

# **The Freshman Survey 2003: A Comparison Report Freshman Programs at George Mason University Honors, New Century College, Mason Topics**



Office of Institutional Assessment  
George Mason University

**July, 2004**

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## I. Highlights

### Student Diversity

- 21% of Mason students in general programs and 20% of Honors students have a language other than English for their native language.
- Between 17% -19% of freshmen in each freshman program were not born in the U.S.
- 8% of Honors freshmen are Islamic.
- 25% of all Mason freshmen are the first in their immediate family to attend college. This is particularly true for general Mason students (27%) and Mason Topics students (25%).
- Students in NCC (33%), Honors (31%) and Mason Topics (29%) are more likely than general Mason students (24%) to say that it is “essential” to attend a “college with a multi-ethnic student body.”

### Student Academic Preparation

- In all programs, the percentage of students who said they had an A average in high school increased from the 2001 Survey. Most dramatic were the Honors Program (54% to 67%) and NCC (7% to 23%).
- Across programs, Math is the subject for which more students needed tutoring in high school than any other and it is the subject for which more students think they will need tutoring in college.
- Fewer Honor students worked for pay during high school than their counterparts.
- High percentages (13% -19%) of students in each program but Honors said they spent less than one hour per week studying/doing homework in high school.
- Substantial numbers of students think they will need to spend ½ hour or less of study time for each hour of class/labs—30% of NCC students, 25% of Mason Topics students, 23% of general Mason students and 17% of Honors students.
- At least 80% of students in each program “agree” or “strongly agree” that they expect “technology to be included in assignments in most courses.”

### College Motivations, Choices and Decisions

- For freshmen in all programs, the top reason that they considered “very important” for going to college was “to learn more about things that interest me.” (There was a tie for Mason Topics students with “to be able to make more money.”)
- In each program, with the exception of Mason Topics, the percentage who said that Mason was their first choice was lower in 2003 than in 2001.
- In each program, fewer students are applying to only one school.
- Across programs, “very good academic reputation” remains the top “very important” reason for selecting George Mason.
- By far, a higher percentage of Honors students (33%) live within 10 miles of campus than students in other programs.

### Probable Major Field of Study and Career

- The most popular major among Honors, Mason Topics and general Mason students is political science; for NCC students, it is Elementary Education.

### Educational Aspirations and Plans

- Small percentages of students in each program expect to earn a baccalaureate degree, but not from Mason—4% in Honors, 3% in NCC, 3% in Mason Topics and 1% in general Mason programs.
- 32% of Honors students, a higher percentage than in any other program, plan to earn an advanced degree from Mason.

- Honors students (62%) are considerably more likely than their counterparts to “be satisfied with your college.”
- Nearly three-fourths of all Mason freshmen think they are very likely to “socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group,” particularly when compared with public university students (66%). 82% of Honors and NCC students respectively expect this.
- Nearly half (47%) of NCC students think it “very likely” that they will need to “get a job to help pay college expenses.” For Honors and Mason Topics, the percentages are 36% and 39% respectively.
- Over one third of Honors and NCC students (35%) think the chances are very good that they will “participate in volunteer/community service work” compared to 28% in Mason Topics and 19% in general Mason programs.
- NCC Freshmen (75%) are far more likely to live on campus than students in any other program.
- Nearly half of all Mason freshmen say that they “strongly agree” that “talking with professors outside of class is important.” Honors students (49%), NCC students (49%) and Mason Topics students (46%) are more likely to say this than general Mason students (39%).
- Well over half of the students in each program expect professors to contact them outside of class at least “a few times during the semester” and over three-fourths expect to meet with an academic advisor at least “a few times during the semester.”

### **Student Self-Perceptions and Personal Objectives**

Given a list of abilities and asked to rate themselves, the following percentages of students rated themselves “above average” or in the “highest 10%” of others their age.

- Honors students (95%) in academic ability
- Honors students (82%) in intellectual self-confidence
- NCC students (70%) in leadership ability
- NCC (43%), Mason Topics (43%), and general Mason (42%) students in risk-taking
- NCC (67%) and Mason Topics (66%) students in creativity

The following percentages of students said these personal objectives were “essential” or “very important.”

- General Mason students (80%) said “being very well off financially.”
- Mason Topics students (52%) said “keeping up to date with political affairs.”
- Mason Topics students (34%) said “participating in a community action program.”
- Honors students (61%) said “improving my understanding of other countries and cultures.”
- 61% of Honors students said “to be at least moderately fluent” in another language.
- NCC students (39%) and Mason Topics students (38%) said “becoming a community leader.”

### **Student Political Views**

- A plurality of students in each program considers itself “middle-of-the-road” politically, and more students in each program consider themselves “liberal” rather than “conservative.”
- Fewer, but still a clear majority in each program agree “strongly” or “somewhat” that “same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status.”
- Between 22%—26% of students in each program agree “strongly” or “somewhat” that “racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America.”



## II. Introduction

George Mason University regularly participates in the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), a national longitudinal study on college students. The Mason freshmen entering in fall 2003 were asked to complete the CIRP Freshmen 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%. Among the respondents, 78 were from the Honors Program, 177 from the Mason Topics, 64 from New Century College (NCC), and the remaining 818 were from all the other programs of George Mason University. Mason's response rate for 2003 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 compares the survey results of full-time first-time freshmen enrolled in the Honors program, Mason Topics, NCC, and all other Mason programs. **References to “general Mason students” or “general Mason freshmen” refer to the CIRP respondents exclusive of the students from the Honors, NCC and Mason Topics programs.** The results on freshmen from all other public universities across the U.S. are provided as references. This report also compares the respondents from the 2001 cohort with the 2003 cohort when possible. The original institution-level full report, as well as the separate ones on students enrolled in NCC, Mason Topics, and the Honors program, can be requested from the Office of Institutional Assessment.

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

***References to “general Mason students” or “general Mason freshmen” throughout this report refer to the CIRP respondents exclusive of the students from the Honors, NCC and Mason Topics programs.***

### III. 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 majority of Mason freshmen are female and between age 18-19. In 2003, 70% of NCC freshmen are female, the highest percentage of all Mason programs. The percentage of white students at GMU is significantly lower than the average of public universities. In the general Mason programs, 22% of the 2003 freshmen are Asian – significantly higher than the other special programs of Mason. In both 2001 and 2003, a higher percentage (15% and 14% respectively) of African American/Black students enrolled in NCC. In comparison, the Honors Program has the lowest percentage of African-American students in both years. The percentage of Hispanic students remains constant in both 2001 and 2003.

The percentage of US citizens enrolled in Mason is increasing in most Mason programs from 2001 to 2003. On average, 92% of 2003 Mason freshmen are US citizens, 7% are permanent residents and 2% are non-resident alien. In 2003, for 20% of the freshmen from the Honors Program and 21% of the students from the general Mason programs, English is not their native language, 10% higher than the average of all public universities. As Table 2 shows, among the Honors students, 15% came to the U.S. after age 6, twice that of the NCC freshmen and three times that of the national average. On average, 82% of Mason freshmen were born in the U.S., 10% lower than the national average.

