

Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement 2013
Peer Comparison Report

March 2014

Office of Institutional Assessment

George Mason University

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Major Findings	1
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>	1
<i>Academic Characteristics</i>	1
<i>Expected Academic Engagement in College and Importance of Campus Environment</i>	1
<i>Financial Concern and Work for Pay</i>	2
INTRODUCTION	3
Survey Administration and Response Rate.....	3
Scope and Structure of the Report	3
Important Notes.....	3
DEMOGRAPHIC AND ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BCSSE RESPONDENTS	5
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	5
<i>Enrollment Status</i>	5
<i>Gender and Race/Ethnicity</i>	5
<i>First-Generation Students</i>	5
Academic Characteristics.....	6
<i>Math Courses</i>	6
<i>AP Classes and College or University Credit Classes</i>	6
<i>Reading and Writing</i>	6
<i>SAT/ACT Scores</i>	7
<i>Mason as the Institution of Choice</i>	8
<i>Academic Aspiration</i>	8
ANALYSIS OF BCSSE SCALES	9
BCSSE Scales	9
Scale Score Comparison	9
Item Analysis by Scales	10
<i>Quantitative Reasoning – High School Academic Engagement</i>	10
<i>Learning Strategies – High School Academic Engagement</i>	10
<i>Collaborative Learning – Expected College Academic Engagement</i>	10
<i>Student-Faculty Interaction - Expected College Academic Engagement</i>	11
<i>Interaction with Diverse Others - Expected College Social Engagement</i>	11
<i>Expected Academic Perseverance</i>	12
<i>Expected Academic Difficulty</i>	13
<i>Perceived Academic Preparation</i>	13
<i>Importance of Campus Environment</i>	14

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES ON SPECIAL TOPICS	15
Time Allocation	15
<i>Study Hours in High School</i>	15
<i>Study Hours in College</i>	15
<i>Work for Pay</i>	16
<i>Co-Curricular Activities</i>	16
Student Finances	17
<i>Financial Concerns</i>	17
<i>Funding Sources for College Education</i>	17
APPENDIX A: Peer Institutions 2013	19
APPENDIX B: BCSSE 2013 Self-Reported Respondent Characteristics	20
APPENDIX C: BCSSE Scale Descriptions	21

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Gender and Race/Ethnicity in 2013	5
Table 2. Percent Earning a Grade of C or Better in High School Math Courses.....	6
Table 3. Advanced Placement (AP) and College or University Courses Taken for Credit during High School	6
Table 4. Amount of Reading during Last Year of High School	7
Table 5. Amount of Writing during Last Year of High School	7
Table 6. Choice of Institution	8
Table 7. BCSSE 2013 Scale Scores Comparison	9
Table 8. Quantitative Reasoning during Last Year of High School	10
Table 9. Using Learning Strategies during Last Year of High School	10
Table 10. Expected Student-Faculty Interactions in the Coming School Year	11
Table 11. Expected Interaction with Diverse Others in the Coming School Year	12
Table 12. Percent of Students Anticipating Academic Difficulty	13
Table 13. Perceived Academic Preparation	13
Table 14. Importance of Campus Environment.....	14
Table 15. Hours Working for Pay.....	16
Table 16. Hours Participating in Co-Curricular Activities	16
Table 17. Funding Sources for College Expenses	17

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. SAT Composite Score	7
Figure 2. Percent of Students Who Intend to Graduate from Their Institution	8
Figure 3. Expected Collaborative Learning in the Coming School Year	11
Figure 4. Percent of Students with High Levels of Academic Perseverance.....	12
Figure 5. Actual Hours Spent Preparing for Classes during Last Year of High School.....	15
Figure 6. Expected Hours to be Spent Preparing for Classes during Freshman Year	15
Figure 7. Level of Difficulty in Paying for College Expenses	17

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a comparison of Mason 2013 freshmen and national peers about their characteristics, high school performance, and expected college experiences as measured by the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE). Mason participated in BCSSE in 2008 and 2013. In 2013, 124 colleges and universities with over 71,000 first-time freshmen participated in BCSSE. At Mason, 1,435 enrolled students took the survey, yielding a response rate of 49%. Fourteen doctorate-granting universities that participated in BCSSE 2013 serve as national peers in this report.

Major Findings

Demographic Characteristics

- Mason freshmen are much more diverse than national peers: nearly half of Mason respondents in 2013 are of racial/ethnicity minorities compared to about one-quarter at peer institutions. Asian students constitute the largest minority group at Mason.
- The percentage of first-generation freshmen at Mason has gone up from 30% in 2008 to 40% in 2013. Peer institutions reported a similar 10-percentage point increase during the same period reaching 42%.

Academic Characteristics

- More Mason freshmen passed advanced math courses in high school than national peers. For example, 84% of Mason respondents report earning a grade of C in pre-calculus/trigonometry compared with 73% at peer institutions.
- Mason freshmen took more AP and college/university courses for credits than national peers. For example, 88% of Mason students report taking at least one AP course compared with 73% at peer institutions.
- Mason freshmen compare less favorably with national peers on SAT/ACT scores: 32% of Mason freshmen scored above 1200, compared with 41% at peer institutions.

Expected Academic Engagement in College and Importance of Campus Environment

- Freshmen plan to spend more time studying in college than they did in high school. Over 80% of freshmen, Mason or peer institutions alike, expect to spend 11 or more hours per week preparing for classes. Time management is, for many students, a major concern, somewhat more so among national peers than at Mason (49% vs. 46%).
- Mason students are less likely than national peers to expect to collaborate with other students and interact with faculty about academic performance. On the other hand, Mason students have higher expectations than peers on several measures addressing expected academic perseverance (e.g., stay positive when doing poorly on a test/assignment: 66% vs. 60%).
- Mason freshmen attach more importance to a challenging academic experience and support for academic success than national peers (61% vs. 57% and 88% vs. 84%, respectively).
- More Mason freshmen find it important to have opportunities to interact with students of different backgrounds and expect to have more interactions with diverse others than national peers, a finding consistent since 2008.

Financial Concern and Work for Pay

- More Mason freshmen foresee difficulty in paying for college expenses than national peers: 51% of Mason students anticipate a high level of difficulty compared with 40% of national peers. This difference was found in 2008 as well.
- About two-thirds of Mason freshmen plan to work up to 20 hours for pay in college, as do national peers.
- Mason freshmen are less likely to identify grants/scholarships as a funding source than national peers, a finding also true in 2008.

INTRODUCTION

The Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) is a national survey administered annually to incoming first-time first-year students before they start college. BCSSE collects data about students' high school experiences and performance, expectations for academic experiences during the first year in college, and plans for co-curricular activities. Survey results are intended to inform student services and academic programs to enhance freshman retention and achievement. Mason participated in BCSSE in 2008 and 2013.

This report focuses on comparisons of Mason freshmen with national peers on key characteristic and BCSSE scales from 2013. Results on trend and subgroup analysis (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) within Mason are available in the *Beginning of College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) 2013: Self Comparison Report*, which is available online at <https://assessment.gmu.edu>.

Peer institutions used in this report refer to the fourteen doctorate-granting universities that participated in BCSSE 2013 with more than 25,000 respondents. Survey results of peer institutions used in this report include data from Mason because BCSSE does not provide customized peer analysis. As defined by the Carnegie Classification, doctorate-granting universities "award at least 20 doctoral degrees per year (excluding doctoral-level degrees that qualify recipients for entry into professional practices, such as the JD, MD, PharmD, DPT, etc.)." A complete list of peer institutions is provided in Appendix A. Survey participation and respondent characteristics are summarized in Appendix B. The BCSSE 2103 instrument is online at <https://assessment.gmu.edu>.

Survey Administration and Response Rate

In summer 2013, all 3,213 prospective first-year Mason undergraduate students were invited by e-mail to participate in the survey online. During summer orientations, non-respondents were invited to take the survey on-site, and post cards were handed to students as a reminder to fill out the survey. After removing duplicate cases and respondents who did not enroll in fall 2013, 1,435 respondents remain in the final data file for a response rate of 49%.

Scope and Structure of the Report

This report focuses on a comparison of Mason with peer institutions with three main sections:

- Demographic and academic characteristics of BCSSE respondents
- Analysis of BCSSE scales
- Special topics

Peer comparisons are based on survey results from 2013. References to findings from 2008 are included where applicable to illustrate trends.

Important Notes

- In this report, race/ethnicity characteristics are based on self-reported data so that comparisons can be made with peer institutions. In the *BCSSE 2013 Self-Comparison Report*, race/ethnicity characteristics are based on institutional data.
- The terms *respondents*, *freshmen*, and *students* in this report are synonymous in referring to BCSSE 2013 participants from Mason and peer institutions whose responses on the survey were used in this report.
- First-generation students are defined as those with neither parent (or guardian) having completed a 4-year college degree.
- Percentages reported may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

DEMOGRAPHIC AND ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF BCSSE RESPONDENTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Enrollment Status

Almost all Mason respondents (99%) graduated from high school in 2013 compared with 97% at peer institutions. At Mason, the majority of the respondents (90%) graduated from public high schools; the rest either attended private schools (10%) or earned a high school diploma through home schooling or GED (1% combined). At peer institutions, 82% of the respondents graduated from public schools and 16% from private schools. Almost all respondents (99%), Mason and peer institutions alike, reported that they would enroll full-time in college. These statistics were very similar to those for the 2008 cohort.

Gender and Race/Ethnicity

Demographic characteristics of the 2013 BCSSE respondents at Mason and peer institutions are summarized in Table 1. Female students account for 61% of Mason respondents and 56% of those at peer institutions. Mason has a more diverse student population than peer institutions. Based on self-report data, nearly half of Mason respondents are racial/ethnic minorities compared with about one-quarter in peer institutions. The largest minority group at Mason is Asian (20%) followed by black/African American (19%). The trend for Mason compared to national peers has been rather consistent since 2008.

Table 1. Gender and Race/Ethnicity in 2013

Gender	Mason	Peer Institutions
Female	61%	56%
Male	39%	44%
Race/Ethnicity¹		
American Indian or Alaska Native	3%	3%
Asian	20%	8%
Black or African American	19%	11%
Hispanic or Latino	12%	6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%	1%
White (non-Hispanic)	56%	78%
Other	5%	2%
I prefer not to respond	4%	6%

Note: Percentages are based on self-report data.

¹*Each response option for race/ethnicity was a separate variable so respondents were able to select multiple options, resulting in the sum of percentages exceeding 100.*

First-Generation Students

BCSSE defines a “first-generation” student as one with neither parent (or those who raised him/her) having completed a 4-year college degree. Applying this definition, the percentage of first-generation freshmen at Mason has gone up from 30% in 2008 to 40% in 2013. National peers reported a similar 10-percentage point increase during the same period reaching 42% in 2013.

Academic Characteristics

Math Courses

As a measure of academic preparation, BCSSE asked respondents to indicate whether they had earned a grade of C or better for several high school math courses including algebra II, pre-calculus/trigonometry, calculus, and probability or statistics. Results in Table 2 show that the Mason 2013 incoming freshman class was somewhat better prepared in math than their national peers: a higher percentage of 2013 Mason freshmen compared to national peers, passed, with a C or better, algebra II, pre-calculus/trigonometry, and probability or statistics during high school.

Table 2. Percent Earning a Grade of C or Better in High School Math Courses

Course	Mason	Peer Institutions	Sig.
Algebra II	94%	91%	***
Pre-calculus/Trigonometry	84%	73%	***
Calculus	40%	39%	
Probability or Statistics	34%	27%	***

Notes: Percentages are for “earning a grade of C or better.” The denominator excludes missing responses.

*** $p < .001$, proportion test

AP Classes and College or University Credit Classes

BCSSE 2013 asked respondents to indicate how many advanced placement (AP) classes and college or university courses they had completed for credit. As shown in Table 3, 88% of the 2013 Mason respondents took at least one AP class during high school, compared with 73% of their counterparts at peer institutions. The difference is most prominent at the upper end of the spectrum: 38% of the 2013 Mason respondents took 5 or more AP classes compared to 23% for national peers – a 15% percentage point difference. Similarly, 48% of Mason incoming freshmen had completed at least one university course for credits, compared with 40% at peer institutions.

Table 3. Advanced Placement (AP) and College or University Courses Taken for Credit during High School

Number of Classes	AP Classes		College or University Courses for Credit	
	Mason	Peer Institutions	Mason	Peer Institutions
0	12%	27%	53%	60%
1-2	23%	29%	27%	22%
3-4	27%	19%	8%	8%
5 or more	38%	23%	13%	9%

Reading and Writing

In BCSSE 2013, respondents were asked about their level of engagement in reading and writing activities during the last year of high school. As shown in Table 4, 42% of Mason respondents spent at least 6 hours on assigned reading compared to 32% of national peers. In terms of writing in high school, the percentages of Mason respondents completing at least 6 writing tasks of various lengths were also slightly higher than those of national peers (e.g., up to 5 pages: 50% for Mason vs. 45% for national peers – see Table 5).

Table 4. Amount of Reading during Last Year of High School

Of the time you spent preparing for class in a typical 7-day week, about how many hours were on assigned reading?	Mason				Peer Institutions			
	None	1-5 hours	6-10 hours	> 10 hours	None	1-5 hours	6-10 hours	> 10 hours
	5%	54%	25%	17%	7%	62%	21%	11%

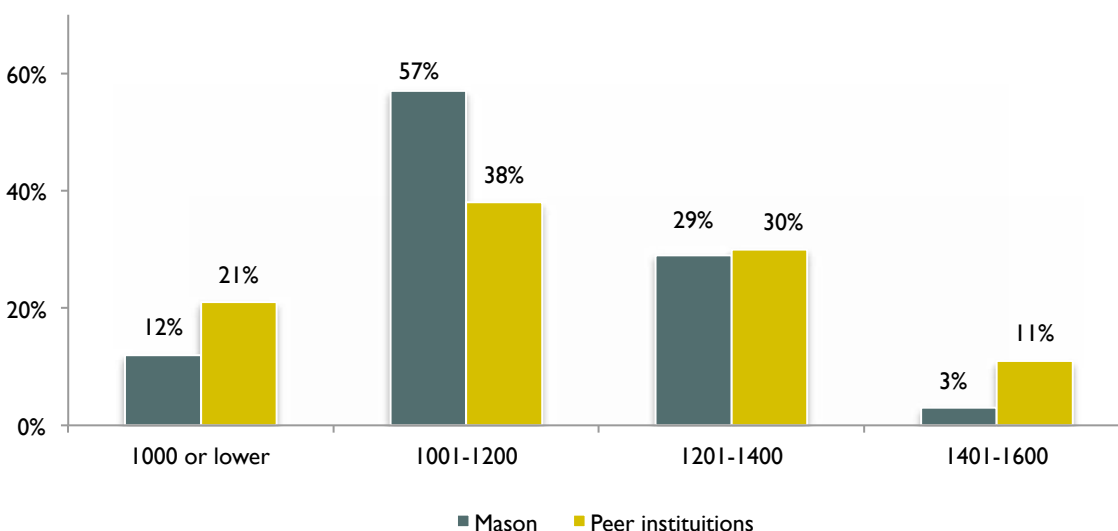
Table 5. Amount of Writing during Last Year of High School

About how many papers, reports, or other writing tasks of the following length did you complete?	Mason				Peer Institutions			
	None	1-5 papers	6-10 papers	>10 papers	None	1-5 papers	6-10 papers	>10 papers
Up to 5 pages	4%	46%	19%	31%	4%	51%	21%	24%
Between 6 and 10 pages	25%	65%	7%	3%	27%	65%	5%	1%
11 pages or more	60%	37%	2%	2%	67%	31%	1%	0%

SAT/ACT Scores

Figure 1 shows the distribution of SAT composite scores at Mason and peer institutions. Over half of the Mason students scored between 1001 and 1200. Only 32% of Mason freshmen scored above 1200, compared with 41% at peer institutions.

Figure 1. SAT Composite Score¹



¹The scores for Mason are based on institutional data whereas scores for peer institutions are based on self-report data provided by BCSSE. The maximum SAT composite score is 1600.

Mason as the Institution of Choice

BCSSE 2013 asked respondents to indicate the ranking of choice for the college they were about to enter. Table 6 shows that Mason was the first choice among 59% of Mason freshmen in 2013, While the figure has increased by eight percentage points since 2003, it is lower than the numbers for Mason in 2005 and national peers in 2013 (63% and 65%, respectively).

Table 6. Choice of Institution

Choice	Mason			Peer Institutions
	2003 ¹	2005 ¹	2013	2013
First	51%	63%	59%	65%
Second	31%	26%	28%	24%
Third	18% ²	11% ²	9%	7%
Fourth	N/A	N/A	1%	2%
Fifth or lower	N/A	N/A	3%	2%

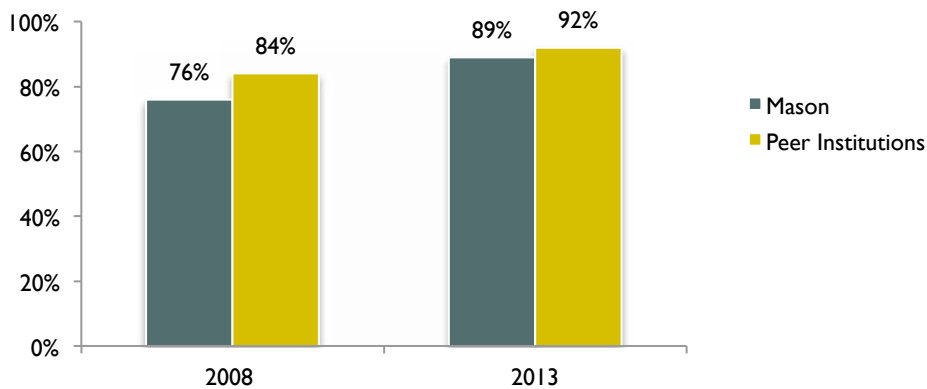
¹ Percentages for 2003 and 2005 are from CIRP Freshman Survey and are based on the same definition as BCSSE.

² Percentages are for "Third or lower," a response option on the CIRP Freshman Survey.

Academic Aspiration

As an assessment of their future plans, BCSSE asked respondents to indicate whether they intend to graduate from the college they were about to enter. As shown in Figure 2, nearly 90% of the 2013 Mason freshmen reported that they expect to graduate from Mason, a significantly higher rate compared to 76% in 2008 ($p < .001$, proportion test), and just 3 percentage points behind national peers.

Figure 2. Percent of Students Who Intend to Graduate from Their Institution



ANALYSIS OF BCSSE SCALES

This section compares Mason 2013 freshmen with their national peers on BCSSE scales and items associated with each scale. Scale score comparisons are presented first, followed by item-level comparison within each scale.

BCSSE Scales

BCSSE scales are intended to provide a framework to organize the information collected to better understand the characteristics of incoming freshmen and develop and implement effective services and programs to address their needs. The scales are listed below. See Appendix C for a detailed description of each scale.

- Quantitative Reasoning (QR)
- Learning Strategies (LS)
- Collaborative Learning (CL)
- Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)
- Interaction with Diverse Others (IDO)
- Expected Academic Perseverance (EAP)
- Expected Academic Difficulty (EAD)
- Perceived Academic Preparation (PAP)
- Importance of Campus Environment (ICE)

Scale Score Comparison

Scale scores for Mason and other institutions are presented in Table 7. Although there are differences between Mason and national peers on these scales, the most striking is the difference on *Interaction with Diverse Others*. On each of the four items that make up this scale, Mason students are significantly more likely to *expect to have discussions with people different than themselves*. This is the only scale for which a score over 50 was achieved. Other significant differences between Mason and peers can be found on items within each scale.

Table 7. BCSSE 2013 Scale Scores Comparison

BCSSE Scales	Mason (n=1,435)¹	Peer Institutions (n=25,247)²
Quantitative Reasoning	32.94	31.96
Learning Strategies	40.36	38.19
Collaborative Learning	37.86	38.56
Student-Faculty Interaction	34.48	34.20
Interaction with Diverse Others	50.18	45.15
Expected Academic Perseverance	44.90	44.24
Expected Academic Difficulty	29.41	29.08
Perceived Academic Preparation	45.68	45.15
Importance of Campus Environment	47.40	46.40

Note: The scale scores are based on a 60-point scale.

¹The number and means for Mason are based on enrolled respondents without duplicates.

²Mean scale scores for peer institutions are based on a standard report provided by BCSSE. No statistical tests were conducted on scale scores because raw data from other institutions are not available.

Item Analysis by Scales

Quantitative Reasoning – High School Academic Engagement

Quantitative Reasoning, a new scale starting in 2013, comprises three items assessing respondents' level of engagement with analysis and numerical information during the last year of high school on a 4-point scale (1=Never to 4=Very often). As shown in Table 8, Mason freshmen reported using quantitative reasoning in thinking and learning more often during high school than national peers.

Table 8. Quantitative Reasoning during Last Year of High School

<i>About how often did you do the following?</i>	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
Reached conclusions based on your own analysis of numerical information	69%	66%	+3%	*
Used numerical information to examine a real world problem or issue	51%	47%	+4%	**
Evaluated what others have concluded from numerical information	48%	45%	+3%	*

Note: Percentages are for “often” and “very often” combined.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, proportion test

Learning Strategies – High School Academic Engagement

In *Learning Strategies*, a new scale starting in 2013, respondents were asked to report how often, on a 4-point scale (1=Never to 4=Very Often), they used strategies to enhance learning as measured by three items during the last year of high school. Table 9 shows that, while the majority of respondents at Mason and peer institutions reported using recommended strategies to enhance learning, the percentages were significantly higher for Mason.

Table 9. Using Learning Strategies during Last Year of High School

<i>About how often did you do the following?</i>	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
Identified key information	85%	82%	+3%	**
Reviewed notes	66%	59%	+7%	***
Summarized course materials	63%	59%	+4%	**

Note: Percentages are for “often” and “very often” combined.

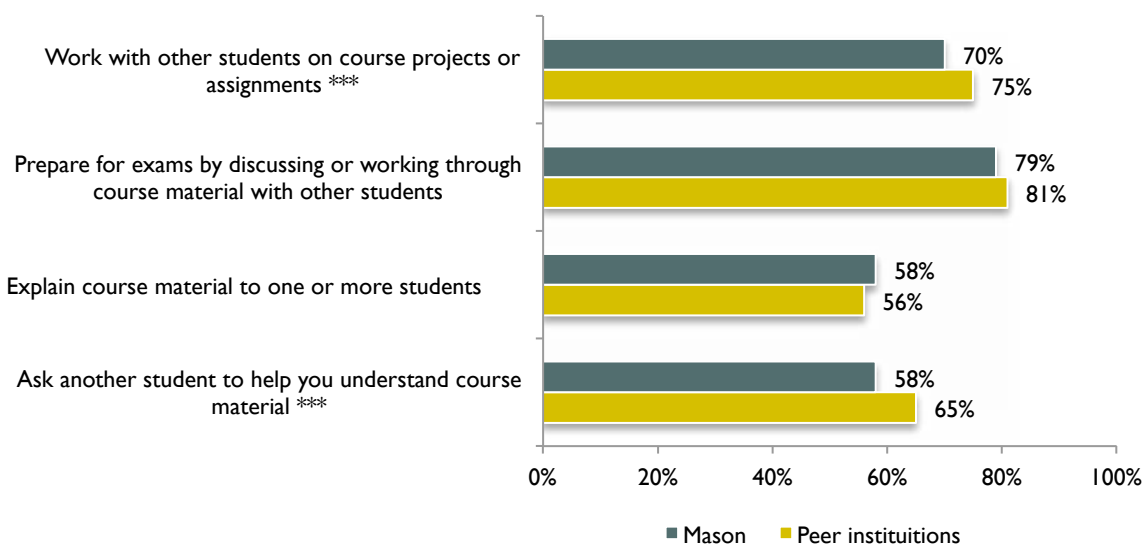
** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, proportion test

Collaborative Learning – Expected College Academic Engagement

In *Collaborative Learning*, another new scale introduced in 2013, respondents were asked to indicate how often, on a 4-point scale (1=Never to 4=Very Often), they expect to engage in each of four items pertaining to working with other students on course work or assignments during the first year in college. Figure 3 shows that Mason students trail behind national peers on expected *collaboration with other students on course projects/assignments* (70% vs. 75%) and *asking other students for help to understand course material* (58% vs. 65%).

Figure 3. Expected Collaborative Learning in the Coming School Year

About how often do you expect to do the following?



Note: Percentages are for “often” and “very often” combined.
 *** $p < .001$, proportion test

Student-Faculty Interaction - Expected College Academic Engagement

In the *Student-Faculty Interaction* scale, students were asked to indicate how often they expect to interact with faculty during the freshman year on a 4-point scale (1=Never to 4=Very often) as measured by four items. As shown in Table 10, Mason freshmen are comparable with national peers on all measures except one: 56% of Mason students expect to *discuss academic performance* often or very often with faculty, compared to 60% at peer institutions.

Table 10. Expected Student-Faculty Interactions in the Coming School Year

About how often do you expect to do each of the following?	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference in % (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
Talk about career plans	63%	61%	+2%	
Work on activities other than coursework	48%	47%	+1%	
Discuss academic performance	56%	60%	-4%	**
Discuss course topics, ideas, or concepts outside of class	51%	53%	-2%	

Note: Percentages are for “often” and “very often” combined.
 ** $p < .01$, proportion test

Interaction with Diverse Others - Expected College Social Engagement

Interaction with Diverse Others is a new scale though the concept has been addressed previously with different items. Using four items, BCSSE 2013 asks students to indicate how often they expect to have discussions with people who are different from them on a 4-point scale (1=Never to 4=Very often). Results in Table 11 show that Mason freshmen surpassed their national peers on all four measures of expected diverse experiences.

Table 11. Expected Interaction with Diverse Others in the Coming School Year

About how often do you expect to have discussions with people from the following groups?	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
Different race/ethnicity	94%	85%	+9%	***
Different economic background	92%	87%	+5%	***
Different religious beliefs	90%	82%	+8%	***
Different political views	88%	82%	+6%	***

Note: Percentages are for “often” and “very often” combined.

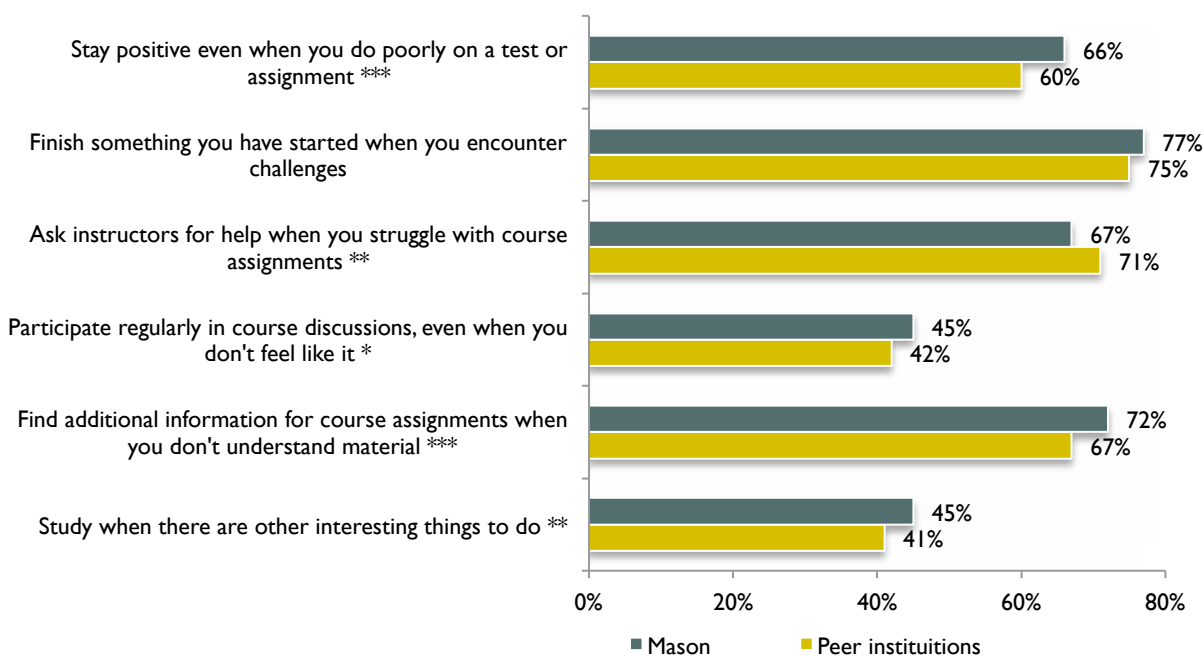
*** $p < .001$, proportion test

Expected Academic Perseverance

In the *Expected Academic Perseverance* scale, students were asked how certain they were that they would stay on task and persist when encountering various challenging situations as described by six items. Students were asked to rate their level of certainty on a 6-point scale (1 = Not at all certain to 6 = Very certain). Figure 4 shows the percentage of students marking 5 or 6 for each item. Mason freshmen were significantly more likely to have expectations of perseverance compared to peers on four of the six items.

Figure 4. Percent of Students with High Levels of Academic Perseverance

During the coming school year, how certain are you that you will do the following?



Note: Percentages are for “5” and “6” combined on a 6-point scale (1 = Not at all certain to 6 = Very certain).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, proportion test

Expected Academic Difficulty

In the *Expected Academic Difficulty* scale, students were asked to rate, on a 6-point scale (1 = Not at all difficult to 6 = Very difficult), how difficult it is to learn course material, manage time, get help with school work, and interact with faculty. Table 12 shows the percentage of students marking 5 or 6 on the scale for each item. Results show that *managing time* is a major concern among nearly half of the respondents, more so at peer institutions than at Mason. On the other hand, more Mason freshmen anticipate difficulty in *getting help with school work* and *interacting with faculty* than national peers even though these were concerns among a relatively small percentage of Mason students (12% and 13% respectively).

Table 12. Percent of Students Anticipating Academic Difficulty

During the coming school year, how difficult do you expect the following to be?	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
Learning course material	27%	30%	-3%	*
Managing time	46%	49%	-3%	*
Getting help with school work	12%	6%	+6%	***
Interacting with faculty	13%	9%	+4%	***

Note: Percentages are for "5" and "6" combined on a 6-point scale (1=Not at all certain to 6=Very certain).

* $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$, proportion test

Perceived Academic Preparation

To assess preparedness for college, BCSSE asked respondents to evaluate how prepared they were in seven competency areas on a 6-point scale (1=Not at all prepared to 6=Very prepared): writing, speaking, critical thinking, quantitative skills, teamwork, IT skills, and self-learning. Table 13 shows the percentages of students marking 5 and 6 for each item. Mason freshmen are much like their peers in their perception of their academic preparation. However, in three areas, they are even more likely to feel prepared: *working effectively with others*, *using computing and information technology*, and *learning effectively on their own*.

Table 13. Perceived Academic Preparation

How prepared are you to do the following in your academic work at this institution?	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
Write clearly and effectively	63%	62%	+1%	
Speak clearly and effectively	59%	59%	0%	
Think critically and analytically	68%	67%	+1%	
Analyze numerical and statistical information	51%	51%	0%	
Work effectively with others	78%	75%	+3%	*
Use computing and information technology	65%	61%	+4%	**
Learn effectively on your own	67%	64%	+3%	*

Note: Percentages are for "5" and "6" combined on a 6-point scale (1=Not at all prepared to 6=Very prepared).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, proportion test

Importance of Campus Environment

Importance of Campus Environment is a composite indicator of what matters most to freshmen in their college experience and environment. Students were asked to rate how important they felt about different aspects of college environment on a 6-point scale (1=Not at all important to 6=Very important). Table 14 shows the percentage of students marking 5 or 6 on each item. Major findings include the following:

- Similar to the findings regarding the *Interactions with Diverse Others* scale, a higher percentage of Mason freshmen find it important to have *opportunities to interact with students of different backgrounds* than national peers (68% vs. 61%).
- Mason freshmen attach most importance to *support that would help them succeed academically* (88%) – more so than their national peers.
- Like their peers, nearly three-fourths of Mason freshmen place high importance on *opportunities to attend campus activities* and *to be involved socially*.

Table 14. Importance of Campus Environment

<i>How important is it to you that your institution provides each of the following?</i>	Mason	Peer Institutions	Difference (Mason-Peers)	Sig.
A challenging academic experience	61%	57%	+4%	**
Support to help students succeed academically	88%	84%	+4%	***
Opportunities to interact with students of different backgrounds	68%	61%	+7%	***
Help managing non-academic responsibilities	52%	51%	+1%	
Opportunities to be involved socially	71%	70%	+1%	
Opportunities to attend campus activities and events	74%	72%	+2%	
Learning support services	72%	72%	0%	

Note: Percentages are for “5” and “6” combined on a 6-point scale (1=Not important to 6=Very important)

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, proportion test

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES ON SPECIAL TOPICS

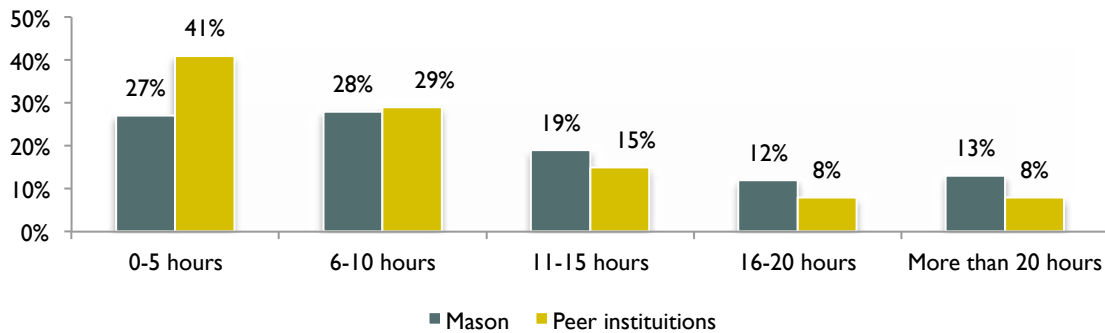
This section provides analysis results on time allocation and the financial condition of students. Reference to findings from 2008 is noted where appropriate.

