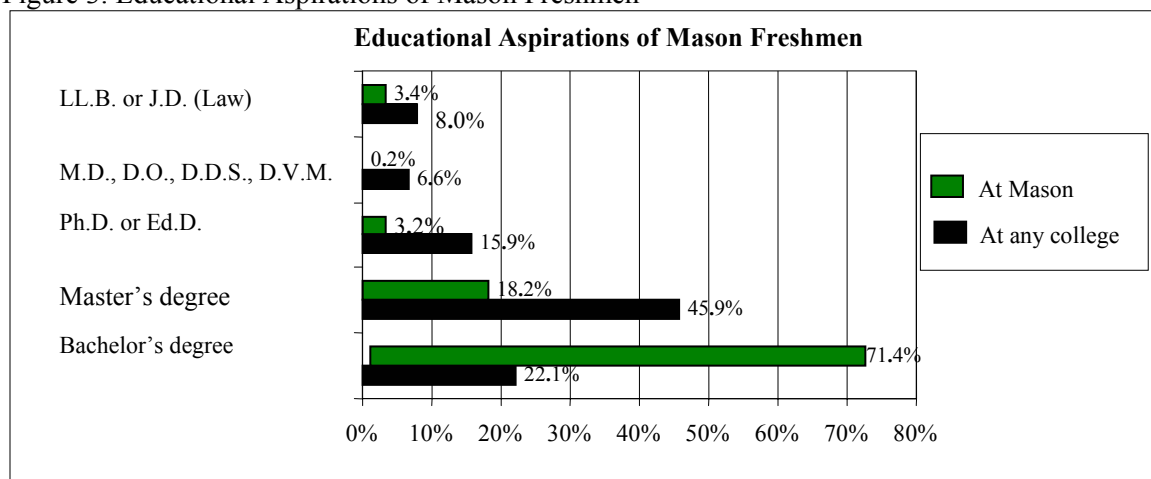
Political science is the most popular probable major and business executive is the most popular probable career of Mason freshmen.

VI. Educational Aspirations and Plans

As Figure 3 presents, the majority of Mason freshmen (71.4%) intend to obtain a bachelor's degree from Mason. Forty-six percent of them intend to obtain a master's degree from a university but only 18% of them intend to obtain it from Mason. Similarly, 16% of students would like to obtain a Ph.D., but only 3.2% intend to get it from Mason. Since Mason has no medical school, almost all the students who want to become a doctor (6.6%) have to get the training from other institutions. Among the 8% of students who want to become a lawyer or judge, 40% of them may choose Mason's law school.

More Mason freshmen intend to get a bachelor's degree from Mason (71.4%) than public university freshmen (64.5%) intend to get a bachelor's from their institutions.

Figure 3. Educational Aspirations of Mason Freshmen



Mason students are very optimistic about their chance of getting a bachelor's degree – over 84% think the chance is “very good” (see Table 12). This percentage has increased by 6% since 2000 and is 4% higher than the average for public universities. Fifty-seven percent of Mason students are confident that they can

More Mason freshmen (12%) say the chances are “very good” that they will transfer to another college compared to public university freshmen (5%).

make at least a ‘B’ average in college, also an increase of 10% over the year 2000. Some students say they are very likely to change their majors or career choices in college, 13% and 12% respectively among Mason freshmen. Most importantly, 12% of Mason freshmen consider it very likely that they will transfer to another college, 7% higher than the average for public universities! Fortunately, few Mason students think they are very likely to drop out of college.

Table 12. College Academic Plans

Student estimates chances are “very good” that he/she will:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Get a bachelor's degree	78%	77%	84%	80%
Make at least a B average	47%	52%	57%	61%
Participate in study abroad	-	-	19%	22%
Change majors	13%	13%	13%	16%
Change career choice	12%	12%	12%	15%
Transfer to another college	12%	9%	12%	5%
Work full-time while attending college	6%	6%	8%	5%
Drop out of college	1%	1%	1%	1%

Seventy-three percent of Mason freshmen think they are very likely to socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group. They also anticipate a close friendship with professors (72%). Forty-four percent are very interested in participating in student clubs/groups, but only 8% are very interested in participating in student government. Forty-two percent of students plan to get a job to help pay college expenses – an increase of 6% over 2000. In 2003, 23% of Mason freshmen plan to participate in volunteer/community service work, the highest percentage since 2000.

