Graduating Senior Survey Report 2006-2007

Graduates from Summer 2006, Fall 2006 and Spring 2007

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Office of Institutional Assessment

July 2008

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

I. Introduction

The Office of Institutional Assessment has been conducting Graduating Senior Surveys since 1989. Senior students who graduated in summer 2006, fall 2007 and spring 2007 were directed to complete the 2007 Graduating Senior Survey online as they completed their online graduation application. In this academic year, **3,695** graduates earned a total number of 3,715 undergraduate degrees from Mason. Among them, **3,146** completed the survey for a response rate of **85%**.

The 2007 Graduating Senior Survey included a variety of topics: learning outcomes in the major and in general education, writing experience in upper-level courses, synthesis courses, global understanding, and advising. This report presents survey results for each topic and compares student responses by demographic characteristics and/or by college affiliation when appropriate. A special analysis on learning outcomes and student competence, published earlier in an *In Focus* report, is included in Section V of this report.

Detailed information on college and program level results of the survey is available online at https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2007/index.cfm. Feedback from readers is appreciated. We can be contacted at assessment@gmu.edu.

1. Data Summary Table

Total Respondents = 3,146
Response Rate = 85%

Transfer Status of the Respondents

• Started college at Mason as a freshman	42%
• Transferred to Mason: <=14 credits were accepted	4%
• Transferred to Mason: 15-29 credits were accepted	8%
• Transferred to Mason: 30-44 credits were accepted	10%
• Transferred to Mason: 45-59 credits were accepted	13%
• Transferred to Mason: 60 credits or more were accepted	23%

General Education Learning Outcomes – Perceived Competence

How competent do you feel about your knowledge or skill in each of the following:	Very competent	Competent	Mean [a]
Written Communication	55%	42%	3.52
Critical Thinking & Analysis	45%	51%	3.41
Oral Communication	46%	49%	3.39
Social & Behavioral Sciences	46%	48%	3.39
Synthesis	44%	50%	3.36
Global Understanding	40%	52%	3.33
Literature	39%	54%	3.32
Western Civilization	30%	57%	3.15
Ethics in IT	33%	51%	3.14
Information Technology	31%	54%	3.14
Scientific Reasoning	30%	55%	3.14
Quantitative Reasoning	30%	54%	3.13
Natural Sciences	27%	56%	3.09
Arts	27%	54%	3.06

[a] *The survey included four options: 1=not at all competent, 2=not very competent, 3=competent and 4=very competent. Means were calculated based on the 4-point scale.*

Perceived Competence in the Field of Study

How competent do you feel about your knowledge/skill in each of the following:	Very competent	Competent	Mean [a]
Knowledge of important work in my field	40%	57%	3.36
Ability to analyze work in my field	48%	49%	3.45
Ability to create original work in my field	36%	52%	3.24
Ability to conduct original research in my field	36%	55%	3.25

[a] *The survey included four options: 1=not at all competent, 2=not very competent, 3=competent and 4=very competent. Means were calculated based on the 4-point scale.*

Experiences in Synthesis Courses

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the synthesis course you have taken/are taking:	Strongly agree	Agree	Mean [b]
The course required me to think critically.	44%	48%	3.34
The course required me to organize ideas, info, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	41%	49%	3.29
The course was intellectually challenging.	40%	48%	3.27
The course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	39%	49%	3.24
The course was well organized.	38%	51%	3.24
The course held my interest.	38%	50%	3.24
The course improved my writing skills.	25%	52%	2.99
The course improved my oral presentation skills.	23%	52%	2.95

[b] *The survey included four options: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree and 4=strongly agree. Means were calculated based on the 4-point scale.*

Global Understanding Outcomes

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:	Strongly agree	Agree	Mean [c]
I am able to identify causes of some significant global issues.	45%	51%	3.40
I have a better understanding of a specific global problem or issue than I did before I came to Mason.	46%	44%	3.34
I have a better understanding of a specific area or region outside my home country or region than I did before I came to Mason.	45%	43%	3.33
I think about the global impact of U.S. policies now more than I did before I came to Mason.	42%	41%	3.23

[c] *The survey included four options: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree and 4=strongly agree. Means were calculated based on the 4-point scale.*

Writing Experiences

In how many 300-level or above courses did you have the opportunity to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your instructor on an earlier draft?	>= Five	20%
	Four	10%
	Three	21%
	Two	24%
	One	17%
	None	7%

Advising During the Senior Year

During your senior year, how often were you in touch with an advisor to discuss your course schedule, graduation requirements, application to graduate school, etc?	Three times or more	29%
	Twice	29%
	Once	25%
	Not at all	18%

Advising – Where the Meeting Took Place [d]

If you met with an advisor during your senior year, did the meeting take place: (Check ALL that apply)	In person	91%
	Through email	35%
	On the phone	10%
	Other meeting places	1%

[d] *The table included the students who were in touch with an advisor at least once during the senior year.*

Would Attend Mason Again

If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?	Definitely yes	45%
	Probably yes	43%
	Probably no	10%
	Definitely no	3%

- ***At the end of the survey, students were given an opportunity to comment on their Mason experiences. All student comments can be accessed at: https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2007/index.cfm***
- ***A complete frequency table for all survey questions can be found at the end of this report in the appendix. Department/major level frequency tables are available at the above website.***

2. Demographics for Survey Respondents and Response Rates

Selected Characteristics of the Respondents

- 61% of the respondents are women.
- 52.5% are white Americans, 43% are minority Americans and 4.5% are international students.*
- 91% are VA residents.*

**These figures are very similar to the overall demographic characteristics of the 2007 graduating class. For more detailed statistics, go to: https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2007/index.cfm*

Summary of College Response Rates

The survey was administered after the former College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) was re-organized into two colleges: the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and the College of Science (COS). In addition, the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) graduated the first class of undergraduates in this year. College response rates vary from 79% to 90% (see Table 1). Among the total respondents, 47% graduated from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and 20% from the School of Management.

Table 1. College Response Rates Summary

College Name	College Code*	Total Respondents	Response Rate
College of Education and Human Development	**CEHD**	75	79%
College of Health and Human Services	**CHHS**	250	87%
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	**CHSS**	1484	86%
College of Science	**COS**	213	90%
College of Visual and Performing Arts	**CVPA**	163	83%
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution	**ICAR**	14	88%
School of Management	**SOM**	620	83%
Volgenau School of Information Technology & Engineering	**VIT&E**	333	84%

The "College Codes" listed in Table One are used throughout the report!

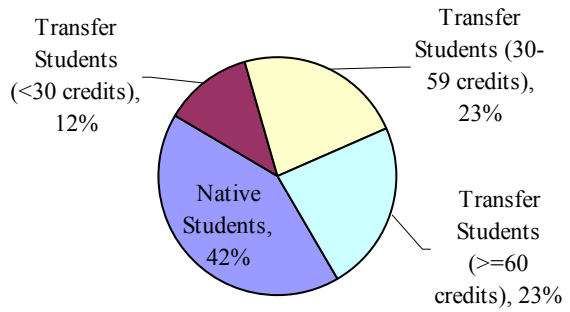
Self-Reported Transfer Status

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

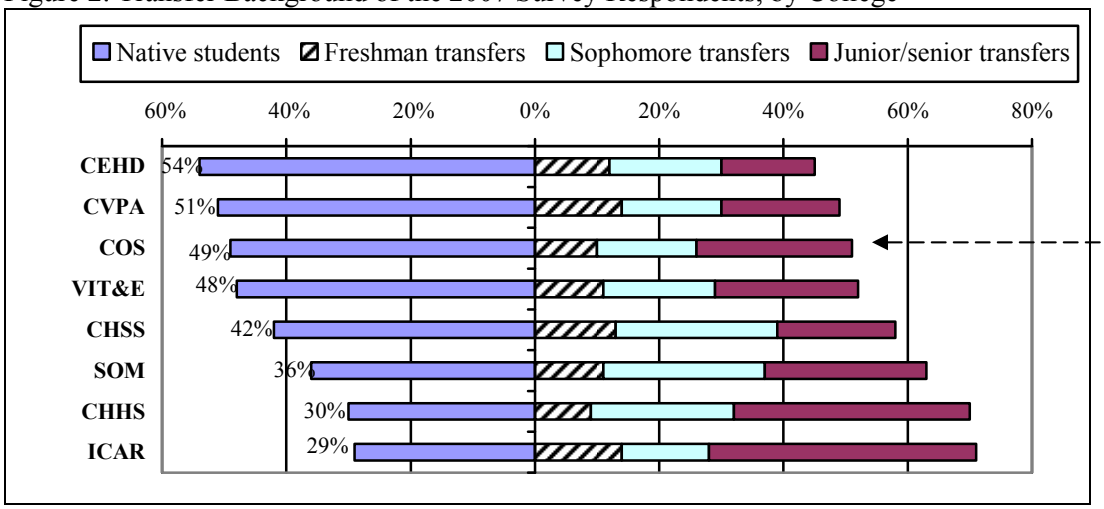
In the past three years, about 57-58% of the survey respondents identified themselves as transfer students. In 2007 (as shown in Figure 1), 42% of the survey respondents were self-reported native students; 12% were transfer students who transferred less than 30 credits into Mason; 23% transferred 30-59 credits into Mason; and the remaining 23% transferred 60 credits or more into Mason. The last group of transfer students, accounting for 39% of all transfer students, completed most of their general education courses at other institutions and transferred into upper level classes (junior or senior class).

Figure 1: Self-Reported Transfer Status



More than half of the survey respondents from **CEHD** and **CVPA** said they started college at Mason as a first-time freshman – the highest percentages among all the colleges. For **SOM**, **CHHS**, and **ICAR**, more than 60% of the survey respondents were transfer students.

Figure 2. Transfer Background of the 2007 Survey Respondents, by College



Transfer status affects students' responses to questions regarding their educational experiences at Mason. As the *In Focus* report, Section V, indicates, over 82-97% of native students said they took courses *at Mason* that emphasized arts, western civilization, natural sciences, scientific reasoning, oral communication, or quantitative reasoning. In contrast, 51-67% of transfer students took or remembered taking courses *at Mason* emphasizing the above areas.

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

II. Synthesis and Global Understanding

Section Summary

- *Experiences in Synthesis Courses*: for two consecutive years, students have given very positive evaluations to synthesis courses. The 2007 respondents rated their experiences more positive than their 2006 counterparts. Compared to native students, transfers are more likely to say that the synthesis courses challenged them and helped to improve their competence and skills. Student experiences vary significantly by college: ICAR students rated their synthesis experience significantly higher than students from other colleges.
- *Growth in Global Understanding*: most students reported growth in global understanding during their years at Mason, particularly those from academic programs emphasizing global understanding competence. Overall, 88-90% of the respondents agreed they had a better understanding of a specific global problem/issue or a specific area/region outside their home country than they did before they came to Mason.
- *Perceived Competence in Synthesis and Global Understanding*: the majority of respondents believe they are competent or very competent in synthesis or global understanding. Students who recalled taking courses emphasizing synthesis or global understanding were significantly more likely to rate themselves as competent, compared to those who did not take or did not recall taking such courses.

1. Experiences in Synthesis Courses

Every undergraduate at Mason is required to take a synthesis course – the culminating course of Mason's general education program. Synthesis courses are designed to engage students in the connection of meaning and the synthesis of knowledge. The survey results indicate that 85% of the 2007 graduates had taken or were taking a synthesis course at the time of the survey, compared to 93% of the 2006 graduates. Such a difference was likely caused by a change in academic policy – the May 2007 graduates could apply for intent to graduate in fall 2006, one semester earlier than the previous cohort. Therefore, the percentage of 2007 respondents who completed the survey one semester before they *officially* graduated was slightly higher than that of 2006, and the 2007 graduates may not have finished a synthesis course.

Note: The following results only include the respondents who had taken or were taking a synthesis course at the time they completed the survey.

Cohort Comparison. Both the 2006 and 2007 respondents gave high ratings to synthesis courses. Among a set of eight statements (see Table 2), both cohorts of students were most likely to agree or strongly agree with the following statements:

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

Over 40% of the 2007 respondents "strongly agreed" and another 48-49% "agreed" with the above statements. Relatively fewer respondents from both cohorts agreed that the synthesis courses improved their writing or oral communication skills; nonetheless, about one fourth of the 2007 respondents strongly agreed and about half agreed with these two statements.

The average rating for each of the eight statements in 2007 is significantly higher than that of 2006. In 2007, more respondents selected "strongly agree" for these statements than the previous year.

Table 2. Student Experiences in Synthesis Courses, 2006 vs. 2007

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the synthesis course you have taken/are taking:	Frequency, 2007			Mean Comparison*		
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	2007	2006	Sig.†
This course required me to think critically.	44%	48%	8%	**3.34**	3.22	0.000
This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	41%	49%	10%	**3.29**	3.18	0.000
This course was intellectually challenging.	40%	48%	11%	**3.27**	3.14	0.000
This course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	39%	49%	12%	**3.24**	3.12	0.000
This course was well organized.	38%	51%	11%	**3.24**	3.13	0.000
This course held my interest.	38%	50%	12%	**3.24**	3.11	0.000
This course improved my writing skills.	25%	52%	23%	**2.99**	2.93	0.009
This course improved my oral presentation skills.	23%	52%	24%	**2.95**	2.89	0.007

Note:
For each of the statements, the mean for 2007 (**bold**) is significantly higher than that of 2006 ($p<0.05$).