**Table 1: Diversity of Mason First-time Full-time Freshmen**

	<i>Mason 2003 First-time Freshmen (2251)*</i>	<i>CIRP Respondents</i>								
		<i>2001 Mason Respondents</i>				<i>2003 Mason Respondents</i>				<i>2003 Public Univ. (66,163)</i>
		<i>Honors (113)</i>	<i>NCC (112)</i>	<i>Topics (196)</i>	<i>Mason General (1082)</i>	<i>Honors (78)</i>	<i>NCC (64)</i>	<i>Topics (177)</i>	<i>Mason General (818)</i>	
<b>Sex</b>										
Male	47%	43%	43%	42%	45%	45%	30%	49%	48%	47%
Female	53%	58%	57%	58%	55%	56%	70%	51%	52%	53%
<b>Ethnicity</b>										
Asian Am/Asian	18%	20%	17%	22%	19%	18%	14%	19%	22%	13%
African Am/Black	6%	4%	15%	7%	11%	1%	14%	7%	5%	7%
Hispanic Am./Hispanic	7%	5%	2%	6%	9%	4%	5%	6%	7%	4%
Native American	.3%	3%	0.9%	0.5%	1%	0%	3%	2%	1%	1%
White Am/Caucasian	66%	73%	63%	62%	57%	68%	68%	64%	63%	75%
Other**	--	3%	4%	7%	7%	10%	5%	6%	6%	3%
Non-resident Alien**	3%	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Age</b>										
17	No Data	1%	2%	2%	3%	7%	3%	3%	2%	2%
18	No Data	75%	78%	73%	72%	68%	75%	71%	72%	67%
19	No Data	24%	17%	24%	23%	25%	21%	26%	24%	30%
20	No Data	0%	2%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
21 and over	No Data	0%	2%	0.5%	0.2%	1%	2%	0%	0.4%	0.3%
<b>Citizenship Status</b>										
U.S. Citizen	Combined	90%	92%	90%	88%	92%	94%	92%	92%	96%
Permanent Resident	97%	10%	7%	9%	10%	6%	6%	6%	7%	3%
Neither	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%
<b>Native Language</b>										
English	No Data	82%	88%	80%	79%	80%	87%	83%	80%	90%
Other than English	No Data	18%	12%	20%	21%	20%	13%	17%	21%	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. However, all the CIRP racial categories include not only US citizens and permanent residents, but also non-resident aliens. And the CIRP respondents may check more than one category.

*21% of Mason students in general programs have a language other than English for their native language.*

**Table 2: Student Place of Birth, 2003**

Place of Birth	George Mason University				Public Univ.
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	
Born in United States	81%	81%	83%	82%	92%
Came to US before age 6	4%	11%	7%	7%	4%
Came to US between 6-12	10%	5%	5%	6%	3%
Came to US after age 12	5%	3%	5%	6%	2%

Between 17%—19% of freshmen in each freshman program were not born in the U.S.

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. In 2003, 8% of the Honors students, 6% of the Mason Topics students, and 7% of the general Mason students are Islamic, compared to 1% in public universities. Roman Catholic is the single largest religious group in most Mason programs except for NCC, where many students (29%) have no religious preferences.

**Table 3 – Religious Preference of Mason Freshmen**

Religious Preferences	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Baptist	4%	19%	12%	12%	4%	13%	9%	8%	10%
Buddhist	4%	1%	4%	3%	7%	3%	4%	4%	2%
Episcopal	7%	5%	4%	2%	1%	5%	3%	3%	2%
Hindu*	--	--	--	--	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Islamic	10%	4%	6%	7%	8%	2%	6%	7%	1%
Jewish	0	3%	2%	1%	0%	5%	5%	2%	3%
Lutheran	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	2%	3%	3%	6%
Methodist	7%	6%	5%	5%	4%	8%	6%	6%	7%
Presbyterian	1%	6%	7%	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	5%
Roman Catholic	24%	22%	27%	27%	29%	11%	28%	25%	27%
Other Christian	21%	13%	8%	13%	12%	18%	13%	14%	15%
Other Religion	6%	6%	7%	7%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%
None	14%	15%	18%	18%	22%	29%	17%	21%	20%

\*The 2003 survey added two more religious preferences than the 2001 survey, Hindu and Unitarian/Universalist. The latter one is grouped into "Other Christian."

Table 4 shows the self-reported family economic status of Mason freshmen in terms of their parents' total income before taxes. In 2003, 45% of the freshmen enrolled in the Honors program and the Mason Topics program are from families with an annual income above \$100,000, 12% higher than the average of all public universities. In NCC, 21% of the freshmen report their parents earn more than \$150,000 last year, the highest of all Mason programs. NCC also has the highest percentage of students (13%) whose parents earn less than \$25,000 a year.

**Table 4 – Family Economic Status of Mason Freshmen**

Family Economic Status	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
<=\$24,999	4%	11%	14%	11%	6%	13%	9%	10%	11%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	16%	23%	12%	19%	10%	16%	11%	16%	17%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	31%	23%	27%	23%	25%	14%	22%	17%	22%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	23%	8%	14%	16%	14%	18%	13%	19%	16%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	21%	21%	21%	20%	32%	18%	30%	22%	18%
\$150,000 or more	6%	15%	12%	11%	13%	21%	15%	16%	15%

#### IV. Student Academic Preparation

Research found 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. As Table 5 shows, except for the Honors Program, 20-23% of the 2003 Mason freshmen report a GPA of ‘A-’ or better, compared with 53% in public universities. The majority of Mason freshmen enrolled in these programs got a ‘B’ average in high school. But compared with the 2001 cohort, there is a significant increase of ‘A’ average students in all programs. Especially in the Honors Program and NCC where the increase is by 13% and 16% respectively.

**Table 5. Average High School Grades**

Average High School Grades	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
As	54%	7%	17%	17%	67%	23%	20%	21%	53%
Bs	42%	85%	80%	77%	32%	72%	80%	76%	44%
Cs	5%	8%	3%	6%	1%	5%	1%	3%	3%

*In all programs, the percentage of students who said they had an A average in high school increased from the 2001 Survey. Most dramatic were the Honors Program (54% to 67%) and NCC (7% to 23%).*

In the aspect of academic preparation, very few Honors students had any kind of tutoring or remedial work in high school (see Table 6). Many of them don’t think they will need any remedial work in college for any of the subjects except math (Table 7). Math is a weak subject for many freshmen nationwide. Mason freshmen (except the Honors students) are more likely to report that they had math tutoring or remedial work in high school than their counterparts in public universities. In NCC and Mason Topics programs, about 16-17% of the 2003 respondents had math tutoring in high school, higher than the university average. About 25%-29% of these students feel that they will need math tutoring in college. Higher percentages of NCC students had English, reading, writing and foreign language tutoring/remedial work in high school than other Mason students. Twenty-two percent of NCC students may need tutoring/remedial work in writing in college, 8% higher than Mason Topics students and 11% higher than the general Mason students.

**Table 6. Tutoring/Remedial Work in High School**

Needed Tutoring /Remedial Work in High School:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
English	3%	5%	4%	6%	3%	11%	6%	5%	4%
Reading	1%	3%	5%	5%	3%	8%	6%	3%	4%
Math	14%	21%	16%	16%	5%	16%	17%	13%	10%
Social Studies	1%	5%	4%	4%	1%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Science	2%	5%	6%	6%	1%	3%	4%	4%	4%
Foreign language	5%	11%	9%	7%	3%	14%	4%	7%	4%
Writing	2%	4%	3%	4%	3%	9%	5%	4%	4%

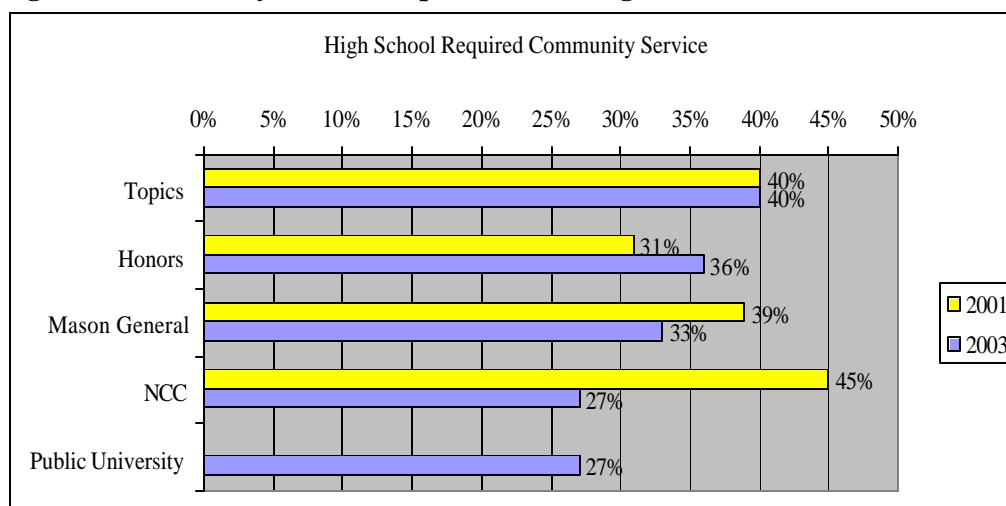
*Across programs, Math is the subject for which more students needed tutoring in high school than any other and it is the subject for which more students think they will need tutoring in college.*

