



CAMPUS
ASSESSMENT
WORKING GROUP

**A Profile of Beginning Students:
2007**

**By members of the
Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG)
Beginnings Subgroup**



CAWG

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Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	1
Special Undergraduate Experiences	1
Student Involvement.....	1
Admissions	1
Learning Outcomes.....	1
Weekly Activities	1
Finances.....	2
Adjustment	2
Diversity	2
Academics	2
Responsibility	2
Background.....	3
The Survey.....	3
Methodology.....	3
Survey respondents.....	3
Findings	5
Special Undergraduate Experiences	5
Student Involvement in Co-Curricular Experiences.....	7
Admissions	8
Learning Outcomes.....	9
Weekly Activities	11
Finances.....	12
Adjustment	12
Diversity	13
Freshmen Racial Identity/Attitudes about Diversity	13
Perception of UM’s Diversity Climate.....	15
Academics	16
Responsibility	17
Limitations of the Report.....	18
Appendix A: Beginning Student Survey 2007.....	19
Appendix B: Campus Assessment Working Group.....	23
Table 1: Respondent demographics of the 2007 Beginning Student Survey.....	4
Table 2: Respondent familiarity with the President’s Promise Initiative opportunities	5
Table 3: Respondent interest in President’s Promise Initiative opportunities	6
Table 4: Respondent perceived benefits of participation in President’s Promise Initiative opportunities....	7
Table 5: Respondent participation in UM co-curricular activities.....	8
Table 6: Reasons for being less involved than students would like.....	8
Table 7: Factors contributing to decision to attend UM	9
Table 8: Self-rated learning outcome skills and abilities of freshmen.....	10
Table 9: Respondent weekly activities.....	11
Table 10: Respondent self-identified reason for working.....	11
Table 11. Finances: Longitudinal analysis.....	12

Table 12: Respondent attitudes towards UM.....	13
Table 13: Respondent personal racial identity	14
Table 14: Attitudes of prejudice.....	14
Table 15: Socialization with students not of own race	14
Table 16: Study or coursework shared with students not of own race.....	15
Table 17: Racial/ethnic composition of home compared to UM	15
Table 18: Student Learning About Diversity	16
Table 19: Perception of UM's support of diversity	16
Table 20: Respondent contact with instructional staff outside of class	17
Table 21: Respondent perception of English 101	17
Table 22: Student perceptions of their responsibilities versus those of the University	18

Executive Summary

The Beginning Student Survey (BSS) is a yearly survey administered to first-time students directly admitted to the University of Maryland from high school. The purpose of the survey is to learn about the beginning student experience, to collect baseline data for future surveys, and to understand the perspectives of beginning students on University initiatives. In 2007, the survey was designed to collect data on topics such as the President's Promise Initiative (special undergraduate experiences such as internships, study abroad, living learning programs, undergraduate research experiences), co-curricular involvement, admissions/reasons for attending UM, learning outcomes, weekly activities, finances, adjustment, diversity, academics, and students' attribution of responsibility. The purpose of this report is to provide a profile of beginning student experiences (first-time freshman) as they enter the University. The following findings are presented in more detail in the report:

Special undergraduate experiences: The 2007 Beginning Student Survey included four questions to gain a better understanding of how freshmen in 2007 related to the special undergraduate experiences offered at UM. According to the survey, just over half of the respondents were aware of what the President's Promise Initiative is and a majority of respondents were somewhat familiar with many of the opportunities included in the Initiative. Respondents were the most interested in participating in internships and international experiences. Students perceived that participation in President's Promise Initiative opportunities had a wide range of benefits. The most often selected benefit was "to build skills for my intended career."

Student involvement: The BSS asked respondents about their involvement in various co-curricular activities as well as their satisfaction with their involvement level. The activities with the highest percentage of involvement include: residence hall activities, other student group activities, and movie or theater/music performance. More than half of respondents were less involved than they would like to be. The three most frequently selected barriers to involvement were: they were planning to get involved later, not having found a good fit yet, and having to study.

Admissions: In order to better understand the factors involved in recruitment of the freshman class, the BSS 2007 asked respondents about their decision to attend UM. More than half of respondents stated that UM was their first choice. Respondents were also asked about the factors that most contributed to their decision to attend UM. The three factors that were most frequently selected as the top factor in a respondent's decision to attend UM were the cost of attendance, reputation of the University in general, and reputation of a particular academic discipline/major.

Learning outcomes: Questions on learning outcomes were included in the 2007 Beginning Student Survey as part of an ongoing initiative to assess the University's progress toward elevating the quality of undergraduate education. Respondents were asked to assess their abilities on ten skills and abilities. Generally, freshmen seem to be confident in their skills and abilities. For each of the ten learning outcome areas, the majority of respondents rated themselves as at least adequate. The learning outcome areas where respondents were least confident included framing a research question, speaking effectively, and organizational/time management skills.

Weekly activities: In order to gain a better understanding of how freshmen spend their time, the BSS 2007 asked respondents about their weekly activities. Results indicated that of the activities listed, respondents spent the most time preparing for class or studying outside of the classroom. Most respondents also participated in at least one hour of organized student activities per week. A vast majority of students did not spend time in an average week working at a job on-campus or off-campus. It appears

that most respondents who worked did so for personal expenses, extra spending money, or to gain work experience.

Finances: The BSS included two questions about student finances. A majority of freshmen in 2007 believed that they will be able to afford college in the short term, but more than 40% agreed that they were concerned that they would ultimately be able to finance their college education.

Adjustment: Questions about student's initial adjustment to UM were included on the survey. Overall, it appears that most freshmen perceived that they are adjusting well to both the academic and social aspects of college. Respondents were also asked a number of questions to determine their overall satisfaction levels with UM. It appears that respondents were generally satisfied with their experience at the University. A majority of respondents felt proud to be students at UM, like being at the institution, and would have recommended UM to others. A strong majority of respondents who took the survey indicated that they intended to enroll at UM the following semester and disagreed that they often think about changing universities.

Diversity: The 2007 BSS included questions about race/ethnicity and campus climate. To better understand freshmen perspectives on their own racial identity and on diversity more generally, respondents were asked about their personal racial identity, attitudes of prejudice, socialization/coursework with students not of their own race, and the racial composition of their home environment. