



# Graduating Senior Survey Report

**2004-2005**

*Graduates from Summer 2004,  
Fall 2004, and Spring 2005*



**Office of Institutional  
Assessment**

**June 2006**

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# *I. Highlights and Introduction*

## **1. Survey Highlights**

### **Satisfaction at Mason – All Respondents**

- Nearly all (90%) students are satisfied or very satisfied with their overall Mason experience; 77% are satisfied or very satisfied with their sense of belonging at Mason. It should be noted that the majority of these students are “satisfied” rather than “very satisfied.”
- Transfer students expressed a higher level of satisfaction with academic courses, opportunities to improve writing, campus intellectual life and advising in the major than their native peers did. Native students are more satisfied with opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds than transfer students.
- Performance gaps (the differences between student satisfaction ratings and the corresponding importance ratings) have been increasing since 2003 in the following areas: advising in the major, academic courses, education in the major and education in general. These increasing gaps are caused largely by the substantial increase in student expectations over the past three years.

### **Experiences in Synthesis Courses – All Respondents**

Over 50% of students selected “very often” for the following characteristics of synthesis courses they have taken:

- This course required me to think critically,
- This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships, and,
- This course was intellectually challenging.

### **Civic Engagement – All Respondents**

- 89% of Mason seniors are currently registered to vote. Female, white American, older students and in-state students are more likely to be registered.
- Among Mason seniors who are U.S. citizens and who are currently registered to vote, nearly half “always” vote in elections, over one third vote “sometimes,” and 14% vote “rarely” or “never.” Male students vote as often as female students; in-state students vote as often as out-of-state students. Older students and transfer students vote more often than their counterparts.

### **Educational Outcomes – Transfer Students Only**

Over 50% of transfer students think Mason has contributed “very much” to their growth in the following areas:

- Critical thinking and analysis (62%),
- Written communication (62%), and
- Oral communication (54%).

### **Satisfaction with Transfer Experiences – Transfer Students Only**

- The top three reasons for transferring to Mason rather than another institution are: location – close to home, availability of academic programs in which students were interested, and low tuition.
- Most transfer students (92%) are satisfied or very satisfied with the admissions process at Mason; 85% expressed satisfaction with the University Orientation Program.
- Most transfer students (93%) were satisfied with their adjustment to the environment at Mason, including satisfaction with their overall academic performance (94%). Social involvement with other students received the lowest rating among all the self-transition items (82%) and the highest dissatisfaction rating (18%).
- Nearly half of transfer students reported no difficulty in transitioning to Mason; the other half had academic, financial, and/or some kind of social difficulty.
- 41% of transfer students found other students at Mason particularly helpful to them in adjusting to life at Mason and 39% said faculty were helpful. More than one fourth said no one helped them in transitioning to Mason.

## **2. Implications and Recommendations**

### **For ALL Students:**

1. **Student Expectations and Satisfaction:** Performance gaps between the importance students give to various educational experiences and their corresponding satisfaction are increasing, although only “advising in the major” is approaching a “large” gap. **Advising** in the major remains a difficult challenge for Mason and improvements are clearly needed.
2. **Synthesis:** Synthesis courses seem to be achieving important student outcomes, particularly in **critical thinking**. They also appear to be challenging and interesting to students. Fewer students feel that their oral and written communication skills were improved. They may feel that they already were highly skilled in these areas or their courses did not require challenging oral and written skills. In any case, it is important to find out what is being required of students in synthesis courses.
3. **Civic Engagement:** While the vast majority of Mason students are registered to vote, actual voting varies by ethnicity and age. While civic engagement is more than voting, voting is nonetheless a basic indicator of civic responsibility. Getting all students to vote should be vigorously encouraged.
4. **Personal Growth:** Students generally do not think Mason contributes much to their physical and emotional health. Mason has a large number of non-traditional and working students who experience stress from work, study and family responsibilities. Many of these students may not look to Mason for this kind of support. But it is available and we may need to extend our efforts in this regard.
5. **Educational Debt:** The level of student educational debt does not appear to be increasing with rising tuition costs. But more students reported they had to work, or had to work more, to pay for college expenses.
6. **Future Educational Plans:** In recent years, about 50% of graduating seniors plan to go to graduate/professional school within one year of graduation. However, little is known about whether these students have done so and at which schools they have enrolled or are enrolling.

### **For Transfer Students**

7. **Support for Transfer Students:** While many transfer students report doing well in transitioning to Mason, others have academic, social, financial and other difficulties. These students appear to need special attention in the transition process. Enhancing student awareness of existing programs and services for transfer students is very important.
8. **Credit Transfer/Evaluation:** Some students were frustrated with credit transfer and credit evaluation/re-evaluation. Some of their comments reflect their lack of understanding of university policies. Emphasizing perspective student awareness of university transfer policies might preclude some later confusion.
9. **Orientation for Transfer Students:** From the Survey, we don’t know how many transfer students attended the University Orientation Program for Transfer Students. However, it appears that students who do not attend the Orientation miss an important opportunity to learn how to register for classes and how to get advising.
10. **Educational Outcomes:** Many transfer students think Mason has made substantial contributions to their growth, especially in the areas of critical thinking, written communication and oral communication.

- *All student verbatim comments can be accessed at <http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2005/index.cfm>*
- *Detailed analysis on student verbatim comments will soon be published in a separate report by OIA*

### 3. Data Summary Table

From All Respondents (Native Students and Transfer Students)  
N = 2,924

#### Overall Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Mean <sup>a</sup>	
26%	63%	3.14	Overall Mason experience
16%	61%	2.87	Sense of belonging

#### Satisfaction with Mason Experiences

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Mean <sup>a</sup>	
47%	45%	3.38	Education in the major
40%	55%	3.33	Opportunities to interact with students
35%	59%	3.29	Academic courses
33%	61%	3.26	Education in general
35%	57%	3.26	Opportunities to improve writing
25%	63%	3.10	Out-of-class access to faculty
20%	67%	3.04	Preparation for a technological world
12%	71%	2.92	Campus intellectual life
26%	44%	2.86	Advising in the major

<sup>a</sup> Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=very dissatisfied; and 4=very satisfied

#### Personal Growth – The extent to which Mason contributed to your growth in:

A lot	Somewhat	Mean <sup>b</sup>	
47%	39%	3.28	Drive to achieve
42%	42%	3.23	Self-confidence (intellectual)
40%	44%	3.21	Understanding of others
41%	42%	3.17	Self-understanding
33%	47%	3.07	Creativity

<sup>b</sup> Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=not at all; and 4=a lot

#### Currently Registered to Vote\*

Yes	No	Not applicable	
89%	10%	2%	Are you currently registered to vote?

\* Only U.S. citizens are included.

#### How Often Students Vote

Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	
48%	38%	9%	5%	How often do you vote in local/national/legislative elections?

#### Educational Plans – Percentage of seniors planning to enroll in graduate/professional school

24%	Plan to enroll full-time
26%	Plan to enroll part-time

### Experiences in Synthesis Courses

Very Often	Sometimes	Mean <sup>c</sup>	
54%	32%	3.34	This course required me to think critically.
52%	32%	3.31	This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.
50%	33%	3.26	This course was intellectually challenging.
47%	38%	3.25	This course held my interest.

<sup>c</sup> Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=never; 4=very often

### From Transfer Students Only N=1,669

### Educational Outcomes – The extent to which Mason contributed to your growth in:

Very much	Somewhat	Mean <sup>d</sup>	
62%	32%	3.55	Critical thinking
62%	31%	3.52	Written communication
54%	33%	3.37	Oral communication
42%	38%	3.16	Quantitative reasoning
41%	38%	3.14	Information technology
37%	40%	3.07	Scientific reasoning

<sup>d</sup> Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=not at all; and 4=very much

### Satisfaction with University Support and Services

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Mean <sup>e</sup>	
55%	37%	3.44	The admissions process at Mason
38%	47%	3.19	The university orientation program for transfer students
45%	34%	3.14	The number of credits I was able to transfer to Mason

<sup>e</sup> Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=very dissatisfied; and 4=very satisfied

### Satisfaction with Self-Transition to Mason

Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Mean <sup>e</sup>	
55%	38%	3.47	Adjustment to the environment at Mason
52%	42%	3.45	Overall academic performance at Mason
51%	34%	3.31	Academic performance in the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester after transferring
35%	47%	3.11	Social involvement with other students

### Top Three Reasons for Transferring to Mason<sup>f</sup>

76%	Location - close to home
53%	Availability of academic programs in which I am interested
39%	Low tuition

<sup>f</sup> Percentages add to more than 100% because many students marked more than one category.

A complete frequency table can be found at the end of this report in the appendix. Department/major level frequency tables are available on line at:  
<http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2005/index.cfm>

#### **4. Demographics for All Respondents**

- The total number of respondents is 2,924.
- The overall response rate is 86%.
- 58% of the respondents are women.\*
- 40% are minority Americans and 5% are non-resident aliens.\*
- 91% are VA residents.\*
- 53% of the respondents are from the College of Arts and Sciences and 20% are from the School of Management.\*

*\*These proportions are very similar to overall undergraduate demographics. For more detailed statistics, go to: <http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2005/index.cfm>*

#### **5. Survey Process and Response Rates**

The Office of Institutional Assessment has been conducting Graduating Senior Surveys since 1989. Senior students who graduated in summer 2004, fall 2004 and spring 2005 were directed to complete the Graduating Senior Survey online as they completed their online graduation application. In this academic year, 3,405 graduates earned a total number of 3,415 undergraduate degrees from Mason. Among them, 2,924 completed the survey for a response rate of 86%.

Each year, transfer students account for about 60% of the graduating class. Among the survey respondents, 57% started college at another institution and transferred to Mason later. The 2005 Graduating Senior Survey focused on experiences of transfer students: their transfer experiences, transition to Mason and educational outcomes. The Survey also includes new questions on personal growth, civic engagement, and experiences in synthesis courses. These questions were answered by ALL respondents regardless of their transfer status.

All survey respondents were categorized into two groups using the following definitions:

- **Transfer students:** are those who started college at another post-secondary institution as first-time freshmen and, later, transferred into Mason
- **Native students:** are those who started college at Mason as first-time freshmen and have not attended any other post-secondary institution

The first part of this report presents results from all respondents. Some of these questions have been asked previously and are reported as trends. The detailed results on transfer students and their experiences were reported in an *In-Focus* publication, which is included in the second part of this report.

Detailed information on college and program level results of the Graduating Senior Survey is available online at <http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2005/index.cfm>.

Feedback from readers is appreciated. We can be contacted at [assessment@gmu.edu](mailto:assessment@gmu.edu).

**Throughout this report, percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.**

**The following college codes are used in this report:**

- CAS = College of Arts and Sciences
- CEHD = College of Education and Human Development
- CNHS = College of Nursing and Health Sciences
- CVPA = College of Visual and Performing Arts
- IT&E = The Volgenau School of Information Technology and Engineering
- SOM = School of Management

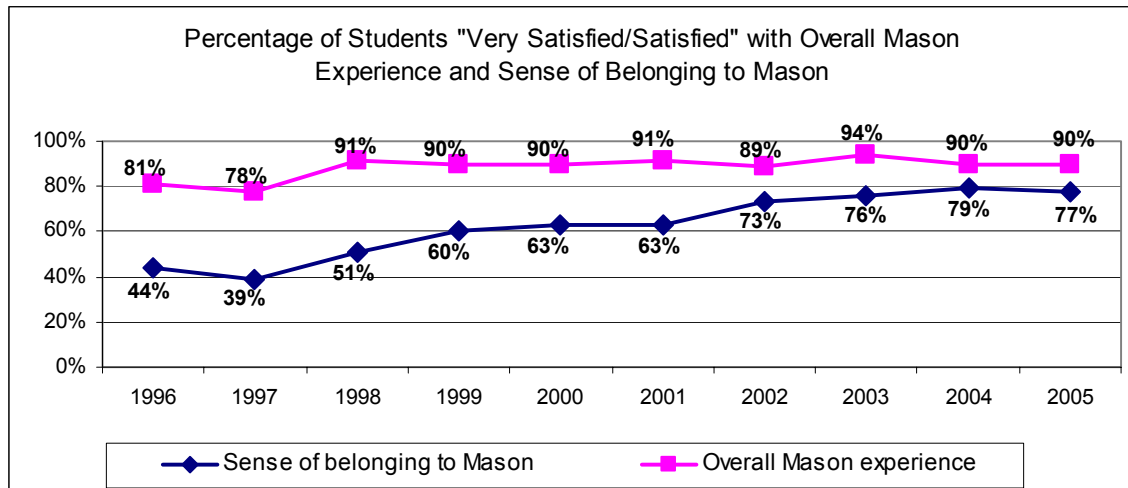


## II. Student Satisfaction

### 1. Trend in Student Overall Satisfaction and Sense of Belonging

The percentage of students who are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their overall Mason experience has hovered around 90% since 1998 (see Figure One). This year, the figure is 90%, the same as in 2004. Thirty-six percent of the 2005 seniors are “very satisfied” with their Mason experience, a modest increase of four percentage points over 2004. Student sense of belonging has dropped slightly by two percentage points to 77% in 2005. Sixteen percent of students are “very satisfied” and 61% are “satisfied” with their sense of belonging to Mason.

Figure One. Ten-Year Trend of Student Sense of Belonging and Overall Experience at Mason, 1996-2005



Compared with transfer students, native students are more likely to say that overall Mason experience and sense of belonging are *important* to them. Fifty-eight percent of native students said the overall Mason experience is “very important” to them, 12 percentage points higher than transfer students. Thirty-four percent of native students said sense of belonging is “very important,” compared with 27% of transfer students.

Transfer students and native students have the same level of *satisfaction* with their overall Mason experience and sense of belonging. Twenty-eight percent of transfer students said they are “very satisfied” with their overall Mason experience, slightly higher than native students (24%). Between 16-17% of native and transfer students are “very satisfied” with their sense of belonging at Mason. (Please note that it is typical to find satisfaction levels lower than importance levels in student surveys. See *Section 4* for more on this).

Table One: Student Sense of Belonging and Overall Experience by Transfer Status, 2005

	% who Selected “Very Important” or “Very Satisfied”		Mean Comparison		
	Native students	Transfer students	Native students	Transfer students	t-test Sig.*
<b>Importance</b>					
overall Mason experience	58%	46%	3.55	3.41	0.000
sense of belonging	34%	27%	3.11	2.94	0.000
<b>Satisfaction</b>					
overall Mason experience	24%	28%	3.11	3.16	
sense of belonging	17%	16%	2.86	2.87	

\* The t-test assesses whether the means of two groups (native students and transfer students) are statistically different from each other. Only a result <.05 indicates a statistically significant difference, which is reported in this column.

## 2. Student Expectations for their Educational Experiences at Mason

Since 2003, student expectations for their educational experiences at Mason have continually increased. As shown in Table Two, 51% of 2003 graduating seniors rated academic courses as a “very important” area of their Mason experience, compared with 83% of 2005 graduating seniors – an increase of 32 percentage points! Substantial increases in student expectations are seen in the following areas as well:

- Education in the major (89% rated “very important” in 2005, an increase of 12 percentage points over 2003)
- Education in general (an increase of 12 percentage points)
- Advising in the major (an increase of 12 percentage points)
- Campus intellectual life (an increase of 9 percentage points)

More and more students have higher expectations for the quality of their education.

A relatively smaller but statistically significant drop in student expectations is noted in two areas:

- Out-of-class access to faculty (37% rated “very important” in 2005, compared with 46% for 2004 and 42% for 2003)
- Opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds (33% rated “very important” in 2005, compared with 39% for 2004 and 35% for 2003)

Table Two. Three-Year Trend of Importance Ratings, 2003 – 2005\*

How important are the following areas to you (rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=very unimportant; 4=very important):	% of Students who Selected “Very Important”			% change 03-05	Mean*			Mean Differ. Sig.**
	2003	2004	2005		2003	2004	2005	
education in the major	77%	83%	89%	+12%	3.74	3.82	3.88	.000
academic courses	51%	62%	83%	+32%	3.48	3.60	3.82	.000
education in general	66%	72%	78%	+12%	3.63	3.69	3.76	.000
advising in the major	50%	51%	62%	+12%	3.38	3.42	3.54	.000
opportunities to improve writing	47%	54%	52%	+5%	3.38	3.46	3.44	.000
preparation for a technological world	49%	53%	49%	0	3.40	3.45	3.39	.002
out-of-class access to faculty	42%	46%	37%	-5%	3.32	3.38	3.22	.000
opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	35%	39%	33%	-2%	3.10	3.19	3.07	.000
campus intellectual life	19%	24%	28%	+9%	2.85	2.94	3.05	.000

\*The calculation of percentages and mean importance values excluded those students who didn’t answer the corresponding satisfaction item.

\*\* This column shows the test results from Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). A result <.05 indicates that the mean values are significantly different across three years.

Compared with students who started college at Mason, transfer students are more likely to say that academic courses and advising in the major are very important to them (see Table Three). Native students, on the other hand, are more likely to say that preparation for a technological world and opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds are very important to them. It should be noted that the mean ratings on most of the importance items are quite high for both groups of students.

Table Three. Importance Ratings by Transfer Status, 2005

Mean Importance Ratings (rated on a 1-4 scale)*:	Native students	Transfer students	t-test Sig.**
education in the major	3.88	3.88	
academic courses	3.78	<b>3.84</b>	0.000
education in general	3.76	3.75	
advising in the major	3.49	<b>3.57</b>	0.001
opportunities to improve writing	3.43	3.45	
preparation for a technological world	<b>3.43</b>	3.36	0.007
out-of-class access to faculty	3.21	3.24	
opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	<b>3.11</b>	3.04	0.015
campus intellectual life	3.06	3.04	

\* The calculation of percentages and mean importance values excluded those students who didn't answer the corresponding satisfaction item.

\*\* Only a statistically significant result ( $p < .05$ ) is reported in this column.

### **3. Student Satisfaction with Educational Experiences at Mason**

When comparing student satisfaction with nine areas of Mason experiences in a three-year period since 2003, we get mixed results. As shown in Table Four, in two areas, the 2005 graduating seniors reported the highest levels of satisfaction since 2003:

- Academic courses, and
- Campus intellectual life

In another five areas, however, the 2003 graduating seniors were more satisfied than those who graduated in 2004 and/or 2005:

- Education in the major
- Education in general
- Advising in the major
- Out-of-class access to faculty, and,
- Opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds

The 2005 seniors, in general, think out-of-class access to faculty and opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds are not only *less important*, but they are also *less satisfied* with these two areas.

In the last two areas in Table Four, student satisfaction remains unchanged in three years: opportunities to improve writing and preparation for a technological world.

Table Four. Three-Year Trend of Satisfaction Ratings, 2003-2005

How satisfied are you with the following areas (rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=very dissatisfied; 4=very satisfied):	% of Students who Selected "Very Satisfied"			% change 03-05	Mean			Mean Differ. Sig.*
	2003	2004	2005		2003	2004	2005	
education in the major	53%	51%	47%	-6%	3.48	3.43	3.38	.000
academic courses	30%	29%	35%	+5%	3.24	3.21	3.29	.000
education in general	37%	38%	33%	-4%	3.33	3.32	3.26	.000
advising in the major	28%	25%	26%	-2%	2.98	2.89	2.86	.000
opportunities to improve writing	35%	35%	35%	0	3.28	3.26	3.26	
preparation for a technological world	21%	21%	20%	-1%	3.01	3.03	3.04	
out-of-class access to faculty	32%	32%	25%	-7%	3.19	3.18	3.10	.000
opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	49%	46%	40%	-9%	3.44	3.41	3.33	.000
campus intellectual life	11%	12%	12%	+1%	2.83	2.88	2.92	.000

\* This column shows the test results from Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). A result  $< .05$  indicates that the mean values are significantly different across three years.

Compared with native students, *transfer* students are more satisfied with academic courses, opportunities to improve writing, campus intellectual life and advising in the major. *Native* students are more satisfied with opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds. These two groups of students have no statistically significant difference in their ratings on the following items: education in the major, education in general, out-of-class access to faculty, and preparation for a technological world.

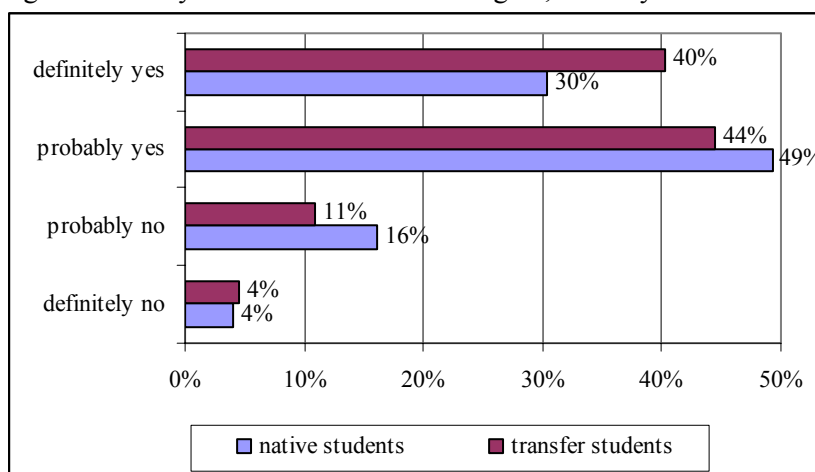
Table Five. Satisfaction Ratings by Transfer Status, 2005

Mean Satisfaction Ratings (rated on a 1-4 scale):	Native students	Transfer students	t-test Sig.*
education in the major	3.39	3.37	
opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	<b>3.38</b>	3.29	.000
education in general	3.25	3.26	
academic courses	3.25	<b>3.31</b>	.003
opportunities to improve writing	3.23	<b>3.28</b>	.041
out-of-class access to faculty	3.08	3.10	
preparation for a technological world	3.05	3.03	
campus intellectual life	2.86	<b>2.96</b>	.000
advising in the major	2.78	<b>2.93</b>	.000

\* Only a statistically significant result ( $p < .05$ ) is reported in this column.

Transfer students are more likely to say that if they were to do it all over again, they would attend Mason: 40% of transfer students said “definitely yes,” compared with 30% of their native peers.

Figure Two. If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?



#### 4. Performance Gaps

For three years, we have been reporting performance gaps, which are defined as the difference between mean importance ratings and mean corresponding satisfaction ratings. A *positive performance gap score* is produced when an importance score is larger than the corresponding satisfaction score. A positive performance gap score indicates that Mason has NOT met students’ expectation in that area. A larger positive score also represents a larger performance gap. Similarly, a *negative performance gap score* is produced when a *satisfaction score* is larger than the corresponding importance score, which indicates that Mason has exceeded students’ expectation. Using similar indexes as the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)<sup>1</sup>, we obtain the following criteria:

1. A large performance gap: the performance gap score for a particular item is larger than **.75**
2. A moderate performance gap: a performance gap score is between **.25** to **.74**
3. A minor performance gap: a performance gap score is lower than **.25**

<sup>1</sup> The Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) is developed by USA Group Noel-Levitz, Inc. to measure college students’ satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences. Our report uses the same definitions of “importance score,” “satisfaction score,” and “performance gap score” as SSI. SSI uses a 1-7 scale, while our survey uses a 1-4 scale. We have changed the SSI performance gap criteria to accommodate the scale differences.

Overall, no large positive performance gap is found for the 11 items included in the 2005 survey. Moderate performance gaps are found in six areas as shown in Figure Three. These performance gaps are the same ones found from the 2004 Graduating Senior Survey. The widest gaps in 2005 are found in advising in major and academic courses. When comparing the positive performance gaps of the past three years, we found increasing gaps in the following areas:

- Advising in the major
- Academic courses
- Education in the major, and
- Education in general

These increasing gaps are caused largely by the substantial increase in student expectations over the past three years. Also of note is the *decrease* in the gap regarding preparation for a technological world.

Figure Three. Three-Year Trend of Performance Gaps, 2003-2005

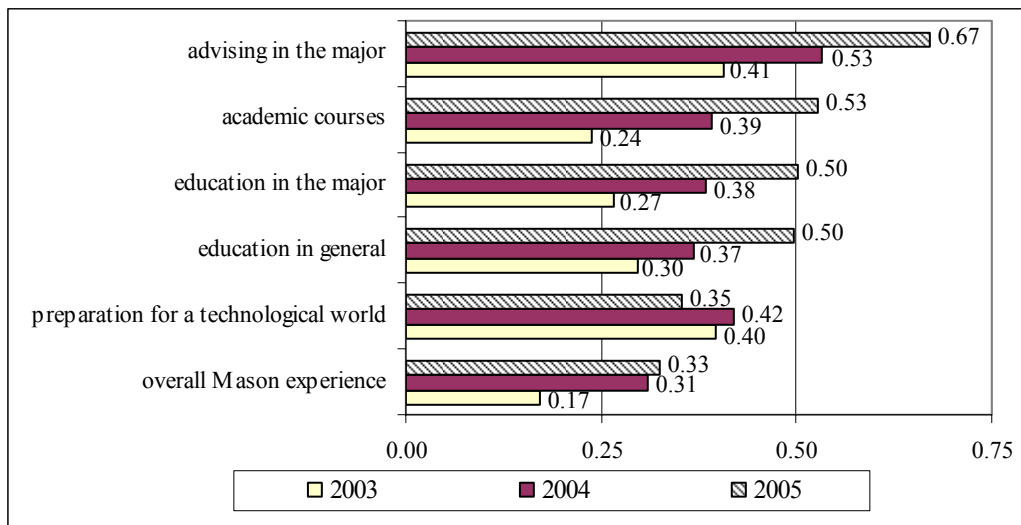
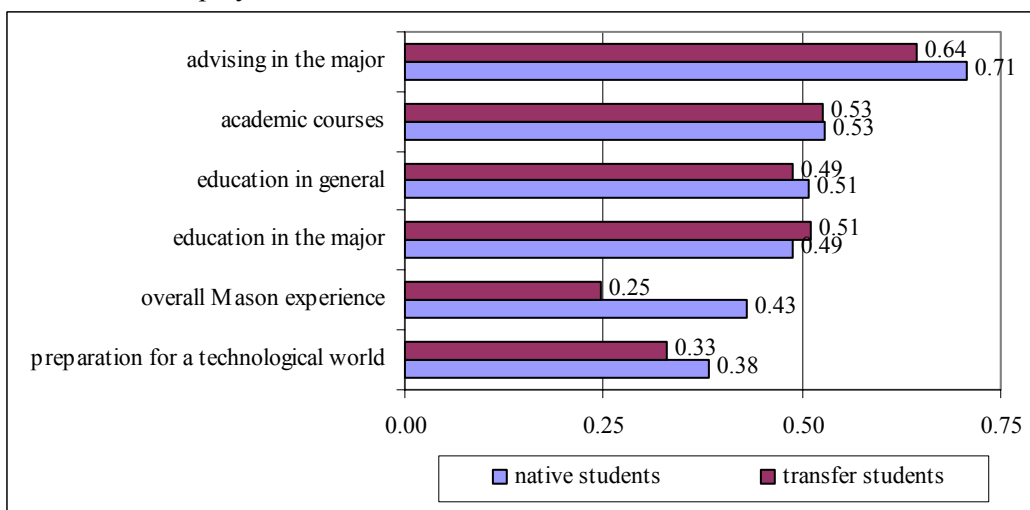


Figure Four compares how well Mason has met the needs of transfer students and native students. The performance gaps are particularly wide for native students in two areas: overall Mason experience and advising in the major.