**Table 7. Anticipated Needs for Tutoring/Remedial Work in College**

Will Need Tutoring/ Remedial Work in College:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
English	4%	10%	13%	9%	4%	11%	10%	7%	10%
Reading	3%	7%	4%	4%	0%	6%	5%	3%	4%
Math	17%	31%	22%	27%	14%	25%	29%	25%	23%
Social Studies	4%	3%	4%	3%	1%	6%	4%	3%	3%
Science	3%	6%	12%	10%	4%	13%	12%	9%	11%
Foreign language	10%	10%	8%	10%	4%	11%	13%	10%	10%
Writing	6%	15%	14%	12%	4%	22%	14%	11%	11%

Compared with their counterparts in public universities nationwide, a significantly higher percentage of 2003 Mason freshmen report that their high schools required community service for graduation. At Mason, this percentage is the highest among Mason Topics students and the lowest among NCC freshmen. In 2003, only 27% of NCC freshmen report this requirement, a drop of 18% compared with 2001.

**Figure 1. Community Service Requirement in High School**



*In 2001, as many as 45% of NCC students graduated from a high school that required community service for graduation. The figure drops to 27% in 2003.*

Hours spent studying – time on task – are positively related to student academic success. Yet, since 2001, approximately 15% of the Mason students spent less than one hour per week studying/doing homework during their senior year of high school. In the Mason Topics program, 19% of the students spent less than an hour studying, compared with 5% of the Honors students. Twenty-nine percent of NCC students do not work or work for pay for less than an hour a week. This means 71% of NCC students work for pay for more than an hour a week. Among them, 18% work over 20 hours a week – the highest among all Mason programs. The figure falls to 12% among Honors students, 13% among Mason Topics students, and 15% among other students. Sixty-four percent of NCC students spent less than one hour a week in volunteer work, higher than any other Mason program and the public university average. Students in the Honors program, NCC and Mason Topics are more likely to report that they engaged in student clubs/groups for more than one hour a week than students in general programs.

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 as well. On average at Mason, over 55% of incoming freshmen spent less than one hour a week (including 10% who spent NO time) talking with teachers outside of class during their last year of high school. Also notably, the percentage of Mason students who talked with teachers outside of class for less than one hour per week in high school has increased in every program since 2001. Especially among the Honors students, the percentage has increased from 46% in 2001 to 58% in 2003.

**Table 8. Student Use of Time during Last Year of High School**

During last year of high school spent less than one hour per week:	2001				2003				
	<i>Honors</i>	<i>NCC</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Mason General</i>	<i>Honors</i>	<i>NCC</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Mason General</i>	<i>Public Univ.</i>
<b>Socializing</b>	1%	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	1%	3%	2%
<b>Working for pay</b>	28%	21%	21%	27%	46%	29%	35%	36%	34%
<b>Exercise or sports</b>	18%	23%	18%	22%	21%	19%	17%	24%	15%
<b>Studying/doing homework</b>	14%	17%	13%	15%	5%	13%	19%	15%	15%
<b>Watching TV</b>	22%	18%	24%	21%	18%	19%	21%	21%	21%
<b>Partying</b>	38%	20%	29%	32%	49%	46%	37%	42%	38%
<b>Student clubs/groups</b>	24%	40%	38%	47%	34%	33%	38%	47%	41%
<b>Playing video/computer games</b>	56%	65%	64%	58%	55%	57%	58%	58%	60%
<b>Volunteer work</b>	42%	46%	53%	59%	42%	64%	47%	58%	52%
<b>Household duties</b>	46%	40%	41%	42%	38%	30%	46%	45%	44%
<b>Reading for pleasure</b>	46%	52%	53%	59%	43%	60%	48%	54%	52%
<b>Talking w. teachers outside of class</b>	46%	53%	50%	56%	57%	57%	52%	58%	55%
<b>Prayer/mediation</b>	75%	63%	74%	71%	69%	83%	70%	75%	72%

*In 2003, fewer Honor students worked for pay during high school than their counterparts. High percentages (13%-19%) of students in each program but Honors said they spent less than one hour per week studying/doing homework in high school.*

## V. College Motivations, Choices, and Decisions

Among a list of 13 motivations to go to college, the top five “very important” reasons for Mason students, regardless of their programs, are as follows (Table 9):

- To learn more about things that interest me (75% on average)
- To be able to make more money (70%)
- To be able to get a better job (68%)
- To get training for a specific career (67%), 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 2001.

In NCC, comparing the 2003 cohort with the 2001 cohort, there are large increases of students who go to college to “learn more about things that interest me” and who want to “get training for a specific job,” an increase of 8% and 10% respectively. And there is a significant drop in the percentage of students who go to college “to be able to make more money,” a decrease of 10%. In the Mason Topics Program, more students in the 2003 cohort go to college to “be able to make more money” and “to be able to get a better job,” an increase of 6% respectively.

**Table 9. Five Top Reasons to Go to College**

Top 5 reasons “very important” in deciding to go to college	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
To learn more about things that interest me	76%	69%	74%	75%	77%	77%	72%	75%	77%
To be able to make more money	66%	75%	66%	71%	69%	65%	72%	70%	72%
To get training for a specific career	64%	60%	70%	70%	61%	70%	67%	67%	70%
To be able to get a better job	67%	60%	64%	69%	70%	65%	70%	68%	72%
To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas	67%	59%	61%	63%	70%	59%	65%	61%	65%

*In 2003, for freshmen in all programs, the top reason that they considered “very important” for going to college was “to learn more about things that interest me.” (There was a tie for Mason Topics students with “to be able to make more money.”)*

In 2003 on average, 51% of incoming freshmen said Mason was their first choice school – a drop of 6% from 2001 (see Table 10). This percentage is also significantly lower than the average of public universities, which is 69%. Fifty-eight percent of Honors students said Mason was their first choice, the highest percentage among all the programs. In contrast, 28% of NCC students said Mason was their third or lower choice, higher than any other program.

**Table 10. College Choice**

Is this college your:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
First choice	60%	57%	47%	58%	58%	45%	53%	51%	69%
Second choice	29%	32%	33%	29%	26%	27%	35%	31%	21%
Third or lower choice	12%	12%	20%	13%	17%	28%	12%	18%	11%

*In each program, with the exception of Mason Topics, the percentage who said that Mason was their first choice was lower in 2003 than in 2001.*

More 2003 entering freshmen applied to more than one college for admission than the 2001 cohort (Table 11). The percentage of students who said they applied to no other institution than Mason has dropped in every program since 2001, especially in NCC which has a drop of 8%. In the Honors Program, there is an increase of 7% of students who applied to more than five institutions besides Mason.

**Table 11. Number of Colleges Student Applied for Admission**

Number of colleges other than Mason to which student applied for admission this year:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
None	13%	17%	13%	16%	9%	9%	11%	14%	21%
1-2	43%	29%	25%	33%	42%	28%	32%	29%	28%
3-4	34%	39%	40%	34%	31%	42%	34%	38%	28%
5+	11%	16%	23%	17%	18%	20%	22%	20%	23%

*In each program, fewer students are applying to only one school.*

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 reasons for Mason freshmen are listed in Table 12. At Mason, students from different programs rate these reasons differently. “Very good academic reputation” is the single most important reason for all Mason freshmen in both 2001 and 2003. On average, 44% of 2003 Mason freshmen selected this reason, 13% lower than the average of all public universities. In the previous CIRP surveys, “graduates get good jobs” is one of the top reasons. However, this year the result on this item was not reported due to suspected order effects. Instead, “a visit to the campus,” a new item, becomes the second most important reason for students in the Honors Program, NCC and Mason Topics. A good impression during campus visit carries a lot of weight in their enrollment decision.

For the general Mason freshmen, “low tuition” is slightly more important than “campus visit” and “being close to one’s home.” For the Honors students, “financial aid” is the third most important factor. For NCC students, the interdisciplinary nature of NCC program is very attractive. Mason Topic students think Mason’s reputation for social activities is a very important factor.

**Table 12. Top “Very Important” Reasons for Attending this Particular College**

Top reasons “very important” in deciding to attend this college**	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Very good academic reputation	49%	38%	44%	40%	47%	42%	48%	44%	57%
Low tuition	29%	28%	24%	26%	30%	(21%)	22%	27%	(24%)
Visit to campus*	--	--	--	--	40%	34%	33%	26%	32%
Wanted to live near home	20%	23%	25%	26%	(25%)	(19%)	(19%)	26%	(15%)
Good reputation for social activities	23%	28%	26%	23%	(20%)	24%	29%	25%	31%
Size of college is right	25%	24%	27%	19%	27%	24%	21%	(21%)	24%
Offered financial aid	22%	14%	17%	17%	33%	(15%)	(12%)	(18%)	25%
Special education programs	21%	17%	24%	13%	(23%)	27%	(18%)	(14%)	(19%)

\* New Item in 2003.

\*\* Reasons are listed in the order selected by “Mason General” students.

\*\*\* Percentage in parentheses indicates that item is not among the top “very important” reasons for a particular group of students.

*Across programs, “very good academic reputation” remains the top “very important” reason for selecting George Mason.*



On average, 56% of freshmen had visited Mason before they applied for admission and a total of 81% of all incoming freshmen had visited Mason before they made the decision to attend. The Honors students are more likely to visit campus before they applied for admission or before they made the enrollment decision than students in other programs.

**Table 13. Student First Visit to Campus, 2003**

Your first visit to this college was:	George Mason University				Public Univ.
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	
Before I applied	59%	52%	55%	56%	59%
After I applied but before I was accepted	13%	10%	12%	10%	10%
After I was accepted but before I decided to attend	21%	24%	11%	15%	15%
After I decided to attend	8%	14%	22%	20%	16%

Being close to one’s home is a special factor attractive to many Mason students. Over the years, Mason continuously attracts students from local areas – 26% of general Mason freshmen live within 10 miles and 39% 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 14. Distance between College and Student Home**

How many miles is college from your permanent home?	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
10 or less	21%	19%	21%	26%	33%	19%	22%	26%	9%
11-50	34%	39%	41%	41%	29%	42%	38%	39%	24%
51-100	11%	16%	6%	8%	7%	11%	9%	8%	18%
101-500	31%	22%	29%	22%	26%	23%	28%	23%	41%
Over 500	4%	5%	4%	3%	5%	5%	3%	5%	9%

*In 2003, by far, a higher percentage of Honors students (33%) live within 10 miles of campus than students in other programs.*

## VI. Probable Major Field of Study and Career

More students in the Honors Program and Mason Topics have chosen their major, compared with students in NCC and the general programs. Eleven percent of general Mason freshmen haven't chosen their major field of study, 3% higher than the students in public universities. At Mason (as shown in Table 15), business, social science, arts and humanities are the most popular fields of study; while in public universities nationwide, professional field, business and engineering are the most popular choices. Tables 16 A-D list the top preferred majors of students from different programs.

**Table 15. Student's Probable Field of Study**

General Fields of Study*:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Business	16%	25%	22%	19%	12%	16%	23%	18%	15%
Social Science	15%	16%	16%	12%	24%	16%	22%	14%	9%
Arts and Humanities	18%	9%	18%	14%	13%	10%	11%	12%	10%
Other Fields	16%	9%	17%	13%	5%	13%	8%	11%	7%
Professional	3%	3%	4%	7%	4%	10%	6%	10%	17%
Engineering	11%	5%	4%	10%	14%	3%	10%	9%	14%
Biological Science	5%	2%	4%	6%	12%	5%	7%	6%	9%
Technical	5%	7%	3%	4%	6%	0	2%	4%	2%
Education	2%	5%	2%	2%	1%	16%	2%	3%	5%
Physical Science	0	0	1%	2%	3%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Undecided	9%	19%	8%	11%	6%	10%	7%	11%	8%

\*The 2001 survey did not include the major "Computer Engineering" and it grouped "Computer Science" as "Other Fields." The 2003 survey distinguished "computer science" and "computer engineering". It added "Computer Engineering" to the "Engineering" category, but still kept "Computer Science" under the "Other Fields" category.

*The most popular major, in 2003, among Honors, Mason Topics and general Mason students is political science; for NCC students, in 2003, it is Elementary Education.*

Nationwide in public universities, only 3.3% of the 2003 incoming freshmen would probably major in political science. However, in Mason, political science is the most popular major of the Honors students (15.4%), Mason Topics students (16.2%), and the general freshmen (7.4%). In these programs, there is a significant increase in the percentage of students who are interested in political science from 2001 to 2003. The Honors students are more likely to major in biology, engineering and information technology, a total of 26.9%. Business majors, such as management, accounting and marketing are very popular among Mason Topics students, a total of 16.8%. The choice of major among NCC students is diverse, including several educational, business, professional and social science fields. The most popular major of NCC students is elementary education – 9.5%. This figure is eight times that of the Mason average and four times that of the public university average. For the students in all other programs, biology, management and psychology are popular but the percentages are low.

**Table 16-A: Most Popular Majors of the Honors Students**

2001		2003	
1	Political Science: 9.0%	1	Political Science: 15.4%
2	Other Engineering: 8.1%	2	General Biology: 10.3%
3	Management: 7.2%	3	Computer Engineering: 6.4%
4	Computer Science: 6.3%	4	Electrical or Electronic Engineering: 5.1%
4	Communication: 6.3%	4	Data Processing or Computer Programming: 5.1%
4	English: 6.3%		

**Table 16-B: Most Popular Majors of the NCC Students**

2001		2003	
1	Management: 9.1%	1	Elementary Education: 9.5%
1	Psychology: 9.1%	2	Marketing: 7.9%
3	Data Processing or Computer Programming: 6.4%	3	Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinarian: 4.8%
4	Marketing: 5.5%	3	Political Science: 4.8%
		3	Communications: 4.8%

**Table 16-C: Most Popular Majors of the Mason Topics Students**

2001		2003	
1	Political Science: 7.6%	1	Political Science: 16.2%
2	Psychology: 7%	2	Management: 6.6%
2	Communication: 7%	3	General Biology: 5.4%
4	Computer Science: 6.5%	3	Accounting: 5.4%
5	Marketing: 5.9%	5	Marketing: 4.8%

**Table 16-D: Most Popular Majors of the Students from All Other Programs**

2001		2003	
1	Computer Science: 6.5%	1	Political Science: 7.4%
2	Management: 6.2%	2	General Biology: 5.8%
3	General Biology: 5.4%	3	Management: 5.0%
4	Psychology: 5.3%	4	Psychology: 4.9%
5	Communication: 4.6%		

Among the additional questions provided by the Office of Institutional Assessment at Mason, students were asked to specify the reasons why they have chosen or have NOT chosen their major field of study. For those who have chosen their major field of study, more than 96% “strongly agree” or “agree” that their decision was influenced by their own personal interest. The potential for employment is the second important reason. On average, only 42% of Mason freshmen agree that their decision was influenced by their parents or a family member.