** The 2007 results were based on 85% of the total respondents and the 2006 results were based on 93% of the respondents who had taken or were taking a synthesis course at the time they completed the survey.*

† Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree.

Comparison by Transfer Status. Transfer students were more likely to say that synthesis courses challenged them and helped to improve their competence and skills. Compared to native students, transfers were significantly more likely to agree that the course required them to think critically; to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships; and was intellectually challenging. More transfer students said the course improved their writing or oral presentation skills.

Table 3. Student Experiences in Synthesis Courses, by Transfer Status

Average level of agreement with the following statements about synthesis courses:	Native Students	Transfers	Sig.*
This course required me to think critically.	3.30	**3.36**	.035
This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	3.25	**3.32**	.023
This course was intellectually challenging.	3.24	**3.29**	.040
This course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	3.23	3.25	
This course held my interest.	3.22	3.25	
This course was well organized.	3.22	3.26	
This course improved my writing skills.	2.92	**3.04**	.000
This course improved my oral presentation skills.	2.91	**2.98**	.036

***** *Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree. Only statistically significant differences ($p<.05$) are shown in the "Sig." column.*

College/Course Comparison. On the survey, the respondents were asked to select the synthesis course they took or were taking from a list of all approved synthesis courses before responding to the questions about their experiences. Respondents' perceptions vary significantly by college for each of the eight statements. And within most colleges, students' experiences vary significantly by the synthesis course they took or were taking.

ICAR students gave significantly higher ratings for each of the statements about the synthesis course than students from any other college at Mason. For example, 69% of the ICAR students "strongly agreed" that the synthesis course engaged them in the process of synthesizing ideas, i.e., organizing ideas, information or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships. Two thirds of ICAR students also strongly agreed that the synthesis course was well organized.

At the course level, the respondents enrolled in the following courses (see Table 4) gave relatively higher ratings to their experiences:

Table 4. Most Highly Rated Synthesis Courses

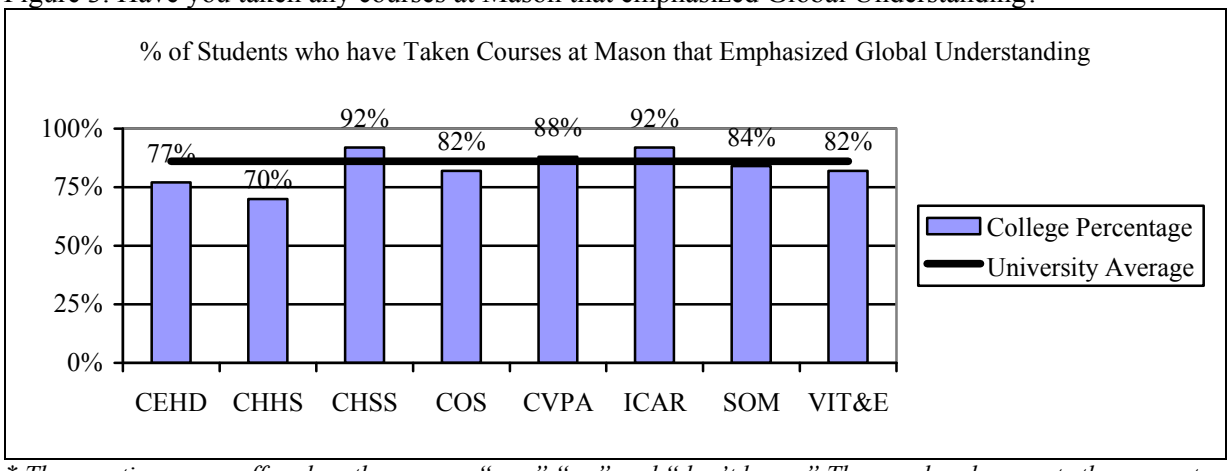
Course Number	Academic Program
ATEP 441*	Athletic Training
BIS 490	Individualized Studies
CEIE 490	Civil and Infrastructure Engineering
COMM 326	Communication
CONF 490	Conflict Analysis and Resolution
DANC 490	Dance
ECE 492/493	Electrical and Computer Engineering
ECON 309	Economics
GOVT 490/491	Government & International Politics
HIST 499	History
MUSI 495*	Music
NCLC 308/491*	Integrative Studies
PHED 415*	Physical Education
SPAN 461*	Foreign Languages
SYST 495	System Engineering

Note:
1. * The university offers more than 50 synthesis courses for students and courses are added/removed over time. MUSI 495 and SPAN 461 were no longer approved as synthesis courses after Aug 2005. ATEP 441, NCLC 491, PHED 495 are not currently listed as synthesis courses, but for each of them, at least five respondents said it was the one they took. Students can take any synthesis course for which they have the pre-requisites.
2. These courses were selected because they got the highest *average rating of all eight statements* and they are listed in alphabetical order.

2. Global Understanding

Courses Emphasizing Global Understanding. Overall, 86% of the survey respondents said they had taken courses at Mason that emphasized global understanding. Native students (95%) are more likely to say they took such courses at Mason than transfers (80%). Students' responses vary significantly by college. As Figure 3 shows, 92% of the respondents from **CHSS** and **ICAR** said they had taken courses at Mason that emphasized global understanding – the highest percentage among all colleges. In contrast, students from CHHS (70%) are least likely to say they had taken such a course – this is probably related to two factors: 1) curricular emphases of the college, and 2) a particularly large percentage of transfer students among its graduates, who are the least likely to have taken a general education course at Mason emphasizing global understanding.

Figure 3. Have you taken any courses at Mason that emphasized Global Understanding?*



** Three options were offered on the survey: "yes," "no" and "don't know." The graph only reports the percentage of students who said "yes."*

Perceived Growth in Global Understanding. Students who took courses emphasizing global understanding were significantly more likely to report growth in global understanding, compared to those who did not take or who didn't recall taking such a course. As shown in Table 5, nearly half of the "have"-group "strongly agreed" that they were able to identify causes of some significant global issues, compared to 28% of those in the "have-not" or "didn't know" group combined.

Table 5. Global Understanding Learning Outcomes

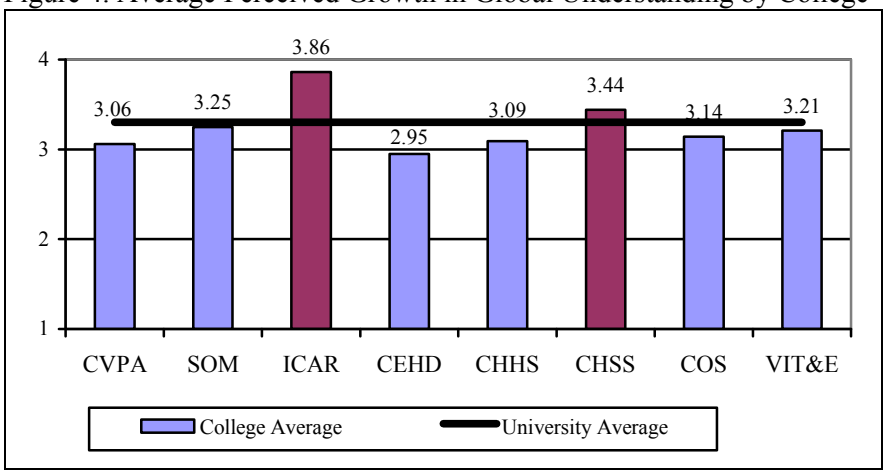
Level of agreement with the following statements:	Have taken a course emphasizing global understanding			Have NOT taken or Did not Know		
	Strongly agree	Agree	Mean*	Strongly agree	Agree	Mean*
I am able to identify causes of some significant global issues.	48%	49%	3.44	28%	64%	3.09
I have a better understanding of a specific global problem or issue than I did before I came to Mason.	49%	42%	3.39	24%	55%	3.16
I have a better understanding of a specific area or region outside my home country or region than I did before I came to Mason.	49%	42%	3.39	24%	51%	3.20
I think about the global impact of U.S. policies now more than I did before I came to Mason.	45%	39%	3.28	24%	47%	3.16

** Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree.*

***Average* Growth in Global Understanding by College/Field of Study.** *A perceived growth in global understanding* for each respondent was calculated by averaging a student's responses to all four questions presented in Table 5. Based on individual growth, an average for all respondents from a college or an academic major was calculated and it ranges from 1-4.

Average perceived growth in global understanding varies significantly by college (see Figure 4) and by field of study. At the college level, **ICAR** students, followed by **CHSS** students, reported the highest average levels of growth. For example, 93% of ICAR students strongly agreed that they had a better understanding of a specific area or region outside their home country/region than they did before coming to Mason. Note: 71% of the ICAR respondents were transfer students!

Figure 4. Average Perceived Growth in Global Understanding by College



Note:
A perceived growth, ranging from 1-4, was calculated for each respondent by averaging an individual's responses to all four questions about global understanding. It is used as the basis for calculating *the average perceived growth* for each college and major.

III. Writing Experiences

Section Summary

- *Courses Emphasizing Written Communication*: 90% of the 2007 respondents said they had taken courses at Mason that emphasized written communication. The percentage is higher among native students (96%) than transfers (86%).
- *Writing Competence*: Students who had taken courses at Mason that emphasized writing were more likely to rate themselves competent in writing, compared to those who did not take or did not recall taking such courses.
- *Opportunities for Revision*: Compared to their counterparts in 2006, the 2007 respondents reported having more upper-level courses in which they had the opportunity to revise their writing after getting feedback from their instructors on an earlier draft.
- *Contribution to Student Learning*: The 2007 respondents were more likely to say the writing experiences in upper-level courses contributed to their learning "a great deal" than their 2006 counterparts.

1. Courses Emphasizing Writing Competence

Mason's Writing Program. To ensure development of writing competence of undergraduate students, Mason has several requirements in place: English 100/101 (first-year composition), English 302 (advanced writing in the disciplines), and Writing Intensive (WI) courses in the major. At least one course in each major (300-level or above) has been designated as a "writing intensive (WI)" course that emphasizes the process of drafting and revision with teacher feedback. Faculty in these courses give comments on drafts of at least one course project and the students then revise and resubmit and/or incorporate into subsequent papers. The draft, feedback, and revision process in WI courses helps students improve their writing and increases their understanding of their field of study.

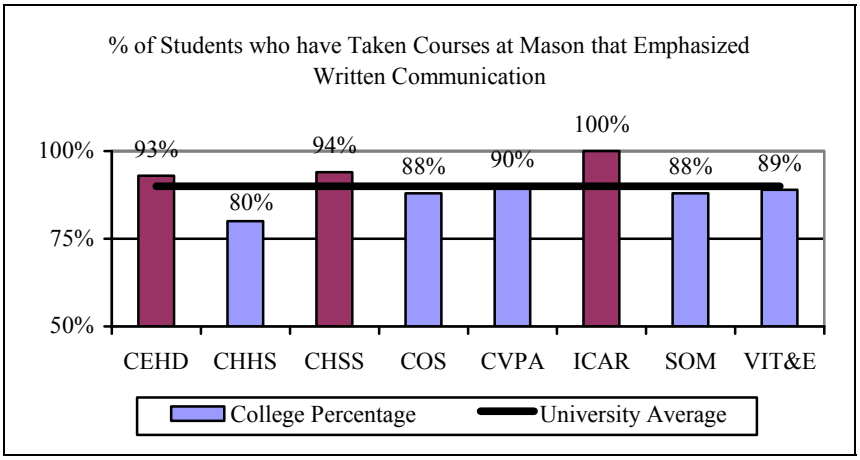
Some academic programs emphasize writing more than others. For example, Economics designates four 300-level WI courses; Music also has four WI courses, two at the 300-level and two at the 400-level; any 400-level course in Art History is a WI course; and any 300-level or above course in Government and International Politics, Public Administration, Administration of Justice, and Integrated Studies is writing intensive. Students are able to test out of English 100/101 or English 302 or transfer credits to fulfill the requirement; but ALL should have taken a WI course (300-level or above) that emphasizes the process of draft, feedback and revision.

Courses Emphasizing Writing. The survey first asked students whether they have taken any courses at Mason that emphasized written communication. Respondents answered this question based on their entire curricular experience at Mason, not just WI courses. The results show that 90% of the 2007 respondents said they had taken courses at Mason that emphasized written communication. The percentage is higher among native students (96%) than transfers (86%).

Figure 5 compares students' responses by college. Among the respondents of ICAR and CHHS, 70% were transfer students. **ALL ICAR** respondents said they had taken courses emphasizing writing – the highest of all colleges; in contrast, 80% of CHHS respondents said the same – the lowest of all. The difference between ICAR and CHHS is probably, in part, due to the curricular emphasis in the major.

Perceived Competence in Writing. When asked to rate their own competence level in writing, about 55% of students think they are "very competent" and 42% "competent." Native students rated themselves slightly higher than transfers. Students who have taken courses at Mason that emphasized writing reported higher levels of competence than those who did not take or who did not recall taking such courses.