Figure Four. Performance Gap by Transfer Status, 2005



### III. Personal Growth & Civic Engagement

#### 1. Personal Growth

Many students think Mason has contributed substantially to their personal growth. Forty-seven percent of them say Mason has contributed “a lot” to their drive to achieve – the most highly rated item in Table Six. Students feel Mason has contributed significantly to their growth in the following areas as well:

- Self-confidence (intellectual) – 42% rated “a lot”
- Self-understanding – 41%
- Understanding of others – 40%

For physical health and emotional health, Mason’s contribution is limited. Fifty percent of students feel Mason contributed “a little” or “not at all” to their physical health; for emotional health, 40% of students rated “a little” or “not at all.” These data do not give us enough information to know whether student health is just fine without assistance from anyone at Mason, whether assistance has been obtained from other sources, or whether students are experiencing serious health issues and need help.

Table Six. To what extent Mason contributed to your personal growth? 2005

Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot	A lot	Somewhat	A little/ Not at all	Mean	Std. Dev.
drive to achieve	47%	39%	14%	3.28	0.82
self-confidence (intellectual)	42%	42%	15%	3.23	0.81
understanding of others	40%	44%	16%	3.21	0.80
self-understanding	41%	42%	18%	3.17	0.85
creativity	33%	47%	20%	3.07	0.83
cooperativeness	29%	52%	19%	3.04	0.81
applying ethical principles in one’s life	34%	43%	23%	3.04	0.89
leadership ability	34%	44%	22%	3.04	0.89
self-confidence (social)	34%	43%	23%	3.01	0.92
sense of responsibility to be involved in social/civic issues	31%	42%	28%	2.93	0.94
emotional health	18%	42%	40%	2.60	0.98
physical health	16%	34%	50%	2.39	1.04

Native students give higher ratings to Mason’s contribution to their personal growth than their transfer peers, especially in the following areas:

- understanding of others
- self-understanding
- leadership ability
- self-confidence (social), and,
- physical health.

Table Seven. Personal Growth by Transfer Status, 2005

	Native students	Transfer students	t-test Sig.*
drive to achieve	3.27	3.29	
self-confidence (intellectual)	3.24	3.22	
understanding of others	<b>3.26</b>	3.16	.001
self-understanding	<b>3.21</b>	3.14	.039
creativity	3.09	3.06	
cooperativeness	3.06	3.02	
applying ethical principles in my life	3.04	3.04	
leadership ability	<b>3.11</b>	2.98	.000
self-confidence (social)	<b>3.10</b>	2.95	.000
sense of responsibility to be involved in social/civic issues	2.96	2.91	
emotional health	2.61	2.60	
physical health	<b>2.46</b>	2.35	.005

\* Only a statistically significant result ( $p < .05$ ) is reported in this column.

## 2. Civic Engagement\*

[\*For this analysis, we excluded the students who are not U.S. citizens (i.e., permanent residents and international students). Permanent residents do not have the right to vote in the U.S. Although one third of them said they are currently registered to vote, we are not sure whether they are registered in their countries of origin or they have been naturalized and gained their U.S. citizenship. No international students who completed the survey are currently registered to vote.]

Overall, 89% of Mason seniors are currently registered to vote and 10% are not registered (see Table Eight). Another 2% indicated that this question was not applicable to them. *Female* students are more likely to be registered to vote than male students. Ninety percent of female students are currently registered, four percentage points higher than their male counterparts. *White American* students are most likely to be registered to vote (92%), compared with students from other racial ethnic groups (See Figure Five). *Asian students* and *Native American* students are the least likely to be registered (79% and 80% respectively). [Please note that there are only 10 Native American respondents.]

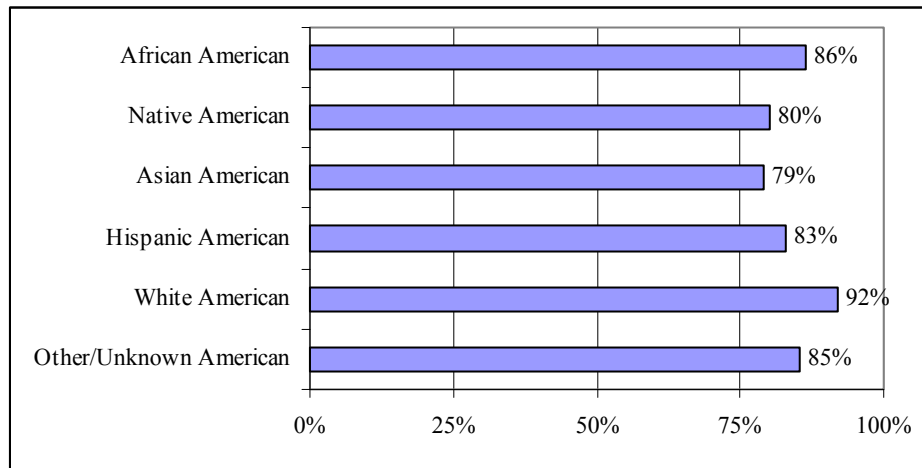
Younger students (*22 or under*) and older students (*28 or older*) are more likely to be registered to vote than their peers who are between 23 to 27 years old. In-state students are more likely to be registered compared with out-of-state students (89% vs. 82%). *Transfer* students are more likely to be registered to vote: 90% of transfer students are currently registered to vote, four percentage points higher than native students.

Table Eight. Registration to Vote by Demographic Characteristics, 2005\*

Demographic Characteristics	Are you currently registered to vote?		
	yes	no	not applicable
<b>Total Respondents</b>	89%	10%	2%
<b>SEX</b>			
Female	90%	8%	2%
Male	86%	12%	2%
Unknown	90%	10%	0%
<b>RACIAL ETHNICITY</b>			
African American	86%	10%	4%
Native American	80%	10%	10%
Asian American	79%	19%	2%
Hispanic American	83%	11%	6%
White American	92%	7%	1%
Other/Unknown American	85%	12%	3%
<b>AGE</b>			
22 or lower	90%	9%	1%
23-24	87%	11%	2%
25-27	86%	11%	3%
28-30	91%	9%	0%
31-34	91%	8%	1%
35+	92%	5%	3%
<b>RESIDENCE</b>			
In state	89%	9%	2%
Out of state	82%	14%	4%
<b>TRANSFER STATUS</b>			
Native students	86%	12%	2%
Transfer students	90%	8%	2%

\* Non-U.S. citizens are excluded from the analysis.

Figure Five. Percentage of Students who are Currently Registered to Vote by Racial Ethnicity, 2005\*



\* Only U.S. citizens are included.

Table Nine shows how often students vote in local/national/legislative elections. Among Mason seniors who are U.S. citizens and who are currently registered to vote, 48% “always” vote in elections, 38% vote “sometimes,” 9% vote “rarely” and the remaining 5% “never” vote. Male students vote as often as female students; in-state students also vote as often as out-of-state students.

Table Nine. How often do you vote? – by Demographic Characteristics\*

Demographic Characteristics	How often do you vote in local/national/legislative elections?			
	always	sometimes	rarely	never
<b>ALL (U.S. citizen and currently registered)</b>	48%	38%	9%	5%
<b>SEX</b>				
Female	47%	39%	9%	5%
Male	51%	36%	8%	5%
Unknown	41%	41%	13%	5%
<b>RACIAL ETHNICITY</b>				
African American	46%	38%	11%	5%
Native American	75%	13%	13%	0%
Asian American	32%	47%	13%	8%
Hispanic American	49%	38%	9%	4%
White American	50%	37%	8%	4%
Other/Unknown American	52%	34%	8%	6%
<b>AGE</b>				
22 or lower	44%	41%	9%	6%
23-24	41%	40%	13%	7%
25-27	47%	39%	11%	4%
28-30	47%	46%	5%	2%
31-34	62%	33%	4%	2%
35+	79%	19%	1%	1%
<b>RESIDENCE</b>				
In state	48%	38%	9%	5%
Out of state	49%	36%	11%	4%
<b>TRANSFER STATUS</b>				
Native students	42%	41%	11%	6%
Transfer students	53%	36%	8%	4%

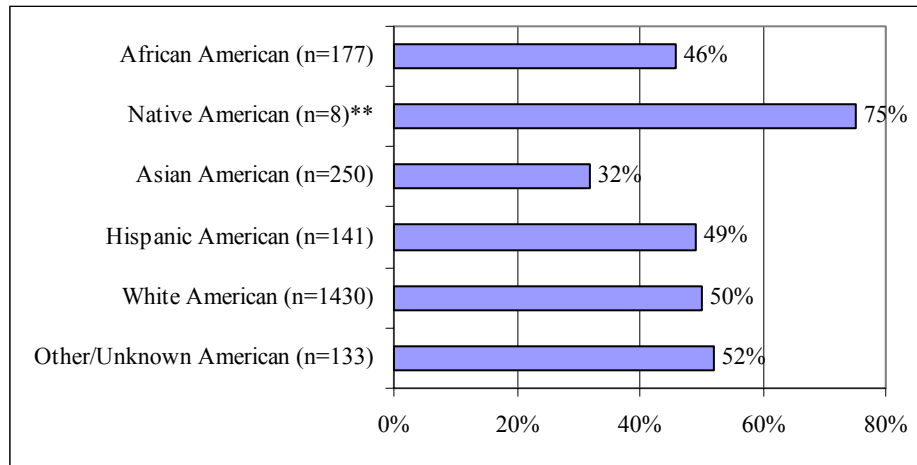
\* Analysis only includes those who are U.S. citizens and are currently registered to vote.



Statistically significant differences are found across *racial ethnicity, age* and *transfer status*. Native American students vote more frequently than students of any other racial ethnic group (results based on 8 Native American respondents who are currently registered to vote). Seventy-five percent of Native American students “always” vote (see Figure Six), compared with 32% of Asian students who reported the same. About 50% of White and Hispanic students say they always vote, a percentage slightly higher than African American students.

Older students (31 and older) are more likely to vote than their younger peers: 79% of students who are 35 or older and 62% of students who are between 31-34 are most likely to vote. Fifty-three percent of transfer students always vote, eleven percentage points higher than their native peers. Six percent of native students and 4% of transfer students say they “never” vote in local/national/legislative elections.

Figure Six. Percentage of Students who ALWAYS Vote in Local/National/Legislative Elections – by Racial Ethnicity\*



\* Only U.S. citizens who are currently registered to vote are included.

\*\* Based on 8 Native Americans who are currently registered.

## IV. Synthesis, Educational Plans and Debt

### 1. Experiences in Synthesis Courses

Synthesis is a core requirement of Mason's General Education Program. Synthesis courses are designed to engage students in the connection of meaning and the synthesis of knowledge and require students to demonstrate advanced skills in oral and written presentation. Every undergraduate student needs to take a synthesis course before graduation. It is the culminating course in the general education sequence. The 2005 Graduating Senior Survey included a new set of questions about student experiences in synthesis courses, and thus, *indirectly* assessed whether these courses have achieved their goals. Table Ten shows student responses to these questions.

Table Ten. How often did the following statements apply to your synthesis course?

<b>Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=never; 2=seldom; 3=sometimes; 4=very often</b>	<b>Very Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom/ Never</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>
This course required me to think critically.	54%	32%	14%	3.34	0.86
This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	52%	32%	15%	3.31	0.88
This course was intellectually challenging.	50%	33%	17%	3.26	0.91
This course held my interest.	47%	38%	15%	3.25	0.86
This course was well organized.	47%	36%	17%	3.23	0.91
This course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	48%	34%	18%	3.23	0.91
This course improved my writing skills.	37%	37%	27%	3.01	0.96
This course improved my oral presentation skills.	32%	40%	28%	2.93	0.96

Over 50% of students selected "very often" for the following characteristics of synthesis courses they have taken:

- This course required me to think critically (54% reported "very often")
- This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships (53%)
- This course was intellectually challenging (50%)

Relatively fewer students say they have improved their oral presentation skills and writing skills through synthesis courses: one out of three students said the synthesis courses "very often" improved their oral presentation and writing skills. Of some concern is the proportion of students who said "seldom" or "never" on these items (14-28%).

*Transfer* students are more likely to give higher ratings to synthesis courses than their native peers (see Table Eleven). Transfer students are more likely to say that: "The course held my interest" and "The course improved my writing skills."

Table Eleven: Experiences in Synthesis Courses by Transfer Status, 2005

<b>Level of agreement with the following statements (rated on a 1-4 scale, 1=never; 4=very often):</b>	<b>Native students</b>	<b>Transfer students</b>	<b>t-test Sig.*</b>
This course required me to think critically.	3.32	3.36	
This course required me to organize ideas, info, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	3.29	3.33	
This course was intellectually challenging.	3.25	3.28	
This course held my interest.	3.20	3.30	.002
This course was well organized.	3.20	3.25	
This course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	3.19	3.26	
This course improved my writing skills.	2.93	3.07	.001
This course improved my oral presentation skills.	2.89	2.96	

\* Only a statistically significant result ( $p < .05$ ) is reported in this column.

## 2. Future Educational Plans

Table Twelve shows a seven-year trend of students' post-graduate educational plans. Overall, post-graduate plans of the 2005 graduates did not change much from the previous year, although there has been a small, but steady increase in full-time enrollment plans since 2002. In 2005, 50% of graduating seniors planned to enroll in graduate/professional schools either part-time (26%) or full-time (24%). Another 8% of students planned to enroll in certificate/licensure programs.

Table Twelve. Trend of Future Educational Plans, 1999-2005

<b>Do you plan to pursue additional education within the next year?</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>
Yes, I will enroll <u>full-time</u> in graduate/professional school.	21%	19%	39%	20%	22%	23%	24%
Yes, I will enroll <u>part-time</u> in graduate/professional school.	26%	26%	14%	26%	25%	26%	26%
Yes, I will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/ professional license.	9%	12%	23%	10%	9%	8%	8%
Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree/ certificate program.	NA	NA	NA	NA	6%	6%	42%
No, I do not plan to be enrolled in course work.	44%	43%	24%	44%	38%	36%	

Table Thirteen presents student future educational plans by college. For both 2004 and 2005, IT&E graduates were most likely to plan to enroll in a graduate or professional school: the total percentage was higher than any other college. However, the percentage of IT&E graduates who planned to enroll part-time *decreased* by nine percentage points to 39% in 2005, while planned full-time enrollment *increased* two percentage points to 18% in 2005. For the College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA), there was a substantial *increase* in the percentage of students who planned to enroll *full-time* in graduate school within the next year. In 2005, 27% planned to do so, an increase of 11 percentage points over 2004. Overall, three colleges (CAS, CVPA and SOM) saw an increase in their proportion of graduates planning to enroll in graduate/professional school and three colleges (CEHD, CNHS and IT&E) saw decreases.

Table Thirteen. Percentage of Students who Plan to Enroll in Graduate/Professional Schools: College Comparison, 2004 and 2005

	<b>2004</b>			<b>2005</b>		
	<b>full-time</b>	<b>part-time</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>full-time</b>	<b>part-time</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total Graduating Seniors</b>	23%	26%	49%	24%	26%	50%
<b>CAS</b>	30%	22%	52%	31%	24%	54%
<b>CEHD</b>	12%	28%	40%	14%	24%	37%
<b>CNHS</b>	14%	30%	44%	12%	29%	41%
<b>CVPA</b>	16%	17%	33%	27%	13%	39%
<b>IT&amp;E</b>	16%	48%	64%	18%	39%	57%
<b>SOM</b>	15%	28%	43%	13%	31%	44%

Compared with transfers, native students are more likely to say that they plan to enroll full-time; whereas, transfer students are more likely to plan to enroll part-time in graduate or professional school (see Table Fourteen).

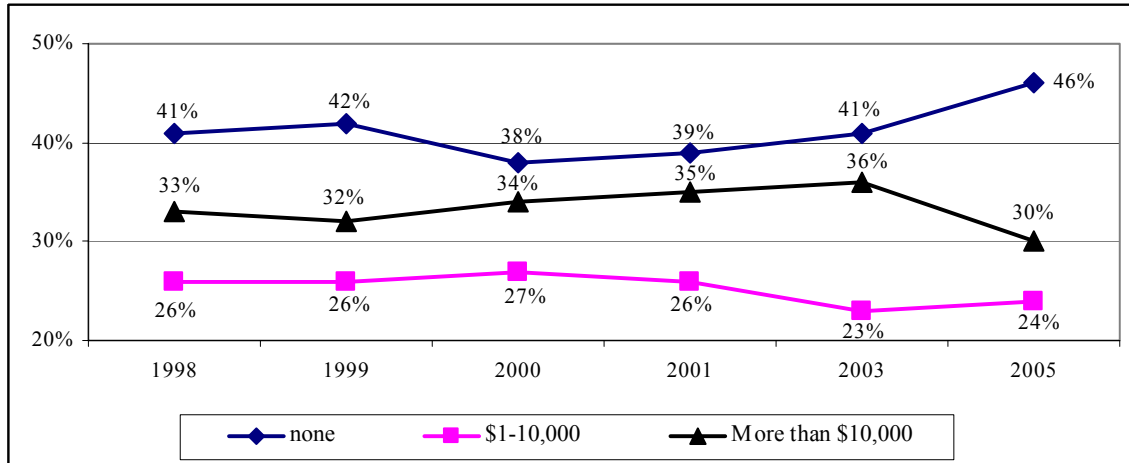
Table Fourteen. Future Educational Plans by Transfer Status, 2005

<b>Plans to pursue additional education within the next year:</b>	<b>Native students</b>	<b>Transfer students</b>
will enroll fulltime in graduate/professional school	26%	22%
will enroll part-time graduate/professional school	23%	29%
will enroll in certificate/professional degree	8%	9%

### 3. Educational Debt

In 2005, there was a significant increase of students who graduated with no educational debt (46%), an increase of 5 percentage points over 2004 and the highest percentage in the last eight years. The percentage of students whose debt was more than \$10,000 also decreased from 2003 by six percentage points to 30%. Native students (50%) are more likely to graduate with no debt than transfer students (43%).

Figure Seven. Level of Educational Debt at Graduation, 1998-2005



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## *Transfer Students at Mason: Results from the 2004-05 Graduating Senior Survey*

### *I. Introduction and Highlights*

The Office of Institutional Assessment has been conducting Graduating Senior Surveys since 1989. Senior students who graduated in summer 2004, fall 2004 and spring 2005 were directed to complete the Graduating Senior Survey online as they completed their online graduation application. In this academic year, 3,406 graduates earned a total number of 3,416 undergraduate degrees from Mason. Among them, 2,924 completed the survey for a response rate of 86%.

The 2004-2005 Graduating Senior Survey focused on experiences of transfer students: their transition to Mason, experiences as students and educational outcomes. All survey respondents were categorized into two groups using the following definitions:

- **Transfer students:** are those who started college at another post-secondary institution as first-time freshmen and, later, transferred into Mason
- **Native students:** are those who started college at Mason as first-time freshmen; have not attended any other post-secondary institution prior to coming to Mason

Each year, transfer students account for about 60% of the graduating class. Among the survey respondents, 57% identified themselves as transfer students. This *In Focus* is devoted only to the survey questions for transfer students. Native students did NOT answer these questions. The results of additional survey questions, which were answered by all students, are included in the full report of the 2004-05 Graduating Senior Survey. For detailed information on college and program level results, and for characteristics of survey respondents, please visit our website at <http://www.assessment.gmu.edu>.

*The results reported in this In Focus are based on the responses from 1,669 distinct students who said they “started college at another institution and transferred to Mason.”*

*Because of rounding, not all percentages equal to 100% in this report.*

### **Highlights:**

- Half of the transfer students came from a community or junior college; 29% transferred from a 4-year college or university, 1% had attended a technical, vocational or business school, and the remaining 17% of students had enrolled in at least two types of schools before coming to Mason.
- 38% of transfer students selected “location – being close to home” as the SINGLE most important reason for transferring to Mason; 19% cited “availability of academic programs” and another 10% indicated personal, family or work reasons. “Size of college” and “availability of scholarships/financial aid” were not important factors for most.

- In the areas of university support and services, transfer students are most satisfied with “the admissions process at Mason”, followed by “the University Orientation Program for Transfer Students.”
- Students who graduated in less than 3 years after transferring into Mason are significantly more satisfied with their overall academic performance and their adjustment to the Mason environment than their peers who took longer to graduate.
- 46% of transfer students reported no difficulty in transitioning to Mason; 19% had academic difficulties, 18% had financial difficulties, and 17% experienced social difficulties.

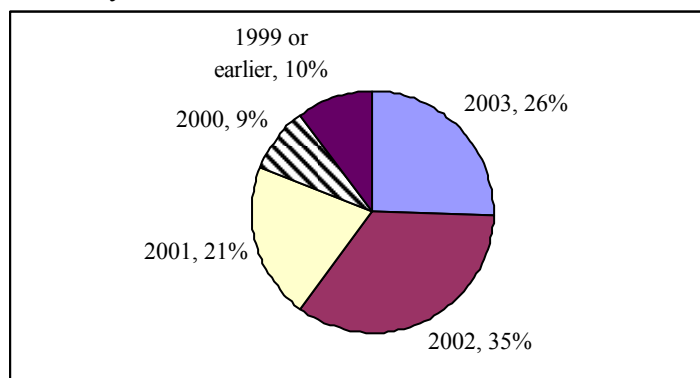
## II. Pre-Mason Educational Experiences

### 1. Previous Institutions

Among the 1,669 transfer students who completed the survey, 53% came from a community or junior college; 29% transferred from a 4-year college or university, and 1% had attended a technical, vocational or business school. The remaining 17% of students had enrolled in at least two types of schools before coming to Mason.

Data from the Office of Institutional Research and Reporting (IRR) show that most transfer students come in as sophomores or juniors. It takes a typical transfer student 2-4 years to graduate from Mason. For the survey respondents (see Figure One), 26% first entered Mason in 2003, 35% started in 2002 and another 21% started in 2001. Nineteen percent entered Mason in 2000 or earlier.

Figure One: What year did you first enter George Mason University?



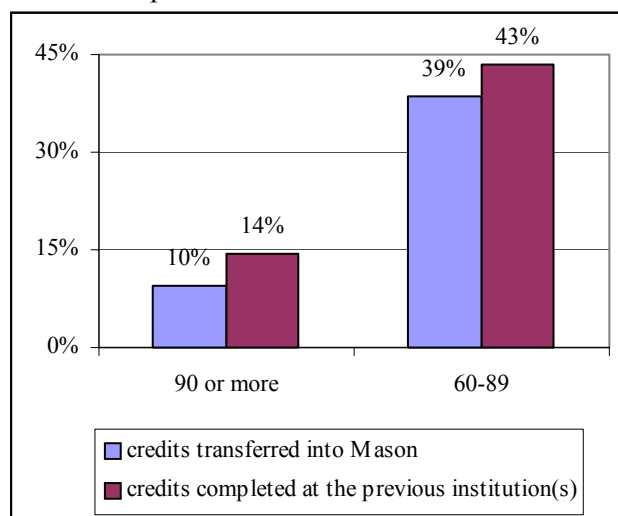
### 2. Number of Credits Transferred into Mason

The University has the following policies about credit transfer (see the University Catalog):

1. A student transferring into Mason receives a formal evaluation of transfer credit following the admissions offer;
2. In general, credits are accepted from regionally *accredited* institutions, provided that a *grade of C* or better has been earned, and that the *course content is equal to that offered at Mason*;
3. At least *120 total credits* are required for graduation, including *45 credits of upper-level coursework*. At least *one-fourth of the total credits* applied to the degree must be completed at Mason, and must include at least *12 upper-level credits in the major*. Among these, English 302 and a synthesis course are required.

As a result of these policies, some credits will transfer as electives and some students will graduate with extra elective credits. For example, in the survey (see Figure Two), 10% transferred more than 90 credits into Mason. These students still needed to meet the upper division and residential requirements which, in many cases, meant they graduated with more than 120 credits.

Figure Two: Credits Transferred into Mason and Credits Completed outside of Mason



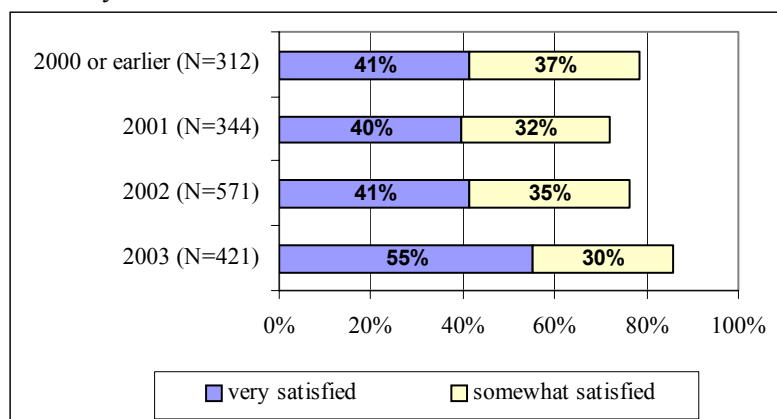
In the *Comments* section (Section VII of this report), some transfer students expressed their frustration with credit transfer or transfer credit evaluation. Some of their comments reflect their lack of understanding of University policies. For instance, many think their credits should be accepted as long as the *title* of the course is equivalent to that offered at Mason. Other students were dissatisfied with the credit re-evaluation process, which they say, is not made known to students.

### **3. Satisfaction with the Number of Credits Accepted by Mason**

Nonetheless, 45% of transfer students were “very satisfied” and 34% were “somewhat satisfied” with the number of credits they were able to transfer into Mason. However, student satisfaction varies significantly by the year they first entered Mason.

As Figure Three shows, students who entered Mason in 2003 had the highest level of satisfaction: 55% were “very satisfied” with the number of credits they transferred, compared with 40-41% of earlier transferees. It is very likely that these students had earned an associate’s degree from the Virginia Community College System or were able to transfer in many general education credits; thus, they finished their degrees within two years. The students who suffered significant credit loss in the transfer process had lower satisfaction and it took them longer to complete their degrees at Mason.

Figure Three: Satisfaction with Number of Credits Transferred to Mason by Year of Enrollment



### ***III. Reasons for Transferring to Mason***

Three-fourths of transfer students (76%) indicated that being close to home was a reason for them to transfer to Mason rather than another institution; 53% said they found academic programs at Mason in which they were interested – the second most popular reason. For 39%, low tuition was a factor and 36% considered the academic reputation of Mason as a reason. Personal, family or work issues and recommendations from others are also reasons to transfer.

