

**Office of
Institutional Assessment**



2006 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

Self-Comparison & Peer Comparison Reports



December 2006

The 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement: Self-Comparison and Peer Comparison Reports

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I. Summary

Summary of Survey Results

Successes:

Student-faculty interaction (Benchmark Three). The low score on this benchmark in 2003 was cause for concern. Educational research suggests that this is a major component of student success in college; and Mason, along with many other institutions, performed poorly on this measure. To counter this situation, a new program was developed to encourage more faculty-student interaction: as of December, 2006, University Life had awarded \$39,000 under the Faculty Fellows Program for several different initiatives, including the development of co-curricular programming across disciplines, an electronic portfolio research project involving 40 students, and a university-wide environmental task force. As a result of this and undoubtedly other activities initiated by individual faculty, and possibly by individual students, there was a significant improvement in this benchmark for both freshmen and seniors. The challenge now is to continue this momentum because, despite the improvements, Student-Faculty Interaction remains the lowest of the five NSSE benchmarks.

Active and collaborative learning (Benchmark Two). Since 2003, both freshmen and seniors made significant gains on this benchmark. For freshmen, improvement is dramatic on three items in this benchmark – made a class presentation, worked with classmates outside of class, and discussed ideas from class outside of the classroom. This is a very positive development as active learning is key in engaging students in their education.

Areas of Concern:

Level of academic challenge (Benchmark One). Both freshmen and seniors are lower on this benchmark than they were in 2003, although only the senior drop is significant. Seniors reported less time spent on “analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory . . .,” fewer assigned readings, and less time spent in preparation for class. In addition, an earlier study of 2nd generation¹ Mason students, conducted by the Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA), found that many students with high GPAs who entered Mason with academic performance anxiety fostered, in part, by how difficult their AP courses were, reported finding freshman year courses not “as challenging” and “easier than expected.”

As we continue to attract better prepared students, it is possible that student expectations are higher and that they are looking for more of an academic challenge. It is a challenge for us to provide these students with a higher level of stimulating learning experiences in which students have more opportunities to think critically, such as participation in undergraduate research, experiential learning, problem-based learning, etc.

Working and commuting. NSSE includes questions about student background that are not included in calculating benchmark scores, but provide a source of information that can help in interpreting scores. Such is the case with the questions regarding working and commuting. It is not news to report that Mason students work. For many years, we have reported that typically over 80% of graduating seniors worked during their senior year and of those, well over half worked more than 20 hours per week. During their time at Mason, only about 14% of graduating students have never worked; of those who do work, the vast majority work during most semesters. The complication for Mason students is not just that students are working, but the overwhelming majority of these students are working off-campus. Given that so few seniors, in particular, live close to campus, we can safely assume that academic work and engaging in the life of the academic community must compete with commuting and working in a student’s daily life.

The good news is that a higher proportion of Mason students, freshmen and seniors, are living on or near campus and more are working on campus than in 2003. National data indicate that the trend of working while in college has been increasing for decades, suggesting that the task of securing on-campus jobs for students should be a high priority.

¹ These students were born in the U.S. to at least one foreign-born parent.

Survey Administration and Response Rate

Each year the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) collects information from undergraduates at four-year colleges and universities across the country to assess the extent to which undergraduate students engage in a variety of effective educational practices. In 2006, 557 institutions in the United States and Canada participated in NSSE with a total of 331,601 respondents.

George Mason University has participated in NSSE every three years since 2000. In fall 2005, a total of 4,000 first-year and senior Mason students were randomly selected to participate in the survey. In spring 2006, about 3,600 of these students were still enrolled at Mason (due to graduation, transfer and stop-out) and they were invited by email to complete the survey online. A total of 1,566 Mason students completed the survey for a response rate of 43% – this percentage is much higher than that of our selected peers² (33%), Carnegie peers (32%) and the NSSE average (34%). Among Mason respondents, 708 were first-year (FY) students (for a response rate of 39%) and 858 were seniors (for a response rate of 47%). These students were largely representative of Mason's first-year and senior students in terms of gender and racial composition, age groups, enrollment status, and grades (see *Appendix Three – Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents* for details).

In addition, some students from the School of Management (SOM) and New Century College (NCC) also participated in a NSSE local administration. The graduating seniors of NCC and students enrolled in SOM 498 and NCLC 140 that were not included in the University random sample were given a paper copy of the survey. The responses from these students are not included in this report; instead, they are presented in two special reports for these units. Please visit the OIA website for 2006 special reports and the earlier NSSE reports from 2000 and 2003:

<http://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/NSSE/NSSE.html>

² See Appendix Two for a complete list of 2006 Selected Peer Institutions and Carnegie Peer Institutions of Mason.

Important Definitions and Notes

- **Mason 2006 first-year (FY) students, also referred to as Mason 2006 freshmen (FR)**, are defined as those students who had less than 30 credit hours in fall 2005 and re-enrolled in spring 2006. Over three quarters of these students were still classified as freshmen in spring 2006; the remaining students became sophomores but are still included in this study.
- **Mason 2006 seniors (SR)** are defined as those students who had earned more than 90 credit hours by fall 2005 but did not graduate in fall. They were still seniors in spring 2006.
- This report is based on results from all *randomly selected* students for both Mason and peer institutions. Targeted and local over-samples are not included.
- In *Section III: 2003 and 2006 Self-Comparison Report*, both 2003 and 2006 results are NOT weighted. The percentage and mean values reported in this section may be *slightly* different from those reported in *Section IV: Peer Comparison Report*. For details about the justification and the impact of using weights on survey results, please refer to *Appendix One: Change of Methodology*. Overall, the use of weights has minimal impact on Mason's survey results in 2006.
- In *Section IV: Peer Comparison Report*, ALL 2006 results (i.e., Frequency Distributions, Mean Comparisons, and Benchmark Comparisons) are based on **weighted** data. All statistics are weighted by gender, enrollment status (full-time vs. part-time, first-year vs. senior) and institutional size.
- The 2006 benchmark scores are calculated at the **student level**, not at the institution level as in 2003. The 2003 benchmark scores were **recalculated** to allow for a more accurate comparison with 2006, and thus, are different from those reported by OIA in 2004.
- NSSE calculated two sets of benchmark scores on *student-faculty interaction* for 2006 using two different formulas: one set of scores (i.e., *unadjusted scores*) should be used when reporting 2006 results only (including peer comparison results) and the other set of scores (i.e., *adjusted scores*) should be used when comparing the 2003 scores with those of 2006 for the same institution.
- The 2006 NSSE participating institutions are different from those of 2003. Both Mason's selected peers and Carnegie peers changed in 2006.
- Throughout this report, percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

II. Overview

Characteristics of Student Population

Previous research has found that student background characteristics (such as gender, ethnicity, enrollment status, class level, place of residence, etc.) impact student engagement in certain academic and non-academic activities. Changes in characteristics of Mason students and differences in student populations between Mason and peer institutions may account for some of the changes reported in the *Benchmark Overview*. Three major characteristics of Mason students may have a strong impact on Mason students' engagement:

1. Mason has a larger percentage of *commuting students* than peer institutions. Commuting may impact students' interaction with faculty and other students outside of the classroom and participation in co-curricular activities. Most commuting students at Mason live at home, and thus, spend more time taking care or helping take care of family members. Compared to 2003, the percentage of commuting students at Mason decreased slightly in 2006, which should bring about an increase in the level of engagement in certain types of activities.
2. Mason has a larger number of *part-time senior students* than peer institutions. Most of these part-time seniors work off campus. They tend to spend less time on academic work and are generally less engaged in campus activities than full-time students.
3. Mason has a large number of students (both full-time and part-time students, both freshmen and seniors) who *work for pay OFF campus* and *work for much longer hours* than their counterparts from selected peers and Carnegie peers. The percentage of Mason seniors who work for pay ON campus is significantly lower than that of peer institutions. This may be one reason why Mason students spent fewer hours a week on academic work and co-curricular activities than their counterparts.

Commuting Students

Table 1 compares Mason respondents' current places of living with their counterparts at peer institutions. Compared with selected peers and Carnegie peers, significantly fewer Mason 2006 freshmen and seniors live on campus or at a place within walking distance of campus. Compared to 2003, more Mason students (seniors in particular) live on campus in 2006.

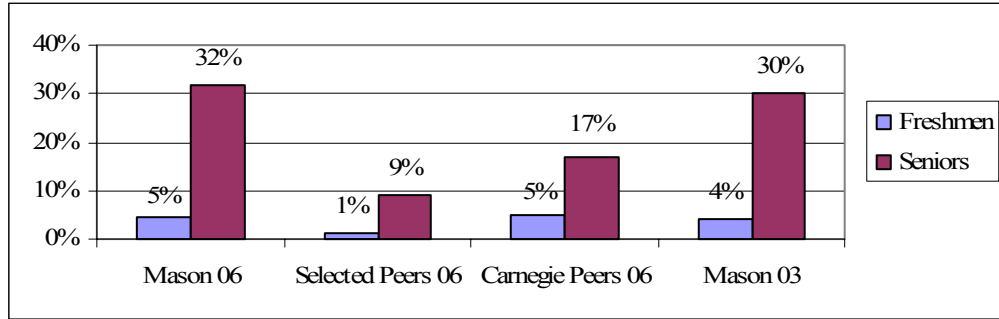
Table 1. Current Places of Living

Response Options	Freshmen				Seniors			
	Mason 06	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06	Mason 03	Mason 06	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06	Mason 03
Dormitory or campus housing	48%	85%	58%	45%	10%	6%	7%	4%
Residence, walking distance	3%	6%	11%	2%	3%	52%	28%	2%
Residence, driving distance	49%	7%	30%	53%	87%	40%	64%	93%
Fraternity or sorority house	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	3%	2%	0%

Part-time Senior Students

Among the survey respondents, 32% of Mason seniors reported their enrollment status as "less than full-time," compared to 9% of selected peers and 17% of Carnegie peers. This figure is comparable to that of Mason respondents in 2003, which was 30%. The percentage of part-time freshmen among Mason respondents is the same as that of Carnegie peers (5%), but higher than selected peers (1%).

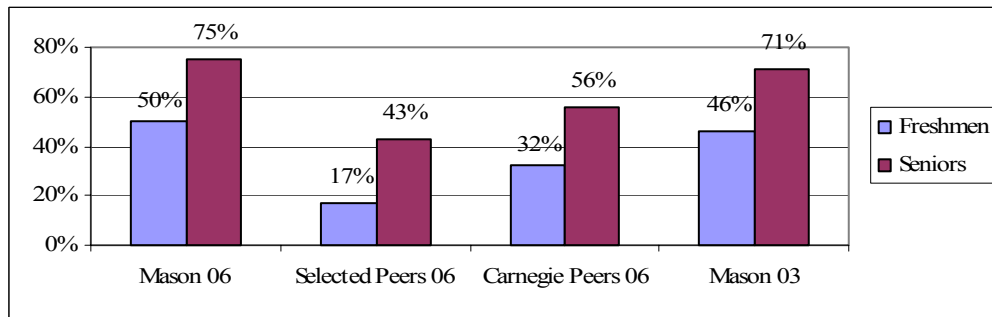
Figure 1. Percentage of Part-Time NSSE Respondents



Working Students

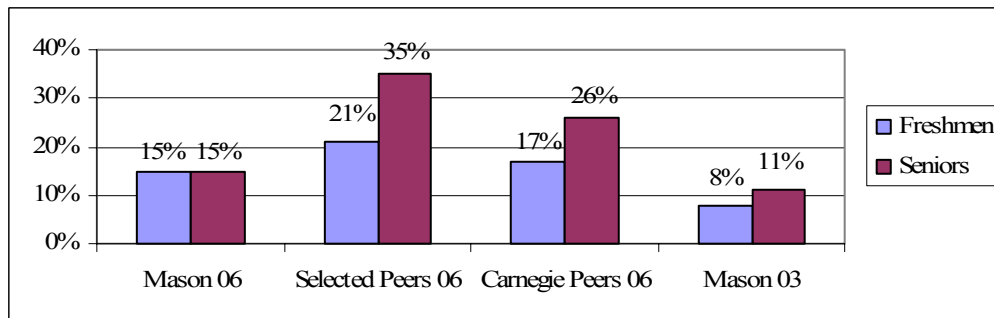
Working OFF campus. Half of Mason’s 2006 freshman respondents work for pay off campus. The percentage is much lower for our peer groups: 17% for selected peers and 32% for Carnegie peers. Among Mason’s senior respondents, 75% work for pay off campus, compared to 43% of selected peers and 56% of Carnegie peers. The percentage of Mason respondents who work off campus has increased slightly since 2003.

Figure 2. Percentage of Respondents who Work OFF Campus



Working ON campus. Fifteen percent of Mason’s 2006 freshman respondents work for pay on campus, an increase of seven percentage points since 2003. The figure is comparable to that of Carnegie peers (17%), but significantly lower than that of selected peers (21%). Among the senior respondents from Mason in 2006, only 15% work on campus, significantly lower than that of selected peers (35%) and Carnegie peers (26%). Compared to 2003, the percentage of seniors who work on campus increased by four percentage points in 2006.

Figure 3. Percentage of Respondents who Work ON Campus



Hours of Working OFF Campus

Among the 2006 Mason freshmen who DID work off campus, 25% worked for 10 hours or less a week, 36% worked for 11-20 hours, 24% worked between 21-30 hours, and the remaining 16% worked for more than 30 hours. These percentages are similar to those of Carnegie peers, but Mason freshmen worked for longer hours than selected peers. Among the 2006 Mason seniors who DID work off campus, 41% worked for more than 30 hours a week, compared to 10% of selected peers and 31% of Carnegie peers. Comparing 2006 Mason students (both freshmen and seniors) with 2003 Mason students, the former group reported longer hours working off campus.

Table 2. Hours of Working OFF Campus*

Response Options	Freshmen				Seniors			
	Mason 06 (n=324)	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06	Mason 03	Mason 06 (n=612)	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06	Mason 03
1-10 hr/wk	25%	43%	27%	22%	15%	32%	19%	14%
11-20 hr/wk	36%	40%	33%	37%	23%	37%	26%	28%
21-30 hr/wk	24%	12%	24%	30%	21%	22%	23%	23%
30+ hr/wk	16%	6%	16%	11%	41%	10%	31%	35%

* This table only includes those respondents who worked for at least one hour a week off campus.

Benchmark Overview

Introduction to NSSE Benchmarks

The NSSE survey measures a variety of areas in student academic life, such as course emphases, in and out of classroom activities, course assignments, student use of time, interaction/relationships with peers, faculty and administrators, campus environment, institutional contributions to student development, and student satisfaction. NSSE data provide us with evidence of patterns of student engagement at Mason. In an effort to analyze different aspects of student engagement, NSSE created five clusters or benchmarks of effective educational practices using the items from the survey:

1. **Level of Academic Challenge:** includes survey items on coursework emphasis (analysis, synthesis, making judgments, and application), the amount of reading and writing in coursework, the amount of time a student spends preparing for class, etc.
2. **Active and Collaborative Learning:** student participation in community-based projects, discussion of ideas inside and outside of class, and level of collaborative learning among students both during and outside of class, etc.
3. **Student Interactions with Faculty:** how often students discuss their coursework or career plans with faculty, how often students work with faculty on activities other than coursework, whether students receive prompt feedback from faculty, etc.
4. **Enriching Educational Experiences:** student participation in co-curricular activities, practica, internships, field experiences, co-op experiences, community service or volunteer work, study-abroad, foreign language coursework, independent study, culminating senior experience, student use of electronic technology, whether students interact with other students from diverse backgrounds, etc.
5. **Supportive Campus Environment:** the quality of the campus environment and relationships among students, faculty and administration, etc.

NSSE benchmark scores are calculated on a 100-point scale for every respondent in 2006. The 2003 benchmark scores were **recalculated** to allow for a more accurate comparison with 2006, and therefore, are different from those reported by OIA in 2004.

Benchmark Score Comparison: Mason 2006 vs. 2003

Table 3 compares Mason's benchmark scores of 2006 and 2003 on four benchmark areas. Compared to their counterparts in 2003:

- 2006 Mason seniors reported a significantly *lower* level of academic challenge;
- Both 2006 freshmen and seniors reported significantly *more* active and collaborative learning and *more* interaction with faculty;
- The perceptions of campus environment of Mason 2006 students did not change significantly.

Table 3. Mason Benchmark Score Comparison: 2003 and 2006*

Benchmark	2006 FY	2003 FY	Sig.	2006 SR	2003 SR	Sig.
Level of Academic Challenge	51.8	52.8		54.9	57.6	.010
Active and Collaborative Learning	42.8	37.8	.000	48.8	45.4	.004
Student-Faculty Interaction†	36.2	32.6	.018	41.2	38.1	.032
Supportive Campus Environment	55.6	57.6		55.0	53.9	

* Due to a change of survey items, it is impossible to compare the benchmark scores on enriching educational experiences.

† To allow for a more accurate comparison with those of 2003, the 2006 benchmark scores on student-faculty interaction reported in Table 3 were adjusted and re-calculated by NSSE. They are different from those reported in Tables 4 and 5.

Benchmark Score Comparison: Mason 2006 vs. Peer Institutions

Mason freshmen. Tables 4 and 5 compare Mason’s 2006 benchmark scores with those of selected peers and Carnegie peers. Overall, Mason 2006 freshmen:

- reported a significantly *lower* level of academic challenge when compared with freshmen at *selected* peer institutions. There is no significant difference between Mason and Carnegie peers on this benchmark;
- reported significantly *more* active and collaborative learning than those from selected peers and Carnegie peers;
- had *more* interaction with faculty when compared with *selected* peers, but no difference with Carnegie peers;
- had the same level of enriching educational experiences as selected peers – both are significantly *higher* than Carnegie peers;
- rated supportive campus environment much *lower* than their counterparts from selected peers and Carnegie peers.

Table 4. Benchmark Score Comparisons of Freshmen

Benchmark	Mason 2006		Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers		
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Sig.*	Mean	Std Dev	Sig.*
Level of Academic Challenge	51.8	13.1	52.7	12.5	.047	51.1	13.3	
Active and Collaborative Learning	42.8	16.4	38.7	14.8	.000	40.1	16.1	.000
Student-Faculty Interaction	31.2	18.7	28.9	16.4	.001	30.4	17.3	
Enriching Educational Experiences	29.1	13.7	29.7	12.7		26.6	12.9	.000
Supportive Campus Environment	55.6	18.7	58.7	17.0	.000	57.7	18.4	.002

* Only significant differences ($p < .05$) are reported in this column.

Mason seniors. Mason 2006 seniors:

- reported the same level of academic challenge as their counterparts from selected peers and Carnegie peers;
- reported the same level of active and collaborative learning as seniors from Carnegie peers – both are significantly *higher* than selected peers;
- had significantly *less* interaction with faculty compared to selected peers and Carnegie peers;
- had significantly *less* enriching educational experiences than selected peers and Carnegie peers;
- rated supportive campus environment significantly *higher* than seniors from selected peer institutions, but not differently than Carnegie peers.

Table 5. Benchmark Score Comparisons of Senior Students

Benchmark	Mason 2006		Selected Peers			Carnegie Peers		
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	Sig.*	Mean	Std Dev	Sig.*
Level of Academic Challenge	54.9	14.4	55.5	13.8		55.1	14.2	
Active and Collaborative Learning	48.8	17.1	46.3	16.0	.000	49.3	17.3	
Student-Faculty Interaction	36.5	20.3	38.4	19.8	.009	39.7	20.9	.000
Enriching Educational Experiences	37.0	17.5	43.7	16.5	.000	38.9	17.6	.001
Supportive Campus Environment	55.0	18.8	53.3	17.7	.009	55.6	19.3	

* Only significant differences ($p < .05$) are reported in this column.

III. Self-Comparison Report: Mason 2006 and 2003

Table 3 shows several significant changes on Mason’s benchmark scores for 2006 compared to 2003. This section further explores what has caused these changes and where Mason needs improvement. Although every benchmark item has been examined, we report primarily on statistically significant changes from 2003. Due to survey item and methodology changes, it is impossible to compare Mason’s benchmark scores of 2000 with those of 2003 and 2006. However, we do include a few NSSE results from 2000 when direct comparisons on certain benchmark items are possible to document trends. For more information on other NSSE items, please refer to *Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons*.

Benchmark One: Level of Academic Challenge

Level of academic challenge includes three major areas: coursework emphasis, amount of reading and writing, and time spent on studying. There are two major findings for this benchmark:

1. Compared to their counterparts in 2003, the 2006 Mason seniors reported a significantly *lower* level of academic challenge. There are three reasons for this drop: 1) significantly *fewer* 2006 Mason seniors thought their coursework emphasized “analysis” very much; 2) 2006 Mason seniors reported significantly *fewer* assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings than 2003 seniors; 3) 2006 seniors spent significantly *less* amount of time preparing for class than 2003 seniors.
2. There is no statistically significant change on any Benchmark One item for Mason freshmen.