**Table 17. Reasons for Choosing a Particular Major Field of Study**

Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:	Honors		NCC		Mason Topics		Mason General	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
I was influenced to choose my major by the potential for employment.	41%	41%	33%	35%	38%	41%	35%	44%
I was influenced to choose my major by my parents or a family member.	9%	33%	14%	35%	15%	32%	13%	27%
I was influenced to choose my major by my own personal interest.	82%	15%	75%	21%	75%	22%	76%	20%

For those who haven’t chosen their major, on average 59% either “strongly agree” or “agree” that they are unsure about the competencies and qualifications necessary to do well in the majors in which they are interested. Forty-six percent of those undecided don’t know enough about the various majors to make a decision and 30% really have no idea about what major to choose.

**Table 18. Reasons for Not having Chosen a Major Field of Study**

Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:	Honors		NCC		Mason Topics		All Others	
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree
I am unsure about the competencies and qualifications necessary to do well in the majors in which I am interested in.	12%	36%	33%	26%	14%	39%	17%	45%
I don't know enough about the various majors to make a decision.	16%	20%	21%	35%	13%	26%	15%	32%
I really have no idea about what major to choose.	12%	23%	12%	28%	12%	16%	14%	15%

Students were also asked to select their probable career from a list of 46 careers. Approximately 15% of Mason freshmen haven't decided their career and another 10% did not find their probable career in the list. For the rest of the students, the most popular careers are listed in Table 19. A student's choice of career reflects his/her choice of major. For instance, Honors students are more likely to have a career in engineering or IT field. A higher percentage of NCC students want to become a school teacher or administrator – higher than the Mason average and public university average. A higher percentage of Mason Topics students plan to seek a career as a lawyer or judge. In the other Mason programs, the most popular career is business executive.

**Table 19. Five Most Popular Careers**

The Most Popular Career	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	All Others	Honors	NCC	Topics	All Others	Public Univ.
<b>Business executive</b>	8%	13%	8%	9%	(3%)*	5%	7%	8%	7%
<b>Computer programmer or analyst</b>	11%	(3%)	8%	10%	8%	3%	4%	6%	(3%)
<b>Engineer</b>	9%	6%	(2%)	7%	11%	(0)	7%	5%	11%
<b>Lawyer or judge</b>	6%	5%	6%	6%	7%	7%	11%	5%	4%
<b>Physician</b>	(4%)	(2%)	(1%)	4%	(5%)	(0%)	(4%)	4%	8%
<b>Foreign service working (diplomat)</b>	(2%)	(0)	3%	(1%)	7%	(2%)	(4%)	(2%)	(1%)
<b>Teacher or administrator (secondary)</b>	(5%)	4%	(1%)	(3%)	7%	7%	(3%)	(2%)	(3%)
<b>Teacher or administrator (elementary)</b>	(0)	4%	(1%)	(1%)	(0)	7%	(1%)	(2%)	(3%)
<b>Policymaker/Government</b>	7%	(1%)	3%	(2%)	(5%)	(2%)	5%	(3%)	(1%)
<b>Nurse</b>	(1%)	(0)	(2%)	(3%)	(1%)	(0)	(3%)	(4%)	3%
<b>Undecided</b>	18%	24%	13%	18%	12%	10%	16%	16%	15%

*\*( ) indicates that the career is not among the five most popular careers of a particular group of students.*

## VII. Educational Aspirations and Plans

As Table 20 and Table 21 show, almost every 2003 freshman at Mason intends to obtain at least a bachelor's degree at a post-secondary institution. However, 4% of the Honors students and 3% of the Mason Topics and NCC students do not intend to seek any academic degree from Mason. Seventy-nine percent of NCC students intend to earn a bachelor's degree from Mason, the highest percentage among all the Mason programs. In contrast, only 64% of Honors students share the same goal, the lowest among all the Mason programs. As high as 51% of Mason Topics students would like to study for a master's degree, but only 14% of them plan to obtain it from Mason. Even fewer freshmen would consider enrolling in a doctoral program at Mason. For instance, as many as 26% of the Honors students intend to get a doctoral degree, but only 2% of them will probably get it from Mason. Since Mason has no medical school, almost all the students who want to become doctors (6.6% on average) 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 apply to Mason's law school.

**Table 20. Highest Academic Degree Intend to Obtain at ANY College**

	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
None	1%	1%	2%	0.6%	0	0	0	0.5%	6%
Vocational certificate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.1%
Associate	0	1%	0	0.1%	0	0	0	0	0.3%
Bachelor's degree	24%	21%	22%	26%	11%	23%	18%	24%	22%
Master's degree	38%	51%	42%	43%	45%	46%	51%	45%	39%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	25%	17%	17%	18%	26%	14%	14%	16%	19%
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.	5%	3%	4%	5%	12%	8%	6%	6%	12%
LL.B. or J.D. (Law)	7%	7%	10%	6%	6%	10%	10%	8%	5%
Other	0	0	3%	0.6%	0	0	1%	0.8%	2%

**Table 21. Highest Academic Degree Intend to Obtain at THIS College**

	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
None	1%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%	3%	1%	1%
Vocational certificate	0	0	0	0.3%	0	0	0	0.4%	0.4%
Associate	1%	2%	1%	0.6%	0	0	1%	0.7%	1%
Bachelor's degree	62%	69%	66%	71%	64%	79%	71%	72%	65%
Master's degree	31%	23%	26%	22%	28%	13%	14%	18%	22%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	2%	5%	1%	3%	2%	3%	4%	3%	5%
M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.	1%	0	1%	0.2%	0	0	1%	0	4%
LL.B. or J.D. (Law)	1%	0	1%	0.6%	2%	3%	5%	3%	1%
Other	0	0	3%	0.5%	0	0	1%	2%	1%

*32% of Honors students, a higher percentage than in any other program, plan to earn an advanced degree from Mason. Honors students (62%) are considerably more likely than their counterparts to be "satisfied with your college."*

Mason students are very optimistic about their expectations of getting a bachelor's degree – over 84% (on average) think the chance is "very good" (see Table 22). The Honors students are the most confident about getting a bachelor's degree (92% feel the chance is "very good"), making at least a 'B' average (81%), and being satisfied with Mason (62%). They are less likely to say that they will change their major as compared with their counterparts at Mason. More NCC students say they will change majors (17%) and work full-time while attending college (13%). On average, 12% of Mason freshmen consider it very likely that they will transfer to another college, 7% higher than the average of public universities! The transfer intention is the highest among the students enrolled in the general programs of Mason

(13%) and it has risen by 4% since 2001. Few Mason students think they are “very likely” to drop out of college. More 2003 incoming freshmen think they will be satisfied with Mason than the 2001 cohort, an increase of 8% on average.

**Table 22. College Academic Plans**

Students estimates chances are “very good” that they will:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Get a bachelor’s degree	86%	72%	83%	75%	92%	88%	85%	82%	80%
Make at least a B average	71%	44%	50%	51%	81%	57%	56%	55%	61%
Participate in study abroad*	--	--	--	--	29%	20%	21%	18%	22%
Change majors	16%	18%	12%	13%	5%	17%	13%	14%	16%
Change career choice	13%	18%	12%	11%	12%	12%	13%	11%	15%
Transfer to another college	7%	11%	9%	9%	9%	10%	9%	13%	5%
Work fulltime while attending college	5%	6%	6%	6%	5%	13%	4%	8%	5%
Drop out of college**	2%	3%	4%	2%	0	2%	1%	1%	1%
Be satisfied with your college	44%	34%	42%	39%	62%	50%	45%	47%	52%

\* Not included in 2001 survey.

\*\*Including both “drop out temporarily” and “drop out permanently” in 2001 survey. The 2003 survey did not distinguish these two.

Nearly half (47%) of NCC students think it “very likely” that they will need to “get a job to help pay college expenses.” For Honors and Mason Topics, the percentages are 36% and 39% respectively.

