



George Mason University Korea Highlights from the Welcome Survey and Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement Fall 2020

In fall 2020, George Mason University (Mason) Korea enrolled a total of 490 students. The majority of the enrolled students are South Korean citizens (89%). Of the 490 students: 89 are new to Mason Korea this fall (74 first-time freshmen and 15 transfers), 33 students are from the Fairfax Campus, and 10 are consortium students. See Table 1 in the Appendix for more information.

The Mason Korea Welcome Survey was administered to 87 new Mason Korea students who intended to enroll in fall 2020 at Mason Korea at the time of survey administration. The survey included questions about their previous educational experiences, academic goals, and expectations for Mason Korea. The survey was open for four weeks. Altogether, 44 students completed the survey. After removing four non-enrollees, including one respondent, the valid response rate was 52%. This report presents the highlights of the results. Where feasible, previous data were included to facilitate trend analysis on measures of high relevance to support services.

Also included in the report are results from the Beginning Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) which was administered to all Mason incoming freshmen in August 2020. The response rate for Mason Korea students was 23%. BCSSE results on selected items are included where appropriate to supplement the report.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Previous Educational Experience

- Similar to the findings from the past two years, most new students had educational experiences that prepared them for the English-speaking environment at Mason Korea as specified below (Table 2).
 - 77% of the respondents had studied English in school
 - 61% had attended an English-speaking school
 - 51% had had an English language tutor or attended a private institute
 - 44% had lived in an English-speaking country*(Note that multiple selections were permitted so the sum of the percentages was greater than 100.)*
- 42% of the respondents (n=18) had studied abroad; 78% of those who had studied abroad did so in an English-speaking country. The length of time for study abroad varied with 45% studying at least for 3 years.

Academic Goals

- 80% of the 2020 respondents expected to graduate from Mason Korea. While the percentage remains high, it represents a 6 percentage point drop from 2019 (Figure 1).
- 43% of the respondents in 2020 aspired to obtain a master's and/or doctoral degrees beyond college, noticeably higher compared to 30-39% from the previous two years (Figure 2).

Expectations for College

- **Why Choosing Mason Korea** International environment and diverse experience and earning an US degree were the top two reasons for choosing Mason Korea in 2020, a noticeably different perspective compared to 2018 when English-speaking environment and stay in Korea carried more weight among incoming freshmen. It is also noteworthy that over the years more students chose Mason Korea because of quality academic programs (19% vs. 35% for 2018 and 2020, respectively) (Table 3).
- **Expected Valuable Experiences** In 2020, 51% of the respondents cited international experience and 40% cited career preparation as the most valuable experiences at Mason Korea, much higher rates compared to 34% and 25% of the 2018 cohort. Academic experience, on the other hand, has decreased by nine percentage point over the same time period to reach 51%. These findings suggest that students are taking a broader perspective in their expectations for Mason Korea (Table 4).
- **Anticipated Activities or Events**
 - Similarly, nearly two-thirds of the respondents in 2020 wished to have career-related or academic/research activities and events (65% and 58% respectively) compared to 53% and 42% in 2018 (Figure 3).
 - Consistent with the current restrictions imposed by COVID-19, students reported less expectations for sport-related activities and social/club events in 2020 (16-51%), which are significantly lower rates compared to 40-75% reported in 2018 (Figure 3).
- **Expected Interactions with Faculty** Compared to their 2017 peers, more respondents in 2020 expected to interact frequently with faculty to discuss course topics/ideas/concepts, academic performance, or career plans (42-63% vs. 57-71% for 2017 and 2020, respectively) (Figure 4).
- **Expected Collaborative Learning with Students** Similarly, a higher percentage of respondents in 2020 (50-79%) also planned to often or very often explain course materials to other students or work with others on course projects or assignments than their 2017 peers (39-65%) (Figure 5). These findings have implications for course design as faculty adjust their instructional approach and activities in face of the COVID-19 challenge.
- **Expected Transition Difficulty**
 - Meeting academic demands and English proficiency continue to be the top two concerns among freshmen in 2020 as was the case in the past two years. Additionally, 42% of the respondents were also worried about time management, a noticeable increase compared to 28% in 2018 (Table 5).
 - 43% of the respondents in 2020 expected learning course material to be difficult or very difficult, compared to 29% in 2017, which could be linked to the modified instructional modality during the current pandemic (Table 6).
- **Expected Academic Perseverance** Over one half of the respondents indicated that they would persevere academically by asking instructors for help when struggling with course assignments, finding additional information when they do not understand the materials, and finishing a task when they encounter challenges, a finding true in both 2017 and 2020 (Table 7).