Course Emphasis on Analysis – Seniors

As Table 6 shows, in 2006, 40% of the seniors thought their coursework emphasized analysis “very much,” nine percentage points lower than that of 2003. There is no statistically significant difference between 2006 and 2000 seniors on this item.

Table 6. Coursework Emphasis on Analysis – Seniors (i.e., *analyzing the basis elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components*)

Response Options	2006 Mason SR	2003 Mason SR	2000 Mason SR
Very little	1%	1%	2%
Some	17%	11%	18%
Quite a bit	41%	39%	44%
Very much	40%	49%	37%

Reading Assignments – Seniors

2006 Mason seniors also reported less assigned readings than their counterparts of 2003 and 2000. About 33% of 2006 seniors said they had more than 10 books/book-length packs of course readings, compared to 48%-49% of the earlier cohorts. One possible influence may be the rising cost of textbooks and course materials in recent years. Mason faculty are encouraged to consider such cost when they plan for courses.

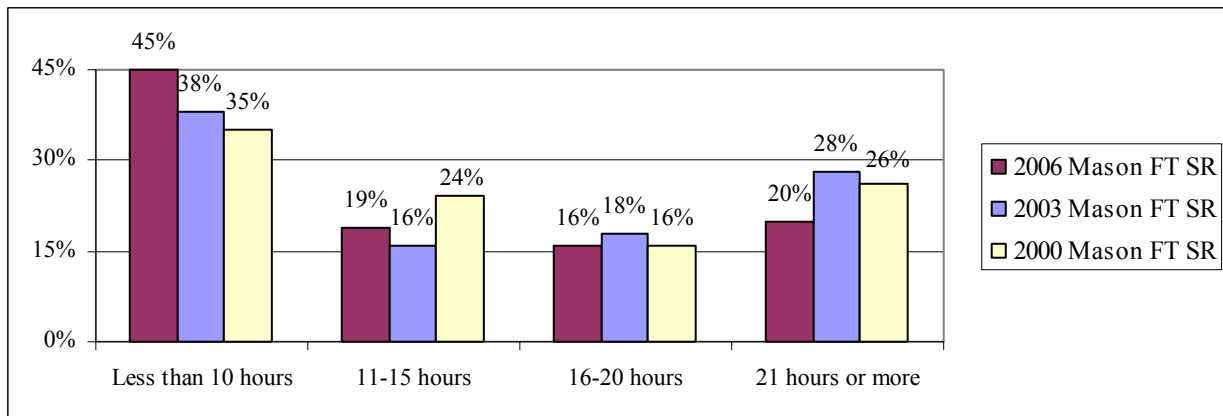
Table 7. Number of Assigned Readings – Seniors

# of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings in the current school year	2006 Mason SR	2003 Mason SR	2000 Mason SR
None	1%	1%	0%
Between 1 and 4	28%	18%	18%
Between 5 and 10	38%	31%	34%
Between 11 and 20	20%	33%	32%
More than 20	13%	16%	16%

Study Hours – Full-time Seniors

In 2000, 2003 and 2006, respectively, about 70% of Mason seniors who completed the NSSE survey were enrolled as full-time students. Their self-reported study time has dropped significantly over the past six years. Figure 4 includes the full-time senior respondents from Mason only. The percentage of seniors who spent less than 10 hours a week preparing for class has increased by ten percentage points since 2000 to 45%; whereas, the percentage who spent more than 21 hours a week has dropped by six percentage points to 20%.

Figure 4. Hours Spent per Week Preparing for Class – Full-time Seniors at Mason



Benchmark Two: Active and Collaborative Learning

Both 2006 freshmen and seniors reported significantly *more* active and collaborative learning compared to the 2003 cohort. There are several reasons for this improvement:

1. Compared to the 2003 cohort, significantly *more* 2006 freshmen said the following: 1) they “often/very often” made class presentations; 2) they “often/very often” worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments; and 3) they “often/very often” discussed ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class.
2. Compared to their counterparts in 2003, significantly *more* 2006 seniors said: 1) they “often/very often” worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments; and 2) they at least “sometimes” tutored or taught other students.

Mason Freshman Trend, 2000-2006

On three benchmark items of active and collaborative learning (as shown in Table 8), 2006 Mason freshmen showed significant improvement compared to 2003 and 2000. The percentage of 2006 freshmen who selected “often” or “very often” for these items has significantly increased since 2003 and is also higher than that of 2000. Forty-four percent of 2006 freshmen often or very often made a class presentation, 42% often or very often worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments, and 57% often or very often discussed ideas from their readings or classes with others outside of class.

Table 8. Engagement in Active and Collaborative Learning – Mason Freshman Trend

How often have you done the following during the current school year?	Response Options	2006 Mason FR	2003 Mason FR	2000 Mason FR
Made a class presentation	Never	8%	16%	14%
	Sometimes	48%	52%	51%
	Very often/Often	44%	33%	35%
Worked with classmates OUTSIDE OF CLASS to prepare class assignments	Never	10%	20%	15%
	Sometimes	48%	52%	48%
	Very often/Often	42%	28%	37%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	Never	7%	13%	9%
	Sometimes	36%	40%	43%
	Very often/Often	57%	47%	48%

Mason Senior Trend, 2000-2006

On two benchmark items of active and collaborative learning (as shown in Table 9), 2006 Mason seniors showed significant improvement over 2003. More 2006 seniors (56%) very often/often worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments than 2003 seniors. Fifty-two percent of 2006 seniors tutored or taught other students at least “sometimes,” compared to 45% of 2003 seniors. But this figure is significantly lower than that of 2000, which is 59%.

Table 9. Engagement in Active and Collaborative Learning – Mason Senior Trend

How often have you done the following during the current school year?	Response Options	2006 Mason SR	2003 Mason SR	2000 Mason SR
Worked with classmates OUTSIDE OF CLASS to prepare class assignments	Never	6%	7%	5%
	Sometimes	38%	43%	40%
	Very often/Often	56%	50%	55%
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	Never	48%	56%	42%
	Sometimes	35%	33%	43%
	Very often/Often	17%	12%	16%

Benchmark Three: Student-Faculty Interaction

Compared to 2003, both 2006 Mason freshmen and seniors reported more interaction with faculty. There are significant improvements in the following areas:

1. At the freshman level, more 2006 freshmen than 2003 freshmen talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor and worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientations, student life activities, etc.).
2. At the senior level, more 2006 seniors reported the following activities than 2003 seniors: 1) talking about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, 2) discussing ideas from their readings and classes with faculty members outside of class, and, 3) working with faculty members on activities other than coursework.

Mason Freshman Trend, 2000-2006

As Table 10 shows, 22% of 2006 freshmen “very often” or “often” talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, higher than that of 2003 and 2000 (17%-18%). Thirty-two percent of 2006 freshmen have “never” done so, a figure lower than that of 2003 (38%) but comparable to that of 2000. Thirty-six percent of 2006 freshmen have worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework, 12-13 percentage points higher than that of 2003 and 2000.

Table 10. Student-Faculty Interaction – Mason Freshman Trend

How often how you done the following during the current school year?	Response Options	2006 Mason FR	2003 Mason FR	2000 Mason FR
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	Never	32%	38%	31%
	Sometimes	46%	46%	51%
	Very often/Often	22%	17%	18%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework	Never	64%	76%	77%
	Sometimes	22%	14%	19%
	Very often/Often	14%	10%	5%

Mason Senior Trend, 2000-2006

At the senior level, 30% of 2006 seniors “very often” or “often” talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor, 5 percentage points higher than that of 2003 and 2000. Twenty-four percent of 2006 seniors “very often” or “often” discussed ideas from their readings or classes with faculty members outside of class, a figure higher than that of 2003 and 2000 (17-19%). In the area of working with faculty members on activities other than coursework, 59% of the 2006 seniors have NEVER done it, much lower than the percentage of 2003 and 2000 (69%).

Table 11. Student-Faculty Interaction – Mason Senior Trend

How often how you done the following during the current school year?	Response Options	2006 Mason SR	2003 Mason SR	2000 Mason SR
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	Never	23%	27%	22%
	Sometimes	46%	48%	52%
	Very often/Often	30%	25%	25%
Discussed ideas from their readings and classes with faculty members outside of class	Never	33%	36%	36%
	Sometimes	43%	45%	46%
	Very often/Often	24%	19%	17%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework	Never	59%	69%	69%
	Sometimes	25%	22%	21%
	Very often/Often	15%	9%	10%

IV. Peer Comparison Report, 2006

In several areas as shown in Tables 2 and 3, Mason's benchmark scores for 2006 are significantly different from selected peer and Carnegie peer institutions. This section further explores those areas in which Mason's performance is above or below its peers and where Mason needs improvement. All the data presented in this section are from NSSE 2006 and were weighted by sex, enrollment status and institutional size. Only statistically significant results are discussed in this section. For more information, please refer to *Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons*.

Benchmark One: Level of Academic Challenge

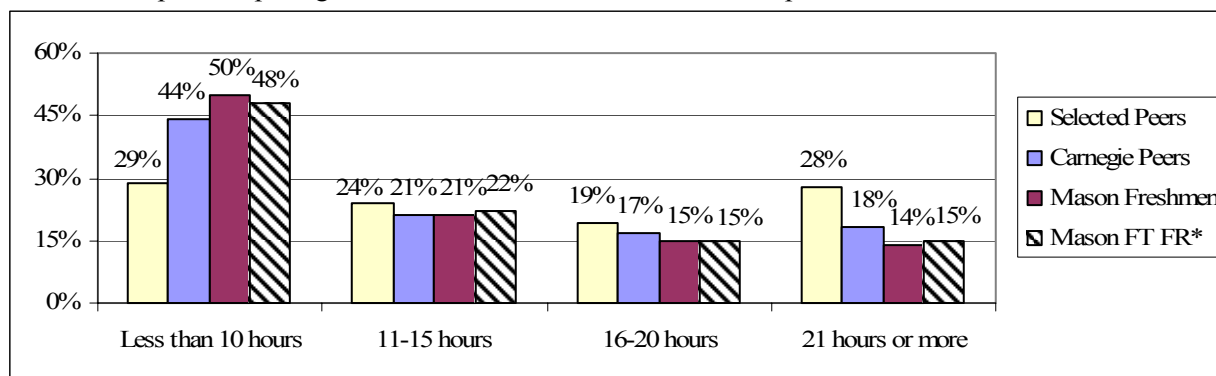
On level of academic challenge, the benchmark score for Mason freshmen is *significantly lower* than that of freshmen at selected peer institutions. The difference between Mason freshmen and their Carnegie peers and the difference between Mason seniors and their selected and Carnegie peers are not statistically significant. There are three major findings for this benchmark:

1. Both Mason freshmen and seniors reported *significantly less amount of time preparing for class* than their selected and Carnegie peers did. Fewer Mason students than their selected peers thought Mason emphasized spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work. These differences may account for the lower benchmark score for Mason freshmen compared to selected peers.
2. Fewer Mason freshmen and seniors than their selected peers thought their coursework emphasized *application* very much.
3. Mason freshmen reported *significantly more reading and writing* assignments than their counterparts in selected and Carnegie peer institutions.