Time Allocation

Study Hours in High School

Compared with national peers, Mason respondents spent more time preparing for classes in high school. As shown in Figure 5, 44% of Mason 2013 incoming freshmen spent 11 or more hours per week preparing for classes (studying, reading, doing homework, etc.) during the last year of high school compared with 31% of national peers. A similar pattern of difference was reported in 2008.

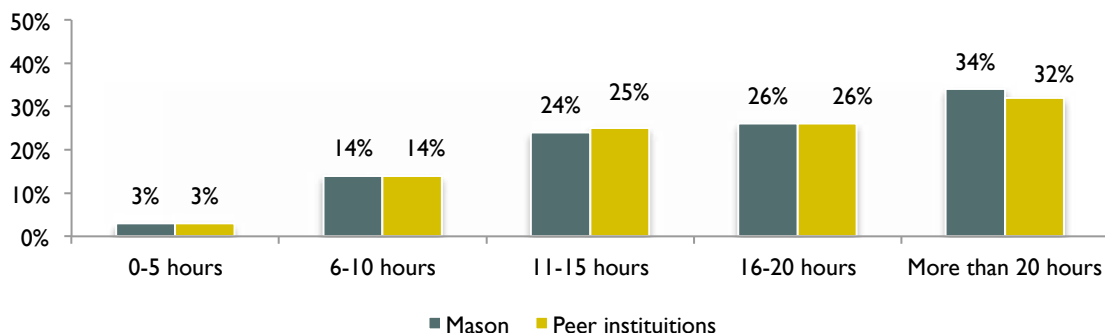
Figure 5. Actual Hours Spent Preparing for Classes during Last Year of High School



Study Hours in College

Freshmen expect to spend more time preparing for classes during freshman year than they did in high school. As shown in Figure 6, over 80% of 2013 incoming freshmen, at Mason and peer institutions alike, expect to spend 11 or more hours per week preparing for classes. The trend has been consistent since 2008.

Figure 6. Expected Hours to be Spent Preparing for Classes during Freshman Year



Work for Pay

Table 15 compares actual hours working for pay during the last year of high school and expected hours in college. Freshmen spent less time working during high school than they expect to in college: 51% of Mason respondents did not work the last year in high school; in college, 25% of Mason respondents do not expect to work in the first year. However, nearly two-thirds of Mason freshmen expect to work up to 20 hours in their first year of college and about 10% plan to work more than 20 hours, similar to the 2008 findings. While the overall pattern holds true for peer expectations for work while in college, a slightly higher percentage of freshmen at these institutions do not plan to work during the freshman year (28% vs. 25% for peers and Mason, respectively).

Table 15. Hours Working for Pay

<i>Hours per Week</i>	Mason		Peer Institutions	
	High School (last year)	College (expected)	High School (last year)	College (expected)
0	51%	25%	40%	28%
1-10	23%	32%	23%	33%
11-20	17%	32%	22%	31%
More than 20 hours	10%	10%	14%	8%

Co-Curricular Activities

Participation in co-curricular activities such as arts, clubs, and athletics is an important part of the college experience and has a positive effect on social integration on campus. Both Mason freshmen and their national peers plan to be more involved in activities in college than they were in their last year of high school. Nonetheless, 21% of Mason students and 24% of peers expect to spend a maximum of 5 hours per week on activities.

Table 16. Hours Participating in Co-Curricular Activities

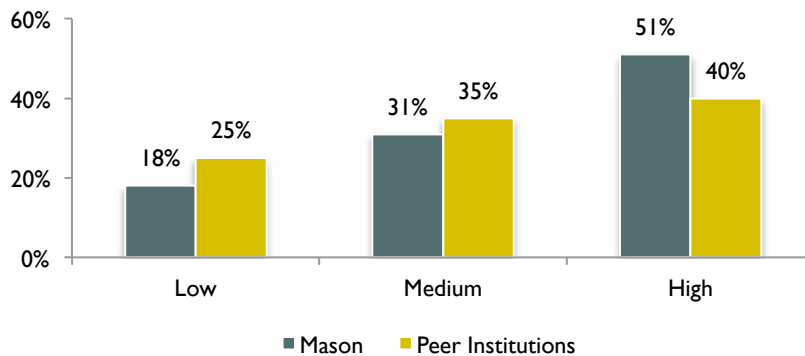
<i>Hours per Week</i>	Mason		Peer Institutions	
	High School (last year)	College (expected)	High School (last year)	College (expected)
0-5	37%	21%	31%	24%
6-10	19%	30%	21%	32%
11-15	17%	22%	20%	23%
16-20	12%	15%	14%	12%
More than 20 hours	15%	12%	15%	9%

Student Finances

Financial Concerns

BCSSE respondents were asked to estimate the level of difficulty in paying college expenses during the first year in college on a 6-point scale (1=Not at all difficult to 6=Very difficult). Figure 7 shows the results for this item on a collapsed scale with three levels of difficulty: low (1-2), medium (3-4), and high (5-6). Mason freshmen express more concern about paying for college expenses than national peers: 51% of Mason freshmen foresee a high level of difficulty in paying for college compared to 40% at peer institutions. A similar difference was also noted in 2008 (high level of concern: 48% vs. 38% for Mason and peer institutions, respectively).

Figure 7. Level of Difficulty in Paying for College Expenses



Funding Sources for College Education

BCSSE identifies four main funding sources and asks respondents to indicate whether they would be using these sources to cover education expenses: (a) parents/relatives, (b) student loans, (c) scholarships or grants, and (d) work or personal savings. As seen in Table 17, parents/relatives, followed by job/personal savings, was the primary source of college funding for Mason freshmen in 2013. While Mason students' reliance on parents/relatives support to cover college expenses exceeds significantly that of national peers, they are far less likely to identify financial support from grants/scholarships as a funding source – these differences were also true in 2008.