APPENDIX

Welcome Survey: n=53, 57, and 43 for fall 2018, fall 2019, and fall 2020, respectively.
BCSSE: n=31 and 14 for 2017 and 2020, respectively.

Table 1. Student Fall Enrollment at Mason Korea: 2018 – 2020

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020 ¹
Mason Korea Students (New)	63	67	89
Mason Korea Students (Returning)	279	304	358
Fairfax Campus Students Studying at Mason Korea	17	16	33
Consortium Students	9	14	10 ²
Mason Korea Students Studying at the Fairfax Campus ³	38 ⁴	78	53 ⁴
Mason Korea Total Enrollment	368	401	490

¹ Based on enrollment data as of September 1, 2020.

² 9 students from SUNY Korea, and 1 student from University of Utah Korea.

³ Mason Korea students studying at the Fairfax Campus are not counted as Mason Korea enrollment.

⁴ Two of these students were at the graduate level.

Table 2. Previous English Language Experiences of Survey Respondents

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020
Studied English in school	79%	79%	77%
Attended English-speaking school	55%	56%	61%
Had an English language tutor/ attended a private institute	57%	44%	51%
Lived in English-speaking country	53%	54%	44%
Family member	13%	5%	21%
English is primary language	2%	9%	16%

Figure 1. Do you intend to graduate from Mason Korea?

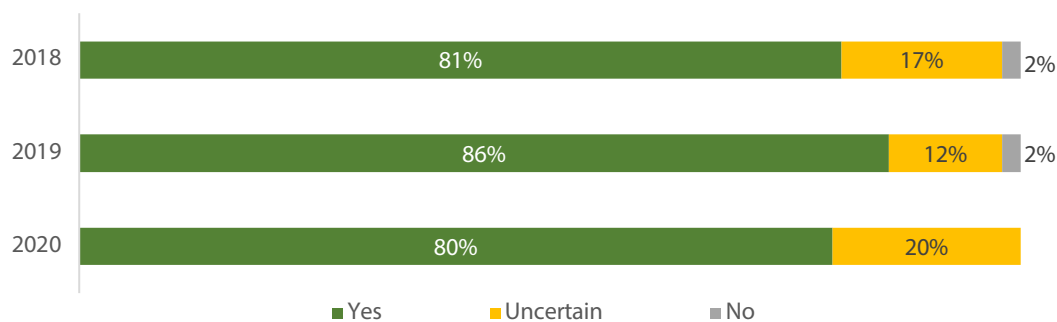


Figure 2. *What is the highest degree you aspire to obtain?*

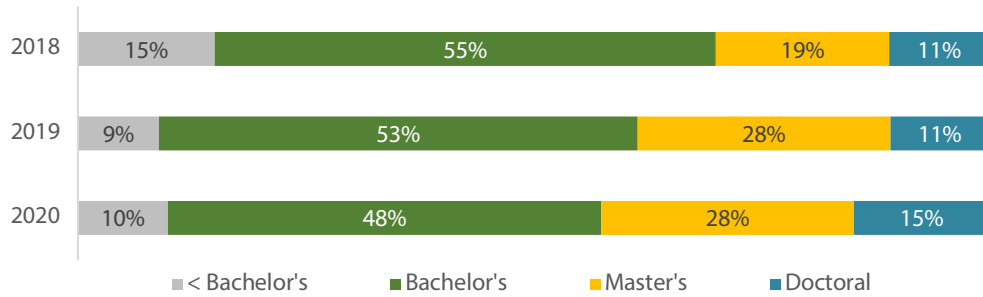


Table 3. *Why did you choose Mason Korea?*

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	% dif between 2018 and 2020
International environment & diverse experience	36%	61%	54%	+18
U.S. Degree	45%	30%	44%	-1
English-speaking environment	70%	40%	40%	-30**
Stay in Korea	58%	46%	40%	-18
Quality academic programs	19%	32%	35%	+16
Affordability	8%	14%	16%	+8