On average, 73% of Mason freshmen think they are very likely to socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group, 7% higher than the public universities nationwide. Many Honors students expect to develop close friendships with other students (82%), to participate in student clubs/groups (64%), and to participate in student government (16%) – the figures are much higher than the Mason average and the public university average. More NCC students expect to get a job to help pay college expenses (47%), to communicate regularly with professors (48%), to join a fraternity/sorority (18%), and to seek personal counseling (12%). The general Mason students are the least likely to communicate regularly with professors, and to participate in volunteer/community service work, student clubs/groups and government.

**Table 23. Plans for Social Life in College**

Students estimate chances are “very good” that they will:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group	80%	75%	73%	74%	82%	82%	74%	71%	66%
Develop close friendships with other students	71%	70%	66%	61%	83%	72%	77%	70%	73%
Participate in student clubs/groups	47%	39%	41%	38%	64%	57%	50%	39%	42%
Get a job to help pay college expenses	46%	42%	42%	40%	36%	47%	39%	43%	45%
Communicate regularly with professors	39%	32%	38%	27%	43%	48%	32%	28%	32%
Participate in volunteer/community service work	20%	17%	14%	15%	35%	35%	28%	19%	23%
Strengthen religious beliefs/convictions*	--	--	--	--	27%	25%	25%	20%	22%
Join fraternity/sorority	9%	14%	11%	10%	9%	18%	12%	10%	11%
Play varsity/intercollegiate athletics	7%	8%	7%	10%	12%	12%	10%	10%	10%
Participate in student protests or demonstrations	9%	9%	8%	6%	12%	12%	14%	7%	6%
Participate in student government	9%	7%	9%	7%	16%	14%	8%	6%	7%
Seek personal counseling	6%	6%	6%	5%	4%	12%	5%	7%	8%

\* Not included in the 2001 survey.

As Table 24 shows, about 40% of Mason freshmen do not have any concerns about how to finance college. However, 14% of NCC students and 13% of general Mason freshmen have major concerns, twice as high as Honors students. That partially explains why more NCC students think it is very likely that they will work full-time while attending college. Almost half of the Honors students are confident that they will have sufficient funds, an increase of 8% over 2001. Fifty-seven percent of Mason Topics freshmen think they will probably have enough funds, an increase of 9% over 2001.

**Table 24. Concerns about Financing College**

Amount of concern you have about financing college:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
None, confident I will have sufficient funds	41%	41%	39%	40%	49%	40%	33%	40%	34%
Some, but I probably will have enough funds	53%	45%	48%	50%	45%	46%	57%	47%	53%
Major, not sure I will have enough funds to complete college	6%	14%	14%	10%	7%	14%	10%	13%	13%

More and more Mason freshmen plan to live on campus. In 2003 an all time high of 62% (on average) of freshmen plan to do so. Yet, this figure is still 12% lower than the average of public universities. Thirty-six percent of students plan to live with family or relatives, 25% higher than the average of all public universities. Compared with the 2001 cohort, there is a 12% increase of 2003 NCC freshmen who plan to live on campus and there is a consequent 13% decline of those who plan to live with family/relatives.

**Table 25. Living Plans of Mason Freshmen**

Where you plan to live during the fall term:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
With family/relatives	35%	36%	33%	41%	36%	23%	33%	38%	11%
Private home, apartment, room	2%	1%	1%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%
College dorm/ campus housing	63%	63%	65%	57%	60%	75%	65%	60%	84%
Fraternity/Sorority	0	0	0	0.2%	1%	0	0	0	1%

*NCC Freshmen (75%) are far more likely to live on campus than students in any other freshman program.*

## VIII. Student Self-Perceptions and Personal Objectives

The self-perceptions of Mason freshmen do not change drastically from 2001 to 2003, as presented in Table 26. The 2003 Honors students have a more positive self-perception than the students in other programs at Mason. As high as 95% of them think they are above average in academic ability, 20% higher than students in any other program. They also give themselves high ratings on drive to achieve, math ability, public speaking ability, self-confidence, and writing ability. Compared with the 2001 Honors students, the 2003 cohort rate themselves more positively in several aspects, such as academic ability, leadership ability, math ability, physical health, public speaking ability, self-confidence and writing ability. The 2003 cohort rates itself lower in computer skills and creativity than the 2001 cohort. To some extent, this result may suggest that the Honors Program has enrolled more capable students in 2003, or at least students with a higher sense of self-regard.

The 2003 NCC students rate themselves high in artistic ability, creativity, leadership ability, and risk-taking. However, only 24% of NCC students rate their math ability above average – the lowest figure among all the Mason programs and a decrease of 11% compared with the 2001 figure. The 2003 Mason Topics students rate themselves more positively than their counterparts in 2001 in the following areas: academic ability, artistic ability, computer skills, and creativity. However, in other areas such as math ability, public speaking ability and self-confidence (social), there is a decline of at least 5% in the 2003 rating.

**Table 26. Student Self-Perceptions**

Student rated self above average or highest 10% as compared with the average person of the same age:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Academic Ability	84%	58%	68%	64%	95%	64%	73%	69%	76%
Artistic Ability	36%	30%	33%	32%	34%	41%	39%	33%	30%
Computer Skills	52%	37%	37%	46%	46%	44%	49%	50%	41%
Creativity	69%	61%	62%	59%	61%	67%	66%	56%	57%
Drive to Achieve	77%	55%	68%	66%	73%	62%	67%	66%	73%
Emotional Health	53%	53%	55%	54%	53%	44%	53%	53%	56%
Leadership Ability	53%	65%	53%	56%	62%	70%	54%	54%	61%
Math Ability	52%	35%	43%	39%	67%	24%	33%	42%	51%
Persistence	64%	56%	65%	58%	62%	56%	65%	62%	65%
Physical Health	41%	50%	50%	50%	49%	43%	48%	54%	57%
Public Speaking Ability	34%	44%	41%	34%	49%	38%	36%	34%	36%
Risk-Taking	--	--	--	--	36%	43%	43%	42%	43%
Self-Confidence (intellectual)	65%	59%	60%	56%	82%	62%	58%	58%	62%
Self-Confidence (social)	47%	61%	52%	52%	52%	43%	46%	50%	50%
Writing Ability	60%	41%	45%	45%	68%	40%	48%	47%	47%

Given a list of abilities and asked to rate themselves, the following percentages of students rated themselves “above average” or in the “highest 10%” of others their age:

- Honors students (95%) in academic ability
- Honors students (82%) in intellectual self-confidence
- NCC students (70%) in leadership ability
- NCC (43%), Mason Topics (43%), and general Mason (42%) students in risk-taking
- NCC (67%) and Mason Topics (66%) students in creativity

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 27 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 during the last year of high school. In the area of under-age drinking, on average, 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. The Honors students are the least likely to report underage drinking behaviors and they are the most likely to have performed voluntary work, tutored other students, played a musical instrument, visited an art gallery/museum and have been a guest in a teacher’s home. On average, one out of three Mason freshmen had overslept and missed class or an appointment. But among NCC students, 51% of them said they had overslept and missed a class or an appointment. Fifty-two percent of Mason Topics students had participated in organized demonstrations, much higher than the university average and public university average.