Figure 5. Have you taken any courses at Mason that emphasized Written Communication? *



Note:

- *Courses emphasizing written communication* include all courses (at any class level) where respondents felt writing was emphasized. They are not limited to WI courses. For example, English 100/101 is not a WI course but it emphasizes writing.
- *WI courses* are designated by each major. They are 300-level or above and they incorporate the process of draft, feedback and revision.

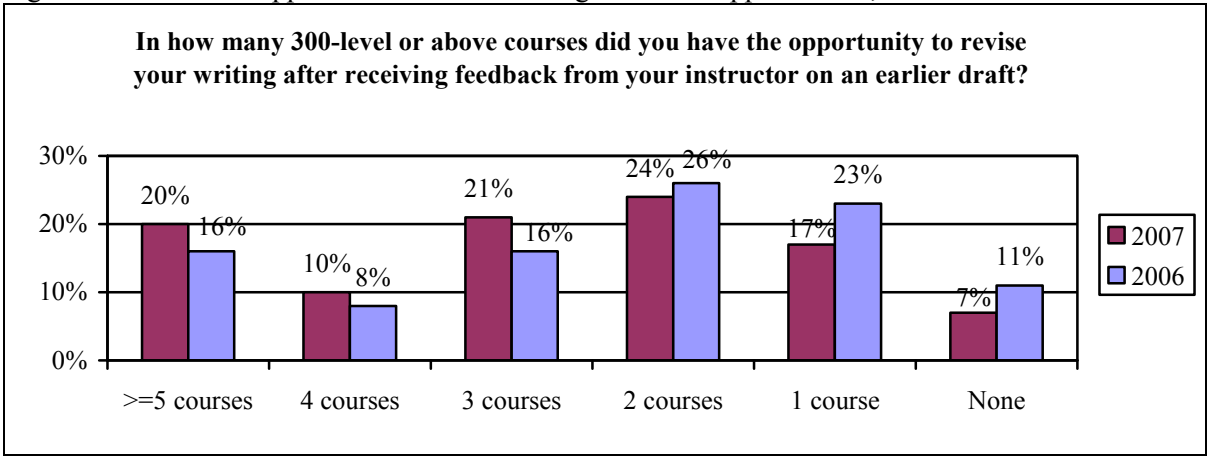
** Three options were offered on the survey: "yes," "no" and "don't know." The graph only reports the percentage of students who said "yes."*

2. The Process of Draft, Feedback and Revision

The exit surveys for 2006 and 2007 included a set of questions suggested by the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee about student writing experiences in 300-level or above courses (excluding English 302). The surveys asked students whether they had any opportunities to revise their writing after receiving feedback from their instructors and whether the feedback and revision process contributed to their learning. As mentioned earlier, although the process of draft, feedback and revision is the major characteristic of WI courses, other upper-level courses in the major may also engage students in this writing process.

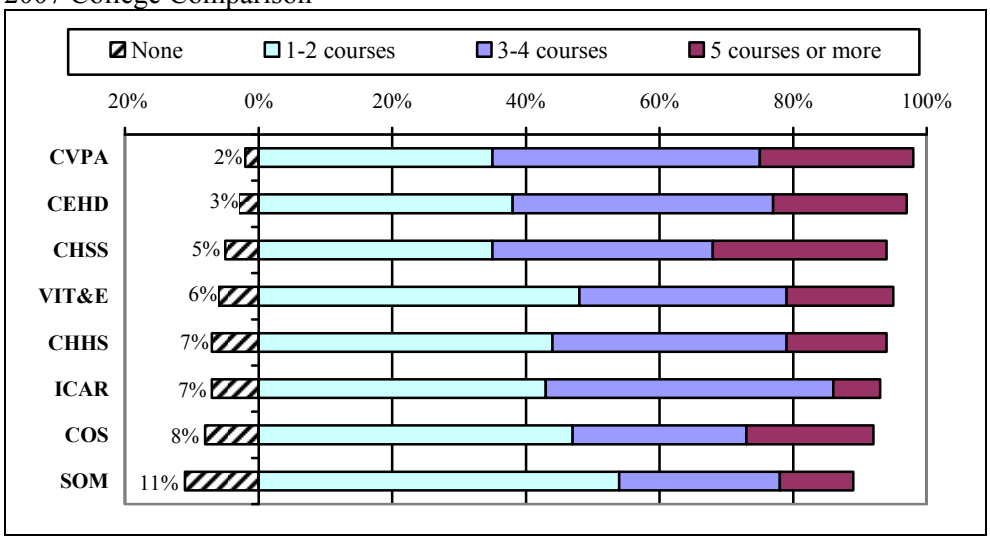
Number of Upper-Level Courses. Students were asked to report in *how many* upper-level courses they had the opportunity to revise their writing after receiving feedback from their instructor on an earlier draft. Compared to 2006, more students in 2007 reported having such opportunities (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Number of Upper-Level Courses having Revision Opportunities, 2006 vs. 2007



At the college level (see Figure 7), only 2-3% of **CVPA** and **CEHD** students said they had no such courses – the lowest among all colleges; SOM has the highest percentage of respondents who said they had no upper-level courses with revision opportunities (11%).

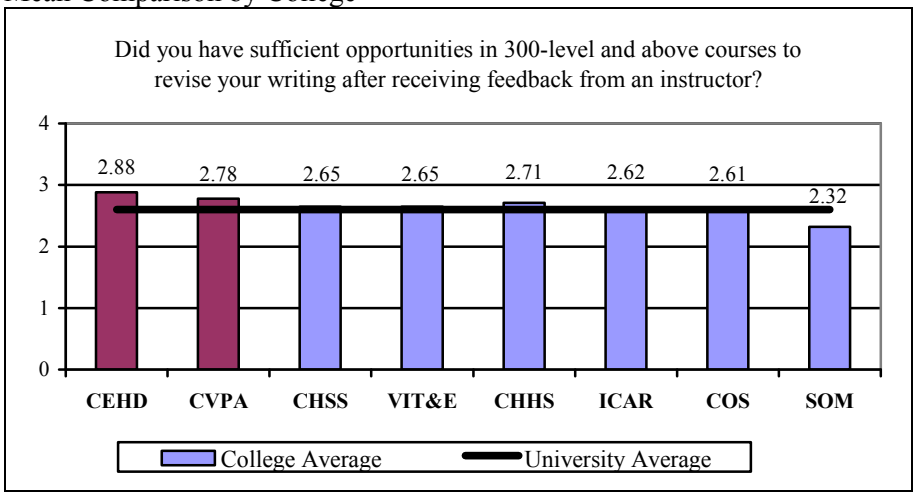
Figure 7. Number of Upper-Level Courses having Revision Opportunities, 2007 College Comparison



Note:
The graph is *sorted* by the percentage of students who selected "none."

Perceived Opportunities for Revision. When asked whether they had ***sufficient*** opportunities in upper-level courses to revise their writing after receiving feedback from an instructor, students' responses largely reflect the results from the previous question (see Figure 8). **CEHD** and **CVPA** students were more likely than students from other colleges to say they had sufficient opportunities. SOM students were least likely to say they had sufficient opportunities.

Figure 8. Perceived Opportunities for Revision – Mean Comparison by College*



**Mean values were calculated on a 0-4 scale: 0=never, 1=rarely, 2=occasionally, 3=frequently, and 4=always.*

3. Contribution to Student Learning

A large percentage of students agreed that the writing experiences in upper-level courses contributed to their learning, as measured by three questions in Table 6. The 2007 respondents are significantly more likely to say "a great deal" to these questions than their 2006 counterparts. About 90% of the 2007 respondents thought the writing assignments in upper level courses had increased their understanding of their field either "a great deal" or "somewhat." A majority also felt these courses, particularly the feedback-and-revision process in these courses, had helped to improve their writing skills and their confidence as a writer.

Table 6. Contribution to Student Learning

To what extent did the 300-level or above courses help you in the following areas?	A great deal	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Mean* 2007	Mean* 2006
The writing assignments from these courses have increased my understanding of my field.	52%	38%	7%	3%	3.39	3.22
The feedback and revision process in these courses has helped me to improve my writing.	47%	43%	6%	3%	3.34	3.14
These courses have improved my confidence as a writer.	47%	42%	8%	3%	3.33	3.15

** Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 4=a great deal, 3=somewhat, 2=very little, and 1=not at all.*

IV. Advising and Future Plans

Section Summary

- *Student Use of Advising Resources*: among a variety of advising resources, students were most likely to seek advising from their official academic advisors, followed by other students and friends. One out of three students would use online resources, such as the web-based version of the University Catalog and the online resources of their major/department.
- *In Touch with Advisor during the Senior Year*: 20% of native students and 16% of transfers did NOT contact their advisor at all during the senior year. ICAR respondents contacted their advisor most often – all of them contacted their advisor at least twice during the senior year.
- *Future Education Plan*: 26% of respondents planned to enroll full-time in graduate/professional school within a year – the highest percentage since 2003; another 19% planned to enroll part-time.
- *Would Enroll in Mason Again*: If they were to do it all over again, 45% of the respondents would "definitely" attend Mason – also the highest percentage since 2003.

1. Student Use of Advising Resources

On a list of eight possible advising resources, students were asked to check all the resources they were likely to use when they had a question or needed clarification regarding an academic problem. As Table 7 presents, students were most likely to contact their official academic advisor – nearly two thirds of them checked this option. About 46% would seek an answer from other students or friends, and one out of three would use online resources (such as the web-version of the University Catalog or their major/department online resources) or contact the major/department staff.

Native students were significantly more likely to seek an answer from other students or friends than transfers, 54% vs. 41%. Native students were also more likely than transfers to use online resources.

At the college level, **ICAR** students were more likely than students from other colleges to say they would seek an answer from their official academic advisor (93%). ICAR students were also more likely to contact their department staff and faculty for advising than students from any other college. VIT&E students were most likely to use online advising resources.

Table 7. Student Use of Advising Resources* - When you had a question or needed clarification regarding an academic problem, from which of the following resources were you more likely to seek an answer? (Check all that apply)

	University	CEHD	CHHS	CHSS	COS	CVPA	ICAR	SOM	VIT&E
My official academic advisor	64%	60%	54%	64%	61%	75%	**93%**	70%	54%
Other students or friends	46%	45%	**57%**	40%	44%	53%	43%	51%	54%
Web-based version of the University Catalog	36%	19%	24%	37%	36%	37%	29%	35%	**46%**
My major/department staff	35%	53%	48%	33%	29%	47%	**64%**	29%	36%
My major/department online resources	34%	28%	29%	35%	32%	31%	43%	28%	**44%**
A faculty member	28%	41%	42%	26%	30%	42%	**57%**	18%	38%
Paper version of the University Catalog	22%	17%	10%	24%	28%	**33%**	29%	18%	26%
Family members	10%	3%	10%	9%	10%	10%	7%	**12%**	9%
Other resources	3%	3%	1%	4%	4%	3%	**7%**	3%	3%

** The table shows the percentage of students who checked a particular advising resource. The highest percentage for each row is **bold** and the lowest percentage is underlined.*

2. Advising during the Senior Year

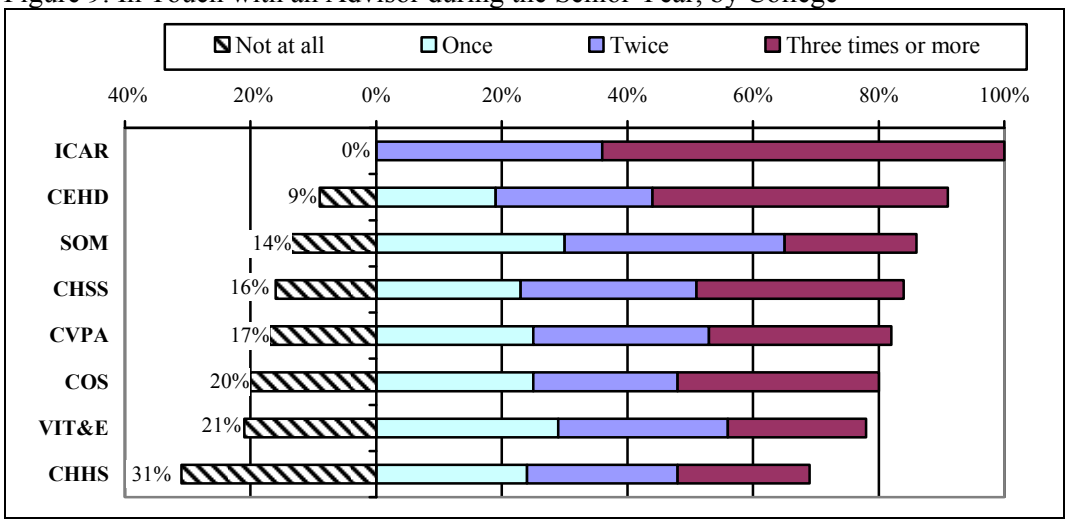
Students were asked to report, during the senior year, how often they were in touch with an advisor to discuss their course schedule, graduation requirements, application to graduate school, etc. Overall, 18% of respondents were not in touch with their advisor at all (see Table 8); the percentage is slightly higher among native students (20%).

Table 8. In Touch with an Advisor during the Senior Year

During SR year, how often were you in touch with an advisor?	Transfer Status	
	Native Students	Transfers
Three times or more	25%	31%
Twice	29%	29%
Once	26%	24%
Not at all	20%	16%

At the college level, **ICAR** and **CEHD** students were not in touch with their advisor *more often* than students from other colleges: two thirds of ICAR students and half of the CEHD students communicated with their advisor at least three times. In contrast, 31% of CHHS respondents did not communicate with their advisors at all during the senior year.

Figure 9. In Touch with an Advisor during the Senior Year, by College



Among the students who communicated with their advisor during the senior year, 90% met their advisors in person, 35% contacted the advisor through email, and 10% used the phone (see Table 9). Student responses vary significantly among colleges. For example, over 95% of COS, CVPA and SOM students met their advisors in person, the highest among all colleges. ICAR and CEHD are mostly likely to contact their advisors via email – over 60% of them did so. In contrast, only 15% of SOM students emailed their advisor. Students rarely speak on the phone with their advisors, but nearly one out of five CEHD students did so in the senior year.

Table 9. When students met with an advisor during the senior year, how did the meeting take place? (Check all that apply)*

	University	CEHD	CHHS	CHSS	COS	CVPA	ICAR	SOM	VIT&E
In person	91%	90%	88%	88%	**95%**	**96%**	86%	**96%**	90%
Through email	35%	60%	27%	42%	33%	31%	**71%**	15%	38%
On the phone	10%	**19%**	10%	13%	5%	6%	14%	8%	5%

The table excludes the students who did NOT meet their advisor during the senior year. Respondents were able to check more than one option. The highest percentage for each row is row is **bold and the lowest percentage is underlined.*

3. Future Educational Plans

Trend analyses. Table 10 shows a five-year trend of students' post-graduate educational plans. The percentage of 2007 graduating seniors who planned to enroll full-time in graduate/professional schools within a year is slightly higher than the previous years – 26% planned to do so; but the percentage of 2007 students who planned to enroll part-time (19%) has dropped by 6 percentage points since 2003.

Table 10. Trend of Future Educational Plans, 2003-2007

Do you plan to pursue additional education within the next year?	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Yes, I will enroll full-time in graduate/ professional school.	22%	23%	24%	23%	26%
Yes, I will enroll part-time in graduate/ professional school.	25%	26%	26%	20%	19%
Yes, I will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/professional license.	9%	8%	8%	7%	7%
Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree/certificate program.	6%	6%	42%*	6%	5%
No, I do not plan to be enrolled in course work.	38%	36%		44%	43%

**The last two options were combined in 2005.*

In 2007, more than 60% of the respondents from the following academic programs* plan to enroll in graduate/professional school:

- Philosophy 100%
- Latin American Studies 100%
- Religious Studies 80%
- Chemistry 72%
- Art History 71%
- Biology 68%
- Health Science 64%
- Government & International Politics 62%

** Programs with less than 3 graduates/respondents are not included in the above list.*

Analyses by college. As noted in previous senior survey reports, students' future educational plans differ significantly by college. And within each college, future educational plans vary from year to year, as shown in Table 11. In 2007, nearly half of the **COS** students planned to enroll full-time in graduate/professional school – the highest among all colleges. **CHSS** and **ICAR** also have a high percentage of students (29%) who planned to enroll full-time. For **VIT&E**, the percentage of students who planned to enroll full-time has steadily increased over the past four years and the percentage planning to enroll part-time has significantly decreased.

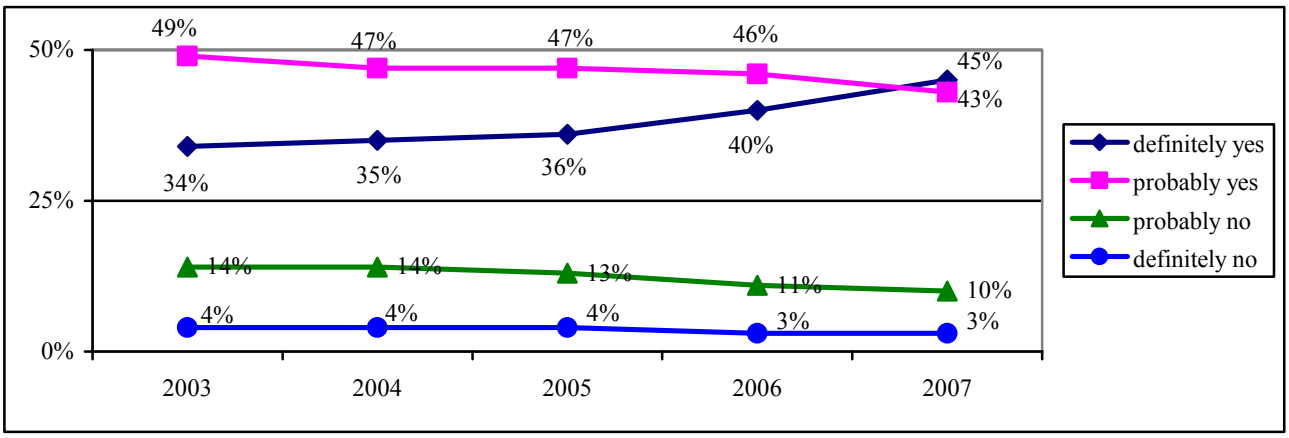
Table 11. Percentage of Students who Plan to Enroll in Graduate/Professional Schools: College Comparison

	Will Enroll Full-time				Will Enroll Part-time			
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2004	2005	2006	2007
All Graduating Seniors	23%	24%	23%	26%	26%	26%	20%	19%
CHSS	30% (CAS)	31% (CAS)	30% (CAS)	29%	22% (CAS)	24% (CAS)	19% (CAS)	19%
COS				49%				14%
CEHD	12%	14%	19%	19%	28%	24%	23%	11%
CHHS	14%	12%	15%	21%	30%	29%	17%	24%
CVPA	16%	27%	22%	13%	17%	13%	7%	15%
VIT&E	16%	18%	20%	21%	48%	39%	28%	23%
SOM	15%	13%	11%	17%	28%	31%	24%	21%
ICAR	--	--	--	29%	--	--	--	14%

4. Would You Attend Mason Again?

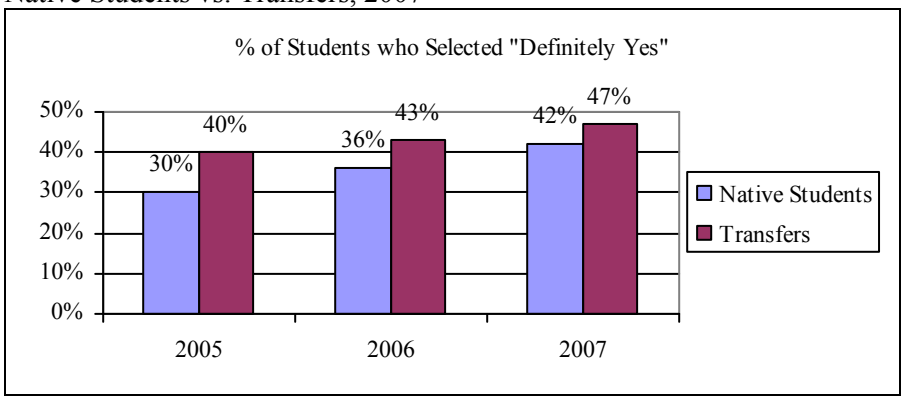
Trend analyses. Over the past five years, more graduating students said "definitely yes" when asked "If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?" In 2007, 45% of the respondents said "definitely yes," an increase of eleven percentage points over 2003 (see Figure 10). Consequently, the percentage of students who said "probably yes" and "probably no" has been going down in the same period.

Figure 10. If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason? 2003-2007



Transfer students are somewhat more likely to say "definitely yes" than native students: 47% of the 2007 transfer students said so, compared to 42% of native students. Over the past three years, the percentage of native students who selected "definitely yes" has increased by twelve percentage points (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?
Native Students vs. Transfers, 2007



At the end of the survey, students were given an opportunity to comment on their experiences at Mason. Those verbatim comments contain more in-depth information about why students were satisfied or dissatisfied with certain experiences. These are available on line at:
https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2007/index.cfm

OIA
Office of Institutional Assessment

In Focus

A Publication of the Office of Institutional Assessment
George Mason University
January 2008 *Volume 13, Number 1*

Office of
Institutional Assessment
D111 Mason Hall
MS 3D2
assessment@gmu.edu
https://assessment.gmu.edu

INSIDE

Learning Outcomes & Student Competence: Results from the 2006-2007 Graduating Senior Survey

I. Introduction

The Office of Institutional Assessment has been conducting Graduating Senior Surveys since 1989. Senior students who graduated in summer 2006, fall 2006 and spring 2007 were directed to complete the Graduating Senior Survey online as they completed their online graduation application. In this academic year, 3,695 graduates earned a total number of 3,715 undergraduate degrees from Mason. Among them, 3,146 completed the survey for a response rate of 85%.

The 2006-2007 Graduating Senior Survey included a variety of topics: learning outcomes, writing experiences, synthesis courses, global understanding and advising. This report focuses on the survey questions about learning outcomes for general education and the major. It examines the following questions: How competent do Mason graduates feel about themselves regarding general education outcomes? How competent do they feel about their knowledge and abilities in their fields of study? Do levels of self-reported competence vary by fields of study?

For this *In Focus* report, all survey respondents were categorized into two groups using the following definitions:

- ***Transfer students***: those who started college at another post-secondary institution as first-time freshmen and, later, transferred into Mason. They accounted for 58% of the survey respondents.
- ***Native students***: those who started college at Mason as first-time freshmen. They accounted for 42% of the survey respondents.

The following shows the college abbreviations used in the report and the number of respondents from each college:

- ***CEHD***: College of Education and Human Development (N=75)
- ***CHHS***: College of Health and Human Services (N=250)
- ***CHSS***: College of Humanities and Social Sciences (N=1,484)
- ***COS***: College of Science (N=213)
- ***CVPA***: College of Visual and Performing Arts (N=163)
- ***ICAR***: Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (N=14)
- ***SOM***: School of Management (N=620)
- ***VIT&E***: Volgenau School of Information Technology and Engineering (N=333)

The results for additional survey questions are included in the full report of the 2006-07 Graduating Senior Survey. For detailed information on college and program level results, and for characteristics of survey respondents, please visit our website at ***https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2007/index.cfm***.

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

II. Highlights

- Over 80% of the 2007 graduates rated themselves competent in each of the 14 general education learning goals. They felt *most competent* in written communication, critical thinking and analysis, oral communication, social and behavioral sciences, synthesis, global understanding and literature: over 90% of them felt competent or very competent.
- The average level of reported competence for **native students** in written communication is *significantly higher* than that of transfers. **Transfer students** rated themselves more competent in information technology and ethics in information technology than native students.
- For each of the 14 general education learning outcomes, students who reported that they had taken courses at Mason that emphasized a particular learning outcome are *significantly more likely* to feel competent in that area than their counterparts who did not take or who didn't remember taking such a course at Mason.
- Self-reported competence varies significantly by college for each of the 14 learning outcomes. *The Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR)* has a small number of baccalaureate graduates. They reported higher levels of competence in written communication, critical thinking and analysis, social and behavioral sciences, oral communication, synthesis and global understanding than students from other colleges.
- Overall, 97% of Mason graduates felt they were competent in analyzing work in their field and had sufficient knowledge about important work in their field. About 90% felt they were competent in conducting original research or creating original work in their field.

III. Previous Findings about General Education Learning Outcomes, 2003-2006

One of the repeating themes of the graduating senior surveys concerns 12 general education learning outcomes (U.S. history is no longer a requirement and is not reported here). The following website specifies Mason's general education requirements: http://www.gmu.edu/departments/provost/gened/requirements.htm. Some of these learning outcomes are also programmatic learning outcomes. For example, many undergraduate degree programs at Mason identify writing, oral communication, synthesis and global understanding as learning outcomes for their graduates.

In addition to Mason's general education requirements, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) requires all institutions to assess six learning outcomes: written communication, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information technology, critical thinking and scientific reasoning. The first four SCHEV-required outcomes overlap with Mason's general education outcomes. The critical thinking outcome, although not listed as an explicit goal for general education, is implicit throughout the entire general education curriculum. Similarly, scientific reasoning is implicit in the natural science requirement of general education, but not explicitly stated.

Between 2003 and 2006, survey respondents were asked to rate the extent to which Mason contributed to their growth in 14 learning outcomes which are required either by general education or by SCHEV. Over the years, we have found that students answered these questions based on their *entire* educational experience at Mason, not just their general education experience. Not surprisingly, students tended to rate their growth in competencies (such as critical thinking and analysis) much higher than their growth in a specific subject matter (such as western civilization and the arts), particularly if the subject was not related to or reinforced in their major.

The 2006 graduates were most likely to say Mason had contributed very much to their growth in critical thinking and analysis, written communication, global understanding, social and behavioral sciences, and synthesis. **Native students** rated Mason's contribution *significantly higher* than transfers in written communication, global understanding, social and behavioral sciences, oral communication, literature, scientific

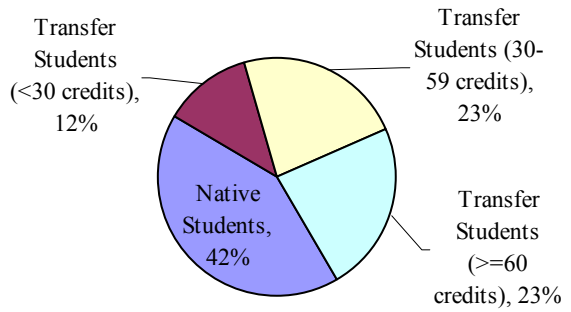
reasoning, natural sciences, arts, and western civilization. Similar findings were reported from the exit surveys between 2003 and 2005.

However, previous surveys did not ask students to rate their levels of competence in these areas. Previous data were not able to explain whether the perceived contribution to one's growth was related to the emphases of Mason courses. For these reasons, the 2007 exit survey asked students to indicate whether they had taken any courses at Mason that emphasized each of these 14 outcomes and how competent they felt about their knowledge and skills in each area.

IV. General Educational Learning Outcomes – Students' Recollections of Course Emphases

The 2007 survey asked students to indicate whether they had taken any courses at Mason that emphasized each of the 14 learning outcomes *before* they rated their competence in the corresponding area. Three options were provided: "yes," "no," and "don't know."

Figure 1: Self-Reported Transfer Status



Transfer status affects students' responses to these questions. As Figure 1 shows, 42% of the survey respondents were self-reported native students; 12% were transfer students who transferred less than 30 credits into Mason; 23% transferred 30-59 credits into Mason; and the remaining 23% transferred 60 credits or more into Mason. The last group of transfer students, accounting for 39% of all transfer students, completed most of their general education courses at other institutions and transferred into upper level classes (junior or senior class).

When students completed the survey also affects their responses. Many students filed intent to graduate and completed the survey several months before they actually graduated. Some students intentionally postponed certain general education courses to the last semester before graduation. Others "found," right before their intended graduation term, that they hadn't fulfilled one or more general education requirements. They ended up taking lower-level general education courses or synthesis courses after they completed the exit survey.

Please also note:

- Native students could test out or transfer credits from outside of Mason to fulfill certain general education requirements.
- The following analyses are based on *recollections and perceptions*, not official transcripts of the respondents.

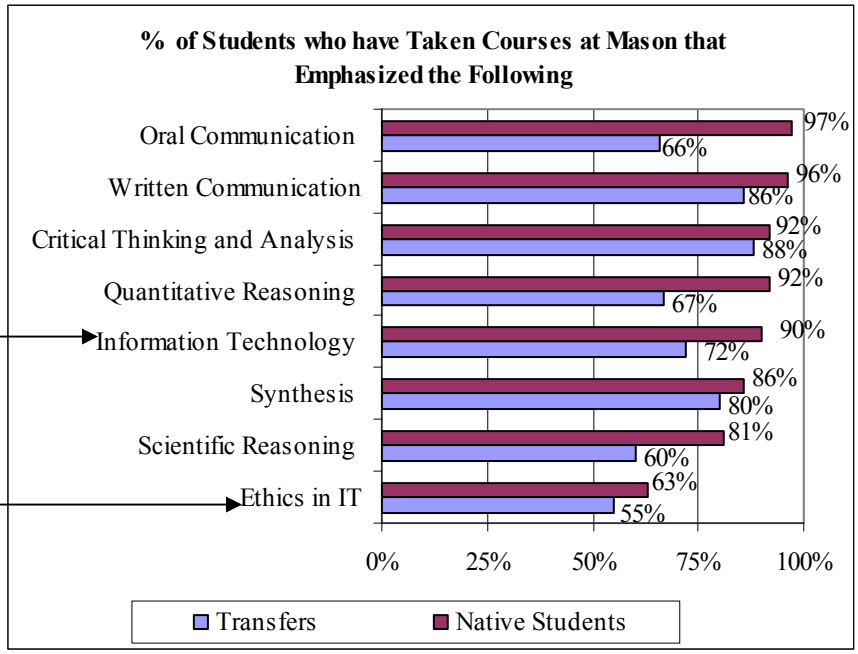
1. Foundation Courses and Competencies

Most native students took, or remembered taking, courses at Mason emphasizing the following competencies: oral communication (97%), written communication (96%), critical thinking and analysis (92%), and quantitative reasoning (92%) (see Figure 2). *Fewer* transfer students took or remembered taking such courses at Mason: between 80-88% said they had taken courses that emphasized critical thinking and analysis (88%), written communication (86%), and synthesis (80%). The percentages are lower for oral communication and quantitative reasoning: only two thirds of the transfer students reported taking such courses at Mason.

Figure 2. Foundation Courses and Competencies, by Transfer Status

Remember: *39% of the transfer students transferred 60 credits or more into Mason.*

Note*: Ethics in IT is an emphasis in some approved general education IT courses, but not all. Some students must take a separate IT ethics course.*



Information technology. Ethics in information technology is part of the information technology requirement of the general education curriculum. Students are required to "have classroom experience in, knowledge of, and appreciation for fundamental ethical issues relating to IT and the changing world" (from the University Catalog). Even native students who test out of IT 103 (a course taken by a large number of students to satisfy the general education requirement for IT) have to have "classroom experience" in IT ethics. The survey shows that 90% of native students reported taking a course in IT, but only 63% remembered taking a course emphasizing IT ethics. Seventy-two percent of transfer students reported taking a course in IT, but only 55% took a course emphasizing ethics in IT. It is likely that some students who recalled taking an IT course did have "classroom experience" in ethics but did not perceive it as an emphasis.

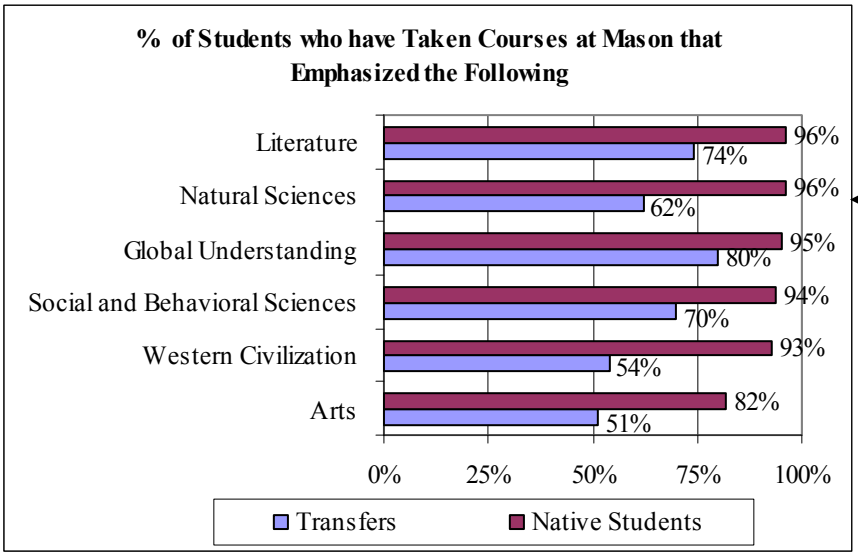
Synthesis. All Mason students, regardless of transfer status, are required to take one synthesis course. All the approved synthesis courses are upper-division courses that intend to engage students in the connection of meaning and the synthesis of knowledge. Some synthesis courses are designed as the final general education course and others serve as the senior capstone course for the major. Eight-six percent of native students and 80% of transfer students reported taking a course which emphasized synthesis. It is likely that by the time students filed for intent to graduate, some of them had not taken a synthesis course yet. However, synthesis, as a competency, was likely addressed in other courses, particularly in upper-division courses offered in the major.

Natural science and scientific reasoning. As part of the general education curriculum, students are required to take at least 6 credits in natural science. As Figure 2 shows, 81% of native students and 60% of transfer student reported taking a course which emphasized scientific reasoning. Figure 3 shows that *more* students, particularly native students, remembered taking a natural science course: 96% of native students and 62% of transfer students reported taking a natural science course at Mason. Some native students may NOT think their natural science courses emphasized scientific reasoning.

2. Core Courses

Most **native students** took, or remembered taking, courses emphasizing literature (96%), natural sciences (96%), global understanding (95%), social and behavioral sciences (94%), western civilization (93%) and the arts (82%). Among **transfer students**, 80% reported taking courses emphasizing global understanding and 70% had courses emphasizing social and behavioral sciences. For western civilization and the arts, only half of the transfer students had taken a related course at Mason.

Figure 3. Courses Emphasizing Core Requirements of General Education, by Transfer Status



***Note**: Figure 2 shows that 81% of native students and 60% of transfers reported taking a course emphasizing scientific reasoning.*

***Remember:** 39% of the transfer students transferred 60 credits or more into Mason.*

3. Courses *Transfer Students* less Likely to Take at Mason

Transfer students were less likely to take courses emphasizing the following:

- arts (45% said no and 4% don't know)
- western civilization (44% no and 2% don't know)
- ethics in IT (41% no and 5% don't know)
- natural sciences (37% no and 2% don't know)
- scientific reasoning (35% no and 6% don't know)
- oral communication (32% no and 1% don't know)
- quantitative reasoning (30% no and 3% don't know)

Transfer students were mostly likely to say that they had taken courses at Mason emphasizing critical thinking and analysis, written communication, synthesis and global understanding.

Students' perception of course emphases affects their perception of Mason's contribution to their educational growth. In previous years, transfer students rated Mason's contribution to certain educational outcomes significantly lower than native students, partially because some transfer students did not take related courses at Mason. The following analyses further show that for each of the 14 learning outcomes, students (native and transfers alike) who took a related course at Mason felt more competent than those who did not take or who didn't recall taking such a course at Mason.

V. General Education Learning Outcomes – Self-Rated Competence

1. Student Perceptions: Overall Levels of Competence

Students tend to rate their own competence much *higher* than the institution's contribution to their growth (see Table 1). The 2007 graduates felt themselves ***most competent*** in written communication and critical thinking and analysis: over 97% rated themselves very competent or competent. Over 90% of the students thought they were competent in oral communication, social and behavioral sciences, synthesis, global understanding and literature. These are the same areas that 2006 graduates were most likely to say Mason had contributed very much or somewhat to their growth. The 2007 graduates felt ***least competent*** in natural sciences and the arts; still, over 80% rated themselves competent in these areas.

Little difference is found when comparing the overall levels of competence for native students and for transfers. On 11 out of 14 learning outcomes, transfer students rated themselves as competent as native students. In written communication, however, native students rated themselves more competent than transfers; in information technology and ethics in information technology, transfer students stated higher levels of competence.

Table 1. Overall Levels of Competence, 2007

General Education Learning Outcomes	Self-reported Competence, 2007 Graduates				Perceived Contribution from Mason, 2006
	Very competent	Competent	Not competent*	Mean*	Very much/ Somewhat
Written Communication†	55%	42%	3%	3.52	89%
Critical Thinking & Analysis	45%	51%	3%	3.41	90%
Oral Communication	46%	49%	6%	3.39	83%
Social & Behavioral Sciences	46%	48%	6%	3.39	77%
Synthesis	44%	50%	6%	3.36	77%
Global Understanding	40%	52%	7%	3.33	83%
Literature	39%	54%	6%	3.32	72%
Western Civilization	30%	57%	13%	3.15	54%
Scientific Reasoning	30%	55%	14%	3.14	67%
Information Technology†	31%	54%	15%	3.14	70%
Ethics in IT†	33%	51%	16%	3.14	62%
Quantitative Reasoning	30%	54%	15%	3.13	72%
Natural Sciences	27%	56%	17%	3.09	62%
Arts	27%	54%	19%	3.06	57%

***Note**: The "Not competent" column combines the percentages of students who selected "not very competent" and "not competent at all." Very few students selected the second option. The table was sorted by the mean level of competence.*

** The survey included four options: 1=not at all competent, 2=not very competent, 3=competent and 4=very competent. Means were calculated based on the 4-point scale.*

† Indicate the mean differences between native students and transfers are statistically significant.

2. Perceived Course Emphasis and Self-Rated Competence

Competence gaps – frequency comparison. For each of the 14 learning outcomes, students who reported that they had taken courses at Mason that emphasized a particular learning outcome were *significantly* more likely to feel competent in that area than their counterparts who did not take or who didn't remember taking such courses. For example, as Table 2 shows, 98% of the students who had taken courses emphasizing written communication felt themselves competent in writing; in contrast, only 79% of those who did not or didn't know rated themselves competent – a difference of 19 percentage points.

***Table Annotation 1**:*
Among the respondents who have taken a course at Mason that emphasized "written communication", 98% felt they were "very competent" or "competent" in written communication; in contrast, among those who did not or did not know, 79% thought they were competent or very competent. The difference is 19 percentage points.

Table Annotation 2:
When measured on a 1-4 scale (1=not competent at all and 4=very competent), the average competence level for students who have taken a course at Mason that emphasized "written communication" is 3.54; and for students who have NOT or did not know, the average is 2.99. A t-test shows that the former group perceived themselves significantly more competent than the latter.

Table 2. Levels of Competence and Course Emphases

Have you taken any courses at Mason that emphasized the following and how competent are you?	% of Students Rated themselves as Competent or Very Competent			Level of Competence: Mean Comparison*	
	Have Taken a Course at Mason	Have NOT / Don't Know	Percentage Difference	Have Taken a Course at Mason	Have NOT / Don't Know
Written Communication	98%	79%	19%	3.54	2.99
Critical Thinking & Analysis	98%	75%	23%	3.45	2.80
Oral Communication	95%	89%	6%	3.42	3.20
Social & Behavioral Sciences	96%	75%	21%	3.46	2.88
Synthesis	97%	62%	35%	3.44	2.60
Global Understanding	94%	79%	15%	3.36	2.92
Literature	95%	76%	19%	3.37	2.91
Western Civilization	89%	78%	10%	3.20	2.91
Scientific Reasoning	91%	58%	33%	3.26	2.59
Information Technology	87%	70%	17%	3.18	2.78
Ethics in IT	94%	55%	39%	3.35	2.52
Quantitative Reasoning	88%	64%	23%	3.18	2.72
Natural Sciences	85%	71%	14%	3.13	2.83
Arts	89%	54%	34%	3.21	2.53

** Rated on a 1-4 scale: 1=not at all competent, 2=not very competent, 3=competent and 4=very competent. T-test shows that the mean difference between the "have"-group and "have-not" group is statistically significant for each learning outcome.*

Large competence gaps are seen in the following learning outcomes between the students who took related courses and those who did not take or did not recall taking related courses:

- ethics in information technology (39 percentage points)
- synthesis (35 percentage points)
- arts (34 percentage points)
- scientific reasoning (33 percentage points)
- critical thinking and analysis (23 percentage points)
- quantitative reasoning (23 percentage points)

***Note**:*
The survey did not ask respondents to recall how many courses they had taken at Mason that emphasized each of the 14 learning outcomes. Many students only took 1-2 courses for each of the specific subject areas such as the arts, literature and western civilization.

Moderate competence gaps are seen in the following areas:

- written communication (19 percentage points)
- literature (19 percentage points)
- information technology (17 percentage points)
- global understanding (15 percentage points)
- natural sciences (14 percentage points)
- western civilization (10 percentage points)

Oral communication shows the smallest competence gap, although the difference between the "have"-group and "have-not"-group is still statistically significant. Among the students who have taken courses at Mason that

emphasized oral communication, 95% rated themselves competent or very competent, compared to 89% of the students who did not take or who did not know.

Average levels of competence – mean comparison. When comparing the *average* levels of reported competence for each of the 14 learning outcomes (see Table 2, rated on a 1-4 scale), the "have"-group is significantly higher than that of the "have-not" and "don't know" groups combined. Further analyses show that, most of the time, students who did NOT know whether they had taken a course that emphasized a particular learning outcome rated their competence even *lower* than those who did not take such a course at Mason.

For the students who have taken related courses at Mason, the average levels of rated competence are the *highest* for the following areas: written communication, social and behavioral sciences, critical thinking and analysis, synthesis, oral communication, literature, global understanding, and ethics in information technology. Above 94% of the students thought they were competent in these areas. Even for the area with the *lowest* average level of competence (i.e., natural science), about 85% of students considered themselves competent.

For the students who have NOT taken or did not know whether they have taken related courses at Mason, the average levels of stated competence are the highest in oral communication, written communication, global understanding, literature and western civilization. Above or close to 80% of students rated themselves competent. In contrast, the arts, ethics in information technology, and scientific reasoning were rated the lowest with less than 60% of students feeling competent.

3. Levels of Self-Rated Competence by College

Obviously, students' entire curricular experiences at Mason impact their growth in knowledge and skills. The previous section shows how courses designed to address specific learning outcomes can increase students' feeling of competence. The following comparison of self-reported competence by college clearly shows that some fields/colleges seem to emphasize certain learning outcomes more than the others (see Table 3).

Table 3. Levels of Competence: Mean Comparison by College*

How competent do you feel about your knowledge or skill in each of the following:	College								Mason ALL
	CVPA	SOM	ICAR	CEHD	CHHS	CHSS	COS	VIT&E	
	N=163	N=620	N=14	N=75	N=250	N=1484	N=213	N=333	N=3,146
Written Communication	3.44	3.49	**3.86†**	3.39	3.40	3.62	3.32	3.35	3.52
Critical Thinking & Analysis	3.38	3.36	**3.79**	3.11	3.38	3.48	3.30	3.40	3.42
Oral Communication	3.34	3.40	**3.73**	3.29	3.36	3.45	3.24	3.28	3.39
Social & Behavioral Sciences	3.11	3.28	**3.64**	3.22	3.40	3.56	3.19	3.05	3.39
Synthesis	3.29	3.30	**3.69**	3.30	3.21	3.42	3.35	3.35	3.37
Global Understanding	3.20	3.29	**3.67**	3.11	3.19	3.42	3.25	3.19	3.33
Literature	3.34	3.20	3.33	3.17	3.26	**3.45**	3.21	3.09	3.32
Western Civilization	3.09	3.11	3.18	2.87	2.92	**3.26**	3.02	3.08	3.15
Scientific Reasoning	2.89	3.16	3.00	2.78	3.15	3.05	**3.52**	3.40	3.14
Information Technology	3.05	3.27	2.50	2.95	3.02	2.98	3.21	**3.68**	3.14
Ethics in IT	3.03	3.30	2.71	2.68	3.07	3.01	3.02	**3.55**	3.14
Quantitative Reasoning	2.90	3.33	2.75	2.84	2.97	3.02	3.32	**3.37**	3.12
Natural Sciences	3.02	3.03	2.56	3.05	3.28	2.97	**3.62**	3.27	3.09
Arts	**3.73**	2.90	2.91	2.91	2.95	3.11	3.00	2.83	3.06

** Means were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1=not at all competent, 2=not very competent, 3=competent and 4=very competent.*

*†The highest mean values are **bold** and the lowest underlined in the table.*

Self-rated competence varies significantly by college for each of the 14 learning outcomes. **The Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution** (ICAR) only had 16 baccalaureate graduates in the 2007 academic year and 14 of them responded to the survey. They reported higher levels of competence in written communication, critical thinking and analysis, social and behavioral sciences, oral communication, synthesis and global understanding than graduates from other colleges. ICAR graduates reported the lowest levels of competence in information technology, quantitative reasoning and natural sciences.

As would be expected, different *curricular emphases* in the major lead to differences in competence levels across colleges at Mason. CVPA students reported the highest level of competence in the arts; CHSS students felt most competent in literature and western civilization; COS students felt most competent in natural sciences and scientific reasoning; and VIT&E students rated their competence the highest in information technology, ethics in information technology, and quantitative reasoning.

Compared to graduates from other colleges, CEHD students rated themselves the lowest in critical thinking and analysis, global understanding, western civilization, ethics in IT and scientific reasoning; CHHS students reported less competence in synthesis; COS students in written communication and oral communication; and VIT&E students in social and behavioral sciences, literature and the arts.

VI. Self-Reported Competence in the Field of Study

1. Overall Competence

The survey included a set of questions asking about students' abilities and knowledge in their field of study (see Table 4). Students rated themselves very high in these areas. They were most likely to say they were very competent in analyzing work in their field: 48% felt themselves very competent and 49% felt competent. Knowledge of important work in the field was the second highly rated item: 40% of students considered themselves very competent and 57% competent. Over one third of students thought they were very competent in creating original work and conducting original research in the field, another half thought they were competent. No statistically significant difference is found for any of these items between native and transfer students.

Table 4. Knowledge and Abilities in the Field – Self-Reported Competence

	Very competent	Competent	Not very competent	Not at all competent	Mean*
Ability to analyze work in my field	48%	49%	2%	0%	3.45
Knowledge of important work in my field	40%	57%	3%	0%	3.36
Ability to conduct original research in my field	36%	55%	9%	1%	3.25
Ability to create original work in my field	36%	52%	11%	1%	3.24

** Calculated on a 1-4 scale: 4= very competent and 1= not at all competent.*

2. Analyses by College

Students' self-ratings on competence in the field vary by college (see Table 5). **ICAR** students rated themselves higher than students from other colleges for three competencies: knowledge of important work in the field, ability to analyze work in the field, and ability to conduct original research. Graduates from the College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) rated themselves comparatively higher in the ability to create original work in the field than graduates from other colleges. On all four items, COS graduates rated themselves *lower* than their counterparts from other colleges.

The data suggest that some schools/colleges may not emphasize these four competencies to the same degree in their majors. Due to disciplinary differences, we expect to see variations from program to program in emphases on conducting original research and creating original work in the field.

Table 5. Knowledge and Abilities in the Field, by College

	College							
	CVPA	**SOM**	**ICAR**	**CEHD**	**CHHS**	**CHSS**	**COS**	**VIT&E**
	N=163	N=620	N=14	N=75	N=250	N=1484	N=213	N=333
Ability to analyze work in my field	3.50	3.41	**3.71***	3.41	3.40	3.51	<u>3.25</u>	3.46
Knowledge of important work in my field	3.37	3.32	**3.43**	3.41	3.35	3.41	<u>3.22</u>	3.30
Ability to conduct original research in my field	3.39	3.24	**3.69**	3.27	3.07	3.32	<u>2.95</u>	3.24
Ability to create original work in my field	**3.60**	3.16	3.50	3.28	3.06	3.31	<u>2.86</u>	3.22

** The highest mean values are **bold** and the lowest <u>underlined</u> in the table.*

VII. Discussion: What factors affect students' feeling of competence?

Research in education has found multiple and interconnected factors that affect students' feelings of educational growth and competence, including psychological factors, curricular experiences, classroom experiences, co-curricular experiences, and institutional environment. This study focuses on students' curricular experiences: whether they have taken courses at Mason that emphasize each of the 14 general education outcomes and how competent they feel about themselves. The following summarizes major findings from the study:

1. Perceived course emphases affect self-rated competence. When students report that they have taken courses that emphasize certain skills or knowledge, they tend to report growth in those areas. For the 14 general education learning outcomes, students (native and transfers alike) who recalled taking courses at Mason that emphasized a particular learning outcome rated themselves more competent than those who didn't recall or who didn't take such courses at Mason. Most of the time, students who selected "don't know" (a very small percentage of students) rated their competence even lower than those who said they did NOT take related courses at Mason.

2. Students reported high levels of competence in those educational outcomes that are addressed throughout the entire undergraduate curriculum. Among the areas in which students feel most competent are written communication, critical thinking and analysis, oral communication, synthesis, and global understanding. These competencies are addressed throughout the general education curriculum and reinforced in most majors. In contrast, the average competence levels for the arts and natural sciences are the lowest among all 14 outcomes. Students who don't major in the arts or sciences may not take courses emphasizing these areas beyond general education requirements.

3. Average level of self-rated competence varies significantly by college for each of the 14 general education learning outcomes and the four learning outcomes in the major. For some learning outcomes, such variation is expected: graduates from VIT&E should feel more competent in information technology and graduates from CVPA should feel more competent in the arts than their counterparts from other colleges. However, for other outcomes, such as critical thinking and analysis, writing communication, oral communication, synthesis, and, possibly, global understanding, we expect all graduates from Mason to be competent regardless of their field of study. Similarly, we expect comparable competence levels in the ability to analyze work and in the knowledge of important work the field of study (see Table 5). We strongly urge colleges and academic programs to review their

students' perceptions of competence, identify areas of concern, and address these concerns through direct assessment of students' competence and curricular analyses.

As a study of student competence, the survey results have three limitations:

1. The results are based on students' perceptions and self-ratings of competence, not direct measurement of learning.
2. The survey did not measure students' *initial level* of competence before they took related courses at Mason.
3. Although the study clearly shows that students' feeling of competence in a learning outcome is affected by taking courses emphasizing that outcome, we are not sure whether those courses are general education courses or major courses.

For a learning outcomes assessment, direct measurement of student learning is needed to determine students' actual competence. The assessment involves identifying explicit learning outcomes for a course or a program, setting appropriate criteria and standards, systematically gathering and analyzing data (such as student work), and using the results to document and improve a course or a program. Degree programs at Mason, as part of their academic program review, are required to directly measure student competence in programmatic learning goals.

For six general education outcomes (i.e., critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, information technology, quantitative reasoning and scientific reasoning), a "value-added" assessment is being or is about to be implemented in general education courses. A pre-assessment is conducted at the beginning of a general education course/course sequence and a post-assessment is conducted at the end of the course/course sequence. The comparison of pre- and post- results will reveal students' learning as they progress through the general education program. The Office of Institutional Assessment is dedicated to providing guidance and support for faculty and academic programs in learning outcomes assessment.