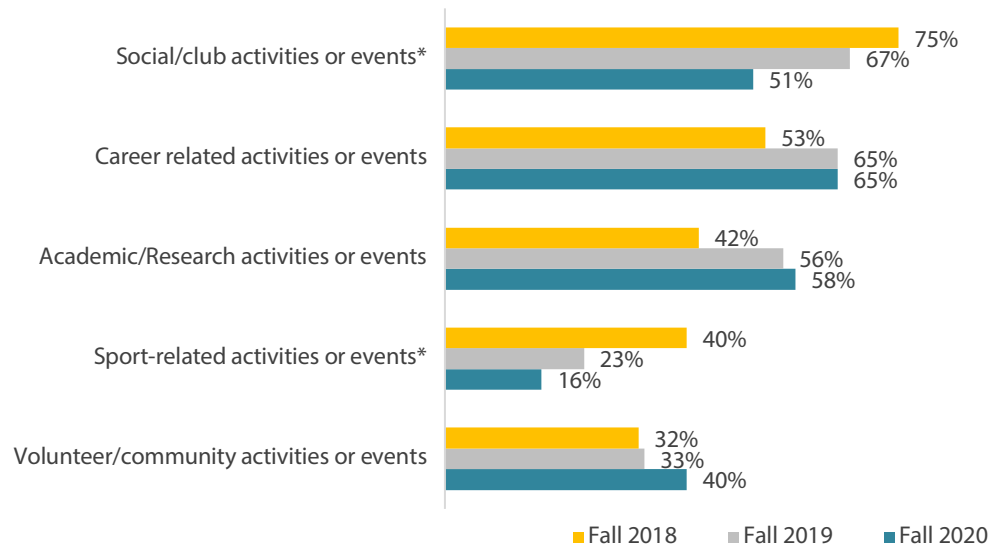
** p<.01, proportion test(2-sided), based on 2018 vs. 2020 comparison.

Table 4. *What experiences at Mason Korea do you think will be the most valuable to you?*

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	% dif between 2018 and 2020
Academic experience	60%	61%	51%	-9
International experience	34%	26%	51%	+17
English skills improvement	45%	42%	47%	+2
Career preparation and development	25%	37%	40%	+15
Interaction with faculty and staff	13%	9%	26%	+13
Interaction with peers	25%	21%	21%	-4
College/campus life	34%	33%	12%	-22*
Club activities	21%	14%	2%	-19*

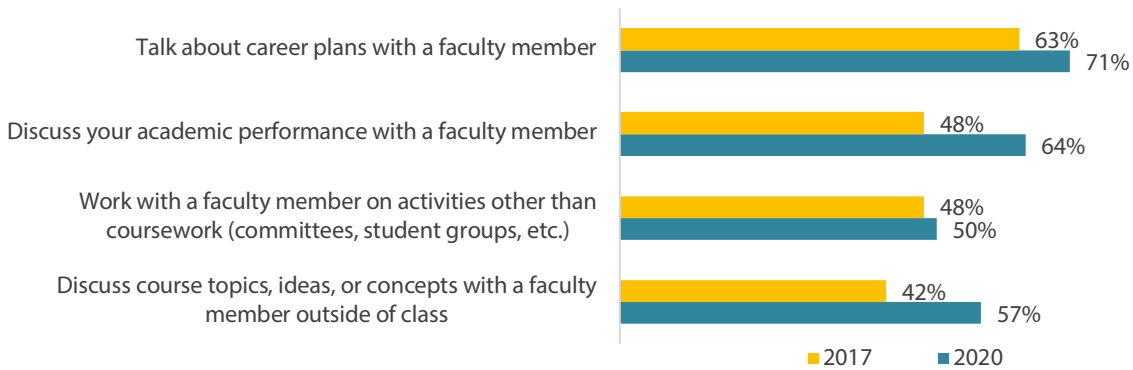
*p<.05, proportion test(2-sided), based on 2018 vs. 2020 comparison.

Figure 3. *What kinds of activities or events do you wish to have at Mason Korea?*



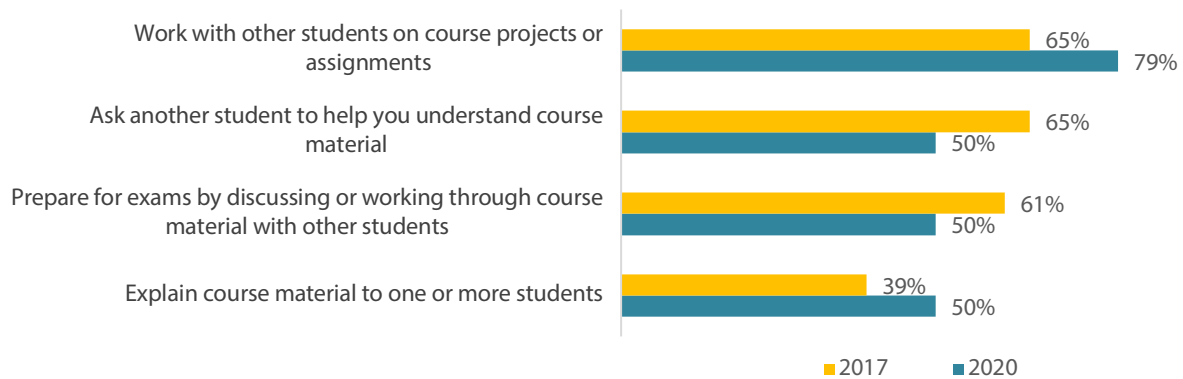
*p<.05, proportion test (2-sided), based on 2018 vs. 2020 comparison.

Figure 4. *During the coming school year, about how often do you expect to do each of the following?*



Percentages are for "Often" and "Very Often" combined. Data source: BCSSE.

Figure 5. *During the coming school year, about how often do you expect to do each of the following?*



Percentages are for "Often" and "Very Often" combined. Data source: BCSSE.

Table 5. *What is your biggest worry about starting college?*

	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	% dif between 2018 and 2020
Meeting academic demands	55%	49%	61%	+6
English proficiency	47%	46%	47%	0
Time management	28%	44%	42%	+14
Affordability	25%	21%	33%	+8
Math skills	43%	21%	23%	-20*
College life and social skills	25%	28%	23%	-2

* p<.05, proportion test (2-sided), based on 2018 vs. 2020 comparison.

Table 6. *During the coming school year, how difficult do you expect the following to be?*

	2017	2020
Learning course material	29%	43%
Managing your time	29%	29%
Paying college or university expenses	29%	21%
Getting help with school work	10%	7%
Making new friends	13%	7%
Interacting with faculty	10%	0%

Percentages are for "5" and "6" combined on a scale from 1 (Not at all difficult) to 6 (Very difficult). Data source: BCSSE.

Table 7. *During the coming school year, how certain are you that you will do the following?*

	2017	2020
Study when there are other interesting things to do	23%	29%
Find additional information for course assignments when you don't understand the material	58%	64%
Participate regularly in course discuss	32%	29%
Ask instructors for help when you struggle with course assignments	74%	71%
Finish something you have started when you encounter challenges	52%	57%
Stay positive, even when you do poorly on a test or assignment	48%	43%

Percentages are for "5" and "6" combined on a scale from 1 (Not at all certain) to 6 (Very certain). Data source: BCSSE.