Time Spent on Studying

Freshmen. One major reason for the low benchmark score of Mason freshmen was because they reported *significantly less* time studying or preparing for class than their peers. As Figure 5 shows, 50% of Mason freshmen spent 10 hours or less a week on academic work, compared to 44% of Carnegie peers and 29% of selected peers. Nonetheless, this figure has *dropped* by ten percentage points since 2003. If we only include full-time Mason freshmen (about 96% of Mason respondents), 48% of full-time Mason freshmen spent 10 hours or less a week studying. Fourteen percent of Mason freshmen spent 21 hours or more studying (15% of full-time freshmen), a figure also significantly lower than that of selected peers (28%).

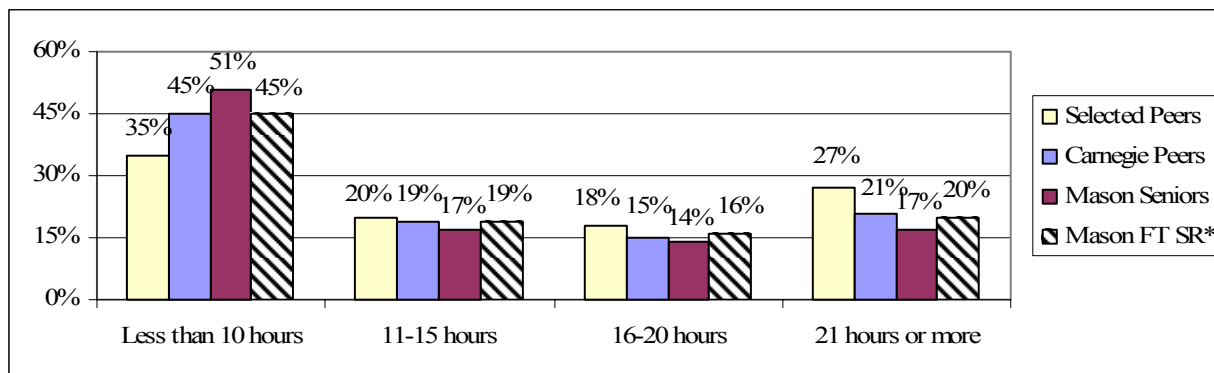
Figure 5. Time Spent Preparing for Class – Freshman Level Peer Comparison



* The first three groups include all freshmen from each institution. The last group includes Mason full-time freshmen ONLY.

Seniors. Figure 6 shows how much time Mason seniors spent studying: 51% of 2006 Mason seniors spent 10 hours or less preparing for class, compared with 35% and 45% of selected peers and Carnegie peers, respectively. This figure has *increased* by eight percentage points since 2003. Among Mason full-time seniors, 45% spent 10 hours or less and 20% spent 21 hours or more in a typical week.

Figure 6. Time Spent Preparing for Class – Senior Level Peer Comparison



* The first three groups include all seniors from each institution. The last group includes Mason full-time seniors ONLY.

Institutional Emphasis on Studying

Fewer Mason freshmen and seniors thought Mason emphasized spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work, compared to their selected peers (see Table 12). For example, 26% of Mason freshmen thought such emphasis was “very much,” compared to 36% of their selected peers; 30% of Mason seniors thought the emphasis was “very much,” compared to 35% of their selected peers.

Table 12. Institutional Emphasis on Spending Significant Amounts of Time on Studying and Academic Work

Response Options	2006 Freshmen			2006 Seniors		
	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers
Very little	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Some	20%	14%	21%	20%	19%	20%
Quite a bit	51%	47%	47%	48%	44%	45%
Very much	26%	36%	30%	30%	35%	32%
Mean†	2.99	3.19	3.04	3.05	3.12	3.07
Mean Sig.	--	***		--	*	

† Mean is calculated on the following scale: 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit and 4=very much. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Reading and Writing Assignments

Freshmen. Mason freshmen are assigned significantly *more reading and writing* than their counterparts in selected and Carnegie peer institutions. They have more assigned textbooks, books or packets of course readings than Carnegie peers and they write more long (20 pages or more) and mid-sized (between 5-19 pages) papers or reports than both peer groups. In addition, they write more short (<5 pages) papers than their selected peers.

Seniors. Mason seniors have a comparable amount of assigned reading to their Carnegie peers, but significantly *less* than their selected peers. Mason seniors and their peer groups have similar numbers of long writing assignments. Both Mason seniors and selected peers write more mid-sized papers or reports than their Carnegie peers.

Benchmark Two: Active and Collaborative Learning

On active and collaborative learning, the benchmark score for Mason freshmen is significantly higher than selected peers and Carnegie peers; the benchmark score for Mason seniors is significantly higher than selected peers and comparable to Carnegie peers. Two things stand out:

1. Mason students generally reported more active and collaborative learning *in class* than their peers. They ask questions, contribute to class discussions, and make presentations more often than their peers.
2. The results on active and collaborative learning experiences *outside of class* are mixed. Mason students engage in the following activities *less often* than their selected peers: working with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments and tutoring or teaching other students.

Active and Collaborative Learning in Class

On two out of three items assessing how actively students engage in learning in the classroom, Mason students (both freshmen and seniors) reported significantly higher levels than their selected peers and Carnegie peers. As Table 13 shows, nearly one quarter of Mason freshmen “very often” ask questions or contribute to class discussions, compared to much smaller percentages of freshman peers; over one third of Mason seniors reported the same, compared to significantly smaller percentages of peers. In addition, 43% of Mason freshmen often or very often make class presentations, compared to 17% of selected peers and 24% of Carnegie peers. This figure has increased by ten percentage points since 2003. Two thirds of Mason seniors often or very often make class presentations, compared to 43% of selected peers and 55% of Carnegie peers.

The third benchmark item asked about how frequently students work with other students on projects during class. Mason students (both freshmen and seniors) reported a significantly higher level of frequency than their selected peers and the same level as their Carnegie peers.

Table 13. In-Class Presentations and Discussions

Survey Items	Response Options	2006 Freshmen			2006 Seniors		
		Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers
How often do you ask questions in class or contribute to class discussion in the current year?	Never	3%	5%	5%	2%	4%	3%
	Sometimes	38%	48%	45%	30%	39%	32%
	Often	35%	32%	33%	30%	32%	34%
	Very often	24%	15%	17%	38%	26%	32%
	Mean†	2.81	2.57	2.64	3.04	2.79	2.95
	Mean Sig.	--	***	***	--	***	**
How often do you make a class presentation in the current year?	Never	9%	23%	22%	5%	6%	7%
	Sometimes	48%	59%	54%	31%	51%	38%
	Often	33%	14%	19%	37%	29%	34%
	Very often	10%	3%	5%	27%	14%	21%
	Mean†	2.45	1.97	2.08	2.85	2.50	2.68
	Mean Sig.	--	***	***	--	***	***

† Mean is calculated on the following scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often and 4=very often. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Active and Collaborative Learning Outside of Class

The results on active and collaborative learning outside of class are mixed. Mason students discuss ideas from readings or classes with others outside of class as often as their selected and Carnegie peers do. Compared with selected peers, Mason freshmen are *more* likely to say they often participate in a community-based project as part of a regular course. Mason seniors are *less* likely than the Carnegie peers to say they often do the same.

In the previous Self-Comparison Report, we concluded that 2006 Mason students engaged in the following activities more often than their counterparts in 2003: working with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments and tutoring or teaching other students. However, on these two items, Mason 2006 students are still behind their *selected* peers – the percentage differences are not large but statistically significant. Forty-one percent of 2006 Mason freshmen and 56% of Mason seniors often or very often worked with classmates outside of class, compared to 45% and 60% of selected peers respectively. As Table 14 shows, about half of Mason students never tutor or teach other students, a percentage much higher than peers.

Table 14. How often do you tutor or teach other students (paid or voluntary)?

Response Options	2006 Freshmen			2006 Seniors		
	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers
Never	54%	46%	49%	48%	41%	41%
Sometimes	31%	38%	35%	35%	37%	37%
Often	10%	11%	11%	10%	12%	12%
Very often	5%	5%	5%	7%	9%	10%
Mean†	1.66	1.75	1.72	1.76	1.88	1.90
Mean Sig.	--	**		--	***	***

† Mean is calculated on the following scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often and 4=very often. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Benchmark Three: Student-Faculty Interaction

Student-faculty interaction was a major concern when the 2003 NSSE results were released in 2004. Compared with 79 doctoral-extensive institutions (according to the 2000 Carnegie Classification) that participated in NSSE from 2001 to 2003, Mason's benchmark score for student-faculty interaction was at the 10th percentile for freshmen and below the 10th percentile for senior students. Since 2003, there has been a significant improvement in student-faculty interaction at Mason as shown in the Self-Comparison Report. Compared to selected and Carnegie peers in 2006, there are two major findings:

1. The benchmark score on level of student-faculty interaction for Mason 2006 freshmen is *comparable* to that of Carnegie peers. It is significantly *higher* than that of selected peers.
2. The benchmark score on student-faculty interaction for Mason 2006 seniors is still significantly *lower* than that of selected peers and Carnegie peers. Three major differences account for the lower benchmark score of Mason seniors in comparison to selected and Carnegie peers: 1) Mason seniors are less likely to say they have worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework; 2) they are less likely to have worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements; 3) they talk about their career plans with a faculty member or advisor less often.

Interaction with Faculty – Freshmen

Table 15 compares the frequency of Mason freshmen and faculty interaction with their counterparts from selected and Carnegie peer institutions. Here are some highlights:

- Mason freshmen discuss grades or an assignment with an instructor significantly *more often* than their selected peers and Carnegie peers.
- Mason freshmen are significantly *less likely* to talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor than their Carnegie peers in 2006.
- Nearly half of freshmen (47%) at Mason, as well as freshmen at selected peer and Carnegie peer institutions, do NOT discuss ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class.
- About half of freshmen at Mason, selected peers and Carnegie peers often or very often receive prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance. Mason freshmen receive such feedback more often than their selected peers.
- A majority of freshmen (64-69%) at Mason, selected peer and Carnegie peer institutions have never worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework.

Table 15. Student-Faculty Interaction – Freshmen

Benchmark Items	Response Options	Mason 2006	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06
Discussed grades or an assignment with an instructor	Never	9%	12%	10%
	Sometimes	43%	49%	45%
	Often	31%	27%	30%
	Very Often	18%	12%	15%
	Mean†	2.57	2.39	2.50
	Mean Sig.	--	***	*
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	Never	31%	27%	27%
	Sometimes	47%	49%	47%
	Often	15%	18%	18%
	Very Often	7%	6%	8%
	Mean†	1.98	2.02	2.07
	Mean Sig.	--		**
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	Never	47%	47%	47%
	Sometimes	34%	39%	37%
	Often	12%	11%	12%
	Very Often	7%	4%	5%
	Mean†	1.79	1.72	1.74
	Mean Sig.	--	*	
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	Never	9%	10%	10%
	Sometimes	39%	43%	41%
	Often	39%	37%	36%
	Very Often	12%	10%	12%
	Mean†	2.55	2.47	2.50
	Mean Sig.	--	*	
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	Never	64%	69%	64%
	Sometimes	22%	22%	24%
	Often	12%	7%	9%
	Very Often	3%	2%	3%
	Mean†	1.54	1.43	1.51
	Mean Sig.	--	***	
Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements (for calculation of mean: 1=done; 0=all other options)	Have not decided	38%	39%	40%
	Do not plan to do	27%	20%	25%
	Plan to do	29%	36%	31%
	Done	5%	5%	4%
	Mean†	0.5	0.5	0.4
	Mean Sig.	--		

† Mean is calculated on the following scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often and 4=very often; or, 1=done and 0=have not decided, do not plan to do, or plan to do. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Interaction with Faculty – Seniors

Table 16 compares 2006 Mason seniors with their selected and Carnegie peers on student faculty interaction. Here are some highlights:

- Mason seniors discuss grades or an assignment with an instructor *more often* than their selected peers in 2006. There is no significant difference between Mason seniors and Carnegie peers.
- Mason seniors talk about career plans with a faculty member or advisor *less often* than their Carnegie peers. Twenty-four percent of Mason seniors have NEVER done this.
- There is no statistically significant difference between Mason seniors and their selected peers and Carnegie peers in terms of how often they discuss ideas from readings or classes with faculty members

outside of class. One third of seniors from Mason, selected peers and Carnegie peers have NEVER had such discussions with faculty outside of class.

- More than half of senior students from Mason, selected peers and Carnegie peers often or very often receive prompt feedback from faculty on their academic performance. No statistically significant difference is found between three groups.
- Far *more* Mason seniors than their selected peers and Carnegie peers have NEVER worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework. Sixty-percent of 2006 Mason seniors have NEVER done so.
- Only 13% of 2006 Mason seniors have worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements, compared to 27% of their selected peers and 19% of Carnegie peers.

Table 16. Student-Faculty Interaction – Seniors

Benchmark Items	Response Options	Mason 2006	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06
Discussed grades or an assignment with an instructor	Never	5%	6%	5%
	Sometimes	40%	45%	38%
	Often	27%	30%	32%
	Very Often	27%	19%	24%
	Mean†	2.76	2.63	2.76
	Mean Sig.	--	***	
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	Never	24%	19%	19%
	Sometimes	46%	48%	43%
	Often	18%	21%	23%
	Very Often	12%	11%	15%
	Mean†	2.18	2.24	2.33
	Mean Sig.	--		***
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	Never	33%	33%	31%
	Sometimes	43%	47%	44%
	Often	16%	14%	16%
	Very Often	8%	6%	8%
	Mean†	1.99	1.94	2.03
	Mean Sig.	--		
Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	Never	8%	6%	7%
	Sometimes	35%	40%	34%
	Often	42%	41%	43%
	Very Often	15%	12%	17%
	Mean†	2.64	2.60	2.69
	Mean Sig.	--		
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	Never	60%	53%	51%
	Sometimes	25%	31%	30%
	Often	10%	11%	12%
	Very Often	5%	5%	7%
	Mean†	1.61	1.68	1.76
	Mean Sig.	--	*	***
Worked on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements (for calculation of mean: 1=done; 0=all other options)	Have not decided	20%	10%	16%
	Do not plan to do	55%	52%	52%
	Plan to do	12%	11%	13%
	Done	13%	27%	19%
	Mean†	.13	.27	.19
	Mean Sig.	--	***	***

† Mean is calculated on the following scale: 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often and 4=very often; or, 1=done and 0=have not decided, do not plan to do, or plan to do. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Benchmark Four: Enriching Educational Experiences

The benchmark score on enriching educational experiences for Mason 2006 freshmen is comparable to that of selected peers and is significantly *higher* than that of Carnegie peers and all NSSE institutions. Mason seniors, however, have a significantly *lower* benchmark score than their selected peers, Carnegie peers, and all NSSE institutions. There are three major findings:

1. Overall, Mason students reported *more* interaction with students from diverse backgrounds (racial, ethnical and religious) than their peers. And they feel Mason's environment encourages contact among students from diverse backgrounds, more so than their peers feel about their respective universities.
2. Mason seniors are significantly *less* likely to have participated in enriching educational experiences than their Carnegie peers and, particularly, selected peers. These experiences include practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, clinical assignment, community service or volunteer work, foreign language coursework, study abroad, independent study or self-designed major, and culminating senior experiences. This difference accounts for the significantly lower benchmark score of Mason seniors compared with Carnegie peers and, in particular, selected peers.
3. Mason students, especially Mason seniors, spend *less* time on co-curricular activities than their selected peers and Carnegie peers. This is partially due to the fact that the percentage of Mason seniors who live off campus but within walking distance is significantly lower than that of selected peers and Carnegie peers.

Interaction with Students from Diverse Backgrounds

Three items in this benchmark assess students' interaction with others from diverse backgrounds. Due to a highly diverse student population, Mason students always report frequent interaction with students from different backgrounds, which is reflected in the NSSE Surveys and the Graduating Senior Surveys. In 2006, one third of NSSE respondents from Mason said they very often have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity, compared to one fourth of their selected and Carnegie peers. Mason freshmen are more likely than Carnegie peers to say they often have serious conversations with students who have different religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values. Thirty-percent of Mason freshmen and 23% of Mason seniors feel Mason encourages contact among students from diverse backgrounds "very much" – both percentages higher than those of selected and Carnegie peer institutions.

Time Spent on Co-curricular Activities

Mason students, particularly seniors, spend *less* time on co-curricular activities than their selected peers (see Table 17). In 2006, 44% of Mason freshmen did NOT spend any time on co-curricular activities, compared to 27% of their selected peers and 41% of their Carnegie peers. This figure has dropped by five percentage points since 2003. At the senior level, 60% of Mason seniors did NOT spend any time on co-curricular activities, a drop of six percentage points since 2003. This figure remains, however, significantly higher than that of selected peers (30%) and Carnegie peers (48%).

The lower participation rate in co-curricular activities may be partially related to where students live. Table 1 (in Section II: *Overview – Characteristics of Student Population*) compares current places of living of three groups of NSSE respondents. Compared with selected peers and Carnegie peers, significantly *fewer* Mason freshmen and seniors live on campus or at a place within walking distance of campus. Students who commute to campus may not be willing to make an additional trip to attend co-curricular activities that don't fit into their schedule.

Table 17. Time Spent on Co-curricular Activities (organizing, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc)

Response Options	2006 Freshmen			2006 Seniors		
	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers	Mason	Selected Peers	Carnegie Peers
0 hr/wk	44%	27%	41%	60%	30%	48%
1-5 hr/wk	29%	39%	31%	23%	37%	29%
6-10 hr/wk	11%	17%	13%	9%	16%	10%
>= 11 hr/wk	16%	17%	15%	9%	17%	13%

Participation in Enriching Educational Experiences

Freshmen. Across all institutions, very few freshmen have had much experience on four out of the six activities included in the benchmark. These results are not reported here. On two other activities, Mason freshmen are lower than peers. Fewer Mason freshmen have had community service or volunteer work, significantly lower than their selected and Carnegie peers. Fewer Mason freshmen (23%) have had foreign language coursework, also significantly lower than selected peers (34%).

Seniors. Table 18 lists six enriching educational experiences included in the benchmark. On all six items, *fewer* Mason seniors than selected peers have “done” those activities; on four of these items, *fewer* Mason seniors than their Carnegie peers have had such experiences. For example:

- 44% of Mason seniors have had a practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment, compared to 61% of selected peers and 50% of Carnegie peers;
- 41% of Mason seniors have done community service or volunteer work, compared to 67% and 58% of selected peers and Carnegie peers respectively;
- Fewer Mason seniors (35%) have had foreign language coursework than their selected peers (54%) and Carnegie peers (41%);
- Very few Mason seniors (12%) have studied abroad, significantly behind selected peers (19%);
- 15% of Mason seniors have had an independent study or self-designed major, slightly lower than both peer groups;
- 30% of Mason seniors have completed a culminating senior experience, four percentage points lower than that of selected peers; and 32% of Mason seniors plan to do so.

Table 18 also lists the responses from Mason 2003 seniors as reference. Note that NSSE 2003 combines two response options: “plan to do” and “done.” Compared to 2003, Mason seniors have made improvements in almost every category and particularly in the following areas:

- More Mason 2006 seniors “plan to do” or have “done” community service or volunteer work, 60% in 2006 vs. 41% in 2003
- More Mason 2006 seniors “plan to” or have participated in a study abroad program (22% in 2006 vs. 14% in 2003)
- Significantly more 2006 seniors “plan to” or have “done” culminating senior experiences, 62% in 2006 vs. 46% in 2003.