Table 13. Plans for Social Life in College

Student estimates chances are “very good” that he/she will:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group	67%	74%	73%	66%
Develop close friendships with professors	62%	63%	72%	73%
Participate in student clubs/groups	41%	40%	44%	42%
Get a job to help pay college expenses	36%	41%	42%	45%
Communicate regularly with professors	30%	30%	31%	32%
Participate in volunteer/community service work	18%	16%	23%	23%
Strengthen religious beliefs/convictions*	-	-	21%	22%
Join fraternity/sorority	10%	11%	11%	11%
Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	10%	9%	10%	10%
Participate in student protests or demonstrations	7%	6%	9%	6%
Participate in student government	8%	8%	8%	7%

*New item in 2003

The majority of Mason freshmen do not have concerns about how to finance college. As table 14 shows, students have been consistent with this confidence over a three-year period. In 2003, 39% of them are confident that they will have enough funds to complete college and 48% think they probably will have enough funds. Family resources, money from parents, relatives, spouse, etc., are the major fund for most students to pay for their educational expenses during the first year (see Table 15). Thirty percent of students expect their families to contribute more than \$10,000 during their first year and another 16% expect to get \$6,000 to \$10,000 from their families. Most Mason students, 92%, have limited (lower than \$3,000) or even no resources of their own to pay for college. Between 38-39% of Mason students receive some kind of aid. Nationwide in public universities, 41% of students receive aid which does NOT need to be repaid and 44% receive aid which must be repaid. Five percent of Mason students borrowed over \$6,000 and another 4% borrowed more than \$10,000 for their first year. These students are at higher risk of accumulating a large amount of debt upon graduation.

Table 14. Concerns about Financing College

Amount of concern you have about financing college:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
None, confident I will have sufficient funds	44%	40%	39%	34%
Some, but I probably will have enough funds	46%	50%	48%	53%
Major, not sure I will have enough funds to complete college	10%	11%	12%	13%

Table 15. Plans to Finance College

Financing College:	None	<\$1,000	\$1,000-2,999	\$3,000-5,999	\$6,000-\$9,999	\$10,000+
Family resources	17%	9%	11%	17%	16%	30%
My own resources	46%	27%	19%	6%	2%	1%
Aid which need NOT be repaid	61%	7%	15%	9%	5%	3%
Aid which must be repaid	62%	5%	15%	10%	5%	4%
Other than above	96%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

More and more Mason freshmen plan to live on campus. In 2003 an all time high of 62% of freshmen plan to live on campus, an increase of 6% over the year 2000. Yet, this percentage is still 22% lower than

In 2003 an all time high of 62% of Mason freshmen planned to live on campus, an increase of 6% over the year 2000 but still 22% lower than public university freshmen.

the average of public universities. Thirty-six percent of Mason students plan to live with family or relatives, a decrease of 5% over a three-year period but still 25% higher than the average of all public universities.

Table 16. Living Plans of Mason Freshmen

Where you plan to live during the fall term:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
With family/relatives	41%	39%	36%	11%
Private home, apartment, room	3%	2%	2%	4%
College dorm/other campus housing	56%	59%	62%	84%
Fraternity/Sorority	0%	<1%	<1%	1%

VII. Student Self-Perceptions and Personal Objectives

The self-perceptions of Mason freshmen do not change drastically in a three-year period, as presented in Table 17. However, more freshmen entering in fall 2003 think they are above average in ten of the 15 characteristics listed than the earlier cohorts, particularly in academic ability and computer skills.

Moreover, there are notable differences in self-perceptions between Mason freshmen and the freshmen in public universities. A higher percentage of freshmen in public universities, compared to Mason freshmen, think they are above average in academic ability, drive to achieve, leadership ability, physical health, and, particularly, math ability (a difference of 9%). Fewer of them think they are above average in computer skills and artistic ability as compared with Mason students, a difference of 8% and 5% respectively.

Table 17. Student Self-Perceptions

Student rated self above average or highest 10% as compared with the average person of the same age:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Academic Ability	65%	66%	71%	76%
Drive to Achieve	64%	66%	66%	73%
Persistence*	-	59%	62%	65%
Self-Confidence (intellectual)	59%	57%	60%	62%
Creativity	64%	60%	59%	57%
Leadership Ability	58%	56%	55%	61%
Emotional Health	53%	54%	52%	56%
Physical Health	54%	50%	52%	57%
Computer Skills	44%	45%	49%	41%
Self-Confidence (social)	52%	52%	49%	50%
Writing Ability	49%	46%	48%	47%
Math Ability	40%	40%	42%	51%
Risk-Taking**	-	-	42%	43%
Public Speaking Ability	40%	35%	36%	36%
Artistic Ability	36%	33%	35%	30%

*New item in 2001

** New item in 2003

CIRP also asked students to indicate the activities in which they were engaged and how often they did them during their last year of high school. Table 18 presents the activities in which students were engaged either frequently or occasionally. Most Mason students had studied with other students, performed volunteer work, attended a religious service and came late to class. In the area of under-age drinking, 44% of Mason freshmen had, at least once, consumed wine or liquor and 37% had consumed beer, 8% and 9% lower respectively than the national average. One out of three Mason freshmen had overslept and missed a class or an appointment.

Sixty-four percent of Mason freshmen said they were late to class at least once during their last year of high school, compared to 63% of public university freshmen. This represents a considerable change from previous years when as many as 75% of Mason freshmen said they were late to class. And fewer Mason students (35% in 2003 compared to 42% in 2000 and 41% in 2001) said they overslept and missed a class or an appointment.

Table 18. Student Involvement in Various Activities during Last year of High School*

Activities during last year of high school	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Studied with other students	85%	84%	84%	88%
Performed volunteer work	79%	81%	82%	84%
Attended a religious service	78%	80%	76%	79%
Came late to class	73%	75%	64%	63%
Visited an art gallery/museum	65%	63%	61%	57%
Tutored another student	52%	56%	56%	58%
Participated in organized demonstrations	48%	47%	44%	43%
Drank wine or liquor	49%	49%	44%	52%
Played a musical instrument	42%	40%	44%	44%
Drank beer	45%	41%	37%	46%
Overslept & missed class/appt.	42%	41%	35%	32%
Was a guest in a teacher's home	18%	20%	17%	24%

* Percentage combining "frequently" and "occasionally" responses.

Table 19 presents the activities in which students had frequently engaged during the last year of high school. Eighty-one percent of Mason freshmen frequently socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group – 13% higher than the national average. Mason freshmen are also politically active: 44% of them participated in organized demonstrations, 33% of them frequently discussed politics and 26% of them frequently voted in student elections. Forty-five percent of them frequently felt bored in class, 9% frequently felt depressed, and 6% frequently smoked.

Table 19. Student Frequent Involvement in Various Activities during Last Year of High School*

Frequent activities during last year of high school	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group	81%	86%	81%	68%
Was bored in class	47%	49%	45%	42%
Discussed politics	22%	27%	33%	23%
Discussed religion	29%	28%	29%	29%
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	28%	28%	28%	26%
Asked a teacher for advise after class	24%	26%	27%	23%
Voted in student election	23%	27%	26%	22%
Felt depressed	10%	8%	9%	7%
Smoked cigarettes	13%	9%	6%	6%

* Percentage responding "frequently" ONLY.

For most freshmen nationwide, the top three "essential" personal objectives are as follows: "being very well off financially," "raising a family," and "helping others in difficulty." Table 20 lists those personal objectives shared by more than 25% of Mason students. Compared with their counterparts in other public universities, Mason freshmen have more political interest – more students would like to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures, want to keep up to date with political affairs, and help to promote racial understanding. Many personal objectives carry different weight for male and female students at Mason. For instance, more female than male students feel it is essential to help others who are in difficulty, understand other countries and cultures, promote racial understanding, integrate spirituality into their life, and influence social values. More male than female students think it is essential to become successful in a business of their own.

Table 20. Student Personal Objectives

Top “Essential” or “Very important” Personal Objectives*:	George Mason University			Public Universities
	2000	2001	2003	2003
Being very well off financially	78%	77%	77%	76%
Raising a family	67%	66%	69%	75%
Helping others in difficulty	63%	60%	66%	63%
Becoming an authority in my field	62%	62%	65%	61%
Obtaining recognition from colleagues for contributions to my special field	56%	54%	58%	54%
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures**	-	-	52%	44%
Keeping up to date with political affairs	32%	35%	42%	35%
Having administrative responsibility for work of others	42%	39%	42%	40%
Becoming successful in business of my own	46%	44%	41%	41%
Influencing social values	40%	39%	39%	36%
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	42%	42%	39%	39%
Helping to promote racial understanding	35%	37%	36%	30%
Integrating spirituality into my life	42%	39%	36%	38%
Becoming a community leader	31%	29%	30%	32%
Influencing the political structure	25%	22%	26%	20%

