



Graduating Senior Survey Report 2007-2008

Graduates from Summer 2007, Fall 2007 and Spring 2008

Office of Institutional Assessment



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All results are available online by college, sex, ethnicity, etc. at
<https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/senior.html>

I. Executive Summary

This report presents the results of the Graduating Senior Survey 2007-2008. The Office of Institutional Assessment started administering the survey in 1989 and since then the survey has served as a major means of collecting feedback from graduating seniors on their educational experiences at Mason. In the academic year 2007-2008, **3,779** students graduated with 3,809 degrees from Mason. Out of these 3,779 graduates, **2,678** completed the Graduating Senior Survey for a response rate of **71 %**. When senior students submit the Graduation Intent Form (GIF) on the Mason website, they are prompted to complete the survey during the graduating semester. The survey was fully administered online with an option of mailing in a hard copy if requested by students.

The major findings of the Graduating Senior Survey 2007-2008 are as follows:

Demographic Characteristics, Enrollment, and Employment

- The ratio of native and transfer student graduates responding to this survey has been consistent over the past three years — 42% native students: 58% transfer students. About 38% of ALL transfer student graduates completed most of their general education courses at other institutions and transferred into upper level classes. Almost three quarters of CHHS (College of Health and Human Services) respondents were transfer students — the highest percentage among all colleges.

Experiences in the Major

- **Perceived Competence:** The vast majority of respondents felt they were “competent” or “very competent” in all four areas of knowledge and abilities included in the survey. The 2008 respondents, however, reported lower levels of competence for all areas than the 2007 respondents.
- **Critical Thinking:** At least 75% of both native and transfer students said that the courses in their majors emphasized all seven key elements of critical thinking included in the survey. Transfer students reported a greater emphasis on critical thinking in major courses than native students.
- **Written Communication:** 44% of the 2008 respondents reported they had taken at least 3 upper-level courses providing them opportunities to revise their writing after receiving feedback from their instructors. The number of those courses that students have taken varied by college/program. More than half of **CVPA, ICAR, CEHD, and CHSS** respondents reported having taken at least 3 or more upper-level courses providing revision opportunities. About half or more of the respondents in **CVPA, CHHS, CHSS, COS, and VIT&E** said that they “frequently” or “always” had *sufficient* revision opportunities in upper-level courses. The vast majority of the respondents (90%) felt that the writing assignments in those upper-level courses had increased their understanding of their fields either “a great deal” or “somewhat.” At least 85% said that the feedback and revision process in those courses improved their writing skills and their confidence as writers.
- **Faculty:** Compared with native students, transfer students are significantly more likely to say that Mason faculty members “always” or “usually” set high expectations for their learning, encourage students to be actively involved in learning, and interact with students out of class. Compared with 2001, student perceptions of Mason faculty are significantly more positive in 2008.

Other Educational Experiences

- **Synthesis Courses:** 73% of the respondents reported they had taken or were taking a synthesis course at the time of completing the survey. The vast majority — over 86% — gave positive evaluations to

synthesis courses including that these courses were challenging; that they linked the topics in the major to broader intellectual and social contexts; and that they required students to think critically and synthesize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships. Mean scores on the 2007 and 2008 surveys showed no differences but both were significantly higher than those of the 2006 scores for the above items. Unlike the previous year, transfer status made no difference in student experiences in synthesis courses.

- **Diversity:** Two thirds of both native and transfer students said that they had been exposed “very much” or “quite a bit” to diversity-related information in course readings, lectures, and discussions during their undergraduate education at Mason.

Advising and Future Education Plans

- About one third of the respondents (34%) contacted an advisor during their senior year 3 times or more. The percentage was slightly higher than that of 2007: 29%.
- Compared with 2004, the 2008 levels of student satisfaction with their major advisors are significantly higher in the following two areas: 1) providing accurate information about academic requirements and choices and 2) having respect and concern for advisees.
- Nearly half of the 2008 respondents were not planning to take any courses within a year of graduation. The figure has increased by 11 percentage points over the past 6 years. At the same time, the percentage of respondents who were planning to attend graduate/professional school full-time has been stable between 22% and 26%.
- For graduate degrees, respondents favored Mason over other universities: 36% of the respondents planning on pursuing additional education said that they were most likely to attend Mason. They also preferred local institutions to out-of-area for post-graduate education.

- At the end of the survey, students were given an opportunity to comment on their experiences at Mason. Those student comments are available on line at: <https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingSenior/2008/index.cfm>
- Detailed survey results on individual colleges and programs are available at the above website.
- Complete frequency tables for all survey questions can be found at the end of this report in the appendix. Descriptive Statistics (mean, standard deviations, etc.) for survey questions using non-nominal measures are also included in the appendix.

Important Notes

- No weight variable is used for statistical data analysis.
- In this report, total percentages may not add to 100 or may exceed 100 due to rounding.

II. Introduction and Respondent Characteristics

1. Survey Administration and Response Rate

Survey Administration and Overall Response Rate. The 2007-2008 Graduating Senior Survey was administered to senior students who graduated in summer 2007, fall 2008 and spring 2008. In this academic year, **3,779** undergraduate students graduated with a total of 3,809 degrees from Mason, and, **2,678 graduates** completed the survey for an overall response rate of **71 %**.

When senior students submitted the Graduation Intent Form (GIF) online the semester prior to the expected graduation semester, they were prompted to complete the Graduating Senior Survey. Although students could fill out the survey when submitting the GIF, most of them did so during the final semester at Mason. This enabled the survey to fully capture college experiences of students including the final semester.

The 2008 Graduating Senior Survey included the following topics: (a) enrollment and employment, (b) educational experiences, (c) synthesis courses, (d) writing experiences in upper-level courses (300 or above), and (e) advising and future plans. This report summarizes the results for each of these topics and compares student responses by transfer status (native or transfer) and/or by college/program affiliation when it produces significant results.

Response Rates by College. College response rates range from 65% to 78% (see Table 1). This was the second year the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) awarded undergraduate degrees. Please note that the number of respondents graduating from ICAR is so small (n=9) that some statistical analysis results for the program may not be stable overtime.

Table 1. Response Rates by College.

College Name	College Code*	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
College of Education and Human Development	CEHD	75	65%
College of Health and Human Services	CHHS	178	67%
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	CHSS	1251	72%
College of Science	COS	210	71%
College of Visual and Performing Arts	CVPA	164	72%
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution	ICAR	9	75%
School of Management	SOM	493	67%
Volgenau School of Information Technology & Engineering	VIT&E	298	78%

***The “College Codes” listed in Table 1 are used throughout the report.**

2. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the 2008 Graduating Senior Survey respondents match very closely those of the 2008 graduating seniors. Presented below are the basic demographic characteristics of the respondents. Please see Appendix One for more details.

- Women account for 60% of the respondents.
- 45% are racial/ethnic minorities — Asian Americans account for one third of minorities; 51% are White Americans; 4% are international students.
- 90% of the respondents are VA residents (in-state students).

- 47% graduated from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and 18% from the School of Management (SOM).

3. Enrollment Status

Data from previous years have shown that the transfer status of students makes a significant difference in their educational experiences at Mason¹. **Transfer student** refers to a student who started college education as a first-time freshman at another higher education institution and transferred to Mason at later time. **Native student** refers to a student who started college education at Mason as a first-time freshman.

Over the past three years, the native-transfer student ratio has not changed at all (Native: Transfer = 42: 58) (see Figure 1).

Transfer students were sub-grouped by the number of credits that they transferred into Mason. The vast majority (78%) of them carried 30 or more credits to Mason. Most notable is that 38% transferred 60 or more credits. This means that those students completed most of their general education courses at other institutions and transferred into upper level classes.

College/Program Comparison. As shown in Figure 2, about half of the survey respondents from the College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) and College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) started college at Mason as first-time freshmen – the highest percentages among all the colleges. More than 60% of respondents who graduated from the School of Management (SOM) and the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) were transfer students. Almost three quarters of respondents from the College of Health and Human Services (CHHS) started college at another college or university.