Table 18. Senior Students' Participation in Enriching Educational Experiences

(For calculation of mean values for 2006 results: 1=Done; 0=have not decided, do not plan to do, and plan to do)

Benchmark Items	Response Options	Mason 2006	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06	Mason 2003
Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	Have not decided	11%	5%	8%	11%
	Do not plan to do	21%	18%	18%	27%
	Plan to do	24%	16%	24%	62%
	Done	44%	61%	50%	
	Mean†	.44	.61	.50	--
	Mean Sig.	--	***	***	--
Community service or volunteer work	Have not decided	15%	7%	10%	17%
	Do not plan to do	24%	16%	17%	42%
	Plan to do	19%	10%	14%	41%
	Done	41%	67%	58%	
	Mean†	.41	.67	.58	--
	Mean Sig.	--	***	***	--
Foreign language coursework	Have not decided	12%	4%	8%	9%
	Do not plan to do	42%	36%	42%	48%
	Plan to do	11%	5%	9%	43%
	Done	35%	54%	41%	
	Mean†	.35	.54	.41	--
	Mean Sig.	--	***	***	--
Study abroad	Have not decided	17%	8%	13%	12%
	Do not plan to do	61%	65%	65%	74%
	Plan to do	10%	8%	9%	14%
	Done	12%	19%	13%	
	Mean†	.12	.19	.13	--
	Mean Sig.	--	***		--
Independent study or self-designed major	Have not decided	15%	7%	13%	10%
	Do not plan to do	60%	68%	61%	71%
	Plan to do	10%	5%	9%	20%
	Done	15%	20%	17%	
	Mean†	.15	.20	.17	--
	Mean Sig.	--	***	*	--
Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	Have not decided	14%	7%	11%	12%
	Do not plan to do	25%	37%	28%	42%
	Plan to do	32%	22%	31%	46%
	Done	30%	34%	30%	
	Mean†	0.30	0.34	0.30	--
	Mean Sig.	--	**		--

† For calculation of mean: 1=done; 0=all other options. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Benchmark Five: Supportive Campus Climate

For this benchmark, Mason freshmen scored significantly *lower* than their selected and Carnegie peers; Mason seniors scored at a comparable level as Carnegie peers and significantly higher than selected peers. There are six items in this benchmark, assessing two major areas: campus environment and quality of relationships on campus. The major findings are:

1. Mason freshmen rated campus relationships (relationships with other students and with administrative personnel and officers) much *lower* than selected peers and Carnegie peers. *Fewer* Mason freshmen think Mason provides support for them to succeed academically and socially than their selected and Carnegie peers. These differences account for the *low* benchmark score for Mason freshmen.
2. On four items, Mason seniors rated Mason significantly *higher* than selected peers: 1) relationships with faculty members, 2) relationships with administrative personnel/offices, 3) providing support to help students succeed academically, and 4) helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities. On these items, there is no significant difference between Mason seniors and Carnegie peers.

Quality of Relationships on Campus

Freshmen. Of three types of relationships, students across the country gave the highest rating to the quality of relationships with other students, followed by relationships with faculty, and relationships with administrative personnel and offices (see Table 19). At Mason, more than half of freshmen (53%) think their relationships with other students are friendly and supportive (i.e., a *high* rating of 6 or 7 on a 1-7 scale). This figure is slightly lower than that of selected peers (59%) and Carnegie peers (56%). On the relationship with faculty members, over one third of Mason freshmen gave a rating of 6 or 7, which is comparable to selected peers and Carnegie peers. Mason freshmen rated the relationship with administrative personnel and offices significantly lower than selected peers and Carnegie peers.

Table 19. Quality of Relationship – Freshmen

Benchmark Items	Response Options	Mason 2006	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06
Relationships with other students (1=unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation; 7=friendly, supportive, sense of belonging)	Ratings of 1-2 (very bad)	7%	3%	4%
	Rating 3 (bad)	6%	5%	5%
	Rating 4 (neutral)	13%	10%	13%
	Rating 5 (good)	21%	22%	21%
	Ratings 6-7 (very good)	53%	59%	56%
	Mean†	5.31	5.55	5.45
	Mean Sig.	--	***	*
Relationships with faculty members (1=unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic; 7=available, helpful, sympathetic)	Ratings of 1-2 (very bad)	3%	4%	4%
	Rating 3	7%	8%	8%
	Rating 4 (neutral)	23%	21%	20%
	Rating 5	29%	31%	29%
	Ratings 6-7 (very good)	38%	36%	39%
	Mean†	5.04	4.97	5.01
	Mean Sig.	--		
Relationships with administrative personnel and offices (1=unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid; 7=helpful, considerate, flexible)	Ratings of 1-2 (very bad)	13%	10%	12%
	Rating 3	15%	14%	13%
	Rating 4 (neutral)	26%	28%	25%
	Rating 5	22%	25%	23%
	Ratings 6-7 (very good)	22%	24%	27%
	Mean†	4.28	4.45	4.48
	Mean Sig.	--	**	***

† Mean is calculated on a 1-7 scale. Only significant differences in mean values ($p < .05$) are reported at the following levels: *= $p < .05$, **= $p < .01$ and ***= $p < .001$.

Seniors. Mason seniors rated the relationship with other students comparable to their selected peers, but significantly lower than their Carnegie peers. On relationships with faculty and administration, Mason seniors scored as high as their Carnegie peers and significantly higher than their selected peers. Here are some highlights:

- 53% of Mason seniors rated relationships with other students as very good (ratings of 6 or 7), compared to 58% of selected peers and 60% of Carnegie peers.
- 47% of Mason seniors rated relationships with faculty as very good, compared to 42% of selected peers and 49% of Carnegie peers.
- 31% rated relationships with administrators as very good, compared to 27% of selected peers and 29% of Carnegie peers.

Campus Support

Freshmen. Compared to freshmen in selected peer and Carnegie peer institutions, fewer Mason freshmen thought Mason emphasized providing support to help students succeed academically and thrive socially (Table 20). Two thirds of freshmen (67%) felt Mason provided “very much” or “quite a bit” of support to help them succeed academically, but this figure is significantly lower than that of selected peers (78%) and Carnegie peers (72%). Less than 40% of Mason freshmen think Mason provides “very much” or “quite a bit” of support to help them thrive socially, compared to 45% of selected peers and 44% of Carnegie peers. Twenty-three percent of Mason freshmen think such support is “very little.” Mason is significantly lower on this item than either the selected peers or Carnegie peers.

Table 20. Perceived Campus Support – Freshmen

Benchmark Items	Response Options	Mason 2006	Selected Peers 06	Carnegie Peers 06	Mason 2003
Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	Very little	5%	2%	3%	5%
	Some	28%	20%	25%	27%
	Quite a bit	43%	47%	46%	43%
	Very much	24%	31%	26%	25%
	Mean	2.86	3.05	2.93	2.89
	Mean Sig.	--	***	*	
Providing the support you need to thrive socially	Very little	23%	15%	19%	21%
	Some	38%	39%	38%	42%
	Quite a bit	28%	33%	31%	27%
	Very much	11%	12%	13%	10%
	Mean	2.27	2.43	2.38	2.24
	Mean Sig.	--	***	**	

† Mean is calculated on the following scale: 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit and 4=very much. Only significant differences in mean values (p<.05) are reported at the following levels: *=p<.05, **=p<.01 and ***=p<.001.

Seniors. Compared to selected peers, Mason seniors reported significantly higher levels of support to help them succeed academically and thrive socially. Nonetheless, 28% of Mason 2006 seniors think the support to help them thrive socially is “very little,” a figure comparable to their peers but significantly lower than that of 2003 (39%). About 41-44% of seniors from Mason, selected peers, and Carnegie peers think they receive very little support to cope with non-academic responsibilities.

V. Observations

From the previous analyses, we have five major observations:

1. Student-faculty interaction at Mason has improved at the freshman and senior levels since 2003, so much so that Mason freshmen now score significantly higher on this benchmark than selected peers. Seniors, on the other hand, remain significantly behind both selected and Carnegie peers. Compared to 2003, more Mason freshmen and seniors in 2006 have talked about their career plans with faculty and worked with faculty on activities other than coursework. However, Mason seniors have fewer interactions with faculty than their peers in the areas of working on activities other than coursework and working on a research project with a faculty member.
2. Mason 2006 freshmen and seniors spend less time preparing for classes and participating in co-curricular activities than their peers. The problem is not because Mason has a higher percentage of part-time students; instead, it is the full-time Mason students who work long hours off campus. Mason students are busier than their peers, spending less time relaxing and socializing. Instead, they spend significantly more time than their peers working for pay OFF campus, providing care for dependents living with them, and commuting to class. Compared to the 2003 Mason cohort, a higher percentage of 2006 Mason freshmen and seniors work for pay ON and OFF campus. Mason 2006 seniors spent significantly less time studying than their counterparts in 2003.
3. Mason seniors reported fewer enriching educational experiences than their peers. From the survey, we can not tell whether it is because Mason students do not have sufficient opportunities, or the time or the interest. For example, significantly more Mason seniors than their peers “have NOT decided” or “do NOT plan” to do community service or volunteer work, some kind of internship (also including practicum, field experience, co-op experience, clinical assignment, etc.), or foreign language coursework before graduation.
4. Mason freshmen perceive a less supportive campus environment than their counterparts in peer institutions. Compared to peer groups, fewer Mason freshmen think Mason emphasizes the following four areas “very much”: spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work, providing the support to help them succeed academically, providing the support they need to thrive socially, and attending campus events and activities. Freshmen perceptions on these areas did not change from 2003 to 2006.
5. There is a paradox in the NSSE findings. For both Mason freshmen and seniors, the level of active and collaborative learning is high compared to peers, i.e., Mason students are more likely to make class presentations and contribute to class discussions. Freshmen have more reading and writing assignments than their peers and seniors have a comparable amount of reading assignments as their Carnegie peers. At the same time, Mason students spend less time preparing for class and feel less of an institutional emphasis on studying than their peers. Why? Are students assigned a lot of work, but not expected to achieve a high level of performance? Are students able to perform well without a lot of effort? Do some students see collaborative work (such as group work/assignments) as “easier?” Some limited focus group data suggest that, at least for some students, Mason is not as “difficult” as they had expected. Should the curriculum be “difficult?” Should students be spending more time in class preparation? If so, how do we support such efforts?

Appendix One: Change of Methodology

NSSE 2006 is significantly different from NSSE 2003 in two areas: use of weights in analysis and a change in calculating benchmark scores.

Use of Weights

Beginning in 2006, weights are applied to all comparison reports provided by NSSE (i.e., Frequency Distributions, Mean Comparisons, and Benchmark Comparisons). The new weighting scheme adjusts for non-responses by gender, enrollment status (fulltime vs. part-time and first-year vs. senior), and institutional size. The use of weights intends to minimize non-response bias and ensure the representation of survey respondents to the larger student population within and between institutions. For George Mason University, our respondents were largely representative of our first-year and senior student population and the use of weights has minimal impact on survey results. For example, the frequency distribution of some survey items change by one percentage point and in the calculation of mean values, the use of weights only impacts the second decimal behind the point for all but one survey item³.

For *Section III: 2003 and 2006 Self-Comparison Report*, the results were NOT weighted. For *Section IV: Peer Comparison Report*, we used weights because the results from our peers were weighted by NSSE. The percentages and mean values reported in these two sections are *slightly* different.

Calculating Benchmark Scores

The change in calculating benchmark scores, especially for comparison group scores, has a more substantial impact. Over the years, researchers at NSSE found that the largest differences in student engagement occur *among students, not between institutions*. Therefore, since 2005 all benchmark scores are calculated at the *student level*, rather than the *institutional level*. This means, in 2006, every NSSE respondent has a set of five benchmark scores; whereas in 2003, every institution had only one set of five benchmark scores. In 2006, Mason respondents are compared with their counterparts in selected and Carnegie peer institutions; whereas, in 2003, George Mason University was compared to a group of 79 institutions that participated in NSSE between 2001 and 2003.