*Includes only the objectives cited by at least 25% of 2003 respondents

**New item in 2003

In terms of their personal objectives, Mason freshmen are quite different than other public university students. Mason freshmen are more likely to consider it “essential” or “very important” to “improve [their] understanding of other countries and cultures” (52% vs. 44%), to keep “up to date with political affairs” (42% vs. 35%), to help “promote racial understanding” (36% vs. 30%), and to influence the “political structure” (26% vs. 20%).

VIII. Student Political Views

Almost half of the Mason freshmen take a “middle of the road” standing politically. Generally, female freshmen at Mason are more likely to identify themselves as politically “liberal” compared to male freshmen and male freshmen are more likely to be “conservative” than female freshmen (as shown in Figure 4). Over a three-year period, the percentage of conservative students is slightly increasing.

Figure 4: Student Political Standing across Years 2000, 2001, and 2003

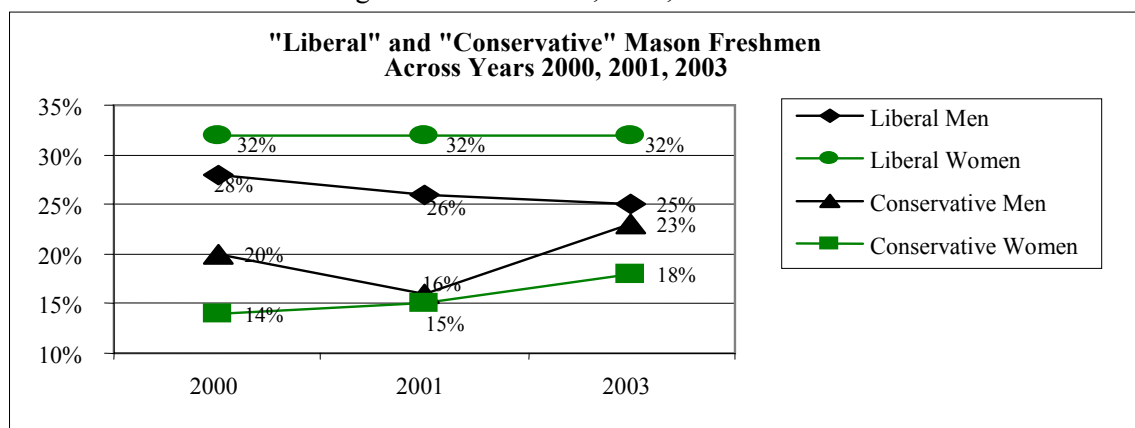


Table 21. Student Political Standing

Political Views:	George Mason University						Public Universities	
	2000		2001		2003		2003	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Far left	4%	3%	3%	2%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Liberal	28%	32%	26%	32%	25%	32%	23%	27%
Middle-of-the-road	47%	51%	52%	49%	45%	48%	47%	53%
Conservative	20%	14%	16%	15%	23%	18%	25%	18%
Far right	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	1%	2%	1%

In light of nationwide discussions on same-sex marriage, there is a significant increase in the percentage of Mason freshmen who support granting legal marital status to same-sex couples as compared with 2000 or 2001. There is also a slight drop in the percentage of Mason freshmen who think it is important to prohibit homosexual relationships. Most freshmen support tighter gun control but the percentage is decreasing from 2000. More than 60% of freshmen support legal abortion, 59% support the prohibition of racist/sexist speech on campus, and 57% support the abolishment of affirmative action in college admissions. There are also a slightly increasing number of freshmen who agree that wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now. Fewer and fewer students identify themselves with the traditional view that the activities of married women are best confined to the home and family.

Politically, nearly half of Mason freshmen (46%) consider themselves to be “middle-of-the-road,” followed by 31% who consider themselves “liberal” or “far left” and 23% who consider themselves “conservative” or “far right.” Public university freshmen are similarly distributed across the political spectrum.