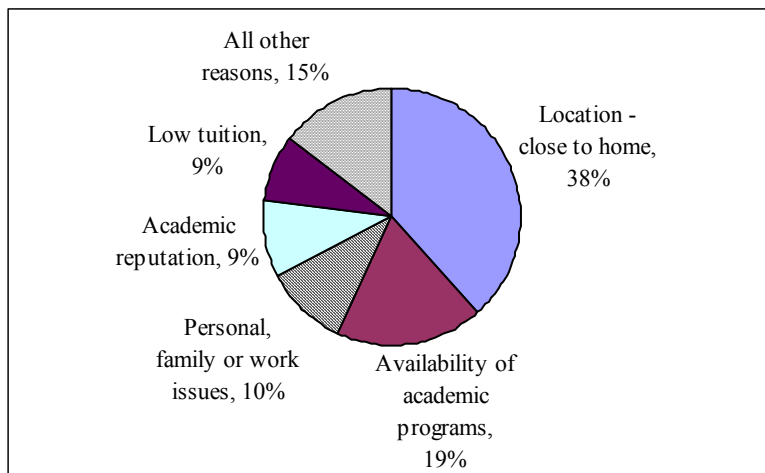
Table One: Top Six Reasons for Transferring to Mason Rather than Another Institution

<b>Possible Reasons:</b>	<b>Percentage*</b>
Location - close to home	76%
Availability of academic programs in which I am interested	53%
Low tuition	39%
Academic reputation	36%
Personal, family or work issues	33%
Recommendations from others	29%

*\*Percentages do not add to 100% because of multiple selections.*

When asked what was the SINGLE most important reason for transferring to Mason, 38% of transfer students selected location – being close to home. Nineteen percent said availability of academic programs and another 10% indicated personal, family or work reasons. Nine percent selected academic reputation and another 9% selected low tuition as the most important reason. Fifteen percent selected a reason other than the above but almost no one identified size of college, graduates gaining admission to top graduate schools or availability of scholarship/financial aid as the most important reason to transfer.

Figure Four: The Single Most Important Reason for Transferring to Mason



Among the transfer students who came to Mason because of the availability of academic programs (N=294), 22% graduated from NURSING.

#### IV. Satisfaction and Difficulties

##### 1. Satisfaction with Transfer Experiences

Transfer students are most satisfied with the admissions process at Mason: 55% were “very satisfied” and 37% were “somewhat satisfied.” Students also expressed fairly high levels of satisfaction with the University Orientation Program for Transfer Students: 38% “very satisfied” and 47% “somewhat satisfied.” While higher levels of dissatisfaction were registered for university support for transfer students and departmental orientation program, all support services received relatively high ratings.

Students are satisfied with their own transition to Mason: 55% were “very satisfied” with their adjustment to the environment at Mason, 52% were “very satisfied” with their overall academic performance at Mason, and 51% were “very satisfied” with their academic performance in the first semester after transfer. Social involvement with other students received the lowest rating among all the self-transition items. In the *Comments* section, some students said they could not get involved with other students because they were working and commuting to Mason; others said they felt it hard to interact with students who started college at Mason.

Table Two: Satisfaction with Transfer Experiences\*\*

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Dissatisfied/ very dissatisfied	Mean
<b>University Support and Services</b>				
The admissions process	55%	37%	8%	3.44
The university orientation program for transfer students	38%	47%	15%	3.19
The financial aid process at Mason	38%	42%	20%	3.12
The university support for transfer students	35%	43%	21%	3.07
The departmental orientation program for transfer students	33%	46%	21%	3.04
<b>Student Self-Transition</b>				
Adjustment to the environment at Mason*	55%	38%	7%	3.47
Overall academic performance at Mason*	52%	42%	6%	3.45
Academic performance in 1st semester after transferring*	51%	34%	15%	3.31
Social involvement with other students	35%	47%	18%	3.11

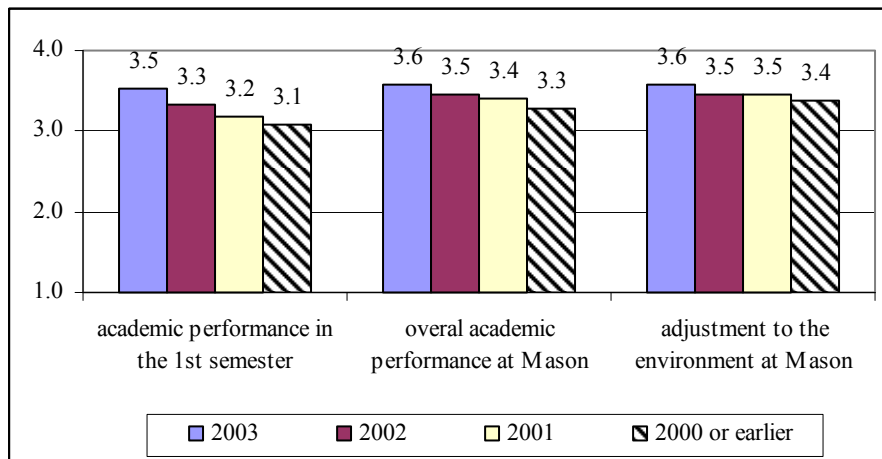
\*Indicates significant differences in level of satisfaction between students who enrolled at Mason in different years.

\*\* For both mean and frequency, the “Don’t Know” category was excluded.



Transfer students who started at Mason in different years expressed significantly different levels of satisfaction in four areas: number of credits transferred into Mason (See Figure Three.), academic performance in the first semester, overall academic performance at Mason, and adjustment to the environment at Mason. On three items shown in Figure Five, earlier transferees (started Mason in 2000 or earlier) had the lowest level of satisfaction; whereas, the later transferees (started Mason in 2003) had the highest level of satisfaction.

Figure Five. Level of Satisfaction by Year of Enrollment

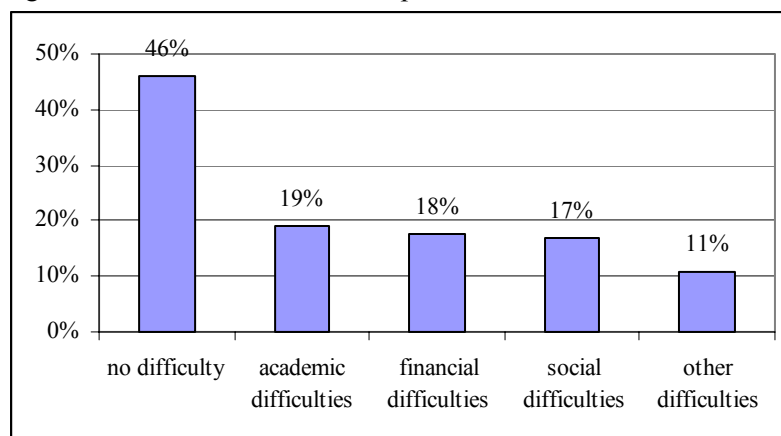


## 2. The Most Difficult Aspect of Transition

Forty-six percent of students reported NO difficulty in transitioning to Mason; 19% had academic difficulties, 18% had financial difficulties, and 17% experienced some kind of social difficulties. In Section VII of this report, we have summarized student comments on their difficulties in transitioning to Mason.

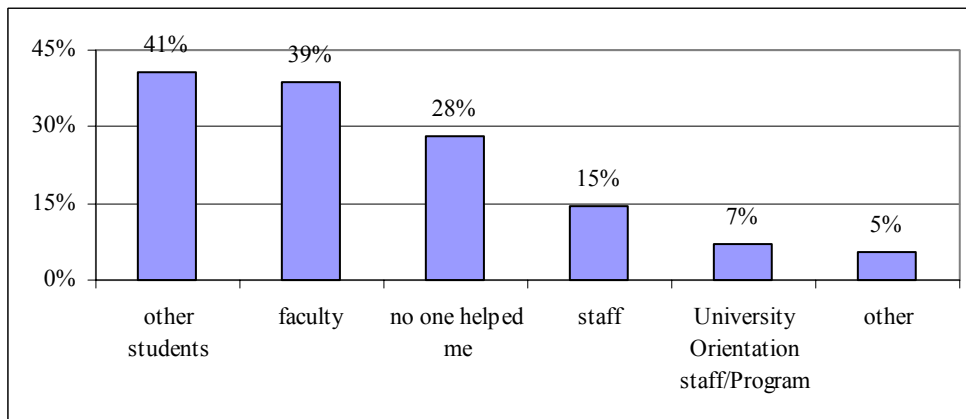
Forty-one percent of transfer students found other students at Mason to be particularly helpful to them in adjusting to life at Mason. Thirty-nine percent said faculty at Mason were helpful and 15% mentioned staff. More than one fourth of the respondents said no one helped them in this transition.

Figure Six: The Most Difficult Aspect of Transition to Mason



\*The figures in the graph do not ADD to 100% due to multiple selections.

Figure Seven: Is there anyone who was particularly helpful to you in adjusting to life at Mason?



\*The figures in the graph do not ADD to 100% due to multiple selections.

## V. Academic Preparation and Change of Major

### 1. Academic Preparation

Forty-three percent of transfer students thought their previous institutions prepared them very well for study at Mason; 37% said they were well prepared and 16% said they were fairly well prepared.

### 2. Change of Major: Frequency and Reasons

When transferring into Mason, 52% of students applied for their same major, 32% changed their major and the remaining 17% did not declare a major at their previous institutions. After transferring into Mason, three fourths completed their original major, 23% changed their major field of study one or two times and 1% changed more than three times.

Among the students who changed their major at Mason, 65% said it was because the new major better fit their career goals or interests. Thirty-four percent reported lack of interest in the previous major, 21% had academic difficulties in the previous major and 19% were dissatisfied with the previous program.

Figure Eight: How well did your previous institution prepare you for study at Mason?

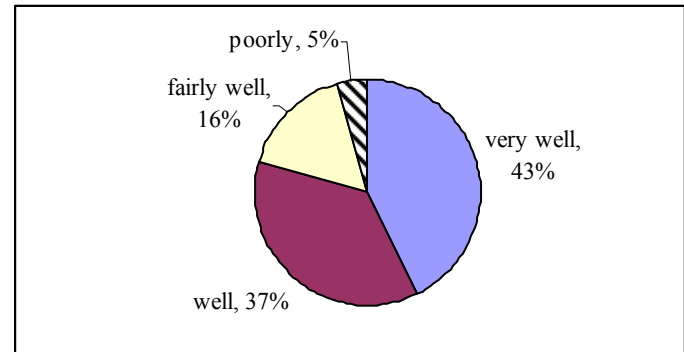


Table Three: Reasons for Changing Major (For those who Changed Major after Transferring to Mason)

Please explain why you changed your major (select all that apply).	Percentage
The new major better fit my career goals/interests.	65%
Lack of interest in the previous major	34%
Academic difficulties in the previous major	21%
Dissatisfaction with the previous program	19%
Reputation of the new program or the faculty in the new program	8%
Other reasons	9%

## VI. Educational Outcomes

At the time of graduation, over 50% of transfer students thought Mason had contributed “very much” to their growth in the following areas:

- Critical thinking and analysis (62% rated “very much”)
- Written communication (62%), and
- Oral communication (54%).

Mason’s contributions were rated comparatively lower in three areas: western civilization (28% rated “very much”), arts (27%), and understanding and applying ethics in information technology (27%). These lower ratings are probably related to students not taking general education courses in these areas.

Transfer students who started Mason in different years had significantly different opinions about Mason’s contribution to their growth in the following seven areas: synthesis, information technology, literature, U.S. history, arts, western civilization and understanding and applying ethics in information technology. Transfer students who started in 2003 reported the *highest* level of growth in synthesis among all four groups (as shown in Table Five); but they reported the *lowest* level of growth in almost all the other six categories. This is probably because most students who started in 2003 and graduated in 2005 had completed their general education at another institution, and *synthesis* and *English 302* are the only general education courses they took at Mason. (The synthesis course was added to general education requirements in fall 2003.)

Students who enrolled in 2001 or 2002, are more likely to say that Mason has made substantial contribution to their growth in information technology, U.S. history, arts, western civilization, and understanding and applying ethics in information technology. Students who started in 2000 or earlier reported the highest contribution in literature.

Table Four suggests that for some skills emphasized in Mason’s general education program, particularly critical thinking and analysis, written communication, and oral communication, Mason made almost an equal contribution to transfer students’ growth no matter when they first entered Mason.

Table Four: Mason’s Contribution to Student Growth

<b>Indicate the extent to which Mason contributed to your growth in each of the following:</b>	<b>Very much</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Mean</b>
critical thinking and analysis	62%	32%	5%	1%	3.55
written communication	62%	31%	5%	2%	3.52
oral communication	54%	33%	10%	4%	3.37
global understanding	49%	37%	11%	4%	3.31
synthesis*	46%	37%	11%	5%	3.24
social and behavioral sciences	47%	34%	13%	6%	3.22
quantitative reasoning	42%	38%	14%	6%	3.16
information technology*	41%	38%	17%	5%	3.14
literature*	35%	45%	14%	6%	3.09
scientific reasoning	37%	40%	15%	8%	3.07
U.S. history*	37%	35%	18%	9%	3.01
natural sciences	31%	38%	18%	13%	2.87
arts*	27%	42%	17%	14%	2.82
western civilization*	28%	36%	20%	17%	2.75
understand and apply ethics in IT*	27%	36%	21%	16%	2.73

\*Indicates significant differences in level of satisfaction between students who enrolled at Mason in different years.

Table Five: Mason’s Contribution to Student Growth, by Year of Enrollment\*

<b>Mean Comparison (Rated on 1-4 scale: 1=not at all; 4=very much)</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2000 or earlier</b>	<b>Sig.**</b>
synthesis	<b>3.34</b>	3.27	3.18	3.16	0.015
information technology	3.03	3.17	<b>3.22</b>	3.17	0.014
literature	2.94	3.13	3.11	<b>3.19</b>	0.000
U.S. history	2.93	3.04	<b>3.13</b>	2.91	0.010
arts	2.61	<b>2.92</b>	<b>2.92</b>	2.83	0.000
western civilization	2.56	2.85	<b>2.87</b>	2.75	0.000
understand and apply ethics in IT	2.56	<b>2.86</b>	2.76	2.72	0.000

\* Only those areas in which statistically significant differences were found are shown here.