**Table 27. Activities EVER Engaged during Last Year of High School\***

Frequent or occasional activities in high school	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Attended a religious service	84%	80%	79%	79%	81%	76%	80%	74%	79%
Came late to class	70%	82%	75%	75%	56%	71%	64%	64%	63%
Drank beer	35%	49%	42%	40%	28%	32%	37%	39%	46%
Drank wine or liquor	45%	58%	50%	49%	37%	40%	46%	45%	52%
Overslept & missed class/appt.	37%	46%	43%	41%	27%	51%	29%	35%	32%
Participated in organized demonstrations	43%	48%	50%	47%	33%	38%	52%	44%	43%
Performed volunteer work	90%	78%	83%	81%	90%	87%	84%	80%	84%
Played a musical instrument	52%	38%	40%	38%	58%	46%	44%	42%	44%
Studied with other students	87%	85%	86%	84%	90%	86%	90%	82%	88%
Tutored another student	74%	51%	56%	54%	78%	57%	53%	55%	58%
Visited an art gallery/museum	77%	68%	63%	61%	74%	57%	70%	59%	57%
Was a guest in a teacher’s home	23%	23%	22%	19%	24%	18%	19%	16%	24%

\* Percentage responding “frequently” or “occasionally”

Table 28 presents the activities in which students had frequently engaged during the last year of high school. Overall, 81% of Mason freshmen frequently “socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group” – 13% higher than the national average. The Honors students are most likely to have frequently “discussed politics” or “discussed religion” and are the least likely to have “asked a teacher for advice after class,” “felt depressed,” “felt bored in class” and “smoked cigarettes.” Forty-eight percent of NCC students frequently “asked a teacher for advice after class,” twice as high as the figure of the Honors students and the public university average. As high as 37% of NCC students frequently “felt overwhelmed by all I had to do” and 48% of them “felt bored in class.”

**Table 28. Activities FREQUENTLY Engaged during Last Year of High School**

Frequent or occasional activities in high school	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Asked a teacher for advice after class	33%	28%	32%	25%	21%	48%	34%	24%	23%
Discussed politics	38%	28%	33%	24%	53%	30%	36%	31%	23%
Discussed religion	34%	28%	29%	27%	39%	29%	34%	26%	29%
Felt depressed	8%	6%	5%	9%	5%	19%	10%	9%	7%
Felt overwhelmed by all I had to do	27%	35%	28%	28%	30%	37%	31%	27%	26%
Smoked cigarettes	6%	9%	7%	10%	3%	7%	5%	6%	6%
Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group	91%	87%	86%	85%	79%	81%	85%	81%	68%
Voted in student election	30%	29%	30%	25%	31%	33%	28%	24%	22%
Was bored in class	49%	46%	47%	49%	38%	48%	43%	45%	42%

\* 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 29 lists those personal objectives shared by more than 25% of Mason students. Students enrolled in different programs at Mason put different weight on these personal objectives. For instance, the objectives of “becoming an authority in field,” “helping others who are in difficulty,” “recognition from colleagues for contribution to my special field,” “keeping up to date with political affairs,” “influencing social values” and “participating in a community action program” are shared by more Mason Topics students than the students enrolled in other programs. “Becoming a community leader” carries more weight to NCC and Mason Topics students than the Honors students. “Being very well off financially” is the most important objective to freshmen in all other Mason programs, but it carries much less weight for the Honors students.

**Table 29. Student Personal Objectives**

Objectives considered to be “essential” or “very important”*:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Being very well off financially	69%	78%	80%	77%	61%	77%	73%	80%	76%
Raising a family	74%	59%	66%	66%	66%	67%	70%	69%	75%
Becoming an authority in field	67%	62%	58%	62%	65%	60%	73%	64%	61%
Helping others who are in difficulty	60%	57%	57%	61%	68%	66%	73%	64%	63%
Recognition from colleagues for contribution to my special field	63%	51%	59%	53%	52%	50%	61%	58%	54%
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures **	--	--	--	--	61%	53%	58%	50%	44%
Becoming successful in my own business	41%	43%	44%	45%	21%	34%	41%	43%	41%
Keeping up to date with political affairs	39%	38%	37%	34%	39%	39%	52%	40%	35%
Having administrative responsibility for the work of others	43%	36%	39%	39%	43%	47%	48%	39%	40%
Influencing social values	44%	43%	41%	38%	35%	42%	47%	38%	36%
Develop a meaningful philosophy of life	54%	50%	39%	41%	49%	43%	47%	35%	39%
Integrating spirituality into my life	40%	43%	34%	39%	35%	38%	40%	35%	38%
Helping to promote racial understanding	48%	45%	38%	35%	40%	39%	42%	34%	30%
Becoming a community leader	33%	38%	31%	28%	29%	39%	38%	28%	32%
Influencing political structure	25%	24%	25%	21%	22%	26%	29%	25%	20%
Participating in a community action program	22%	28%	26%	22%	21%	26%	34%	20%	22%

\*ONLY including the personal objects shared by at least 25% of Mason freshmen.

\*\* New item in the 2003 survey.

The following percentages of students said these personal objectives were “essential” or “very important:”

- General Mason students (80%) said “being very well off financially.”
- Mason Topics students (52%) said “keeping up to date with political affairs.”
- Mason Topics students (34%) said “participating in a community action program.”
- Honors students (61%) said “improving my understanding of other countries and cultures.”
- 61% of Honors students said “to be at least moderately fluent” in another language.
- NCC students (39%) and Mason Topics students (38%) said “becoming a community leader.”

## IX. Student Political Views

Almost half of the Mason freshmen take a “middle of the road” standing politically, as shown in Table 30. Generally, more students identify themselves as “liberal” than “conservative.” Table 31 highlights student opinions toward political issues of the nation. The 2003 freshmen have different views than their 2001 counterparts on several issues, such as legal marital status of same-sex couples, racist/sexist speech on campus, affirmative action in college admissions, and death penalty.

**Table 30. Student Political Standing**

Political Views:	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
Far left	4%	1%	4%	3%	5%	2%	3%	3%	3%
Liberal	38%	33%	29%	28%	31%	25%	32%	28%	25%
Middle-of-the-road	43%	49%	50%	52%	43%	54%	39%	48%	50%
Conservative	16%	17%	15%	15%	19%	18%	23%	21%	21%
Far right	0	0	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	2%	1%

A plurality of students in each program considers itself “middle-of-the-road” politically, and more students in each program consider themselves “liberal” rather than “conservative.”

**Table 31. Student Political Views**

Students agree “strongly” or “somewhat”	2001				2003				
	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Honors	NCC	Topics	Mason General	Public Univ.
The federal government should do more to control the sale of handguns	83%	83%	83%	81%	71%	80%	75%	77%	76%
Same-sex couples should have the right to legal marital status	69%	62%	63%	56%	63%	79%	61%	66%	61%
Abortion should be legal	60%	61%	65%	61%	62%	78%	58%	62%	62%
There is too much concern in the courts for the rights of criminals	61%	61%	64%	63%	53%	45%	63%	61%	62%
Colleges should prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus	66%	68%	70%	67%	61%	54%	55%	60%	57%
Affirmative action in college admissions should be abolished	51%	49%	54%	47%	65%	56%	52%	58%	56%
Wealthy people should pay a larger share of taxes than they do now	54%	49%	49%	50%	58%	58%	62%	51%	53%
Federally military spending should be increased*	--	--	--	--	35%	47%	51%	42%	38%
Marijuana should be legalized	32%	45%	34%	37%	30%	38%	37%	37%	40%
People should not obey laws which violate their personal values*	--	--	--	--	35%	40%	32%	33%	34%
Realistically, an individual can do little to bring about changes in our society	24%	28%	23%	29%	20%	24%	29%	30%	28%
Death penalty should be abolished	32%	42%	33%	32%	46%	35%	28%	25%	32%
Racial discrimination is no longer a major problem in America	17%	19%	22%	25%	22%	26%	24%	24%	23%
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	16%	21%	20%	27%	22%	18%	20%	22%	25%
The activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	17%	24%	21%	25%	16%	15%	20%	21%	20%

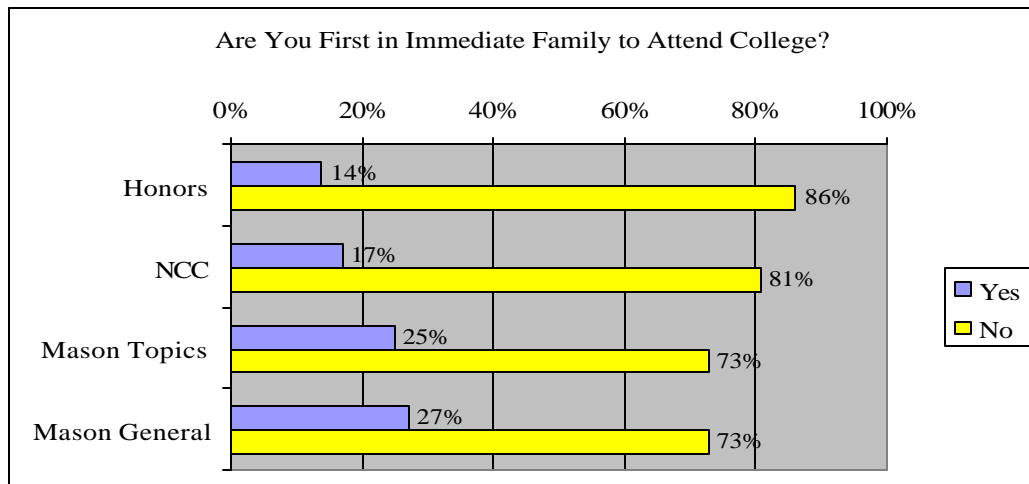
\*New item in 2003.