Table 22. Student Political Views

Students agree “strongly” or “somewhat”	George Mason University			Public Univ.
	2000	2001	2003	2003
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns	83%	81%	77%	76%
Same sex couples should have the right to legal marital status	58%	58%	66%	61%
Abortion should be legal	60%	61%	62%	62%
There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals	66%	63%	60%	62%
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	64%	67%	59%	57%
Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished	51%	48%	57%	56%
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now	49%	50%	54%	53%
People should not obey laws which violate their personal values*	-	-	43%	38%
Marijuana should be legalized	35%	37%	37%	40%
Federal military spending should be increased*	-	-	33%	34%
Realistically an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society	28%	28%	29%	28%
The death penalty should be abolished	29%	33%	28%	32%
Racial discrimination is no longer a problem in America	23%	24%	24%	23%
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	26%	25%	21%	25%
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	24%	24%	20%	20%

*New item in 2003

IX. Questions asked only of George Mason Students

In addition to the standard questions on the CIRP Freshman Survey, Mason freshmen were also asked to respond to 20 questions that pertain only to Mason students. This section summarizes students' responses to these questions.

One out of four Mason freshmen is the first in his/her immediate family to attend college. Over half of them think it is "essential" or "very important" for them to attend a college with a multi-ethnic student body: female students are more likely to think it is essential than male students, 31% and 20% respectively. And the majority of Mason freshmen (60%) estimate that they will spend one hour or less studying for each hour spent in class or labs during their first year. The 2003 Senior Survey administered by the Office of Institutional Assessment at Mason found that senior students on average spend 1.34 hours studying for each hour spent in class or labs during their last year at Mason.

One quarter of Mason freshmen are first-generation college students.

Figure 5. First Generation Students

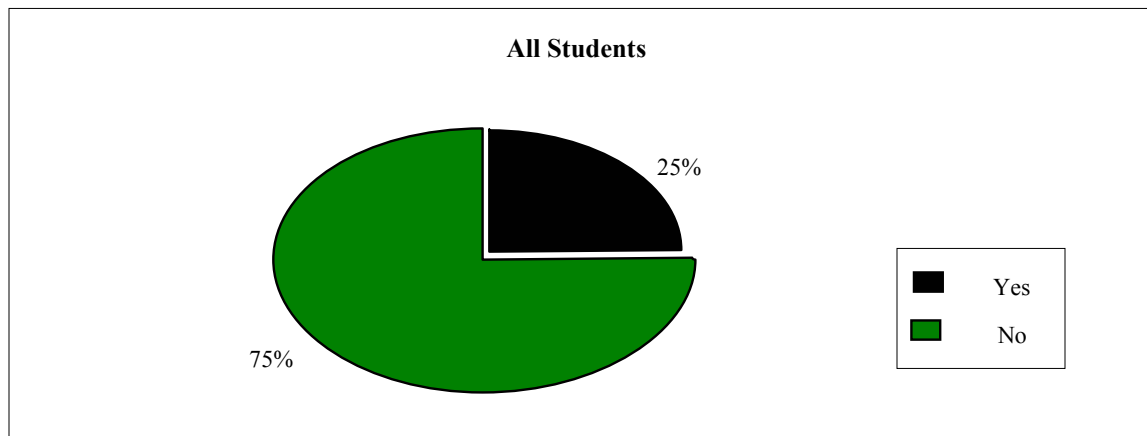


Table 23. Diversity Expectations

It is important to me to attend a college with a multi-ethnic student body:	All Students	Men	Women
Essential	26%	20%	31%
Very important	29%	26%	31%
Somewhat important	32%	37%	28%
Not important	12%	16%	10%

Table 24. Expected Study Time

Approximately, how much time do you expect to spend studying during your first year at Mason	All Students	Men	Women
Less than half hour for each hour spent in class or labs	2%	3%	2%
Half hour for each hour spent in class or labs	21%	26%	17%
One hour for each hour spent in class or labs	37%	38%	36%
One and half hour for each hour spent in class or labs	19%	17%	21%
Two hours or more for each hour spent in class or labs	21%	17%	25%