\*\* This column shows the test results from Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). A result <.05 indicates that the mean values are significantly different across the four groups.

## VII. Verbatim Student Comments on Transition to Mason

This section summarizes student comments on the transition to Mason. The original question on the survey was: *What was the most difficult aspect of your transition to Mason? Please explain.* Because of the way this question was asked, most of the comments were negative – students talked about frustrations or problems they encountered at Mason, not only limited to the initial transition period but their entire educational experience at Mason. There were only a few positive comments about a smooth transition to Mason, although 46% of transfer students said they had a smooth transition.

The following findings are supported by direct citations from student comments. Keep in mind that negative comments were solicited. Some frustration may have been avoided if students attended the University Orientation Program for Transfer Students, or met their advisors on a regular basis, or if they had been active in campus activities. The University might consider the following to improve the transfer experiences for most students:

- Enhance student understanding of University policies on transfer requirements, especially those regarding credit transfer/evaluation
- Enhance student awareness of services for transfer students
- Emphasize student participation in the Orientation Program
- Emphasize regular meetings between students and their academic advisors in the major

### **1. Reasons for a Smooth Transition:**

Forty-six percent of transfer students had no difficulty in transitioning to Mason. From their comments, we suspected that many of these students had one or more of the following characteristics:

#### **They come from local areas and got help from family and friends who attended Mason before their arrival.**

- No difficulties in transferring to Mason – [I] grew up in the area, comfortable with the region and knew other students.
- Fortunately for me, my brother and cousins attended the University upon my arrival, so it made my transition smooth.

#### **They had clear plans and expectations before transferring into Mason.**

- I entered Mason as an adult working student. I had all my plans laid out and I took advantage of all the opportunities that Mason offered for me.
- I was very focused on what I wanted to do by the time I had enrolled at Mason.

#### **They made necessary adjustments to their study habits and got involved in campus life.**

- The overall experience has been good. I had to enhance my studies in order to gain full knowledge of my courses.
- The cultural and ethnic differences between the students here are huge- which was an adjustment for me, but also was very cool!

#### **They took advantage of opportunities and support for transfer students provided by Mason.**

- The school provides all the necessary facilities to assist the students to be successful and enjoy their educational and life experience in Mason.
- I did not encounter any difficulties when I transferred to Mason. The staff and the orientation were excellent.

### **2. Possible Reasons/Causes for Academic Difficulties**

From the transfer students who reported academic difficulties during the transition, we summarized a list of possible reasons or causes:

#### **Academic Demands Higher at Mason/Academically Under-prepared**

- The most difficult aspect of transition was to adapt to the rigor of a four year university compared to a community college.
- I had academic difficulties in some classes because community college wasn't as demanding. I had to adjust to studying more and writing more papers.
- The studying behavior between a community college and the university were different in many terms. For example, it required a lot more studying time and communication between friends and professor to complete a course successfully.
- The Computer Science courses at [Northern Virginia Community College] (NOVA) did not use a Unix environment which made the transition to GMU very difficult. This was ultimately one of the major reasons for my change of major. (*Note: At least four transfer students mentioned the same problem in their comments.*)

### **Late Registration for Classes at Mason\***

- When I came to Mason from NOVA, I came at the beginning of Spring Semester and by orientation all of the courses that I was interested in taking were full. It was extremely difficult to find classes that were compatible with my schedule while at Mason.
- The classes I was forced to take my first semester at Mason were four hard classes because I couldn't break them up. Every class I wanted was full during registration...
- The only problem was that transfer students registered very late, it impacted my ability to get the right classes. I probably could have finished a semester earlier if more classes had been available to me then.

*\* Note: transfer students are often admitted late. They can only register after going to the Orientation; otherwise, they have to wait until the final week before a semester starts.*

### **Frustration with Credit Transfer/Credit Evaluation**

- I was very disappointed in the terrible initial transfer credit evaluation. Not enough information is provided to transfer students in the case they want to get a class re-evaluated. I have talked to many people who were not aware they could get a class re-evaluated... During orientation students should be told how to re-evaluate a class if they feel it was inaccurately transferred on their record.
- Not all my classes were transferred as I had hoped and I was required to retake classes that were almost exact to classes I had completed elsewhere.
- The transfer of credits [was difficult for me] due to the fact that my associates degree was not accepted and I had to retake general education requirements.
- NOVA claims that its program for transfer is the best for transferring to Mason. This is not true, I ended up taking a lot of classes that I thought were transferable, but actually turned out to be electives at Mason.

### **Large Class Size at Mason Made Student-Faculty Interaction Difficult**

- The size of the classes made it more difficult to get aid from teachers or any one else...
- My previous institution had smaller classes, professors recognized me by name, professors and students relationship were better and their offices were nearer to the classes. Whereas GMU professors' offices are further, need appointment most of the time. Most professors are part time, their interest are different from the students.
- Sheer size of GMU made me just a number in lectures, which made it tough [for me] to adjust to a new environment.

### **Different Grading Systems Used by Different Professors**

- I was dissatisfied with the grading system here. Making the GPA depend on + and - but not requiring ALL professors to use that, screwed my GPA. I came in with a 3.75 and am leaving with a 3.4 because A's are not A's but A- and B+. Some professors don't even use the scale; therefore, even if you receive a B+ they only submit a B.
- The grading system [in my program] is primarily subjective and allows for biased or preferential treatment of some students...

### **Dissatisfaction with Faculty/Teaching in the Program**

- I think that Mason, especially my program, needs to screen their professors in order to find teachers that can TEACH, and make the material interesting and understandable. I've had several teachers who did not meet with students and did not make an effort to make the material digestible for students. I've had teachers who set expectations that no student in the class ever reached. Learning should be a combination of good teaching and reachable expectations.
- It is my belief that instructors [in my program] spend a great deal of time professing his/her knowledge rather than disseminating the subject matter. This creates an atmosphere of competition instead of making the student feel as if his/her success is the primary goal... Adjunct professors are not thoroughly screened before being allowed to interact with students in the program. The program is constantly changing (claiming for improvement) and does not have a proven system to educate students. It does not seem as if the student's success is the primary goal...; when 100 students out of a graduating class fail the license exam and need remediation, I think the system needs reevaluation.

- In general, I found the professors inaccessible to students except for strict circumstances. Mason has changed in the past few years because it is trying to become a much larger institution. Because of this desire, personal interaction between professors and students and the professors' love for teaching has dropped dramatically. Students are numbers now instead of people as it was when I first came here.

### **3. Dissatisfaction with Academic Advising**

- I didn't feel like there was a great deal of guidance/support from the department or my academic advisor.
- I was told on more than one occasion that my academic advisor couldn't help me because I was a transfer student. Too difficult to deal with.
- My main problem was advisors. They were uninformative and just gave their most used answers. They seemed to be clueless to the individual student.
- It took a lot of effort to understand exactly my status, I am a transfer student, and my graduation requirements. Nobody explained that part to me; I figured it out on my own. Although the administrative staff throughout the campus were very helpful and pleasant when I asked them questions.
- I received no help from the university on procedural questions when I first started. I was not told how to register, where things were or who to talk to about academic questions. A packet including answers to these questions would have been helpful. When I did find out who my advisor was, he was less than helpful with my questions. He was also very hard to get in touch with. The school I transferred from provided much more support for its students. At Mason, one is very much on their own.
- I received inadequate information about a minor in special education. I was advised to take six graduate level classes which I took every semester from induction. It wasn't until the summer of 04 when I applied to the graduate school did I find out the information I received was not "completely accurate."
- I felt like I was never supported by my academic advisor or my college. In fact, I have never met my academic advisor. When planning what classes to take, or understanding what path I was on, I was completely alone in making decisions. I, as a student, have felt completely alone in my progress here at George Mason... As a part-time student, I feel that most of the support is directed elsewhere. With such a large number of students being working professionals, perhaps George Mason should review how they treat this class of students.

### **4. Financial Difficulties**

- I struggled a bit financially because tuition was much more than what I was paying before I transferred to Mason plus the books were more expensive also, alongside the parking sticker, new student fee, etc. Tuition rate was o.k. when I first started Mason but then it went up and it hasn't gone down.
- Coming from another country and not being able to get aid was very difficult to concentrate on academics and pay next semesters tuition.
- It was very hard to get the amount of financial aid I needed and the process was difficult.

### **5. Social Difficulties**

Although only 17% of transfer students said social difficulties were the most difficult aspect of their transition to Mason, many experienced frustrations when they tried to be socially involved with other students who came to Mason earlier, or lived on campus, or were different from themselves in age or ethnicity. Other transfer students, mostly working adult students, admitted that they had no intention of being socially involved.

#### **Hard to Get Socially Involved with Other Students**

- As a transfer student it was harder to meet people, there were not many events catering to transfer students socially, and not very many social events for upper classmen in general.
- Students of GMU are busy, most are working. Students usually hang out with their races, and international students are more difficult to get along with than local students.
- It seems everyone had already formed groups of close friends. I think this is because they were together since freshman year, and lived on campus. For me who transferred in my junior year, and lived at home, it wasn't easy trying to cut in and socialize.

- I'm amazed at how little social interaction I've had during my 3 years at Mason, especially since I consider myself an outgoing person. I am a commuter, and I know that has played a part in me not making connections with other on-campus students, but I also commuted to my previous university, and I did not encounter the same issue. I'm not sure why it's been such a challenge to develop relationships here, and as such I'm not sure that I have a proposal for what GMU can do to improve the situation. I do think it is something worth looking into though, as I have heard very similar comments from other students about this experience, and I do think it affects the camaraderie (or lack thereof) felt at the school.
- I did not know anyone here and it took me a while to realize that you have to be involved in organizations at Mason to get to know people because a lot of people at Mason still act like they are in high school with their cliques.
- It's difficult to get involved socially when you are not at the school from day one of your freshman year. It's hard to meet people other than in your classes because everyone has a set group of friends prior to your arrival.

#### **Lack of Proper Peer Group – Age Differences**

- I'm from another culture and found it difficult to mingle with peers; possibly because I am also an adult learner and people were either too young or too busy to stick around with me.
- I was 24 years old when I transferred to GMU, so it was difficult to relate to students so much younger than me. I came here only to finish my education so it was hard to relate with many of my peers.
- I am a student in my 30's and the lack of a peer group can lead to a feeling of isolation.
- I was a returning student, age 30, had been a nurse for 5 years. I felt very old and outdated with all the youngsters... Still, the classes suited me fine, I just needed to adjust my frame of reference sometimes to understand the kids.

#### **Living off Campus Making Social Interaction Difficult**

- As both a transfer and commuting student, I found that I did not know many people in my classes. In addition, the distance I had to travel made it difficult to get together with folks. I also found that night classes were especially prohibiting when it came to making friends because many of the students had full time jobs and were in and out of the class without a word. As a transferred commuter, it was difficult to make friends. All I could do was go to class and then go home because of family responsibilities.
- When I transferred, I became a commuter instead of living on campus, and that hurt my chance to make long-lasting friendships that didn't already exist while at college.
- It's such a big commuter school and since I didn't stay on campus, making and gaining friends was difficult. The best way to make long lasting friends in Mason is to join a club/organization.

#### **6. Parking**

- The most difficult aspect of Mason is undoubtedly the parking issue. It is extremely frustrating to pay a large amount of money for a parking decal, only to find that there are never any parking spots available. This causes the commuting student to drive around searching for a place, often causing many students (and teachers) to be late for class. On my very first day of school at Mason, I drove around for 45 minutes before finding a parking spot. At that time, I seriously considered withdrawing from Mason and transferring to another school right away
- It is very difficult for commuter students to be involved in social aspect of school if there are no parking spaces available for us. As a commuter student, I spent extremely too much time locating a parking space. There should be a parking lot for long-distance commuters, as well as more spaces in general (that you don't have to pay extra for, we are not made of money).

#### **7. Physical and Learning Disability**

- I am disabled and had problems with my service animal on campus (especially with a professor).
- Many teachers did not know how to deal with deaf student like me. I was frustrated. Many of them discriminated me but I tried everything to fit in. I didn't have many good professors; some professors won't be flexible like slowing or clearing up with lectures since I am deaf.
- [My difficulty was: ]Dealing with my learning disability in regards to contacts with professors and feeling substandard because of it.

## 2004-05 Graduating Senior Survey - University Results

### I. Educational Experience (Transfer Students ONLY)

1. Indicate the extent to which George Mason University contributed to your growth in each of the following:

	not at all		a little		somewhat		very much		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
arts	231	13.9%	285	17.2%	698	42.0%	446	26.9%	2.82	0.98
critical thinking and analysis	20	1.2%	79	4.7%	529	31.7%	1,039	62.3%	3.55	0.64
global understanding	61	3.7%	179	10.8%	608	36.6%	813	48.9%	3.31	0.81
information technology	77	4.6%	281	16.9%	627	37.8%	675	40.7%	3.14	0.86
literature	105	6.3%	229	13.8%	744	44.8%	582	35.1%	3.09	0.86
natural sciences	210	12.7%	302	18.2%	633	38.2%	512	30.9%	2.87	0.99
oral communication	58	3.5%	159	9.6%	546	33.0%	891	53.9%	3.37	0.80
quantitative reasoning	94	5.7%	238	14.4%	631	38.3%	686	41.6%	3.16	0.87
scientific reasoning	128	7.7%	252	15.2%	660	39.9%	616	37.2%	3.07	0.91
social and behavioral sciences	96	5.8%	217	13.1%	569	34.3%	776	46.8%	3.22	0.88
synthesis	83	5.0%	190	11.5%	620	37.5%	761	46.0%	3.24	0.85
U.S. history	152	9.5%	283	17.7%	568	35.5%	598	37.4%	3.01	0.96
understand and apply ethics in IT	269	16.3%	343	20.8%	600	36.4%	438	26.5%	2.73	1.03
western civilization	275	16.6%	325	19.7%	587	35.5%	466	28.2%	2.75	1.04
written communication	40	2.4%	85	5.1%	508	30.8%	1,018	61.7%	3.52	0.71

2. Have you ever changed your major while you were a Mason student?

	no		1 or 2 times		3 or 4 times	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
have you ever changed your major	1,257	75.5%	388	23.3%	21	1.3%

3. Please explain why you changed your major. (Select ALL that apply.)

	Reason
	Count
Reason: academic difficulties	89
Reason: lack of interest	142
Reason: dissatisfaction	77
Reason: fit my career goals/interests	268
Reason: reputation	33
Other reason	37



## II. Enrollment Status (Transfer Students ONLY)

### 4. What year did you first enter George Mason University?

	year of enrollment	
	Count	%
2003	425	25.6%
2002	576	34.7%
2001	345	20.8%
2000	144	8.7%
1999	64	3.9%
1998	39	2.4%
1997	19	1.1%
1996 or earlier	47	2.8%

### 5. Which of the following statements best described your enrollment status at Mason?

	native students		transfer students	
	Count	%	Count	%
Enrollment status	1,255	42.9%	1,669	57.1%

## III. Transfer Student Experiences

### 6. How many credits did you transfer from other institution(s) to George Mason?

	credits transferred in	
	Count	%
0-14	64	3.9%
15-29	190	11.6%
30-44	264	16.1%
45-59	330	20.1%
60-89	633	38.6%
90 or more	157	9.6%

### 7. How many credits did you complete at the previous institution(s)?

	Credits completed	
	Count	%
0-14	47	3.0%
15-29	153	9.9%
30-44	212	13.7%
45-59	241	15.6%
60-89	669	43.3%
90-119	131	8.5%
120 or more	91	5.9%

**8. In what type of institution(s) did you enroll before coming to**

	type of institutions	
	Count	%
a community/junior college	891	53.5%
a 4-year college	478	28.7%
other postsecondary school	10	0.6%
two or more of the above types of schools	287	17.2%

**9. Why did you transfer to Mason rather than another institution? (Please select ALL that apply.)**

	YES
	Count
A. academic reputation	603
B. availability of academic programs in which I am interested	881
C. Opportunities for practicum, internship, community-based program, or to study abroad	165
D. Low tuition	657
E. Availability of scholarship/financial aid	148
F. Location - close to home	1,276
G. Location - broader geographic location of the University	193
H. Recommendations from friends/parents/significant others	487
I. Personal, family or work issues	552
J. Graduates get good jobs	159
K. Graduates gain admission to top graduate schools	48
L. Size of the college is right	196
M. Other	105

**10. From the list above, please select the one SINGLE most important reason that you transferred to Mason.**

	most important reason	
	Count	%
A. academic reputation	149	9.5%
B. availability of academic programs in which I am interested	294	18.7%
C. Opportunities for practicum, internship, community-based program, or to study abroad	25	1.6%
D. Low tuition	134	8.5%
E. Availability of scholarship/financial aid	8	0.5%
F. Location - close to home	600	38.2%
G. Location - broader geographic location of the University	42	2.7%
H. Recommendations from friends/parents/significant others	54	3.4%
I. Personal, family or work issues	164	10.5%
J. Graduates get good jobs	26	1.7%
K. Graduates gain admission to top graduate schools	2	0.1%
L. Size of the college is right	6	0.4%
M. Other	65	4.1%

**11. Did you change your major when you transferred to Mason?**

	yes		no		didn't declare major at the previous institution	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Did you change your major when transferred to Mason?	526	31.6%	864	51.9%	276	16.6%

**12. How well did your previous institution prepare you for your study at Mason?**

	poorly		fairly well		well		very well		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
How well did your previous institution prepare you for study at Mason?	76	4.6%	267	16.0%	613	36.8%	711	42.7%	3.18	0.86

**13. Please rate your satisfaction with the following items:**

	very dissatisfied		dissatisfied		somewhat satisfied		very satisfied		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
the admissions process at Mason	45	2.7%	89	5.4%	616	37.3%	903	54.6%	3.44	0.72
the university orientation program for transfer students	79	5.1%	148	9.6%	723	46.9%	591	38.4%	3.18	0.81
the departmental orientation program for transfer students	101	7.0%	208	14.4%	661	45.8%	474	32.8%	3.04	0.87
the financial aid process at Mason	70	6.1%	160	13.9%	481	41.7%	442	38.3%	3.12	0.87
the number of credits I was able to transfer to Mason	142	8.6%	219	13.2%	558	33.7%	737	44.5%	3.14	0.95
the university support for transfer students	113	7.5%	207	13.7%	657	43.4%	537	35.5%	3.07	0.89
your academic performance in the first semester after you transferred	79	4.8%	173	10.5%	561	34.0%	836	50.7%	3.31	0.84
your academic performance at Mason, overall	20	1.2%	78	4.7%	698	42.1%	863	52.0%	3.45	0.64
your adjustment to the environment at Mason	26	1.6%	89	5.4%	618	37.8%	903	55.2%	3.47	0.67
your social involvement with other students	93	5.8%	191	12.0%	747	47.0%	559	35.2%	3.11	0.83

**14. What was the most difficult aspect of your transition to Mason? (Please select one or more categories and explain.)**

	YES
	Count
I didn't have any difficulties	768
academic	321
financial	297
social	280
other	178

**15. Is there anyone who was particularly helpful to you in adjusting to life at Mason? (Select ALL that apply.)**

	YES
	Count
faculty	642
other students	671
staff	241
university orientation staff/program	113
no one helped me	462
other	90

#### IV. Satisfaction (ALL Students)

##### 16. How important to you are the following aspects of your education at Mason?

	very unimportant		unimportant		important		very important		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
academic courses	16	0.5%	14	0.5%	469	16.1%	2,413	82.9%	3.81	0.44
advising you received in your major	41	1.4%	159	5.5%	911	31.3%	1,797	61.8%	3.54	0.67
campus intellectual life	63	2.2%	556	19.2%	1,475	51.0%	800	27.6%	3.04	0.74
education you received in general	11	0.4%	42	1.4%	594	20.5%	2,251	77.7%	3.75	0.49
education you received in your major	6	0.2%	9	0.3%	313	10.8%	2,565	88.7%	3.88	0.35
opportunities to improve your writing	22	0.8%	182	6.3%	1,188	41.0%	1,508	52.0%	3.44	0.65
opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	103	3.5%	541	18.6%	1,310	45.1%	953	32.8%	3.07	0.81
out-of-class access to Mason faculty	40	1.4%	336	11.6%	1,455	50.2%	1,066	36.8%	3.22	0.70
overall Mason experience	20	0.7%	100	3.5%	1,284	44.4%	1,491	51.5%	3.47	0.60
preparation for a technological world	27	0.9%	230	8.0%	1,223	42.3%	1,413	48.8%	3.39	0.67
sense of belonging at Mason	121	4.2%	613	21.2%	1,284	44.3%	878	30.3%	3.01	0.83

##### 16. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your education at Mason?

	very dissatisfied		dissatisfied		satisfied		very satisfied		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
academic courses	22	0.8%	151	5.2%	1,687	58.6%	1,017	35.3%	3.29	0.60
advising you received in your major	278	9.7%	583	20.3%	1,271	44.2%	746	25.9%	2.86	0.91
campus intellectual life	81	2.8%	414	14.5%	2,022	70.9%	335	11.7%	2.92	0.61
education you received in general	28	1.0%	151	5.3%	1,745	60.8%	947	33.0%	3.26	0.60
education you received in your major	34	1.2%	190	6.6%	1,303	45.4%	1,342	46.8%	3.38	0.66
opportunities to improve your writing	41	1.4%	189	6.6%	1,631	56.8%	1,009	35.2%	3.26	0.64
opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	41	1.4%	115	4.0%	1,579	55.0%	1,138	39.6%	3.33	0.62
out-of-class access to Mason faculty	70	2.4%	294	10.2%	1,799	62.7%	708	24.7%	3.10	0.66
overall Mason experience	65	2.3%	224	7.8%	1,822	63.5%	759	26.4%	3.14	0.64
preparation for a technological world	67	2.3%	325	11.3%	1,908	66.6%	566	19.7%	3.04	0.63
sense of belonging at Mason	203	7.1%	442	15.5%	1,750	61.2%	464	16.2%	2.87	0.76

##### 17. If you were to do it all over again, would you attend George Mason?

	definitely no		probably no		probably yes		definitely yes		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
Would you attend Mason again?	125	4.3%	381	13.1%	1,352	46.5%	1,048	36.1%	3.14	0.80

**18. How often did the following statements apply to your SYNTHESIS course?**

	never		seldom		sometimes		very often		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
this course held my interest	170	6.2%	248	9.0%	1,042	37.8%	1,293	47.0%	3.26	0.86
this course improved my oral presentation skills	290	10.5%	489	17.8%	1,092	39.7%	878	31.9%	2.93	0.96
this course improved my writing skills	205	9.5%	367	17.0%	799	36.9%	793	36.6%	3.01	0.96
this course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns	198	7.2%	295	10.8%	935	34.1%	1,313	47.9%	3.23	0.91
this course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	172	6.3%	246	9.0%	881	32.2%	1,441	52.6%	3.31	0.88
this course required me to think critically	159	5.8%	227	8.3%	876	31.9%	1,482	54.0%	3.34	0.86
this course was intellectually challenging	197	7.2%	263	9.6%	902	32.8%	1,385	50.4%	3.27	0.90
this course was well organized	217	7.9%	239	8.7%	995	36.2%	1,297	47.2%	3.23	0.91

**V. Future Educational Plans (ALL Students)**

**19. Do you plan to pursue additional education within the next year?**

	additional education	
	Count	%
will enroll fulltime in graduate/professional school	693	23.8%
will enroll part-time in graduate/professional school	768	26.4%
will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/professional license	239	8.2%
all other plans	1,208	41.5%

**20. At graduation, how much money will you owe for tuition, books, and other educational expenses?**

	educational debt	
	Count	%
none	1,255	45.8%
\$5000 or less	258	9.4%
\$5001-10000	390	14.2%
\$10001-15000	301	11.0%
\$15001-20000	222	8.1%
\$20001-25000	113	4.1%
\$25001 or more	200	7.3%

## VI. Personal Growth (ALL Students)

### 21. Indicate the extent to which George Mason University contributed to your growth in each of the following:

	not at all		a little		somewhat		a lot		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
cooperativeness	181	6.2%	365	12.5%	1,523	52.3%	841	28.9%	3.04	0.81
creativity	155	5.3%	439	15.1%	1,361	46.7%	959	32.9%	3.07	0.83
drive to achieve	136	4.7%	279	9.6%	1,126	38.6%	1,375	47.2%	3.28	0.82
emotional health	518	17.8%	642	22.1%	1,225	42.1%	525	18.0%	2.60	0.98
leadership ability	222	7.6%	429	14.7%	1,285	44.1%	977	33.5%	3.04	0.89
physical health	763	26.2%	694	23.8%	999	34.3%	456	15.7%	2.39	1.04
self-confidence (intellectual)	133	4.6%	307	10.5%	1,237	42.4%	1,239	42.5%	3.23	0.81
self-confidence (social)	268	9.2%	413	14.2%	1,250	42.9%	984	33.8%	3.01	0.92
self-understanding (awareness)	168	5.8%	350	12.0%	1,213	41.6%	1,184	40.6%	3.17	0.85
understanding of others	111	3.8%	353	12.2%	1,267	43.6%	1,174	40.4%	3.21	0.80
applying ethical principles in my life	222	7.6%	445	15.3%	1,241	42.7%	999	34.4%	3.04	0.90
sense of responsibility to be involved in social/civic issues	295	10.2%	503	17.3%	1,211	41.7%	894	30.8%	2.93	0.94

### 22. Are you currently registered to vote?

	yes		no		not applicable	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
are you currently registered to vote?	2,272	77.9%	399	13.7%	245	8.4%

### 23. If yes, how often do you vote in local/national/legislative elections?

	never		rarely		sometimes		always		Mean	Std Deviation
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%		
how often do you vote?	114	5.1%	208	9.3%	848	37.8%	1,071	47.8%	3.28	0.83

## Demographics of All Graduates and Respondents

In the 2004-2005 academic year (summer and fall 2004, and spring 2005), 3,405 students graduated with 3,415 undergraduate degrees (10 students had double majors). Of these, 2,924 individuals, who earned 2,933 degrees (9 had double majors), responded to the Survey. This resulted in an 85.9% overall response rate.