Table 17. Funding Sources for College Expenses

Funding Sources	Mason	Peer Institutions	Sig.
Parents or relatives	93%	90%	**
Loans	63%	62%	
Grants or scholarships	72%	86%	***
Job or personal savings	77%	75%	

Note: Percentages are for “using” specified funding sources. The denominator excludes “not sure” responses.

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, proportion test

APPENDIX A: Peer Institutions 2013

Carnegie Classification RU/VH

Georgia Institute of Technology

Montana State University

The University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Carnegie Classification RU/H

Auburn University

Clark University

*George Mason University**

Kent State University

University of Akron

University of New Orleans

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

University of Vermont

Carnegie Classification DRU

Pace University

Pepperdine University

University of St. Thomas

RU/VH = Research University (very high research activity)

RU/H = Research University (high research activity)

DRU = Doctoral/Research University

**Survey results of peer institutions used in this report include data from Mason because BCSSE does not provide customized peer analysis.*

APPENDIX B: BCSSE 2013 Self-Reported Respondent Characteristics¹

	Mason ²		Peer Institutions	
	Count	%	Count	%
Number of Surveys Used for Analysis	1,435	100%	25,247	100%
Mode of Completion				
Paper	0	0%	14,644	58%
Web	1,435	100%	10,603	42%
When Student Completed BCSSE				
Prior to the start of fall term classes	1,419	99%	23,589	94%
During the first week of fall term classes	16	1%	642	3%
After the first week of fall term classes	0	0%	762	3%
<hr/>				
Student Characteristics				
Enrollment Status				
Full-time	1,194	99%	23,861	99%
Less than full-time	12	1%	229	1%
Gender				
Female	732	61%	13,508	56%
Male	473	39%	10,622	44%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian or Alaska Native	29	3%	597	3%
Asian	235	20%	1,960	8%
Black or African American	215	19%	2,650	11%
Hispanic or Latino	140	12%	1,425	6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	15	1%	160	1%
White	645	56%	18,408	78%
Other	60	5%	484	2%
I prefer not to respond	47	4%	643	6%
High School Graduation Year				
2010 or earlier	3	<1%	188	1%
2011	4	<1%	132	1%
2012	13	1%	520	2%
2013	1400	99%	24,258	97%
First-Generation Status³				
Yes	487	40%	10,101	42%
No	720	60%	13,886	58%
International or Foreign National Student				
Yes	82	7%	990	4%
No	1,118	93%	23,027	96%

¹Based on self-reported data. Numbers do not always add up to the total number of surveys completed due to missing data.

²Duplicate cases and respondents who were not enrolled at Mason in fall 2013 were excluded.

³First-generation is defined as one with neither parent (or those who raised him/her) having completed a 4-year college degree.

APPENDIX C: BCSSE Scale Descriptions

BCSSE scales are intended to provide a framework to organize the information collected to better understand the characteristics of incoming freshmen and develop and implement effective services and programs to address their needs.

- 1) **Quantitative Reasoning (QR)** consists of three items related to student engagement with analysis and numerical information during the last year of high school. The items include reaching conclusions based on student analysis of numerical information, using numerical information to examine issues or problems, and evaluating what others have concluded from numerical information.
- 2) **Learning Strategies (LS)** consists of three items related to student use of strategies to enhance learning during the last year of high school. Specific strategies include identifying key information from reading assignments, reviewing notes after class, and summarizing course materials.
- 3) **Collaborative Learning (CL)** consists of four items related to students' expectation to interact and collaborate with their peers in understanding course materials, working on assignments or projects, and preparing for exams during the first year of college.
- 4) **Student-Faculty Interaction (SFI)** consists of four items addressing students' expectation to interact with faculty inside or outside of class during the first year of college. Interactions may pertain to academic performance, course materials, or career plans, and may involve work with faculty on activities beyond coursework.
- 5) **Interaction with Diverse Others (IDO)** consists of four items measuring students' expectation to interact with peers who are different from themselves in race/ethnicity, economic situation, religious beliefs, or political points of view during the first year of college.
- 6) **Expected Academic Perseverance (EAP)** consists of six items related to the level of persistence that students have in case they face challenges or academic adversity during the first year of college.
- 7) **Expected Academic Difficulty (EAD)** consists of four items related to the level of difficulty students expect to experience in academic activities during the first year of college. Difficulty may spring from course materials, time management, getting help with schoolwork, or interaction with faculty.
- 8) **Perceived Academic Preparation (PAP)** consists of seven items that ask students to assess their preparedness in various competency areas including writing, speaking, critical thinking, quantitative skills, computer and IT skills, teamwork, and self-learning during first year of college.
- 9) **Importance of Campus Environment (ICE)** consists of seven items that measure student's perception of importance of different aspects of campus support and environment. These aspects pertain to challenging academic experience, support for academics and non-academic responsibilities, opportunities for interaction with diverse others and for attending campus events and activities.

Office of Institutional Assessment

George Mason University

3600 University Hall • MS3D2 • 703-993-8834 • assessment@gmu.edu • assessment.gmu.edu

Karen Gentemann

Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness

genteman@gmu.edu

703.993.8836

Stephanie Hazel

Associate Director

shazel@gmu.edu

703.993.5106

Sarah Pérez-Kriz

Associate Director

skriz@gmu.edu

703.993.8616

Zhicheng Zhang

Associate Director

zzhang11@gmu.edu

703.993.5104

Nicole Long

Assessment Analyst

nlong3@gmu.edu

703.993.4267

Rawa Jassem

Applications Analyst & Web Developer

rjassem1@gmu.edu

703.993.8876

Karen Manley

Administrative & Communications Coordinator

kmanley@gmu.edu

703.993.8834