This change allows us to test whether the average benchmark scores of Mason respondents are statistically different from those of their peers in other institutions. It also allows us to compare Mason respondents from different colleges within the University. As a consequence of this change, the decile charts and the Engagement Index (included in the 2003 report prepared by OIA) have been discontinued. Also, the 2003 benchmark scores were recalculated, when possible, to allow for a more accurate comparison with those of 2006, and thus, are different from those reported by the OIA in 2004.

In addition, due to the changes of survey questions, it is impossible to *directly* compare the scores of 2006 with those of 2003 and earlier for two benchmarks: student-faculty interaction and enriching educational experiences. With some adjustment (as discussed in detail in this report), we are able to compare changes in student-faculty interaction benchmarks for 2003 and 2006. Nonetheless, no adjustment could be made to allow for comparisons between 2003 and 2006 on enriching educational experiences.

³ For the survey item, *hours per week working for pay off campus*, the use of weights significantly increases the mean values for both first-year and senior Mason students.

Appendix Two: Peer Institutions

Due to changes of NSSE participating institutions and the change of Carnegie Classification of higher education institutions in 2005, our peer institutions in 2006 are different from those of 2003 and 2000. Among the 2006 NSSE participating institutions, OIA selected seven institutions (as listed below) as our selected peer group. They were referred to as “*Selected Peers*” throughout this report.

According to the 2005 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, the basic classification of George Mason University is “Research University with High Research Activity.” Among 102 universities that are in the same basic classification as Mason, 38 participated in NSSE 2006. These institutions are listed below and are referred to as “*Carnegie Peers*” throughout this report.

Selected Peers

1. The University of Texas at Austin
2. University of Colorado at Boulder
3. University of Michigan – Ann Arbor
4. University of Missouri – Columbia
5. University of Pittsburgh
6. University of Wisconsin – Madison
7. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Carnegie Peers

Research Universities – High Research Activity (the 2005 Basic Carnegie Classification)

1. Auburn University
2. Baylor University
3. Brigham Young University
4. Catholic University of America
5. Clark University
6. Clarkson University
7. Clemson University
8. Colorado School of Mines
9. Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis
10. Loyola University, Chicago
11. Michigan Technological University
12. New Jersey Institute of Technology
13. Old Dominion University
14. Polytechnic University
15. Saint Louis University
16. South Dakota State University
17. Syracuse University
18. The University of Alabama
19. The University of Montana
20. The University of Texas at Arlington
21. The University of Texas at Dallas
22. The University of Texas at El Paso
23. University of Arkansas
24. University of Denver
25. University of Memphis
26. University of Mississippi
27. University of Missouri-Kansas City
28. University of Missouri-Rolla
29. University of Nevada, Las Vegas
30. University of Oregon
31. University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras Campus
32. University of Southern Mississippi
33. University of Toledo
34. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
35. Utah State University
36. Virginia Commonwealth University
37. Western Michigan University
38. Wright State University

	Mason		Selected Peers		Carnegie Peers		NSSE 2006	
	FY	SR	FY	SR	FY	SR	FY	SR
Response Rate								
Overall	43%		33%		32%		34%	
By class	39%	47%	33%	33%	30%	34%	33%	36%
NSSE sample size	1,802	1,820	14,573	13,840	53,921	53,046	391,156	358,867
Sampling Error^a								
Overall	2.2%		1.0%		0.5%		0.2%	
By class	3.3%	3.0%	1.3%	1.4%	0.7%	0.7%	0.2%	0.2%
Number of respondents	708	858	4,782	4,583	15,961	17,808	130,541	127,875
Total population	3,839	3,912	37,014	41,815	97,433	105,217	587,522	548,709
Student Characteristics								
Class Level^b	45%	55%	51%	49%	47%	53%	51%	49%
Enrollment Status^b								
Full-time	96%	70%	99%	92%	96%	84%	95%	86%
Less than full-time	4%	30%	1%	8%	4%	16%	5%	14%
Gender^b								
Female	58%	59%	58%	58%	58%	57%	64%	64%
Male	42%	41%	42%	42%	42%	43%	36%	36%
Race/Ethnicity								
Am. Indian/Native American	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Asian/Asian Am./Pacific Isl.	18%	16%	8%	9%	6%	5%	5%	4%
Black/African American	7%	8%	3%	3%	7%	6%	6%	6%
White (non-Hispanic)	51%	52%	76%	74%	71%	73%	74%	74%
Mexican/Mexican American	1%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Puerto Rican	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Other Hispanic or Latino	6%	5%	1%	1%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Multiracial	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Other	5%	6%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
I prefer not to respond	9%	7%	6%	6%	6%	7%	6%	7%
International Student	9%	16%	4%	4%	5%	4%	5%	4%
Place of Residence								
On-campus	50%	11%	89%	9%	65%	11%	71%	20%
Off-campus	50%	89%	11%	91%	35%	89%	29%	80%
Transfer Status								
Transfer students	11%	64%	3%	23%	8%	41%	9%	39%
Age								
Non-traditional (24 or older)	4%	51%	0%	12%	3%	31%	6%	31%
Traditional (less than 24)	96%	49%	100%	88%	97%	69%	94%	69%

^a Sampling error is an estimate of the margin by which the *true* score for your institution on a given item could differ from the reported score. To interpret the sampling error, assume that 60% of your students reply "very often" to a particular item. If the sampling error is +/-5%, then true population value is most likely between 55% and 65%.

^b Institution-reported data. This information was used to weight Mean Comparisons, Frequency Distributions, and Benchmark Comparisons

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

				<i>Mason compared with:</i>								
<i>Bench- mark</i>	<i>Class</i>	Mason 2006		Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003		
		<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>	<i>Effect Size^c</i>	<i>Mean^a</i>	<i>Sig^b</i>		
<i>In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>												
1. Academic and Intellectual Experiences	a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	2.81	2.57	***	.29	2.64	***	.21	2.72	
			SR	3.04	2.79	***	.29	2.95	**	.10	2.96	
b. Made a class presentation	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	2.45	1.97	***	.68	2.08	***	.47	2.25	**	
		SR	2.85	2.50	***	.43	2.68	***	.19	2.79		
c. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in		FY	2.42	2.39			2.62	***	-.20	2.62	**	
		SR	2.62	2.29	***	.35	2.48	***	.15	2.74		
d. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources		FY	3.09	2.80	***	.34	2.97	***	.15	3.07		
		SR	3.34	3.18	***	.21	3.24	***	.13	3.39		
e. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments		FY	2.85	2.62	***	.27	2.71	***	.16	2.79		
		SR	2.87	2.60	***	.29	2.69	***	.19	2.84		
f. Come to class without completing readings or assignments		FY	2.11	2.14			2.11			2.06		
		SR	2.07	2.34	***	-.33	2.18	***	-.13	2.00		
g. Worked with other students on projects during class	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	2.43	2.22	***	.26	2.39			2.34		
		SR	2.49	2.29	***	.23	2.47			2.39		
h. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	2.42	2.49	*	-.08	2.36	*	.06	2.14	***	
		SR	2.75	2.83	*	-.09	2.79			2.62	*	
i. Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions		FY	2.65	2.55	**	.12	2.55	***	.12	2.39	***	
		SR	2.92	2.89			2.90			2.80	*	
j. Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	1.66	1.75	**	-.10	1.72			1.54		
		SR	1.76	1.88	***	-.13	1.90	***	-.15	1.62	*	
k. Participated in a community-based project (e.g. service learning) as part of a regular course	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	1.48	1.39	**	.12	1.51			1.43		
		SR	1.52	1.55			1.66	***	-.16	1.50		

^a 2006 means are weighted and 2003 means are not.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

	Bench- mark	Class	Mason compared with:									
			Mason 2006		Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003	
			Mean ^a		Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b
l. Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	2.76		2.73			2.69	*	.07	2.71	
		SR	2.91		2.84			2.88			3.00	
m. Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor		FY	3.22		3.03	***	.23	3.01	***	.24	3.27	
		SR	3.44		3.33	***	.15	3.30	***	.17	3.40	
n. Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	III. Student-faculty interaction	FY	2.57		2.39	***	.22	2.50	*	.08	2.54	
		SR	2.76		2.63	***	.15	2.76			2.74	
o. Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	III. Student-faculty interaction	FY	1.98		2.02			2.07	**	-.11	1.80	*
		SR	2.18		2.24			2.33	***	-.15	2.06	*
p. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	III. Student-faculty interaction	FY	1.79		1.72	*	.09	1.74			1.65	
		SR	1.99		1.94			2.03			1.85	*
q. Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	III. Student-faculty interaction	FY	2.55		2.47	*	.09	2.50			2.52	
		SR	2.64		2.60			2.69			2.68	
r. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	I. Level of academic challenge	FY	2.56		2.49	*	.08	2.54			2.46	
		SR	2.65		2.52	***	.16	2.67			2.68	
s. Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	III. Student-faculty interaction	FY	1.54		1.43	***	.15	1.51			1.38	*
		SR	1.61		1.68	*	-.09	1.76	***	-.16	1.45	**
t. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	II. Active and collaborative learning	FY	2.71		2.71			2.68			2.52	**
		SR	2.81		2.83			2.85			2.80	
u. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	2.85		2.65	***	.20	2.52	***	.32	2.90	
		SR	2.80		2.74			2.63	***	.16	2.78	
v. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	2.88		2.83			2.65	***	.23	2.90	
		SR	2.73		2.85	***	-.13	2.67			2.64	

^a 2006 means are weighted and 2003 means are not.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons George Mason University

Benchmark	Class	Mason compared with:								
		Mason 2006			Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06		
		Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b
<i>During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>										
2. Mental Activities										
a.										
b.										
c.										
d.										
e.										
<i>During the current school year, about how much reading and writing have you done? 1=none, 2=between 1 and 4, 3=between 5 and 10, 4=between 11 and 20, 5=more than 20</i>										
3. Reading and Writing										
a.										
b.										
c.										
d.										
e.										