### Gender

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
Female	1685	57.6%	1912	56.2%	88.1%
Male	1057	36.1%	1283	37.7%	82.4%
Unknown	182	6.2%	210	6.2%	86.7%
Total	2924	100.0%	3405	100.0%	85.9%

### Age at Graduation

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
22 OR YOUNGER	720	24.6%	786	23.1%	91.6%
23-24	999	34.2%	1170	34.4%	85.4%
25-27	554	18.9%	649	19.1%	85.4%
28-30	208	7.1%	261	7.7%	79.7%
31-34	150	5.1%	184	5.4%	81.5%
35 OR OLDER	290	9.9%	350	10.3%	82.9%
UNKNOWN	3	0.1%	5	0.1%	60.0%
Total	2924	100.0%	3405	100.0%	85.9%

### Ethnicity

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
African American	260	8.9%	316	9.3%	82.3%
Asian American	474	16.2%	556	16.3%	85.3%
Hispanic American	211	7.2%	241	7.1%	87.6%
Native American	10	0.3%	14	0.4%	71.4%
Non-resident Alien	139	4.8%	191	5.6%	72.8%
Other/Unknown American	212	7.3%	257	7.5%	82.5%
White American	1618	55.3%	1830	53.7%	88.4%
Total	2924	100.0%	3405	100.0%	85.9%

### Final Grade Point Average

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
2.000-2.500	247	8.4%	314	9.2%	78.7%
2.501-3.000	1005	34.4%	1176	34.5%	85.5%
3.001-3.500	988	33.8%	1152	33.8%	85.8%
3.501-4.000	681	23.3%	758	22.3%	89.8%
UNKNOWN	3	0.1%	5	0.1%	60.0%
Total	2924	100.0%	3405	100.0%	85.9%

Final Grade Point Average	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
Survey Respondents	3.09	3.12	0.45
All Graduates	3.08	3.10	0.45



## Academic Unit/College\*

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
College of Visual and Performing Arts	196	6.7%	220	6.4%	89.1%
College of Arts and Sciences	1553	52.9%	1790	52.4%	86.8%
School of Management	586	20.0%	721	21.1%	81.3%
College of Education and Human Development	59	2.0%	69	2.0%	85.5%
School of Information Technology and Engineering	319	10.9%	356	10.4%	89.6%
College of Nursing and Health Science	220	7.5%	259	7.6%	84.9%
Total	2933	100.0%	3415	100.0%	85.9%

\* Students/respondents who graduated with double degrees from different academic programs were counted twice in the table.

## Major\*

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
Accounting (ACCT) (BS)	146	5.0%	175	5.1%	83.4%
Administration of Justice (ADJ) (BS)	94	3.2%	109	3.2%	86.2%
Anthropology (ANTH) (BA)	17	0.6%	19	0.6%	89.5%
Art (History) (ARTH) (BA)	12	0.4%	12	0.4%	100.0%
Art (Studio) (ARTS) (BA)	30	1.0%	33	1.0%	90.9%
Art (Studio) (ARTS) (BFA)	9	0.3%	10	0.3%	90.0%
Athletic Training (ATT) (BS)	6	0.2%	6	0.2%	100.0%
Art and Visual Technology (AVT) (BA)	85	2.9%	98	2.9%	86.7%
Art and Visual Technology (AVT) (BFA)	17	0.6%	20	0.6%	85.0%
Biology (BIOL) (BA)	20	0.7%	21	0.6%	95.2%
Biology (BIOL) (BS)	93	3.2%	102	3.0%	91.2%
Business Administration (BUAD) (BS)	1	0.0%	2	0.1%	50.0%
Civil and Infrastructure Engr (CEIE) (BS)	11	0.4%	11	0.3%	100.0%
Chemistry (CHEM) (BA)	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	100.0%
Chemistry (CHEM) (BS)	17	0.6%	18	0.5%	94.4%
Communication (COM) (BA)	259	8.8%	295	8.6%	87.8%
Speech Communication (COMM) (BA)	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	100.0%
Computer Engineering (CPE) (BS)	26	0.9%	26	0.8%	100.0%
Computer Science (CS) (BS)	108	3.7%	132	3.9%	81.8%
Dance (DANC) (BA)	2	0.1%	2	0.1%	100.0%
Dance (DANC) (BFA)	7	0.2%	10	0.3%	70.0%
Decision Sci & Mgmt Info Syst (DMIS) (BS)	131	4.5%	166	4.9%	78.9%
Economics (ECON) (BA)	32	1.1%	41	1.2%	78.0%
Economics (ECON) (BS)	41	1.4%	55	1.6%	74.5%
Electrical Engineering (ELEN) (BS)	55	1.9%	58	1.7%	94.8%
English (ENGL) (BA)	116	4.0%	134	3.9%	86.6%
Earth Systems Science (ESSC) (BS)	3	0.1%	4	0.1%	75.0%
Finance (FNAN) (BS)	131	4.5%	158	4.6%	82.9%
Foreign Languages (FRLN) (BA)	26	0.9%	32	0.9%	81.3%
Geography (GEOG) (BA)	7	0.2%	7	0.2%	100.0%
Geography (GEOG) (BS)	2	0.1%	2	0.1%	100.0%
Government and Politics (GOVT) (BA)	1	0.0%	1	0.0%	100.0%
Government & Intl Politics (GVIP) (BA)	167	5.7%	192	5.6%	87.0%
Health, Fitness & Rec Resources (HFRR) (BS)	45	1.5%	52	1.5%	86.5%
History (HIST) (BA)	77	2.6%	83	2.4%	92.8%
Health Science (HSCI) (BS)	27	0.9%	30	0.9%	90.0%
Interdisciplinary Studies (INDS) (BA)	5	0.2%	5	0.1%	100.0%
Individualized Study (INDV) (BIS)	93	3.2%	110	3.2%	84.5%
Information Technology (INFT) (BS)	107	3.6%	115	3.4%	93.0%

Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduates		Response Rate
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	
Integrative Studies (INTS) (BA)	88	3.0%	107	3.1%	82.2%
Integrative Studies (INTS) (BS)	4	0.1%	7	0.2%	57.1%
Mathematics (MATH) (BA)	3	0.1%	4	0.1%	75.0%
Mathematics (MATH) (BS)	11	0.4%	15	0.4%	73.3%
Management (MGMT) (BS)	103	3.5%	124	3.6%	83.1%
Marketing (MKTG) (BS)	74	2.5%	96	2.8%	77.1%
Medical Technology (MTCH) (BS)	6	0.2%	6	0.2%	100.0%
Music (MUSI) (BA)	12	0.4%	13	0.4%	92.3%
Music (MUSI) (BM)	16	0.5%	16	0.5%	100.0%
Nursing (NURS) (BSN)	193	6.6%	229	6.7%	84.3%
Physical Education (PHED) (BSED)	8	0.3%	11	0.3%	72.7%
Philosophy (PHIL) (BA)	6	0.2%	6	0.2%	100.0%
Physics (PHYS) (BS)	4	0.1%	8	0.2%	50.0%
Psychology (PSYC) (BA)	144	4.9%	164	4.8%	87.8%
Psychology (PSYC) (BS)	103	3.5%	117	3.4%	88.0%
Public Administration (PUAD) (BS)	26	0.9%	29	0.8%	89.7%
Religious Studies (RELI) (BA)	5	0.2%	6	0.2%	83.3%
Russian Studies (RUST) (BA)	8	0.3%	10	0.3%	80.0%
Sociology (SOCL) (BA)	34	1.2%	38	1.1%	89.5%
Social Work (SOCW) (BS)	26	0.9%	28	0.8%	92.9%
Systems Engineering (SYST) (BS)	12	0.4%	14	0.4%	85.7%
Theatre (THR) (BA)	17	0.6%	17	0.5%	100.0%
Total	2933	100.0%	3415	100.0%	85.9%

*\*Students/respondents who graduated with double degrees from different academic programs were counted twice in the table.*



**III. Transfer Student Experience** Questions 4 – 15 for Transfer students only (those who selected “b” in question 5)

6. How many credits did you transfer from other institution(s) to George Mason?  
 0 – 14       15 – 29       30 – 44       45 – 59       60 – 89       90 or more
7. How many credits did you complete at the previous institution(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
8. In what type of institution(s) did you enroll before coming to Mason?  
 A community/junior college  
 A 4-year college or university  
 Other postsecondary school (for example: technical, vocational, business)  
 Two or more of the above types of schools
9. Why did you transfer to Mason rather than another institution? (Please select all that apply.)
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Academic reputation  | h. <input type="checkbox"/> Recommendations from friends/parents/significant others |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of academic programs in which I am interested                           | i. <input type="checkbox"/> Personal, family, or work issues                        |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for practicum, internship, community-based program, or to study abroad | j. <input type="checkbox"/> Graduates get good jobs                                 |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> Low tuition  | k. <input type="checkbox"/> Graduates gain admission to top graduate schools        |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of scholarships/financial aid   | l. <input type="checkbox"/> Size of college is right                                |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> Location – close to home   | m. <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: _____                            |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> Location – broader geographic location of the University                             |   |
10. From the list above, using letters a. through m., please select the one SINGLE most important reason that you transferred to Mason. Single most important reason is \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Did you change your major when you transferred to Mason?  
 Yes       No       I didn't declare a major at the previous institution.
12. How well did your previous institution prepare you for study at Mason?  
 Very well       Well       Fairly well       Poorly
13. Please rate your satisfaction with the following items (1-4 scale):

	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't Know
The admissions process at Mason	4	3	2	1	DK
The <u>university</u> orientation program for transfer students	4	3	2	1	DK
The <u>departmental</u> orientation program for transfer students	4	3	2	1	DK
The financial aid process at Mason	4	3	2	1	DK
The number of credits I was able to transfer to Mason	4	3	2	1	DK
The university support for transfer students	4	3	2	1	DK
Your academic performance in the first semester after you transferred	4	3	2	1	DK
Your academic performance at Mason, overall	4	3	2	1	DK
Your adjustment to the environment at Mason	4	3	2	1	DK
Your social involvement with other students	4	3	2	1	DK

14. What was the most difficult aspect of your transition to Mason? (Please select one or more categories and explain.)  
 I didn't have any difficulties       Academic       Financial       Social       Other  
 Explanation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. Is there anyone who was particularly helpful to you in adjusting to life at Mason? (Select all that apply.)  
 Faculty       Other students       Staff       University Orientation Staff/Program       No one helped me  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

## IV. Satisfaction

16. How important to you are the following aspects of your education at George Mason and how satisfied are you with each?

	Level of <b>Importance</b>				Level of <b>Satisfaction</b>			
	Very important	Important	Unimportant	Very unimportant	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Academic courses	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Advising you received in your major	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Campus intellectual life	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Education you received in general	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Education you received in your major	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Opportunities to improve your writing	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Opportunities to interact with students from diverse backgrounds	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Out-of-class access to Mason faculty	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Overall Mason experience	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Preparation for a technological world	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1
Sense of belonging at Mason	4	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

17. If you were to do it all over again, would you attend George Mason?

definitely yes       probably yes       probably no       definitely no

18. How often did the following statements apply to your SYNTHESIS COURSE (Synthesis courses include: ADJ 303, ANTH 400, ARTH 394, AVT 497, BINF 354, BIOL 301, BIS 490, CAS 313, CEIE 490, COMM 326, COMM 362, COM 454, CS 306, CS 491, DANC 490, ECE 447, ECE 492, ECE 493, ECON 309, EOS 304, ENGL 325, FREN 376, GEOG 304, GOVT 490, GOVT 491, HEAL 490, HIST 300, HIST 499, IT 492, MUSI 490, NCLC 308, NURS/HSCI 465, PHED 415, PHED 441, PHIL 309, PHIL 377, PRLS 490, RELI 490, SOCI 377, SOCW 323, SOM 498, SPAN 461, SPAN 466, SPMT 490, SYST 495, THR 440, THR 496, TOUR 490, UNIV 342, UNIV 442) Other \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_?

From the above list, please circle your synthesis course.

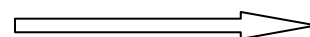
	Very Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
This course held my interest.	4	3	2	1
This course improved my oral presentation skills.	4	3	2	1
This course improved my writing skills.	4	3	2	1
This course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	4	3	2	1
This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	4	3	2	1
This course required me to think critically.	4	3	2	1
This course was intellectually challenging.	4	3	2	1
This course was well organized.	4	3	2	1

## V. Future Educational Plans

19. Do you plan to pursue additional education within the next year?

- Yes, I will enroll full-time in graduate/professional school.  
 Yes, I will enroll part-time in graduate/professional school.  
 Yes, I will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/professional license.  
 Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree or certificate program.  
 No, I don't plan to be enrolled in course work.

20. At graduation, how much money will you owe for tuition, books, and other educational expenses? \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .00



## VI. Personal Growth

21. Indicate the extent to which George Mason University contributed to your growth in each of the following:

	A lot	Somewhat	A little	Not at all
Cooperativeness	4	3	2	1
Creativity	4	3	2	1
Drive to achieve	4	3	2	1
Emotional health	4	3	2	1
Leadership ability	4	3	2	1
Physical health	4	3	2	1
Self-confidence (intellectual)	4	3	2	1
Self-confidence (social)	4	3	2	1
Self-understanding (awareness)	4	3	2	1
Understanding of others	4	3	2	1
Applying ethical principles in my life	4	3	2	1
Sense of responsibility to be involved in social/civic issues	4	3	2	1

22. Are you currently registered to vote?

Yes  No  Not applicable

23. If yes, how often do you vote in local/national/legislative elections?

Always  Sometimes  Rarely  Never  Not applicable

## VII. Comments/recommendations/observations on your experiences at Mason

24. Please mark those areas on which you wish to comment and use the space below to make comments/recommendations/observations about Mason: *(Add additional pages if necessary and attach and return with survey.)*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic advising              | <input type="checkbox"/> Resources (lab, Internet, library, bookstore, etc.)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Admissions and tuition         | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff, general  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career services and counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Student life and residence halls                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education in Major             | <input type="checkbox"/> University Management (food stands, gym, parking, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty, general               | <input type="checkbox"/> Other   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial aid                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Education              |  |

*August 2004 Graduates - please use the nine digit student identification number you have used to register for Mason courses in the past. Fall 2004 or spring 2005 Graduate - please enter your new student identification number which begins with the letter "G."*

*Student identification number:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Your student identification number is necessary for us to verify that only graduating seniors have completed the survey. All individual responses are confidential and no report will identify you as an individual.) Thank you for your participation.*

This survey was prepared and distributed by the Office of Institutional Assessment

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