## X. Questions Asked only of George Mason Students

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

On average, 25% of Mason freshmen are the first in their immediate family to attend college. The percentage of first-generation students is the lowest in the Honors Program, followed by NCC, and the highest in the general Mason programs. Over half of the incoming students think it is “essential” or “very important” for them to attend a college with a multi-ethnic student body.

**Figure 2. First Generation Students**



25% of all Mason freshmen are the first in their immediate family to attend college. This is particularly true for general Mason students (27%) and Mason Topics students (25%).

**Table 32. Diversity Expectations**

It is important to me to attend a college with a multi-ethnic student body:	Honors	NCC	Mason Topics	Mason General
Essential	31%	33%	29%	24%
Very important	28%	22%	34%	28%
Somewhat important	31%	34%	27%	34%
Not important	9%	9%	9%	14%

Students in NCC (33%), Honors (31%) and Mason Topics (29%) are more likely than general Mason students (24%) to say that it is “essential” to attend a “college with a multi-ethnic student body.”

Over 50% of incoming freshmen 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. Overall, the Honors students plan to spend more time studying than do students from other programs. Twenty-seven percent of them are prepared to spend one and a half hours and 19% plan to spend two hours or more studying for each hour spent in class. In contrast, 30% of NCC students expect to study half hour or less for each hour spent in class.

Substantial numbers of students think they will need to spend 1/2 hour or less of study time for each hour of class/labs—30% of NCC students, 25% of Mason Topics students, 23% of general Mason students and 17% of Honors students.

**Table 33. Expected Study Time**

Approximately, how much time do you expect to spend studying during your first year at Mason	Honors	NCC	Mason Topics	Mason General
Less than half hour for each hour spent in class or labs	0	5%	3%	2%
Half hour for each hour spent in class or labs	17%	25%	22%	21%
One hour for each hour spent in class or labs	37%	34%	34%	38%
One and a half hours for each hour spent in class or labs	27%	14%	21%	18%
Two hours or more for each hour spent in class or labs	19%	22%	22%	21%

Mason Freshmen also expect to have opportunities to interact with faculty out of class. The students from the Honors program and NCC expressed strong expectations to interact with faculty outside of class. However, the students in general Mason programs are the least likely to think it is important for them to talk with professors outside of class.

**Table 34. Student-Faculty Interaction Expectations**

Student-Faculty Interaction expectations (“strongly agree”):	Honors	NCC	Mason Topics	Mason General
I expect to talk to professors outside of class.	36%	42%	31%	28%
Talking with professors outside of class is important to me.	49%	49%	46%	39%

*Nearly half of all Mason freshmen say that they “strongly agree” that “talking with professors outside of class is important.” Honors students (49%), NCC students (49%) and Mason Topics students (46%) are more likely to say this than general Mason students (39%).*

Seventy-eight percent of Honors students expect professors to contact them outside of class at least a few times during a semester – that figure is much higher than for any other program. The majority of freshmen expect to meet with their academic advisors at least a few times during a semester. However, 10% of NCC and Mason Topics students, as well as 7% of general Mason freshmen, do not expect professors to contact them outside of class.

**Table 35. Expected Frequency of Interaction with Faculty**

During my first semester, I expect...	Honors	NCC	Mason Topics	Mason General
<b>professors will contact me outside of class</b>				
Weekly	22%	21%	15%	15%
A few times during semester	56%	38%	48%	47%
Once	12%	13%	17%	16%
Never	1%	10%	10%	7%
Don’t know	9%	19%	10%	15%
<b>to meet with academic advisor</b>				
Weekly	12%	16%	15%	14%
A few times during semester	65%	71%	70%	68%
Once	17%	6%	13%	10%
Never	1%	2%	0.6%	1%
Don’t know	5%	5%	2%	7%

*Well over half of the students in each program expect professors to contact them outside of class “a few times during the semester” and over three-fourths expect to meet with an academic advisor at least “a few times during the semester.”*

On average, 23% of Mason freshmen feel it is essential for them to be at least moderately fluent in a language other than their native language. The Honors students are the most interested in learning a foreign language and NCC students are the least interested. Students across programs alike expect to increase their technology skills and expect their professors to use technology in class or include technology in assignments. More than 90% of Mason freshmen “very often” or “often” used a word processor to format and edit text. While in high school, a combination of 10% of students had

“never” or had “once” created an electronic presentation. Students across campus use email or Instant Messaging to communicate with others on at least a “weekly” basis.

**Table 36. Foreign Language Expectation of Mason Freshmen**

<b>It is important to me to be at least moderately fluent in a language other than my native language:</b>	<b>Honors</b>	<b>NCC</b>	<b>Mason Topics</b>	<b>Mason General</b>
<b>Essential</b>	31%	17%	24%	23%
<b>Very important</b>	30%	20%	21%	18%
<b>Somewhat important</b>	18%	38%	38%	35%
<b>Not important</b>	21%	25%	17%	24%

**Table 37. Technology Expectations of Mason Freshmen**

<b>Indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:</b>	<b>Honors</b>		<b>NCC</b>		<b>Mason Topics</b>		<b>Mason General</b>	
	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>I want to increase my technology skills.</b>	36%	53%	30%	52%	40%	51%	40%	47%
<b>I expect professors to use technology as part of class.</b>	41%	56%	28%	61%	36%	56%	35%	54%
<b>I expect technology to be included in assignments in most courses.</b>	31%	55%	25%	63%	24%	60%	26%	54%

*At least 80% of students in each program “agree” or “strongly agree” that they expect “technology to be included in assignments in most courses.”*

**Table 38. Student Basic Computer Skills**

<b>Student Use of Technology</b>	<b>Honors</b>	<b>NCC</b>	<b>Mason Topics</b>	<b>Mason General</b>
<b>Used word processor to format and edit text</b>				
<b>Very Often</b>	91%	77%	78%	78%
<b>Often</b>	5%	21%	14%	16%
<b>A Few Times</b>	1%	2%	7%	4%
<b>Once</b>	1%	0%	1%	0%
<b>Never</b>	1%	0%	1%	1%
<b>Used software to create an electronic presentation</b>				
<b>Very Often</b>	41%	45%	36%	37%
<b>Often</b>	21%	16%	25%	30%
<b>A Few Times</b>	24%	27%	29%	22%
<b>Once</b>	8%	7%	5%	6%
<b>Never</b>	5%	5%	5%	6%
<b>Use email/Instant Messaging to communicate with others</b>				
<b>Daily</b>	71%	74%	73%	77%
<b>Weekly</b>	25%	21%	23%	19%
<b>Monthly</b>	1%	3%	4%	2%
<b>Yearly</b>	1%	0	1%	1%
<b>Never</b>	1%	2%	0	1%

## Notes



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