OIA *Office of Institutional Assessment*

Associate Provost	Associate Director	Assistant Director	Applications Analyst	Program Support
Karen M. Gentemann, Ph.D.	Ying Zhou, Ph.D.	Mary Zamon, M.A.T.	Rawa Abdalla, M.S.	Karen Manley, B.S.
genteman@gmu.edu	yzhou@gmu.edu	mzamon@gmu.edu	rjassem1@gmu.edu	kmanley@gmu.edu
703-993-8836	703-993-8832	703-993-8616	703-993-8876	703-993-8834

This In Focus and earlier editions of this publication can be found on our website:
https://assessment.gmu.edu

2006-2007 Graduating Senior Survey - University Results

I. Educational Experience

1. Which of the following statements best describes your enrollment status at Mason?

	Count	%
First-time freshmen	1,284	42%
Transfer: 14 credits or less	111	4%
Transfer: 15-29 credits	256	8%
Transfer: 30-44 credits	314	10%
Transfer: 45-59 credits	406	13%
Transfer: 60 credits or more	700	23%
Total Respondents	3,071	100%

2. How competent do you feel about your knowledge/abilities in each of the following:

	Very competent		Competent		Not very competent		Not at all competent		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %		
Knowledge of important work in my field	1,239	40%	1,784	57%	95	3%	6	0%	3.36	0.55
Ability to analyze my work in my field	1,502	48%	1,544	49%	74	2%	4	0%	3.45	0.55
Ability to create original work in my field	1,082	36%	1,566	52%	330	11%	19	1%	3.24	0.66
Ability to conduct original research in my field	1,103	36%	1,689	55%	273	9%	22	1%	3.25	0.64

*** 4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the synthesis course you have taken/are taking:**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %		
This course held my interest.	1,018	38%	1,349	50%	242	9%	66	2%	3.24	0.72
This course improved my oral presentation skills.	624	23%	1,400	52%	535	20%	108	4%	2.95	0.77
This course improved my writing skills.	662	25%	1,394	52%	510	19%	92	3%	2.99	0.76
This course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	1,032	39%	1,307	49%	257	10%	66	2%	3.24	0.72
This course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	1,090	41%	1,316	49%	215	8%	47	2%	3.29	0.69
This course required me to think critically.	1,167	44%	1,276	48%	178	7%	46	2%	3.34	0.68
This course was intellectually challenging.	1,080	40%	1,289	48%	241	9%	59	2%	3.27	0.71
This course was well organized.	1,020	38%	1,354	51%	212	8%	81	3%	3.24	0.72

** Question 3 was used as a filter for Question 4. Only the respondents who had taken or who were taking a synthesis course were included in the above table.*

5-1. Have you taken any courses at Mason that emphasize the following:

	Native Students			Transfers		
	Yes	No	Don't know	Yes	No	Don't know
Arts	82%	16%	2%	51%	45%	4%
Critical Thinking & Analysis	92%	4%	4%	88%	9%	3%
Global Understanding	95%	4%	1%	80%	18%	2%
Information Technology	90%	9%	0%	72%	26%	1%
Ethics in IT	63%	31%	6%	55%	41%	5%
Literature	96%	3%	0%	74%	24%	1%
Natural Sciences	96%	4%	0%	62%	37%	2%
Oral Communication	97%	3%	0%	66%	32%	1%
Quantitative Reasoning	92%	6%	2%	67%	30%	3%
Scientific Reasoning	81%	13%	6%	60%	35%	6%
Social and Behavioral Sciences	94%	6%	1%	70%	28%	2%
Synthesis	86%	10%	4%	80%	15%	5%
US History	86%	14%	0%	53%	46%	2%
Western Civilization	93%	7%	0%	54%	44%	2%
Written Communication	96%	4%	1%	86%	12%	1%

*** 5-2a. How competent do you feel about your knowledge or skill in each of the following? (Native Students ONLY)**

	Very competent	Competent	Not very competent	Not at all competent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Arts	28%	53%	17%	2%	3.08	0.73
Critical Thinking & Analysis	48%	47%	4%	0%	3.42	0.60
Global Understanding	41%	51%	8%	1%	3.31	0.65
Information Technology	31%	50%	16%	3%	3.11	0.75
Ethics in IT	34%	47%	15%	5%	3.10	0.82
Literature	41%	52%	6%	1%	3.33	0.62
Natural Sciences	26%	57%	15%	2%	3.08	0.69
Oral Communication	47%	47%	6%	0%	3.40	0.62
Quantitative Reasoning	31%	52%	14%	3%	3.11	0.75
Scientific Reasoning	32%	53%	13%	2%	3.14	0.72
Social and Behavioral Sciences	46%	47%	7%	1%	3.37	0.65
Synthesis	46%	47%	6%	2%	3.36	0.67
US History	35%	53%	11%	1%	3.21	0.68
Western Civilization	30%	56%	12%	2%	3.14	0.69
Written Communication	58%	39%	3%	0%	3.55	0.57

** The table included ALL native students, regardless whether they had taken a course emphasizing the corresponding area.*

*** 5-2b. How competent do you feel about your knowledge or skill in each of the following? (Transfers ONLY)**

	Very competent	Competent	Not very competent	Not at all competent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Arts	26%	54%	16%	3%	3.04	0.74
Critical Thinking & Analysis	44%	54%	2%	0%	3.41	0.55
Global Understanding	40%	54%	5%	1%	3.34	0.61
Information Technology	31%	57%	11%	1%	3.17	0.67
Ethics in IT	33%	54%	10%	3%	3.16	0.73
Literature	37%	57%	6%	1%	3.31	0.60
Natural Sciences	28%	55%	15%	2%	3.10	0.70
Oral Communication	44%	50%	5%	1%	3.38	0.61
Quantitative Reasoning	30%	56%	12%	2%	3.14	0.70
Scientific Reasoning	30%	57%	11%	2%	3.14	0.69
Social and Behavioral Sciences	46%	49%	4%	1%	3.41	0.61
Synthesis	43%	52%	4%	1%	3.36	0.62
US History	33%	58%	8%	2%	3.21	0.65
Western Civilization	30%	58%	10%	2%	3.16	0.68
Written Communication	53%	44%	3%	1%	3.49	0.58

** The table included ALL transfer students, regardless whether they had taken a course emphasizing the corresponding area.*

II. Global Understanding

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %		
I am able to identify causes of some significant global issues.	1,394	45%	1,599	51%	113	4%	11	0%	3.40	0.58
I have a better understanding of a specific global problem or issue than I did before I came to Mason.	1,416	46%	1,363	44%	289	9%	42	1%	3.34	0.70
I have a better understanding of a specific area or region outside my home country or region than I did before I came to Mason.	1,418	45%	1,354	43%	303	10%	42	1%	3.33	0.70
I think about the global impact of U.S. policies now more than I did before I came to Mason.	1,319	42%	1,261	41%	461	15%	71	2%	3.23	0.78

III. Writing Experiences in Courses of 300-level or above

		Count	%
7. In how many 300-level above courses did you have the opportunity to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your instructor on an earlier draft?	None	205	7%
	One	539	17%
	Two	763	24%
	Three	660	21%
	Four	317	10%
	>= Five	636	20%

	Always		Frequently		Occasionally		Rarely		Never	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
8. Did you have sufficient opportunities in those 300-level above courses to revise your writing after receiving feedback from an instructor?	689	22%	1,091	35%	869	28%	324	10%	139	4%

9. To what extent did these 300-level or above courses help you in the following areas?

	A great deal		Somewhat		Very little		Not at all		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %		
The feedback and revision process in these courses has helped me to improve my writing.	1,452	47%	1,337	43%	196	6%	108	3%	3.34	0.75
These courses have improved my confidence as a writer.	1,444	47%	1,300	42%	251	8%	91	3%	3.33	0.75
The writing assignments from these courses have increased my understanding of my field.	1,610	52%	1,170	38%	212	7%	93	3%	3.39	0.75

IV. Advising

10. When you had a question or needed clarification regarding an academic problem, from which of the following resources were you more likely to seek an answer? (Check all that apply).

	Count	%
My official academic advisor	1,999	64%
Paper version of the University Catalog	706	22%
Web-based version of the University Catalog	1,134	36%
A faculty member	893	28%
My major/department online resources	1,064	34%
My major/department staff	1,093	35%
Other students or friends	1,458	46%
Family members	304	10%
Other resources	105	3%

	Three times or more		Twice		Once		Not at all	
	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %	Count	Row N %
11. During SR year, how often were you in touch with an advisor?	894	29%	902	29%	783	25%	553	18%

*** 12. If you met with an advisor during your senior year, did the meeting take place: (Check all that apply)**

	Count	%
In person	2,342	91%
On the phone	265	10%
Through email	894	35%
Other meeting places	16	1%

****** The table included the students who were in touch with an advisor at least once during the senior year.*

V. Future Plans

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

	Count	%
Yes, I will enroll fulltime in graduate professional school	800	26%
Yes, I will enroll part-time in graduate/professional school	606	19%
I will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/professional license	227	7%
Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree or certificate program	159	5%
No, I don't plan to be enrolled in course work	1,330	43%
Total Respondents	3,122	100%

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

	Count	%
Definitely yes	1,409	45%
Probably yes	1,337	43%
Probably no	300	10%
Definitely no	87	3%
Total Respondents	3,133	100%

Demographics of All Graduates and Respondents

In the 2006-2007 academic year (Summer and Fall 2006, and Spring 2007), **3695** students graduated with **3715** degrees. Out Of these **3695** individuals, **3146** responded to the survey. This resulted in a **85.1%** overall response rate. Students earning double degrees are counted just **once** in the following tables.

Age at Graduation

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
22 or younger	1187	37.7%		1349	36.5%	88.0%
23-24	893	28.4%		1064	28.8%	83.9%
25-27	463	14.7%		569	15.4%	81.4%
28-30	221	7.0%		263	7.1%	84.0%
31-34	133	4.2%		165	4.5%	80.6%
35 or older	249	7.9%		285	7.7%	87.4%

Domicile (Virginia Residency)

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
In-State	2861	90.9%		3361	91.0%	85.1%
Out-of-State	285	9.1%		334	9.0%	85.3%

Final Grade Point Average

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
3.501-4.000	789	25.1%		882	23.9%	89.5%
3.001-3.500	1154	36.7%		1305	35.3%	88.4%
2.501-3.000	973	30.9%		1203	32.6%	80.9%
2.000-2.500	229	7.3%		304	8.2%	75.3%
2.000 and below	1	0.0%		1	0.0%	100.0%

Race/Ethnicity

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
African American	247	7.9%		287	7.8%	86.1%
Asian American	489	15.5%		590	16.0%	82.9%
Hispanic American	238	7.6%		278	7.5%	85.6%
Native American	7	0.2%		9	0.2%	77.8%
Non-resident Alien	140	4.5%		166	4.5%	84.3%
Other/Unknown American	374	11.9%		449	12.2%	83.3%
White American	1651	52.5%		1916	51.9%	86.2%

Sex

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
Female	1907	60.6%		2160	58.5%	88.3%
Male	1222	38.8%		1514	41.0%	80.7%
Unknown	17	0.5%		21	0.6%	81.0%

College/Major Response Rates

In the 2006-2007 academic year (Summer and Fall 2006, and Spring 2007), 3692 students graduated with 3715 degrees. Out Of these 3692 individuals, 3143 responded to the survey. This resulted in an 85.1% overall response rate. Students earning double degrees are counted twice in the following tables.

Academic Unit/College

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
College of Visual and Performing Arts	163	5.20%		197	5.30%	82.70%
School of Management	625	19.80%		750	20.20%	83.30%
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution	14	0.40%		16	0.40%	87.50%
College of Education and Human Development	75	2.40%		95	2.60%	78.90%
College of Health and Human Services	250	7.90%		286	7.70%	87.40%
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	1488	47.00%		1735	46.70%	85.80%
College of Science	215	6.80%		239	6.40%	90.00%
Volgenau School of IT & Engineering	334	10.60%		397	10.70%	84.10%

Degree

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
Bachelor of Arts, BA	1243	39.30%		1452	39.10%	85.60%
Bachelor of Fine Arts, BFA	32	1.00%		40	1.10%	80.00%
Bachelor of Individualized Study, BIS	76	2.40%		80	2.20%	95.00%
Bachelor of Music, BM	18	0.60%		21	0.60%	85.70%
Bachelor of Science, BS	1620	51.20%		1917	51.60%	84.50%
Bachelor of Science in Education, BSED	10	0.30%		13	0.30%	76.90%
Bachelor of Science in Nursing , BSN	165	5.20%		192	5.20%	85.90%

Major

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	**Count**	**Percent**		**Count**	**Percent**	
Accounting (ACCT) (BS)	171	5.40%		204	5.50%	83.80%
Administration of Justice (ADJ) (BS)	142	4.50%		161	4.30%	88.20%
Anthropology (ANTH) (BA)	15	0.50%		18	0.50%	83.30%
Art (History) (ARTH) (BA)	17	0.50%		21	0.60%	81.00%
Art (Studio) (ARTS) (BA)	3	0.10%		7	0.20%	42.90%
Astronomy (ASTR) (BA)	1	0.00%		1	0.00%	100.00%
Athletic Training (ATT) (BS)	5	0.20%		5	0.10%	100.00%
Art & Visual Technology (AVT) (BA)	74	2.30%		89	2.40%	83.10%
Art & Visual Technology (AVT) (BFA)	25	0.80%		33	0.90%	75.80%
Biology (BIOL) (BA)	17	0.50%		18	0.50%	94.40%
Biology (BIOL) (BS)	115	3.60%		129	3.50%	89.10%
Civil & Infrastructure Engineering (CEIE) (BS)	18	0.60%		19	0.50%	94.70%
Chemistry (CHEM) (BA)	0	0.00%		1	0.00%	0.00%
Chemistry (CHEM) (BS)	27	0.90%		28	0.80%	96.40%
Communication (COM) (BA)	198	6.30%		227	6.10%	87.20%
Conflict Analysis & Resolution (CONF) (BA)	10	0.30%		11	0.30%	90.90%
Conflict Analysis & Resolution (CONF) (BS)	4	0.10%		5	0.10%	80.00%
Computer Engineering (CPE) (BS)	13	0.40%		15	0.40%	86.70%
Computer Science (CS) (BS)	66	2.10%		85	2.30%	77.60%
Dance (DANC) (BA)	1	0.00%		1	0.00%	100.00%