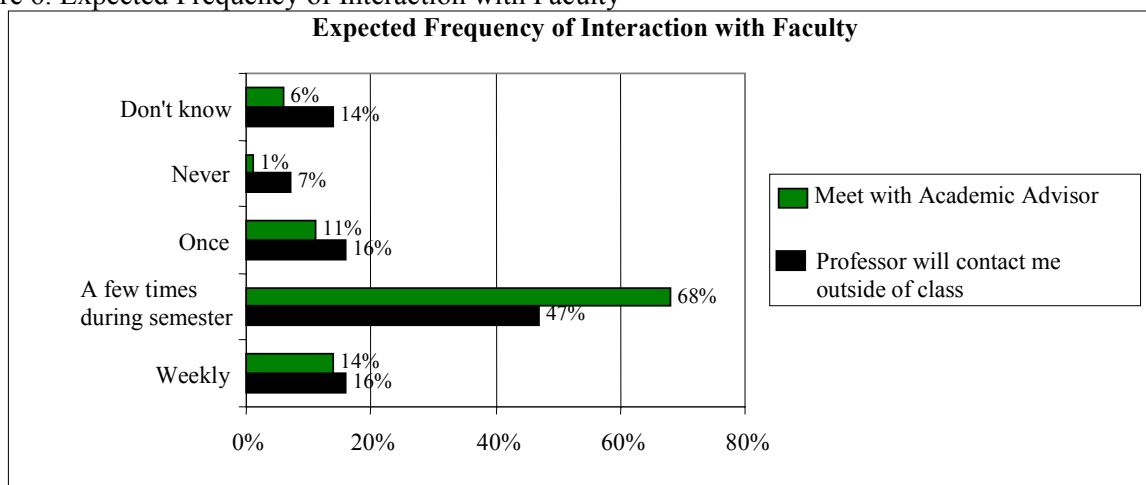
Mason Freshmen also expect to have opportunities to interact with faculty out of class. Forty-six percent of female students and 37% of male students “strongly agree” that it is “very important” for them to talk with professors outside of class. Regarding the frequency of out-of-class interaction, 47% of Mason students expect their professors to contact them a few times during a semester and 16% expect professors to contact them weekly. Similarly, 93% of Mason freshmen expect to meet their academic advisors at least once a semester, with the majority (68%) of them expecting to meet with advisors a few times a semester.

Nearly three-fourths of Mason freshmen (72%) expect to “develop close friendships with professors,” a substantial increase over 2000 and 2001 (62% and 63% respectively). Two-thirds (66%) “agree” or “strongly agree” that “talking with professors outside of class is important to me.”

Table 25. Student-Faculty Interaction Expectations

Student-Faculty Interaction expectations:	Strongly Agree			Agree		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
I expect to talk to professors outside of class.	30%	26%	34%	54%	54%	54%
Talking with professors outside of class is important to me.	42%	37%	46%	44%	45%	45%

Figure 6. Expected Frequency of Interaction with Faculty



Twenty-three percent of Mason freshmen feel it is essential for them to be at least moderately fluent in a language other than their native languages. Keep in mind that the native language for 18% of Mason freshmen is not English. Overall, female students are more likely than male students to think it is “very important” or “important” to master a language other than their native ones. On the other hand, male students are more likely to have higher technology expectations than female students. For instance, 53% of male students “strongly agree” that they want to increase their technology skills, 16% higher than females. More male students expect their professors to use technology in class or include technology in assignments. Before they start college at Mason, 94% of Mason freshmen “very often” or “often” use word processor to format and edit text. Nearly all students (95%) use email or instant messaging at least weekly. Sixty-five percent of them have used presentation software “very often” or “often,” but 6% of them have never created an electronic presentation before.

Table 26. Foreign Language Expectation of Mason Freshmen

It is important to me to be at least moderately fluent in a language other than my native language:	All Students	Men	Women
Essential	23%	20%	26%
Very important	20%	18%	22%
Somewhat important	34%	33%	35%
Not important	23%	28%	18%

Table 27. Technology Expectations of Mason Freshmen

Technology goals/expectations:	Strongly Agree			Agree		
	All	Men	Women	All	Men	Women
I want to increase my technology skills.	39%	53%	27%	49%	38%	58%
I expect professors to use technology as part of class.	35%	46%	26%	55%	47%	63%
I expect technology to be included in assignments in most courses.	26%	35%	18%	56%	51%	61%

Table 28. Student Basic Computer Skills

Student Use of Technology <i>(only a small difference between men & women)</i>	Very Often	Often	A Few Times	Once	Never
Use word processor to format and edit text	79%	15%	4%	1%	1%
Use software to create an electronic presentation	38%	27%	24%	6%	6%

Table 29. Student Use of Email or IM

Use email/Instant Messaging to communicate with others <i>(only a small difference between men and women)</i>	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never
	75%	20%	3%	1%	1%



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