^a 2006 means are weighted and 2003 means are not.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

Benchmark	Class	Mason compared with:									
		Mason 2006		Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003	
		Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	
<i>In a typical week, how many homework problem sets do you complete? 1=none, 2=1-2, 3=3-4, 4=5-6, 5=more than 6</i>											
4. Problem Sets											
a.	Number of problem sets that take you more than an hour to complete	FY	2.67	2.69		2.66			2.44	*	
		SR	2.72	2.48	***	.19	2.60	**	.09	2.43	**
b.	Number of problem sets that take you less than an hour to complete	FY	2.67	2.59		2.78	**	-.09	2.67		
		SR	2.37	2.05	***	.29	2.37		2.12	**	
5. Examinations											
<i>1=very little to 7=very much</i>											
	To what extent have your examinations during the current school year challenged you to do your best work?	FY	5.25	5.64	***	-.37	5.42	***	-.15	5.32	
		SR	5.37	5.25	**	.09	5.41		5.55		
6. Additional Collegiate Experiences											
<i>During the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? 1=never, 2=sometimes, 3=often, 4=very often</i>											
a.	Attended an art exhibit, gallery, play, dance, or other theatre performance	FY	2.18	2.01	***	.19	2.12		--		
		SR	2.04	1.99			1.98	*	.08	--	
b.	Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities	FY	2.54	2.98	***	-.47	2.79	***	-.24	--	
		SR	2.54	2.89	***	-.35	2.71	***	-.16	--	
c.	Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	FY	1.95	1.97			2.22	***	-.23	--	
		SR	2.10	1.93	***	.16	2.36	***	-.22	--	
d.	Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	FY	2.61	2.58			2.57		--		
		SR	2.66	2.67			2.70		--		
e.	Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	FY	2.81	2.73	*	.09	2.72	**	.11	--	
		SR	2.85	2.81			2.83		--		
f.	Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	FY	2.80	2.82			2.79		--		
		SR	2.87	2.85			2.87		--		
7. Enriching Educational Experiences											
<i>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution? (Recorded: 0=have not decided, do not plan to do, plan to do; 1=done. Thus, the mean is the proportion responding "done" among all valid respondents.)</i>											
a.	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	.07	.07		.07		--		
			SR	.44	.61	***	-.34	.50	***	-.12	

^a 2006 means are weighted and 2003 means are not.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

	Bench- mark	Class	Mason compared with:										
			Mason 2006		Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003		
			Mean ^a		Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	
b. Community service or volunteer work	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	.30		.38	***	-.15	.38	***	-.15	--		
		SR	.41		.67	***	-.56	.58	***	-.34	--		
c. Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together		FY	.19		.22	*	-.08	.18			--		
		SR	.20		.26	***	-.14	.26	***	-.15	--		
d. Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	III. Student-faculty interaction	FY	.05		.05			.04			--		
		SR	.13		.27	***	-.33	.19	***	-.16	--		
e. Foreign language coursework	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	.23		.34	***	-.24	.22			--		
		SR	.35		.54	***	-.39	.41	***	-.12	--		
f. Study abroad	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	.03		.02	*	.11	.02			--		
		SR	.12		.19	***	-.17	.13			--		
g. Independent study or self-designed major	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	.03		.02			.03			--		
		SR	.15		.20	***	-.13	.17	*	-.07	--		
h. Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	.02		.01	*	.14	.01			--		
		SR	.30		.34	**	-.09	.30			--		
<i>Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your institution. 1=unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation to 7=friendly, supportive, sense of belonging</i>													
8. Quality of Relationships	a. Relationships with other students	V. Supportive campus environment	FY	5.31		5.55	***	-.19	5.45	*	-.10	5.52	
			SR	5.39		5.48			5.60	***	-.16	5.38	
<i>1=unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic to 7=available, helpful, sympathetic</i>													
b. Relationships with faculty members	V. Supportive campus environment	FY	5.04		4.97			5.01			5.16		
		SR	5.24		5.06	***	.13	5.29			5.37		
<i>1=unhelpful, inconsiderate, rigid to 7=helpful, considerate, flexible</i>													
c. Relationships with administrative personnel and offices	V. Supportive campus environment	FY	4.28		4.45	**	-.12	4.48	***	-.13	4.71	***	
		SR	4.50		4.34	**	.10	4.43			4.75	*	

^a 2006 means are weighted and 2003 means are not.

^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

Benchmark	Class	Mason compared with:										
		Mason 2006		Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003		
		Mean ^a	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	
<i>About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following? 1=0 hrs/wk, 2=1-5 hrs/wk, 3=6-10 hrs/wk, 4=11-15 hrs/wk, 5=16-20 hrs/wk, 6=21-25 hrs/wk, 7=26-30 hrs/wk, 8=more than 30 hrs/wk</i>												
9. Time Usage												
a. Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	I. Level of academic challenge	FY	3.87		4.55	***	-.42	4.03	**	-.10	3.75	
		SR	3.92		4.47	***	-.30	4.11	**	-.11	4.22	*
b. Working for pay on campus		FY	1.44		1.52			1.51			1.22	**
		SR	1.54		2.04	***	-.30	1.88	***	-.21	1.39	
c. Working for pay off campus		FY	3.04		1.53	***	1.11	2.29	***	.34	2.84	
		SR	4.85		2.55	***	1.07	3.61	***	.45	4.54	
d. Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	2.21		2.43	***	-.15	2.19			2.02	
		SR	1.75		2.37	***	-.41	2.02	***	-.18	1.65	
e. Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)		FY	3.73		4.03	***	-.18	3.91	**	-.11	4.12	**
		SR	3.30		3.84	***	-.34	3.49	***	-.12	3.55	*
f. Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)		FY	1.82		1.19	***	.85	1.56	***	.19	1.59	*
		SR	2.65		1.39	***	1.00	2.28	***	.17	2.95	*
g. Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)		FY	2.43		2.20	***	.27	2.32	**	.11	2.49	
		SR	2.62		2.29	***	.40	2.41	***	.20	2.68	
<i>To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following? 1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much</i>												
10. Institutional Environment												
a. Spending significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	I. Level of academic challenge	FY	2.99		3.19	***	-.26	3.04			2.99	
		SR	3.05		3.12	*	-.08	3.07			3.12	
b. Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	V. Supportive campus environment	FY	2.86		3.05	***	-.25	2.93	*	-.09	2.89	
		SR	2.84		2.76	**	.10	2.80			2.83	
c. Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	IV. Enriching educational experiences	FY	2.81		2.66	***	.15	2.51	***	.31	2.80	
		SR	2.67		2.30	***	.38	2.33	***	.34	2.58	

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^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

	Benchmark	Class	Mason compared with:								
			Mason 2006	Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003	
			Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b
d. Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	V. Supportive campus environment	FY	2.04	2.08			2.09			2.04	
		SR	1.87	1.76	***	.15	1.90			1.79	
e. Providing the support you need to thrive socially	V. Supportive campus environment	FY	2.27	2.43	***	-.18	2.38	**	-.11	2.24	
		SR	2.12	2.13			2.14			1.85	***
f. Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)		FY	2.67	2.93	***	-.31	2.78	***	-.12	2.55	
		SR	2.47	2.74	***	-.31	2.59	***	-.12	2.27	**
g. Using computers in academic work		FY	3.39	3.48	**	-.13	3.35			3.43	
		SR	3.46	3.55	***	-.14	3.47			3.55	

To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?

1=very little, 2=some, 3=quite a bit, 4=very much

11. Educational and Personal Growth

a. Acquiring a broad general education	FY	3.12	3.19	*	-.09	3.10			3.20	
	SR	3.20	3.26	*	-.07	3.21			3.19	
b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	FY	2.63	2.74	**	-.12	2.68			2.53	
	SR	2.95	2.96			3.01	*	-.07	2.84	
c. Writing clearly and effectively	FY	2.98	2.81	***	.18	2.88	**	.12	3.04	
	SR	3.08	3.03			3.01	*	.08	3.17	
d. Speaking clearly and effectively	FY	2.87	2.55	***	.34	2.66	***	.23	2.92	
	SR	2.95	2.80	***	.17	2.89			2.96	
e. Thinking critically and analytically	FY	3.14	3.25	***	-.15	3.14			3.18	
	SR	3.25	3.38	***	-.19	3.32	**	-.10	3.30	
f. Analyzing quantitative problems	FY	2.87	3.01	***	-.17	2.86			2.63	**
	SR	2.99	3.08	**	-.11	3.04			2.89	
g. Using computing and information technology	FY	3.07	3.09			3.01			3.13	
	SR	3.23	3.22			3.23			3.23	
h. Working effectively with others	FY	2.95	2.91			2.88			2.90	
	SR	3.05	3.08			3.10			2.99	

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^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.

**Appendix Four: NSSE 2006 Mean Comparisons
George Mason University**

Benchmark	Class	Mason compared with:								
		Mason 2006		Selected Peers 06			Carnegie Peers 06			Mason 2003
		Mean ^a	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b	Effect Size ^c	Mean ^a	Sig ^b
i. Voting in local, state, or national elections	FY	2.21	2.04	***	.16	1.92	***	.29	1.86	***
	SR	2.06	2.22	***	-.16	2.08			1.85	**
j. Learning effectively on your own	FY	2.86	2.98	***	-.14	2.85			2.89	
	SR	2.84	3.06	***	-.26	2.99	***	-.17	2.97	
k. Understanding yourself	FY	2.69	2.73			2.68			2.67	
	SR	2.67	2.78	**	-.12	2.75	*	-.08	2.67	
l. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	FY	2.82	2.57	***	.26	2.54	***	.30	2.83	
	SR	2.76	2.51	***	.26	2.53	***	.24	2.71	
m. Solving complex real-world problems	FY	2.59	2.66	*	-.08	2.56			2.54	
	SR	2.67	2.78	**	-.11	2.74			2.57	
n. Developing a personal code of values and ethics	FY	2.57	2.57			2.59			2.68	
	SR	2.55	2.57			2.67	***	-.12	2.63	
o. Contributing to the welfare of your community	FY	2.23	2.35	**	-.13	2.37	***	-.14	2.23	
	SR	2.27	2.36	**	-.10	2.44	***	-.17	2.22	
p. Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	FY	1.92	1.84	*	.08	2.10	***	-.16	--	
	SR	1.80	1.63	***	.18	2.01	***	-.18	--	
12. Academic Advising		<i>1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent</i>								
Overall, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?	FY	2.73	2.94	***	-.25	2.91	***	-.21	2.69	
	SR	2.68	2.72			2.76	*	-.08	2.74	
13. Satisfaction		<i>1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=excellent</i>								
How would you evaluate your entire educational experience at this institution?	FY	3.12	3.30	***	-.27	3.15			3.06	
	SR	3.12	3.30	***	-.25	3.16			3.05	
14.		<i>1=definitely no, 2=probably no, 3=probably yes, 4=definitely yes</i>								
If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?	FY	3.11	3.41	***	-.40	3.22	***	-.14	3.03	
	SR	3.11	3.36	***	-.32	3.16			3.04	

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^b * p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 (2-tailed).

^c Mean difference divided by comparison group standard deviation.



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