Figure 1. Self-Reported Transfer Status of Graduating Seniors

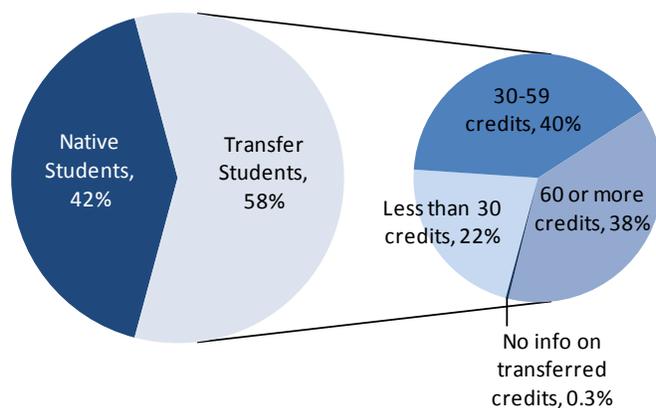
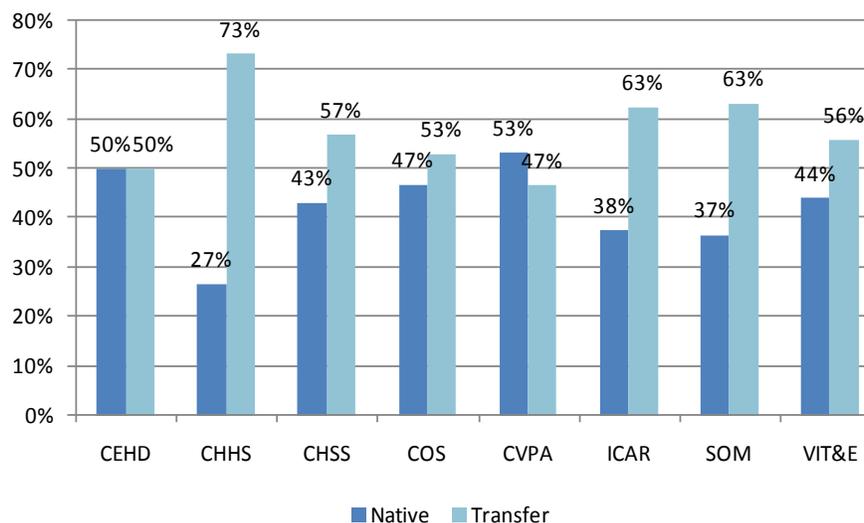


Figure 2. Transfer Status of the Respondents by College. *



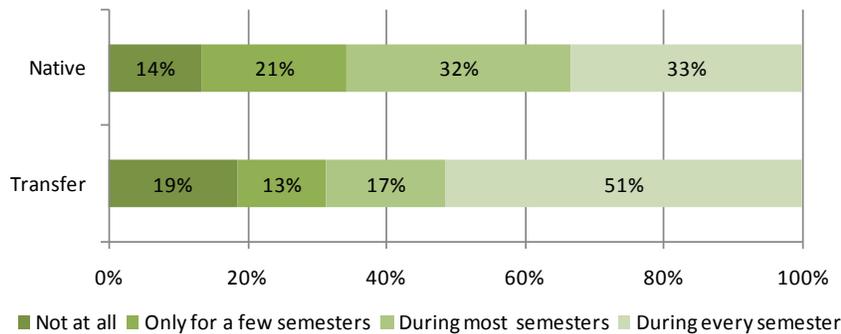
* The ICAR undergraduate program is new and very small and produced 13 graduates this academic year.

¹ Office of Institutional Assessment. 2008. "Learning Outcomes and Student Competence: Results from the 2006-2007 Graduating Senior Survey." In Focus: A Publication of the Office of Institutional Assessment, George Mason University, 13(1).

4. Student Employment

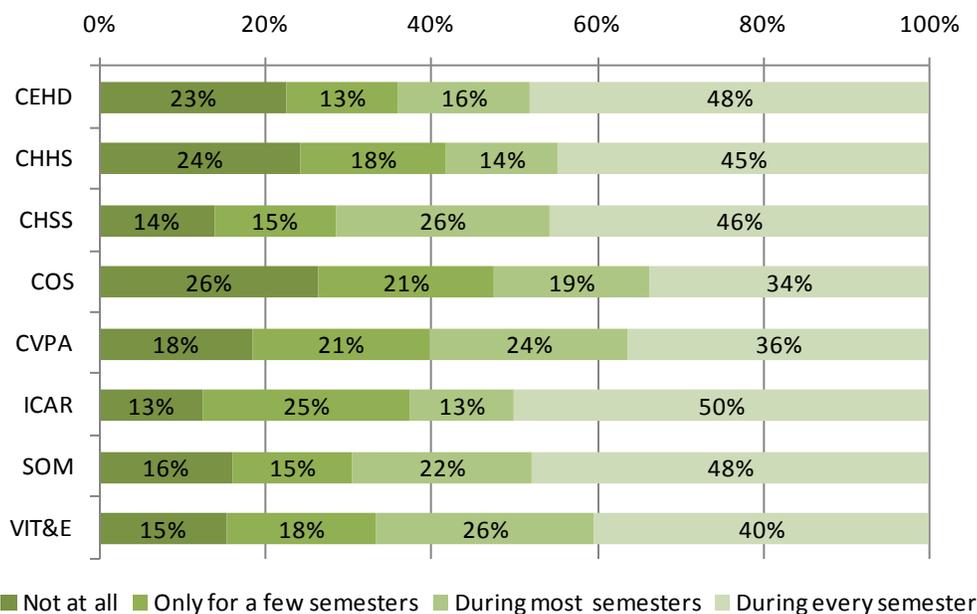
Comparison by Transfer Status. Transfer students are more likely to have worked every semester while attending Mason — half of transfer students said that they worked every semester compared with one third of native students (see Figure 3). At the same time, another one third of native students said that they worked during most semesters.

Figure 3. Employment Status during Undergraduate Education by Transfer Status.



College/Program Comparison. Among eight colleges and programs, **COS** showed the highest percentage of non-working students — 26% — and the lowest percentage of those who worked every semester (see Figure 4). Nearly one fourth of **CEHD** and **CHHS** respondents also said that they did not work at all while attending Mason. Despite these relatively high percentages of non-working students, 44% of all graduating seniors reported having worked every semester.

Figure 4. Employment Status during Undergraduate Education by College.*



* The ICAR undergraduate program is new and very small and produced 13 graduates this academic year. Among them, 9 graduates completed the survey.

III. Experiences in the Major

This section presents the survey results related to student competencies emphasized in the majors including critical thinking, written communication, and several competencies associated with major field courses.

1. Perceived Competence

Trend Analysis. The 2007 and 2008 surveys included a section asking students how competent they felt about their level of knowledge and abilities in their fields of study. Mean comparison results show that the 2008 graduates reported significantly lower levels of competence in all four areas addressed in this survey compared with the 2007 cohort (see Table 2). The percentage of the 2008 respondents who chose “very competent” dropped by 4-7% in all four areas, while that of those who chose “competent” increased by 2-5 percentage points. In 2007, 40% of the respondents said that they were “very competent” about their knowledge of important work in the field of study but it dropped to 33% in 2008 — the largest decrease among the four areas. There is no apparent explanation for this drop in perceived competence, but keep in mind that these findings are all based on self-reported levels of competence, which may differ from the results of student learning/competency assessment using direct measures.

Over the two decades of administering the Graduating Senior Surveys, there have been several cohorts in which respondents were significantly more positive about their educational experiences throughout the survey than the cohorts immediately before or after it. It seems that 2007 might have been such a year.

Transfer status data are not shown here, but transfer status made no significant difference in the level of perceived competence except for knowledge of important work in the field of study in which transfer students rated their competence higher than native students.

Table 2. Perceived Competence, 2007 and 2008.

How competent do you feel about your knowledge and abilities in each of the following:	Year	Frequency			Mean Comparison	
		Very Competent	Competent	Not at all competent/ Not very competent	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
Knowledge of important work (e.g. research, literature, works of art, etc.) in my field.	2007	40%	57%	3%	3.36	<.001
	2008	33%	62%	6%	3.27	
Ability to analyze work in my field.	2007	48%	49%	3%	3.45	<.001
	2008	43%	53%	4%	3.39	
Ability to create original work in my field, such as, poetry, art, software, new products, etc.	2007	36%	52%	12%	3.24	<.001
	2008	31%	54%	16%	3.14	
Ability to conduct original research in my field	2007	36%	55%	10%	3.25	0.001
	2008	32%	57%	11%	3.20	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1= Not at all competent, 2=Not very competent, 3=Competent, 4=Very competent. The higher mean value is in bold for each item when the difference is statistically significant.

² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the “Sig.” column.

2. Critical Thinking

At Mason, critical thinking has been an essential focus of Mason’s general education program and upper-level courses in undergraduate education. Mason’s Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum (CTAC) plays a key role in supporting faculty to strengthen students’ critical thinking through workshops, curriculum development assistance for faculty, and other activities. This year the survey included items about critical thinking in courses in the majors to learn more about student experiences in the development of critical thinking skills in upper-level courses.

The survey asked respondents about how much emphasis the courses in their majors put on seven key activities that research suggests should help develop critical thinking skills. The results are presented in Table 3. Overall, about 75% or more of the respondents marked “very much” or “quite a bit” for all seven activities regardless of their transfer status. Nevertheless, compared with native students, transfer students were significantly more likely to feel that the following areas were emphasized more often in the courses in their majors:

- Synthesize information from different sources
- Judge the quality and relevance of sources and materials
- Use criteria to judge the value and quality of ideas
- Break down information to identify assumptions and relationships
- Thoroughly considering limitations of conclusions and methods

Table 3. Perceived Emphasis in the Courses in the Major by Transfer Status.

“To what extent did the courses in your major emphasize each of the following:”		Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little/Never	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
Breaking down information to identify assumptions and relationships	Native	34%	44%	20%	2%	3.10	0.033
	Transfer	37%	44%	17%	2%	3.16	
Including alternative points of view	Native	35%	38%	24%	2%	3.06	
	Transfer	37%	38%	22%	3%	3.09	
Synthesizing information from different sources	Native	37%	43%	18%	2%	3.15	0.009
	Transfer	42%	41%	16%	1%	3.23	
Applying concepts learned in class to new situations	Native	35%	43%	19%	2%	3.11	
	Transfer	38%	40%	20%	2%	3.14	
Using criteria to judge the value and quality of ideas	Native	34%	47%	16%	3%	3.12	0.019
	Transfer	39%	42%	17%	2%	3.19	
Judging the quality and relevance of sources and materials	Native	36%	45%	17%	3%	3.13	0.014
	Transfer	40%	42%	16%	1%	3.21	
Thoroughly considering limitations of conclusions and methods	Native	29%	47%	21%	3%	3.02	0.046
	Transfer	35%	42%	21%	2%	3.09	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1= Very Little/Never, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much. The higher mean value is in bold for each item.

² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the “Sig.” column.

3. Written Communication

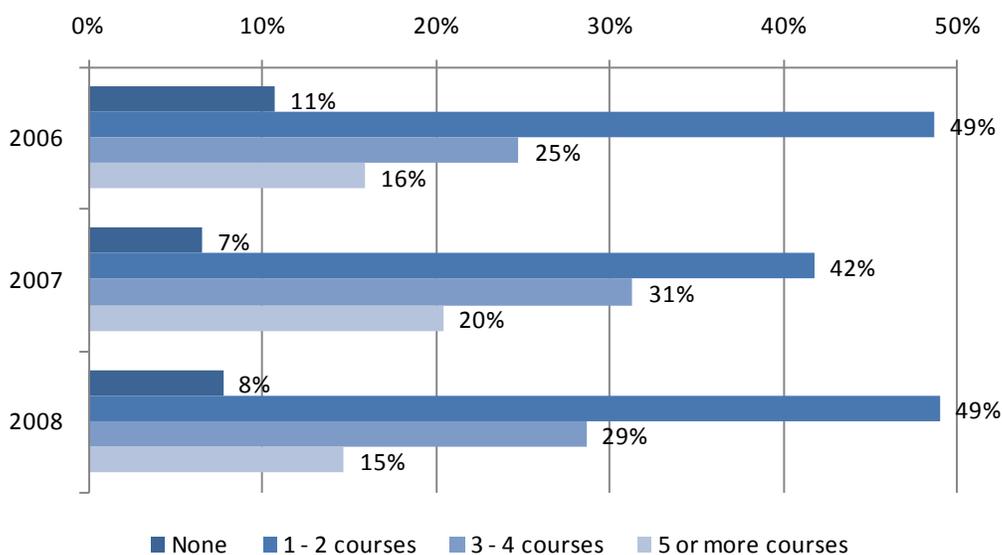
As part of Mason’s Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, each major offers at least one Writing Intensive (WI) course at the 300-level or above that emphasizes the process of drafting and revision with detailed and constructive feedback from the instructor. To maximize the effectiveness of WI courses, the section size is capped at 35 students and there are guidelines for the length of graded writing assignments (at least 3500 words in total) and for how these assignments should be given in the courses.

Since 2006, the exit surveys have included a set of questions proposed by the WAC Committee about student writing experiences in courses at 300-level or above, excluding English 302. Students were asked (1) in how many upper-level courses they had the opportunity to revise their writings after receiving feedback from their instructors, (2) how often they had sufficient opportunities in those courses for revision of writing, and (3) how helpful writing experiences in those courses were to improving their writing competence and understanding of their fields of study.

3-1. Number of Upper-Level Courses Providing Revision Opportunities

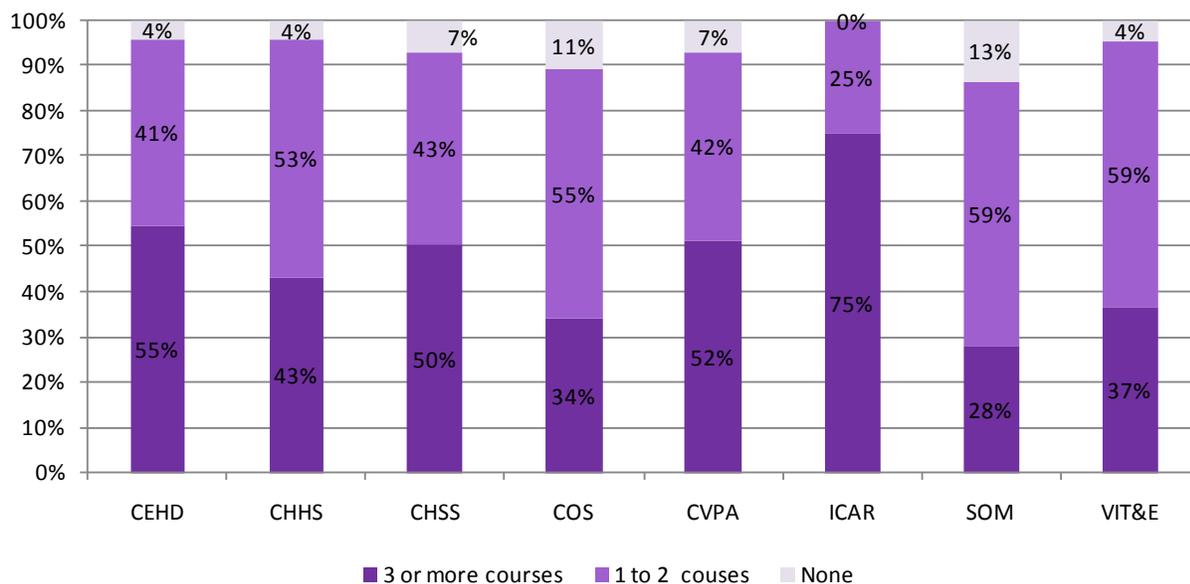
Trend Analysis. Students were asked to report in *how many* upper-level courses they had the opportunity to revise their writing after receiving feedback from their instructor on an earlier draft. The 2008 respondents reported significantly more courses than the 2006 cohort but significantly fewer courses than the 2007 cohort. In 2008, 44% of the respondents said that at least 3 or more courses provided them with opportunities for revision and receiving feedback for their writing (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. The Number of Upper-Level Courses having Revision Opportunities, 2006-2008.



College/Program Comparison. Figure 6 compares the number of upper-level courses in which students had revision opportunities by college. In most colleges/programs, at least 93% of respondents had taken a writing-intensive course. This percentage was a little lower for **SOM** (87%) and **COS** (89%). There are four colleges/programs (**CVPA**, **ICAR**, **CEHD**, and **CHSS**) in which 50% or more said that they took 3 or more courses with a writing emphasis.

Figure 6. The Number of Upper-Level Courses in which Students had the Opportunity to Revise Their Writing after Receiving Feedback from their Instructors by College. *

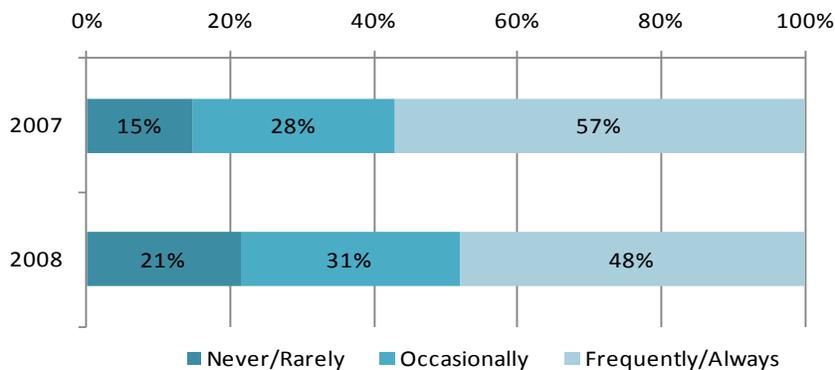


* The ICAR undergraduate program is new and very small and produced 13 graduates this academic year. Among them, 9 graduates completed the survey.

3-2. Sufficient Revision Opportunities

Trend Analysis. In 2007 and 2008, the survey also asked if students were given sufficient revision opportunities in the upper-level courses emphasizing writing experiences. The results are presented in Figure 7. Compared with the 2008 respondents, the 2007 respondents were more likely to say that they had sufficient opportunities “frequently” or “always” in those courses to revise their writing after receiving feedback from an instructor.

Figure 7. “Did you have sufficient opportunities in those (upper-level) courses to revise your writing after receiving feedback from an instructor?” : 2007 and 2008.



College/Program Comparison. At the college/program level, student perception of sufficient revision opportunities was highly correlated with the number of upper-level courses emphasizing writing (see Figure 6). For this reason, the results are not shown in this report but are available online at <https://assessment.gmu.edu> under “Assessment Data and Reports”.

3-3. Contribution to Student Learning

Trend Analysis. In the past three years, the survey has included three questions regarding the contribution of writing experiences to student learning. For all three items, the 2007 respondents were significantly more likely to choose “a great deal” than the respondents from 2006 and 2008 (see Table 4). Further analysis results showed that mean scores in 2008 are significantly higher than those of 2006 but lower than those of 2007. About 90% of the 2008 respondents thought the writing assignments in upper level courses had increased their understanding of their field either “a great deal” or “somewhat.” At least 85% said that the feedback and revision process in upper-level courses improved their writing skills and their confidence as writers.

Table 4. Student Writing Experiences in Upper-Level Courses, 2006-2008.

To what extent did these 300-level or above courses help you in the following areas?		A great deal	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
The feedback and revision process in these courses helped me to improve my writing.	2006	38%	45%	11%	6%	3.14	<.001
	2007	47%	43%	6%	3%	3.34	
	2008	42%	44%	10%	3%	3.26	
These courses have improved my confidence as a writer.	2006	37%	46%	13%	5%	3.15	<.001
	2007	47%	42%	8%	3%	3.33	
	2008	42%	43%	12%	3%	3.24	
The writing assignments from these courses have increased my understanding of my field.	2006	43%	42%	10%	5%	3.22	<.001
	2007	52%	38%	7%	3%	3.39	
	2008	48%	41%	9%	3%	3.34	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 4-point scale: 1= Not at all, 2=Very little, 3=Somewhat, 4=A great deal. The highest mean value is in bold when the difference is statistically significantly.

² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the “Sig.” column.

4. Faculty

Comparison by Transfer Status. In the survey, we asked students how often Mason faculty members in their majors took each of five approaches to enhance their learning experience. Overall, transfer students, compared with native students, are more likely to say that Mason faculty members were actively supporting student learning. Mean comparison results show that transfer students frequently felt, more than native students, that Mason faculty members set high expectations for their learning and encouraged students to be actively involved in learning and interact with students out of class (see Table 5).

Compared with native students, transfer students chose “always” much more often than “usually” for each item. For example, almost half of transfer students (48%) said that faculty members “always” encouraged them to be actively involved in learning compared with 37% of native students. About 30% of both native and transfer students said that Mason faculty “seldom” or “never” encouraged student-faculty interactions outside classroom.

Table 5. Student Perception of Faculty in the Major by Transfer Status.

"How often did Mason faculty in your major:"		Frequency			Mean Comparison	
		Always	Usually	Never /Seldom	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
Encourage you to be actively involved in learning	Native	37%	54%	9%	3.28	<.001
	Transfer	48%	45%	7%	3.41	
Set high expectations for your learning	Native	33%	60%	6%	3.27	<.001
	Transfer	44%	50%	7%	3.36	
Encourage student-faculty interactions out of class	Native	20%	46%	33%	2.83	<.001
	Transfer	29%	42%	30%	2.96	
Give prompt feedback on your academic performance	Native	25%	64%	11%	3.13	.048
	Transfer	30%	58%	11%	3.18	
Encourage learning through cooperative activities among students	Native	28%	55%	17%	3.10	.047
	Transfer	33%	51%	16%	3.16	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Usually, 4=Always. The higher mean value is in bold for each item.

² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the "Sig." column.

Trend Analysis. The same set of questions regarding perceptions of faculty was asked in the Graduating Senior Survey in 2001. Mean comparison results show that the student perception of Mason faculty is significantly more positive than seven years ago (see Table 6). From 2001 to 2008, the percentages of respondents who chose "always" increased by 8-9 percentage points on these items: encouraging students to be actively involved in learning, setting high expectations for student learning, and encouraging student-faculty interactions outside classroom.

Table 6. Student Perception of Faculty in the Major, 2001 and 2008.

"How often did Mason faculty in your major:"	Year	Frequency			Mean Comparison	
		Always	Usually	Never/Seldom	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
Encourage you to be actively involved in learning	2001	35%	56%	9%	3.25	<.001
	2008	43%	49%	8%	3.35	
Set high expectations for your learning	2001	31%	60%	9%	3.22	<.001
	2008	40%	54%	7%	3.33	
Encourage student-faculty interaction out of class	2001	16%	39%	44%	2.66	<.001
	2008	25%	43%	31%	2.91	
Give prompt feedback on your academic performance	2001	22%	64%	14%	3.07	<.001
	2008	28%	61%	11%	3.16	
Encourage learning through cooperative activities among students	2001	27%	53%	21%	3.05	<.001
	2008	31%	53%	16%	3.13	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1=Never, 2=Seldom, 3=Usually, and 4=Always. The higher mean value is in bold for each item.

² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the "Sig." column.

IV. Other Educational Experiences

1. Synthesis Courses

All undergraduate students are required to take a synthesis course as the culminating requirement for Mason's general education program. Survey results showed that 73% of the 2008 respondents had taken or were taking a synthesis course at the time of the survey (see Appendix Two). The figure is 12 percentage points lower than that of the 2007 graduates (85%) and 20 percentage points lower than that of the 2006 graduates (93%).

This steady drop is likely associated with changes in the graduation application process and in the design of survey questions about synthesis courses. Beginning in academic year 2006-2007, all students were allowed to submit the Graduation Intent Form (GIF) one semester prior to the graduating semester - a semester earlier than had been the practice. This results in an increase in the number of students who complete the exit survey before their final semester at Mason. Some respondents may not have taken a synthesis course before their final semester.

Another potential source of the decrease has to do with the way synthesis questions were asked in the survey. In 2006 and 2007, all synthesis courses offered were listed on the survey for respondents to identify which course(s) they had taken or were taking. The 2008 survey did not include the course list, which could have served as a retrieval cue to help students recall if they had taken or were taking any of those courses. Some synthesis courses are also part of the required course in the major, and students may not realize those courses are synthesis courses.

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

Trend Analysis. The same set of questions about synthesis courses was asked in the survey from 2006 to 2008. Over 86% of the 2008 respondents chose "strongly agree" or "agree" for the following four statements (see Table 7).

- The course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.
- The course required me to think critically.
- The course was intellectually challenging.
- The course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.

Further data analysis revealed that means scores of the 2007 and 2008 respondents showed no difference but were significantly higher than those of the 2006 respondents for the above four items. Synthesis courses are also intended to improve oral presentation skills and writing skills. About 25% of students chose "strongly agree" and about 50% chose "agree" on these two skill areas consistently across three cohorts – 2006, 2007 and 2008.

Comparison by Transfer Status. The 2007 results show that transfer students, compared with their native peers, gave significantly more positive evaluations in all six areas except for the following: "The course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns." In 2008, on the other hand, transfer status made no significant differences in student perceptions of synthesis courses. No difference between transfers and natives was found in the 2006 results as well. The analysis results are not presented in this report.

Table 7. Student Perceptions of Synthesis Courses, 2006-2008.

"Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the synthesis course you have taken/are taking."	Year	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
The course improved my oral presentation skills.	2006	23%	50%	22%	6%	2.89	.006
	2007	23%	52%	20%	4%	2.95	
	2008	23%	48%	24%	5%	2.89	
The course improved my writing skills.	2006	24%	50%	21%	5%	2.93	.031
	2007	25%	52%	19%	3%	2.99	
	2008	25%	48%	23%	4%	2.95	
The course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	2006	34%	49%	13%	5%	3.12	<.001
	2007	39%	49%	10%	2%	3.24	
	2008	41%	45%	11%	3%	3.24	
The course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	2006	36%	49%	10%	4%	3.18	<.001
	2007	41%	49%	8%	2%	3.29	
	2008	45%	43%	9%	2%	3.31	
The course required me to think critically.	2006	38%	50%	9%	3%	3.22	<.001
	2007	44%	48%	7%	2%	3.34	
	2008	48%	43%	8%	2%	3.36	
The course was intellectually challenging.	2006	35%	49%	12%	4%	3.14	<.001
	2007	40%	48%	9%	2%	3.27	
	2008	44%	42%	12%	3%	3.27	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree. The highest mean value is in bold for each item when the difference is statistically significant.

² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the "Sig." column.

2. Diversity

Previous reports have consistently shown that the vast majority of Mason graduates are satisfied with diversity on campus. This year we asked students about more detailed experiences related to diversity during their undergraduate education at Mason.

Comparison by Transfer Status. In course readings, lectures, and discussions, two thirds of both native and transfer students said that they were exposed to information about the history, culture, and/or social issues of racial and ethnic groups other than their own (see Table 8). At least another two thirds of both native and transfer students had opportunities to discuss relevant topics about other racial and ethnic groups with other students; nearly half indicated they had opportunities to discuss these topics with faculty/staff.

Compared with native students, transfer students reported that they were significantly more often exposed to information about racial and ethnic diversity in activities and programs in the residence halls (transfer students: 44%; native students: 38%). In terms of other Mason programs and activities, native students reported that they were exposed to diversity information significantly more often than transfer students.

Table 8. Diversity Exposure by Transfer Status.

"In each of these settings, to what extent have you been exposed to information about the history, culture and/or social issues of racial and ethnic groups other than your own?"	Transfer status	Frequency			Mean Comparison	
		Quite a bit/ Very much	Some	Very little/ Never	Mean ¹	Sig. ²
In course readings, lectures and discussions	Native(n=1064)	66%	27%	8%	2.90	
	Transfer (n=1476)	67%	26%	7%	2.95	
In informal interactions and conversations with other students	Native (n=1067)	70%	23%	6%	3.01	
	Transfer(n=1483)	67%	25%	8%	2.96	
In informal interactions and conversations with faculty and/or staff	Native(n=1053)	48%	31%	20%	2.51	
	Transfer(n=1451)	48%	32%	20%	2.52	
In activities and programs in the residence halls	Native (n=837)	38%	28%	33%	2.21	.004
	Transfer(n=757)	44%	28%	28%	2.37	
In other Mason programs and activities	Native (n=959)	51%	32%	17%	2.56	.015
	Transfer (n=1084)	46%	31%	23%	2.45	

¹ Mean values were calculated on a 1-4 scale: 1= Very Little/Never, 2=Some, 3=Quite a bit, 4=Very much. The higher mean value is in bold for each item.

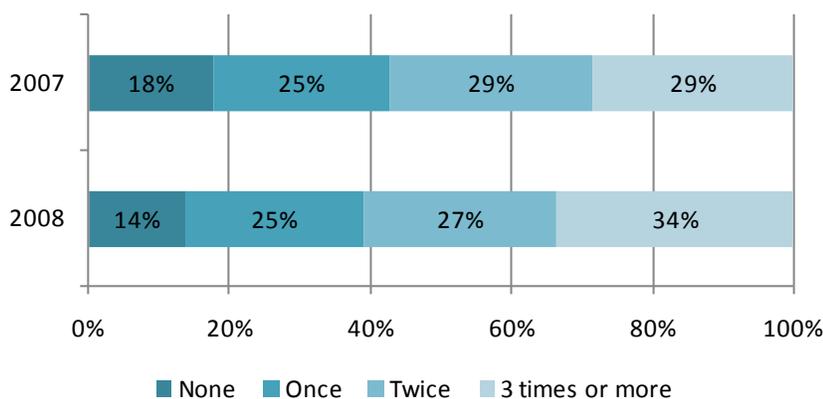
² Only statistically significant differences ($p < .05$) are shown in the "Sig." column.

V. Advising and Future Educational Plans

1. Advising during the Senior Year

Trend Analysis. The survey asked students to report how many times, during their senior year, they contacted an advisor regarding their course schedule, graduation requirements, application to graduate school, and so forth. In 2008, about one third of the respondents contacted an advisor three times or more, which is slightly higher than that of 2007: 29%. At the same time, the percentage of respondents who did not contact an advisor at all decreased slightly from 18% in 2007 to 14% in 2008.

Figure 8. Contact with an Advisor during the Senior Year, 2007 and 2008.



2. Student Satisfaction with Advisor in the Major

Trend Analysis. Previous reports show that satisfaction with advising in the major has been relatively low compared to other areas of educational experience at Mason. Around one fourth of the respondents were “very satisfied” with advising in the major between 2003 and 2006² In the 2008 survey, students were asked about the level of their satisfaction with their major advisors in six different areas.. These questions were identical to those included in the 2004 Graduating Senior Survey. Mean comparison results showed that the levels of student satisfaction with their major advisors are significantly higher in 2008 than 2004 in the following two areas (see Table 9):

- Provide accurate information about academic requirements and choices
- Have respect and concern for you as an advisee

The percentages of respondents who chose “very satisfied” with advisors for the above two areas increased by 13-14 percentage points from 2004 to 2008. For example, 41% of the 2008 respondents were “very satisfied” with having respect and concerns for them as advisees compared with 27% of the 2004 respondents.

For the remaining four items, there is a noticeable difference in the response pattern between 2004 and 2008. For all four items, the percentages of “very satisfied” increased by about 10 percentage points from 2004 to 2008. At the same time, the percentages of “dissatisfied/very dissatisfied” increased by 3-8 percentage points. In 2008, the levels of student satisfaction seem to be somewhat more polarized compared with those of 2004.

² Office of Institutional Assessment. 2007. “The Graduating Senior Survey Report, 2005-2006. Office of Institutional Assessment, George Mason University. Fairfax, VA.

Table 9. Satisfaction with Advisor in the Major, 2004 and 2008.

		Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatisfied	Mean	Sig.
Have respect and concern for you as an advisee	2004	27%	59%	14%	3.10	.001
	2008	41%	42%	16%	3.17	
Provide accurate information about academic requirements and choices	2004	24%	59%	17%	3.04	<.001
	2008	37%	46%	17%	3.14	
Provide help in finding out about academic support available at Mason (e.g. Learning Center, Writing Center, Support Services, Math Literacy Center, etc.)	2004	20%	67%	13%	3.04	
	2008	30%	49%	21%	3.01	
Provide help exploring and clarifying educational goals.	2004	19%	61%	20%	2.97	
	2008	30%	47%	23%	3.00	
Provide help in thinking through your academic choices	2004	20%	59%	21%	2.96	
	2008	31%	43%	26%	2.97	
Provide help assessing your academic strengths	2004	16%	61%	23%	2.90	
	2008	26%	44%	30%	2.85	

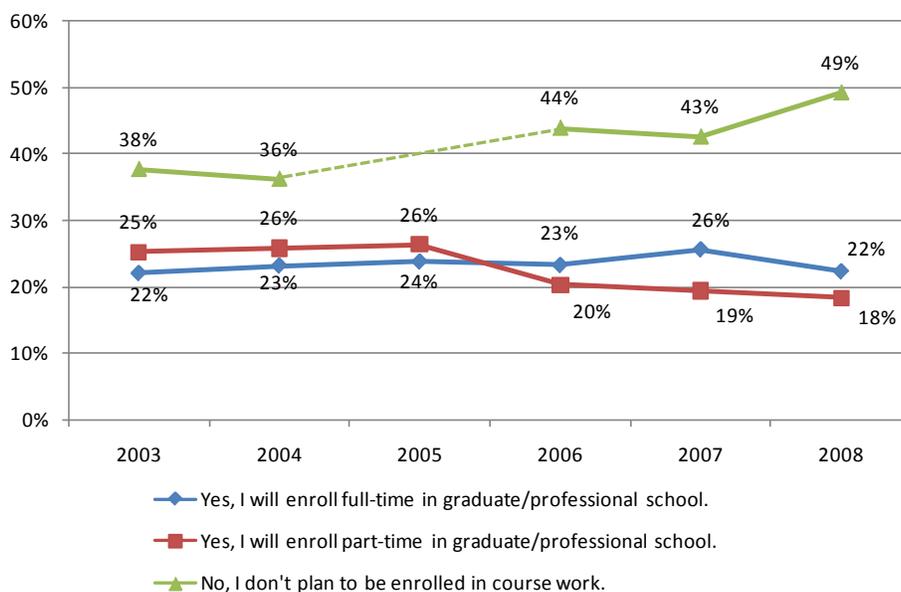
¹ Mean values were calculated on a 4-point scale: 1= Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Satisfied, and 4=Very Satisfied. The higher mean value is in bold when it is statistically significant.

² Significant differences in mean values reported in the table are at the following levels: *=p<.05; **=p<.01; ***=p<.001.

3. Future Educational Plans

Trend analysis. Figure 9 displays the trend from 2003 to 2008 of student educational plans for post-graduate degrees within a year of graduation. (Students had two additional response options that are not reported here.)

Figure 9. Trend of Future Educational Plan (within a year of graduation), 2003-2008.



Note: In 2005, the two categories, "No, I don't plan to be enrolled in course work" and "Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree or certificate program," were combined and cannot be reported separately.

The percentage of the 2008 graduation seniors who planned to enroll full-time in graduate/professional schools dropped slightly by 4 percentage points from the previous year — 22% planned to attend graduate school full-time. The percentage of the respondents who planned to enroll part-time (18%) has dropped as well by 8 percentage points since 2005. The most notable change from 2007 to 2008 was a 6-percent point increase in the percentage of respondents who do not plan to enroll in any graduate-level courses within a year of graduation. Although it is often the case that college graduates go to graduate schools in a bad economy, the economic slump we are currently facing may have convinced students to look for or stay in jobs until the economy recovers.

College Comparison. Previous reports on the Graduating Senior Surveys have consistently shown variations of future education plans by college. Table 10 presents the trend of graduates who are planning to enroll full-time or part-time in graduate/professional schools within a year after graduation.

For two years in a row, **COS** has had the highest percentage of students who are planning to attend graduate/professional school full-time (46%); followed by **CHSS** (27%). For **VIT&E**, the percentage planning to enroll full-time in graduate/professional school — 20% — remained almost the same as that of 2007, but the percentage planning to enroll part-time has significantly increased from 23% in 2007 to 32% in 2008. This resulted in an increase in the total number of students who were planning to enroll in graduate/professional school from 44% in 2007 to 52% in 2008. In all other schools, there were smaller percentages of students who were planning to attend graduate/professional school either full-time or part-time in 2008 than in 2007.

Table 10. The Percentages of Students who Plan to Enroll in Graduate/Professional Schools by College.*

	Will Enroll Full-time					Will Enroll Part-time				
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
All Graduating Seniors	23%	24%	23%	26%	22%	26%	26%	20%	19%	18%
CEHD	12%	14%	19%	19%	15%↓	28%	24%	23%	11%	12%↑
CHHS	14%	12%	15%	21%	12%↓	30%	29%	17%	24%	20%↓
CHSS	30%	31%	30%	29%	27%↓	22%	24%	19%	19%	17%↓
COS	(CAS)	(CAS)	(CAS)	49%	46%↓	(CAS)	(CAS)	(CAS)	14%	9%↓
CVPA	16%	27%	22%	13%	17%↑	17%	13%	7%	15%	9%↓
ICAR	--	--	--	29%	0%↓	--	--	--	14%	25%↑
SOM	15%	13%	11%	17%	10%↓	28%	31%	24%	21%	21%
VIT&E	16%	18%	20%	21%	20%↓	48%	39%	28%	23%	32%↑

The ICAR undergraduate program is new and very small and produced 13 graduates this academic year. Among them, 9 graduates completed the survey.

4. Schools to Attend for Graduate/Professional Degrees

Of those who reported that they would enroll full-time or part-time in graduate/professional school in the previous question, 36% said that they were most likely to attend Mason (see Figure 10). The majority of the respondents preferred local universities to out-of-state schools.

Among other schools Mason graduates considered, some Washington DC/Virginia area universities were repeatedly named by the respondents (see Table 11). George Washington University and Virginia Commonwealth University were the two most popular schools, followed by University of Maryland-College Park and Georgetown University. Among the 13 most named universities, New York University is the only school outside the Washington DC/Maryland/Virginia area.

Figure 10. "Which School Are You Most Likely to Attend?"

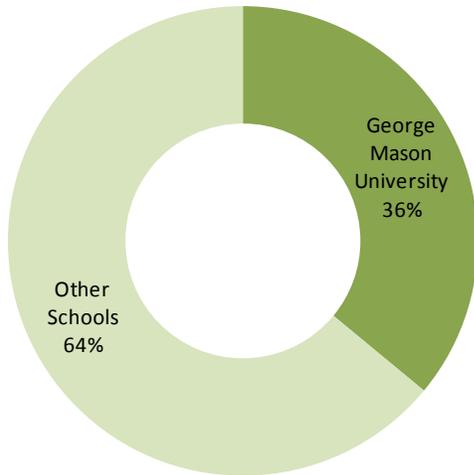


Table 11. Schools Most Frequently Named by the Respondents.

	n
George Mason University	477
<i>Other Schools</i>	
George Washington University	31
Virginia Commonwealth University	25
University of Maryland, College Park	14
Georgetown University	13
Marymount University	11
University of Virginia	11
American University	10
Old Dominion University	8
Howard University	7
New York University	6
Virginia Tech	6
University of Mary Washington	5
Catholic University of America	5
Other	649
Total	1,278

Note: Although students could list more than one school, we counted only the first school that they listed.

Appendix One: Demographics of Survey Respondents and All Graduating Seniors

In the academic year 2007-2008, 3,779 students graduated with 3809 degrees from Mason. Out of these graduates, 2,678 completed the Graduating Senior Survey for an overall response rate of 71 %. Students who earned double degrees are counted just once in the following tables.

Age at Graduation

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
22 or younger	1116	42%	1483	39%	75.3%
23-24	666	25%	982	26%	67.8%
25-27	408	15%	620	16%	65.8%
28-30	149	6%	237	6%	62.9%
31-34	109	4%	156	4%	69.9%
35 or older	230	9%	301	8%	76.4%
Total	2678	100%	3779	100%	70.9%

Gender

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
Female	1605	60%	2141	57%	75.0%
Male	1064	40%	1625	43%	65.5%
Unknown	9	0%	13	0%	69.2%
Total	2678	100%	3779	100%	70.9%

Race and Ethnicity

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
African American	191	7%	276	7%	69.2%
Asian American	407	15%	591	16%	68.9%
Hispanic American	188	7%	273	7%	68.9%
Native American	9	0%	10	0%	90.0%
Other/Unknown	401	15%	581	15%	69.0%
Non-resident Alien	119	4%	161	4%	73.9%
White American	1363	51%	1887	50%	72.2%
Total	2678	100%	3779	100%	70.9%

Virginia Residency (Domicile)

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
In State	2414	90%	3400	90%	71.0%
Out of State	264	10%	379	10%	69.7%
Total	2678	100%	3779	100%	70.9%

Final Grade Point Average

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
2.000 and below	0	0%	1	0.03%	0.0%
2.001-2.500	186	7%	295	8%	63.1%
2.501-3.000	833	31%	1212	32%	68.7%
3.001-3.500	965	36%	1369	36%	70.5%
3.501-4.000	694	26%	902	24%	76.9%
Total	2678	100%	3779	100%	70.9%

Appendix Two: Response Rates

In the academic year 2007-2008, 3,779 students graduated with 3,809 degrees from Mason. Out of these graduates, 2,678 completed the Graduating Senior Survey for an overall response rate of 71 %. Students who earned double degrees are counted twice in this section. As a result, the total number of survey respondents is 2,686 instead of 2,678 in the following tables.

Semester of Graduation

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
Summer 2007	569	21%	895	24%	63.6%
Fall 2007	696	26%	986	26%	70.6%
Spring 2008	1421	53%	1912	50%	74.3%
Total	2686	100%	3793	100%	70.8%

Degree

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
Bachelor of Arts, BA	1062	40%	1482	39%	71.7%
Bachelor of Fine Arts, BFA	36	1%	51	1%	70.6%
Bachelor of Individualized Study, BIS	58	2%	77	2%	75.3%
Bachelor of Music, BM	20	1%	29	1%	69.0%
Bachelor of Science, BS	1385	52%	1952	51%	71.0%
Bachelor of Science in Education, BSED	12	0%	19	1%	63.2%
Bachelor of Science in Nursing, BSN	113	4%	183	5%	61.7%
Total	2686	100%	3793	100%	70.8%

Academic Unit/College/Program

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
College of Education and Human Development	75	3%	116	3%	64.7%
College of Health and Human Services	178	7%	266	7%	66.9%
College of Humanities and Social Sciences	1256	47%	1751	46%	71.7%
College of Science	212	8%	298	8%	71.1%
College of Visual and Performing Arts	165	6%	229	6%	72.1%
Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution	9	0.3%	12	0%	75.0%
School of Management	493	18%	738	19%	66.8%
Volgenau School of IT & Engineering	298	11%	383	10%	77.8%
Total	2686	100%	3793	100%	70.8%

Major

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating Seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
Accounting (ACCT) (BS)	125	4.7%	192	5.1%	65.1%
Administration of Justice (ADJ) (BS)	118	4.4%	159	4.2%	74.2%
Anthropology (ANTH) (BA)	23	.9%	33	.9%	69.7%
Art (History) (ARTH) (BA)	13	.5%	17	.4%	73.2%
Art (Studio) (ARTS) (BA)	1	.0%	1	.0%	75.0%
Astronomy (ASTR) (BA)	2	.1%	2	.1%	100.0%
Athletic Training (ATT) (BS)	2	.1%	3	.1%	100.0%
Art & Visual Technology (AVT) (BFA) (BA)	101	3.8%	141	3.7%	66.7%
Biology (BIOL) (BS)(BA)	141	5.2%	189	5.0%	74.6%
Business Administration (BUAD) (BS)	0	.0%	1	.0%	0.0%
Civil & Infrastructure Engineering (CEIE) (BS)	26	1.0%	35	.9%	75.8%

Response Category	Survey Respondents		All Graduating Seniors		Response Rate
	n	%	n	%	
Chemistry (CHEM) (BS) (BA)	25	.9%	34	.9%	74.3%
Communication (COM) (BA)	158	5.9%	212	5.6%	74.5%
Conflict Analysis & Resolution (CONF) (BS) (BA)	9	.3%	15	.4%	100.0%
Computer Engineering (CPE) (BS)	15	.6%	15	.4%	72.7%
Computer Science (CS) (BS)	48	1.8%	66	1.7%	60.0%
Dance (DANC) (BFA) (BA)	14	.5%	19	.5%	77.8%
Decision Sci & Mgmt Info System (DMIS) (BS)	37	1.4%	56	1.5%	66.1%
Economics (ECON) (BS) (BA)	62	2.3%	97	2.6%	81.8%
Electrical Engineering (ELEN) (BS)	57	2.1%	59	1.6%	63.5%
English (ENGL) (BA)	120	4.5%	160	4.2%	96.6%
Earth Science (ESCI) (BS)	9	.3%	11	.3%	75.5%
Film and Video Studies (FAVS) (BA)	2	.1%	4	.1%	50.0%
Finance (FNAN) (BS)	109	4.1%	167	4.4%	65.3%
Foreign Languages (FRLN) (BA)	22	.8%	29	.8%	75.9%
Geography (GEOG) (BS)(BA)	13	.5%	17	.4%	76.5%
Geology (GEOL) (BA)	1	.0%	2	.1%	50.0%
Global Affairs (GLOA) (BA)	66	2.5%	78	2.1%	84.6%
Government & Politics (GOVT) (BA)	1	.0%	1	.0%	70.0%
Gov't & International Politics (GVIP) (BA)	162	6.0%	230	6.1%	100.0%
Health, Fitness and Recreation (HFRR) (BS)	61	2.3%	94	2.5%	79.4%
History (HIST) (BA)	82	3.1%	112	3.0%	64.9%
Health Science (HSCI) (BS)	50	1.9%	63	1.7%	73.2%
Individualized Studies (INDV) (BIS)	58	2.2%	77	2.0%	75.3%
Information Technology (INFT) (BS)	135	5.0%	189	5.0%	69.2%
Integrative Studies (INTS) (BS)(BA)	91	3.4%	130	3.4%	71.4%
Info Systems & Ops Mgmt (ISOM) (BS)	9	.3%	13	.3%	70.0%
Latin American Studies (LAS) (BA)	1	.0%	1	.0%	100.0%
Mathematics (MATH) (BS) (BA)	14	.5%	31	.8%	66.5%
Management (MGMT) (BS)	125	4.7%	188	5.0%	72.7%
Marketing (MKTG) (BS)	88	3.3%	121	3.2%	41.4%
Medical Technology (MTCH) (BS)	5	.2%	8	.2%	62.5%
Music (MUSI) (BM)(BA)	33	1.2%	46	1.2%	71.1%
Nursing (NURS) (BSN)	113	4.2%	183	4.8%	61.7%
Physical Education (PHED) (BSED)	12	.4%	19	.5%	63.6%
Philosophy (PHIL) (BA)	7	.3%	11	.3%	63.2%
Physics (PHYS) (BS)	2	.1%	4	.1%	50.0%
Psychology (PSYC) (BS)(BA)	214	8.0%	310	8.2%	69.0%
Public Administration (PUAD) (BS)	18	.7%	27	.7%	66.7%
Religious Studies (RELI) (BA)	2	.1%	5	.1%	40.0%
Russian Studies (RUST) (BA)	5	.2%	8	.2%	62.5%
Sociology (SOCL) (BA)	33	1.2%	51	1.3%	75.0%
Social Work (SOCW) (BS)	15	.6%	20	.5%	64.7%
Systems Engineering (SYST) (BS)	17	.6%	19	.5%	89.5%
Theatre (THR) (BA)	14	.5%	18	.5%	77.8%
Total	2686	100.0%	3793	100.0%	70.9%

Appendix Three: The 2007-2008 Graduating Senior Survey – University Results

Please note that descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) are only provided for the items measured by ordinal or interval variables.

I. Enrollment and Employment

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

	n	%
I started college at Mason as a freshman.	1108	42%
I started college at another institution and transferred to Mason.	1553	58%
Total	2661	100%

1b. If you transferred, how many credit hours were accepted by Mason?

	n	%
14 or less	95	6%
15-29	245	16%
30-44	274	18%
45-59	344	22%
60 or more	590	38%
Total	1548	100%

2. While at Mason, I was employed for pay:

	n	%
Not at all	440	17%
Only for a few semesters	428	16%
During most semesters	616	23%
During every semester	1164	44%
Total	2648	100%

II. Educational Experiences

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

		Very competent	Competent	Not very competent	Not at all competent	Mean	SD
Knowledge of important work (e.g. research, literature, works of art, etc.) in my field	n	870	1629	129	17	3.27	.576
	%	33%	62%	5%	1%		
Ability to analyze work in my field	n	1137	1409	87	11	3.39	.573
	%	43%	53%	3%	0%		
Ability to create original work in my field, such as, poetry, art, software, new products, etc.	n	775	1341	347	44	3.14	.707
	%	31%	53%	14%	2%		
Ability to conduct original research in my field	n	845	1486	263	30	3.20	.655
	%	32%	57%	10%	1%		

5. How often did Mason faculty in your major:

		Always	Usually	Seldom	Never	Mean	SD
Set high expectations for your learning	n	1045	1426	167	7	3.33	.602
	%	40%	54%	6%	0%		
Encourage you to be actively involved in learning	n	1145	1291	190	11	3.35	.631
	%	43%	49%	7%	0%		
Encourage student-faculty interaction out of class	n	669	1149	737	88	2.91	.810
	%	25%	43%	28%	3%		
Give prompt feedback on your academic performance	n	738	1610	278	18	3.16	.621
	%	28%	61%	11%	1%		
Encourage learning through cooperative activities among students	n	815	1394	405	28	3.13	.697
	%	31%	53%	15%	1%		

6. To what extent did the courses in your major emphasize each of the following:

		Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little/Never	Mean	SD
Breaking down information to identify assumptions and relationships	n	935	1168	481	48	3.14	.770
	%	36%	44%	18%	2%		
Including alternative points of view	n	952	1006	605	70	3.08	.832
	%	36%	38%	23%	3%		
Synthesizing information from different sources	n	1040	1105	443	40	3.20	.766
	%	40%	42%	17%	2%		
Applying concepts learned in class to new situations	n	966	1085	522	54	3.13	.795
	%	37%	41%	20%	2%		
Using criteria to judge the value and quality of ideas	n	964	1158	447	55	3.16	.773
	%	37%	44%	17%	2%		
Judging the quality and relevance of sources and materials	n	997	1141	433	50	3.18	.769
	%	38%	44%	17%	2%		
Thoroughly considering limitations of conclusions and methods	n	847	1153	561	61	3.06	.791
	%	32%	44%	21%	2%		

7. In each of these settings, to what extent have you been exposed to information about the history, culture and/or social issues of racial and ethnic groups other than your own?

		Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little/Never	Mean	SD
In course readings, lectures and discussions	n	858	856	671	188	2.93	.939
	%	33%	33%	26%	7%		
In informal interactions and conversations with other students	n	927	845	630	181	2.97	.940
	%	36%	33%	24%	7%		
In informal interactions and conversations with faculty and/or staff	n	581	643	812	502	2.51	1.051
	%	23%	25%	32%	20%		
In activities and programs in the residence halls	n	302	364	451	501	2.29	1.095
	%	19%	22%	28%	31%		
In other Mason programs and activities	n	443	560	654	414	2.50	1.038
	%	21%	27%	32%	20%		

III. Synthesis

8. Have you taken or are you currently taking a synthesis course?

	n	%
Yes	1923	73%
No	709	27%
Total	2632	100%

9. Was/is your synthesis course offered by your major department?

	n	%
No	305	17%
Yes	1513	83%
Total	1818	100%

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

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	SD
The course improved my oral presentation skills.	n	97	461	918	438	2.89	.812
	%	5%	24%	48%	23%		
The course improved my writing skills.	n	71	438	915	486	2.95	.794
	%	5%	24%	48%	23%		
The course linked issues in my major to wider intellectual and community concerns.	n	57	213	856	785	3.24	.764
	%	5%	24%	48%	23%		
The course required me to organize ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships.	n	43	179	830	857	3.31	.733
	%	5%	24%	48%	23%		
The course required me to think critically.	n	34	149	817	914	3.36	.703
	%	5%	24%	48%	23%		
The course was intellectually challenging.	n	52	224	795	842	3.27	.771
	%	5%	24%	48%	23%		

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

11. In how many courses at Mason, 300-level or above, did you have the opportunity to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your instructor on an earlier draft? (This might include essays, projects, lab reports, case studies, reviews, and reports, for example.)

	n	%	Mean	SD
None	203	8%	2.45	1.484
One	555	21%		
Two	728	28%		
Three	507	19%		
Four	243	9%		
Five or more	385	15%		
Total	2621	100%		

12. Did you have sufficient opportunities in those courses to revise your writing after receiving feedback from an instructor?

	n	%	Mean	SD
Never	139	5%	2.38	1.101
Rarely	420	16%		
Occasionally	799	31%		
Frequently	819	31%		
Always	439	17%		
Total	2616	100%		

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

		A great deal	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all	Mean	SD
The feedback and revision process in these courses helped me to improve my writing.	n	1114	1162	264	83	3.26	.764
	%	42%	44%	10%	3%		
These courses have improved my confidence as a writer.	n	1108	1126	311	80	3.24	.777
	%	42%	44%	10%	3%		
The writing assignments from these courses have increased my understanding of my field.	n	1255	1067	231	72	3.34	.751
	%	42%	44%	10%	3%		

V. Advising

15. During your senior year, how often were you in touch with an advisor to discuss your course schedule, graduation requirements, application to graduate school, etc.?

	n	%	Mean	SD
Not at all	356	14%	1.81	1.048
Once	661	25%		
Twice	716	27%		
Three times or more	876	34%		
Total	2609	100%		

16. How satisfied are you with the ability of your major advisor to:

		Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Mean	SD
Provide accurate information about academic requirements and choices	n	913	1138	247	163	3.14	.847
	%	37%	46%	10%	7%		
Provide help exploring and clarifying educational goals.	n	712	1114	349	186	3.00	.875
	%	30%	47%	15%	8%		
Provide help in finding out about academic support available at Mason (e.g. Learning Center, Writing Center, Support Services, Math Literacy Center, etc.)	n	637	1033	282	162	3.01	.861
	%	30%	49%	13%	8%		
Provide help assessing your academic strengths	n	550	933	425	225	2.85	.925
	%	26%	44%	20%	11%		
Provide help in thinking through your academic choices	n	708	989	378	204	2.97	.913
	%	31%	43%	17%	9%		
Have respect and concern for you as an advisee	n	984	1016	214	177	3.17	.876
	%	41%	42%	9%	7%		
Other	n	101	118	33	80	2.72	1.138
	%	30%	36%	10%	24%		

VI. Future Plans**17. Do you plan to pursue additional education within the next year?**

	n	%
Yes, I will enroll full-time in graduate/professional school.	585	22%
Yes, I will enroll part-time in graduate/professional school.	479	18%
Yes, I will enroll in courses leading to a certificate/professional license.	136	5%
Yes, I plan to take courses, but not as part of a degree or certificate program.	124	5%
No, I don't plan to be enrolled in course work.	1287	49%
Total	2611	100%

17i. Which school are you most likely to attend? (Summary)

	n	%
George Mason University	477	37%
Other	801	63%
Total	1278	100%

**Graduating Senior Survey
Summer and Fall 2007, Spring 2008
George Mason University**

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

Directions: Circle, mark, or write in the most appropriate response and return the completed survey to the Office of Institutional Assessment, George Mason University - MS 3D2, 4400 University Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030. If you prefer to complete this survey online go directly to: <http://assessment.gmu.edu/surveys/2007-2008/letter-senior.cfm> or access the survey through our website at: <http://assessment.gmu.edu>. Once there click on "Graduating Student Exit Survey."

I. Enrollment & Employment

1. Which of the following statements best describes your enrollment status at Mason?
 - a. I started college at Mason as a freshman.
 - b. I started college at another institution and transferred to Mason.
If you transferred, how many credit hours were accepted by Mason?
 14 or less 15 – 29 30 – 44 45 – 59 60 or more
2. While at Mason, I was employed for pay:
 - a. During every semester
 - b. During most semesters
 - c. Only for a few semesters
 - d. Not at all

If you selected a, b, or c in Question 2, please answer the following question:

3. If 100 and 200-level courses were offered only during the day (before 4:30 p.m.), would your work schedule have interfered with your taking these courses?
 - a. This question does not apply to me because I took very few of these courses.
 - b. The day schedule would have interfered with my work schedule:
 - i. Most of the time
 - ii. Sometimes
 - iii. Occasionally
 - iv. Not at all

II. Educational Experiences

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

*Not applicable

5. How often did Mason faculty in your major:	Always	Usually	Seldom	Never
Set high expectations for your learning	4	3	2	1
Encourage you to be actively involved in learning	4	3	2	1
Encourage student-faculty interaction out of class	4	3	2	1
Give prompt feedback on your academic performance	4	3	2	1
Encourage learning through cooperative activities among students	4	3	2	1

6. To what extent did the courses in your major emphasize each of the following:	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little/Never
Breaking down information to identify assumptions and relationships	4	3	2	1
Including alternative points of view	4	3	2	1
Synthesizing information from different sources	4	3	2	1
Applying concepts learned in class to new situations	4	3	2	1
Using criteria to judge the value and quality of ideas	4	3	2	1
Judging the quality and relevance of sources and materials	4	3	2	1
Thoroughly considering limitations of conclusions and methods	4	3	2	1

7. In each of these settings, to what extent have you been exposed to information about the history, culture and/or social issues of racial and ethnic groups other than your own?	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Very little/Never	NA
In course readings, lectures and discussions	4	3	2	1	NA
In informal interactions and conversations with other students	4	3	2	1	NA
In informal interactions and conversations with faculty and/or staff	4	3	2	1	NA
In activities and programs in the residence halls	4	3	2	1	NA
In other Mason programs and activities	4	3	2	1	NA

III. Synthesis

The synthesis course is the culminating general education course that all students take, usually in the junior or senior year.

8. Have you taken or are you currently taking a synthesis course?
- Yes
 - No (If no, please skip to Section IV)

9. Was/is your synthesis course offered by your major department?
- Yes
 - No

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

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

(For Questions 11-13, please think of your experiences in courses of 300-level or above, excluding English 302)

11. In how many courses at Mason, 300-level or above, did you have the opportunity to revise your writing after receiving feedback from your instructor on an earlier draft? (This might include essays, projects, lab reports, case studies, reviews, and reports, for example.)
 a. ___ None b. ___ One c. ___ Two d. ___ Three e. ___ Four f. ___ Five or more
12. Did you have *sufficient* opportunities in those courses to revise your writing after receiving feedback from an instructor?
 a. ___ Always b. ___ Frequently c. ___ Occasionally d. ___ Rarely e. ___ Never

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

	A great deal	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
The feedback and revision process in these courses helped me to improve my writing.	4	3	2	1
These courses have improved my confidence as a writer.	4	3	2	1
The writing assignments from these courses have increased my understanding of my field.	4	3	2	1

V. Advising

14. During your time at Mason, when you had a question or needed clarification regarding an academic problem (e.g. what courses to take, graduation requirements, etc.), from which of the following resources were you more likely to seek an answer? (Check all that apply)
- | | |
|--|--|
| a. ___ My official academic advisor in my major | g. ___ My major/department online resources |
| b. ___ A school/college based advisor | h. ___ My major/department staff |
| c. ___ University Academic Advising Center (SUB I) | i. ___ Other students or friends |
| d. ___ Paper version of the University Catalog | j. ___ Family members |
| e. ___ Web-based version of the University Catalog | k. ___ Transfer Center (Prince William campus) |
| f. ___ A faculty member (not my official advisor) | l. ___ Other: _____ |
15. During your senior year, how often were you in touch with an advisor to discuss your course schedule, graduation requirements, application to graduate school, etc.?
 a. ___ Not at all b. ___ Once c. ___ Twice d. ___ Three times or more

16. How satisfied are you with the ability of your **major advisor** to:

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	NA
Provide accurate information about academic requirements and choices	4	3	2	1	NA
Provide help exploring and clarifying educational goals	4	3	2	1	NA
Provide help in finding out about academic support available at Mason (e.g. Learning Center, Writing Center, Support Services, Math Literacy Center, etc.)	4	3	2	1	NA
Provide help assessing your academic strengths	4	3	2	1	NA
Provide help in thinking through your academic choices	4	3	2	1	NA
Have respect and concern for you as an advisee	4	3	2	1	NA
Other:	4	3	2	1	NA



VI. Future Plans

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

If you answered "Yes" to a or b, please answer the following:

- i. Which school are you most likely to attend? Please spell out the full name of the institution:
___ George Mason University
___ Other: _____
- ii. Which discipline are you most likely to study?

- iii. Which degree are you most likely to pursue?
___ Masters (M.A., M.S., etc) ___ Medical (M.D., D.O., D.D.S., D.V.M.) ___ Divinity (B.D., M.DIV.)
___ Doctoral (Ph.D., Ed.D.) ___ Law (J.D.) ___ Other: _____

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

18. Please select those areas on which you wish to comment and use the space below to make comments/recommendations/observations about Mason: (*Add additional pages if necessary and attach and return with survey.*)
- a. ___ Academic advising
 - b. ___ Admissions and tuition
 - c. ___ Career services and counseling
 - d. ___ Education in major
 - e. ___ Faculty, general
 - f. ___ Financial aid
 - g. ___ General education
 - h. ___ Resources (lab, Internet, library, bookstore, etc.)
 - i. ___ Staff, general
 - j. ___ Student life and residence halls
 - k. ___ University management (food, gym, parking, etc.)
 - l. ___ Other: _____
-
-
-
-

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

Student identification number: G _____

GMU email address: _____@**gmu.edu**

Preferred email address after graduation: _____

Your G-number and email address are necessary for us to verify that only graduating seniors have completed the survey. All individual responses are confidential and no report will identify you as an individual. Thank you for your participation!

This survey was prepared and distributed by the Office of Institutional Assessment
Mason Hall, Room D111
Phone: 703-993-8834
E-mail: assessment@gmu.edu
<http://assessment.gmu.edu>



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