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	Count	Percent		Count	Percent	
Dance (DANC) (BFA)	7	0.20%		7	0.20%	100.00%
Decision Sci & Mgmt Info System (DMIS) (BS)	64	2.00%		74	2.00%	86.50%
Economics (ECON) (BA)	48	1.50%		57	1.50%	84.20%
Economics (ECON) (BS)	55	1.70%		72	1.90%	76.40%
Electrical Engineering (ELEN) (BS)	60	1.90%		63	1.70%	95.20%
English (ENGL) (BA)	139	4.40%		164	4.40%	84.80%
Earth Science (ESCI) (BS)	10	0.30%		10	0.30%	100.00%
Earth Systems Science (ESSC) (BS)	0	0.00%		1	0.00%	0.00%
Finance (FNAN) (BS)	125	4.00%		154	4.10%	81.20%
Foreign Languages (FRLN) (BA)	25	0.80%		28	0.80%	89.30%
Geography (GEOG) (BA)	10	0.30%		10	0.30%	100.00%
Geography (GEOG) (BS)	4	0.10%		4	0.10%	100.00%
Geology (GEOL) (BA)	2	0.10%		2	0.10%	100.00%
Global Affairs (GLOA) (BA)	36	1.10%		44	1.20%	81.80%
Gov't & International Politics (GVIP) (BA)	218	6.90%		265	7.10%	82.30%
Health, Fitness and Recreation (HFRR) (BS)	60	1.90%		77	2.10%	77.90%
History (HIST) (BA)	81	2.60%		88	2.40%	92.00%
Health Science (HSCI) (BS)	53	1.70%		59	1.60%	89.80%
Individualized Studies (INDV) (BIS)	76	2.40%		80	2.20%	95.00%
Information Technology (INFT) (BS)	154	4.90%		192	5.20%	80.20%
Integrative Studies (INTS) (BA)	107	3.40%		119	3.20%	89.90%
Integrative Studies (INTS) (BS)	3	0.10%		6	0.20%	50.00%
Latin American Studies (LAS) (BA)	1	0.00%		2	0.10%	50.00%
Mathematics (MATH) (BA)	10	0.30%		12	0.30%	83.30%
Mathematics (MATH) (BS)	6	0.20%		8	0.20%	75.00%
Management (MGMT) (BS)	158	5.00%		185	5.00%	85.40%
Marketing (MKTG) (BS)	107	3.40%		133	3.60%	80.50%
Medical Technology (MTCH) (BS)	8	0.30%		10	0.30%	80.00%
Music (MUSI) (BA)	12	0.40%		15	0.40%	80.00%
Music (MUSI) (BM)	18	0.60%		21	0.60%	85.70%
Nursing (NURS) (BSN)	165	5.20%		192	5.20%	85.90%
Physical Education (PHED) (BSED)	10	0.30%		13	0.30%	76.90%
Philosophy (PHIL) (BA)	7	0.20%		7	0.20%	100.00%
Physics (PHYS) (BS)	5	0.20%		5	0.10%	100.00%
Psychology (PSYC) (BA)	152	4.80%		178	4.80%	85.40%
Psychology (PSYC) (BS)	114	3.60%		132	3.60%	86.40%
Public Admininstration (PUAD) (BS)	18	0.60%		23	0.60%	78.30%
Religious Studies (RELI) (BA)	5	0.20%		6	0.20%	83.30%
Russian Studies (RUST) (BA)	2	0.10%		2	0.10%	100.00%
Sociology (SOCI) (BA)	29	0.90%		35	0.90%	82.90%
Social Work (SOCW) (BS)	32	1.00%		35	0.90%	91.40%
Systems Engineering. (SYST) (BS)	23	0.70%		23	0.60%	100.00%
Theatre (THR) (BA)	23	0.70%		24	0.60%	95.80%

Semester of Graduation

	Survey Respondents			All Graduates		Response Rate
Category	Count	Percent		Count	Percent	
SUMMER 2006	738	23.30%		913	24.60%	80.80%
FALL 2006	750	23.70%		907	24.40%	82.70%
SPRING 2007	1676	53.00%		1895	51.00%	88.40%

OIA
Office of Institutional Assessment

Graduating Senior Survey
Summer and Fall 2006, Spring 2007
George Mason University

Congratulations on your impending graduation from George Mason University! Your satisfaction and evaluation of your educational and student life experiences at Mason are important to us and will be used in educational planning. To contact the Office of Institutional Assessment: Mason Hall, D111, Phone: 703-993-8834 or E-mail: assessment@gmu.edu. We can be reached by mail at the address below.

Directions: Circle, mark, or write in the most appropriate response and return the completed survey to the Office of Institutional Assessment, George Mason University - MS 3D2, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. If you prefer to complete this survey online go directly to: **https://assessment.gmu.edu/surveys/2006-2007/letter-senior.cfm** *or* access the survey through our website at: https://assessment.gmu.edu. Once there click on "Graduating Student Exit Survey."

I. Educational Experience

1. *Which of the following statements best describes your enrollment status at Mason?*
   a. ___ I started college at Mason as a freshman.
   b. ___ I started college at another institution and transferred to Mason.

      If you transferred, how many credit hours were accepted by Mason?

      ___ 14 or less
      ___ 15 – 29
      ___ 30 – 44
      ___ 45 – 59
      ___ 60 or more

2. How competent do you feel about your knowledge/abilities in each of the following:	**Very competent**	**Competent**	**Not very competent**	**Not at all competent**	**NA***
Knowledge of important work (e.g. research, literature, works of art, etc.) in my field	4	3	2	1	NA
Ability to analyze work in my field	4	3	2	1	NA
Ability to create original work in my field, such as, poetry, art, software, new products, etc.	4	3	2	1	NA
Ability to conduct original research in my field	4	3	2	1	NA

*Not applicable

3. *Which synthesis course did you take/are you taking? (Please circle one)*

☐ None ☐ I don't know ☐ Other: _____

ADJ 303	COMM 362	FREN 376	MUSI 491*	SOCI 377
ANTH 400	COMM 454	GEOG 303	MUSI 495*	SOCI 483
ARTH 394	CS 306	GEOG 304	NCLC 308	SOCW 323
AVT 497	CS 491	GEOL 406*	NEUR 354	SOM 498
AVT 498	DANC 490	GOVT 490	NURS 465/HSCI 465	SPAN 461*
BINF 354	ECE 447	GOVT 491	PHIL 309	SPAN 466*
BIOL 301	ECE 492	HIST 300	PHIL 377	SYST 495
BIS 490	ECE 493	HIST 499	PHIL 378	THR 440
CAS 313	ECON 309	IT 492	PHYS 390	THR 496
CEIE 490	ENGL 325	MATH 400	RELI 490	UNIV 342
COMM 326	EOS 304	MUSI 490	RUSS 353	UNIV 442

*No longer approved for synthesis after August 2005

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the synthesis course you have taken/are taking:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The course held my interest.	4	3	2	1
The course improved my oral presentation skills.	4	3	2	1
The course improved my writing skills.	4	3	2	1
The course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	4	3	2	1
The course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	4	3	2	1
The course required me to think critically.	4	3	2	1
The course was intellectually challenging.	4	3	2	1
The course was well organized.	4	3	2	1

5. Using the competencies listed below, please tell us:

5-1. Have you taken any courses at Mason that emphasize the following:				5-2. How competent do you feel about your knowledge or skill in each of the following:			
Yes	**No**	**Don't know**		**Very competent**	**Competent**	**Not very competent**	**Not at all competent**
Y	N	DK	**Arts** *(understand the aesthetic and intellectual components of the arts or creative works through critical analysis)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Critical Thinking and Analysis** *(judge the consistency, adequacy, and relevance of ideas, data, and arguments)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Global Understanding** *(understand global society and compare cultural traditions)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Information Technology** (IT) *(use IT to communicate and to conduct research)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Ethics in Information Technology** *(understand and apply)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Literature** *(use critical analysis to understand the aesthetic and intellectual components of major works)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Natural Sciences** *[understand and apply natural science (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics) knowledge and methods]*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Oral Communication** *(use speaking to think, learn, and share ideas)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Quantitative Reasoning** *(use and evaluate numerical information and evaluate logical arguments)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Scientific Reasoning** *(use and understand the scientific process and evaluate scientific information)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Social and Behavioral Sciences** *[understand and apply social science (e.g., Psychology, Government, Sociology) knowledge & methods to the study of human behavior]*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Synthesis** *(understand the connections among different disciplines)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**US History** *(understand US institutions, traditions, values, and history)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Western Civilization** *(understand western civilization and its global impact)*	4	3	2	1
Y	N	DK	**Written Communication** *(use writing to discover and express ideas)*	4	3	2	1

II. Global Understanding

All Mason students are required to take one approved course in "Global Understanding." As a result of having taken that course and your overall education at Mason, please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am able to identify causes of some significant global issues.	4	3	2	1
I have a better understanding of a specific global problem or issue than I did before I came to Mason.	4	3	2	1
I have a better understanding of a specific area or region outside my home country or region than I did before I came to Mason.	4	3	2	1
I think about the global impact of U.S. policies now more than I did before I came to Mason.	4	3	2	1

III. Writing Experience in Courses of 300-level or above

*(For Questions 7-9, please think of your experiences in courses of 300-level or above, **excluding English 302**)*

7. **In how many courses** at Mason, 300-level or above, did you have the opportunity to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your instructor on an earlier draft? (This might include essays, projects, lab reports, case studies, reviews, and reports, for example.)
   a. ___ None b. ___ One c. ___ Two d. ___ Three e. ___ Four f. ___ Five or more

8. Did you have ***sufficient*** opportunities in those courses to revise your writing after receiving feedback from an instructor?
   a. ___ Always b. ___ Frequently c. ___ Occasionally d. ___ Rarely e. ___ Never

9. To what extent did these 300-level or above courses help you in the following areas?	A great deal	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
The feedback and revision process in these courses helped me to improve my writing.	4	3	2	1
These courses have improved my confidence as a writer.	4	3	2	1
The writing assignments from these courses have increased my understanding of my field.	4	3	2	1

IV. Advising

10. When you had a question or needed clarification regarding an academic problem (e.g. what courses to take, graduation requirements, etc.), from which of the following resources were you more likely to seek an answer? (Check all that apply).
    a. ___ My official academic adviso
    b. ___ Paper version of the University Catalog
    c. ___ Web-based version of the University Catalog
    d. ___ A faculty member
    e. ___ My major/department online resources
    f. ___ My major/department staff
    g. ___ Other students or friends
    h. ___ Family members
    i. ___ Other:

11. During your senior year, how often were you in touch with an advisor to discuss your course schedule, graduation requirements, application to graduate school, etc.?
    a. ___ Not at all (Skip to Question 13) b. ___ Once c. ___ Twice d. ___ Three times or more

12. If you met with an advisor during your senior year, did the meeting take place: (Check all that apply)
    a. ___ In person b. ___ On the phone c. ___ Through email d. ___ Other:

V. Future Plans

13. *Do you plan to pursue additional education within the next year?*
    a. ___ Yes, I will enroll full-time in graduate/professional school.
    b. ___ Yes, I will enroll part-time in graduate/professional school.
    c. ___ Yes, I will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/professional license.
    d. ___ Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree or certificate program.
    e. ___ No, I don't plan to be enrolled in course work.

VI. Comments/recommendations/observations on your experiences at Mason

14. If you were to do it all over again, would you attend Mason?
    a. ___ Definitely yes b. ___ Probably yes c. ___ Probably no d. ___ Definitely no

15. Please select 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.)*

    a. ___ Academic advising
    b. ___ Admissions and tuition
    c. ___ Career services and counseling
    d. ___ Education in major
    e. ___ Faculty, general
    f. ___ Financial aid
    g. ___ General education
    h. ___ Resources (lab, Internet, library, bookstore, etc.)
    i. ___ Staff, general
    j. ___ Student life and residence halls
    k. ___ University management (food, gym, parking,etc.)
    l. ___ Other: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please enter your GMU student identification number which begins with the letter "G."

Student identification number: G __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

GMU email address: _____@gmu.edu

Your G-number and email address are 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
Mason Hall, Room D111
Phone: 703-993-8834
E-mail: assessment@gmu.edu
https://assessment.gmu.edu

OIA
Office of
Institutional
Assessment

Office of Institutional Assessment
D111 Mason Hall, MS 3D2
703-993-8834
assessment@gmu.edu
https://assessment.gmu.edu

Associate Provost
Karen M. Gentemann, Ph.D.
genteman@gmu.edu

Associate Director
Ying Zhou, Ph.D.
yzhou@gmu.edu

Assistant Director
Mary Zamon, M.A.T.
mzamon@gmu.edu

Programmer/Analyst
Rawa Abdalla, M.S.
rjassem1@gmu.edu

Program Support
Karen Manley, B.S.
kmanley@gmu.edu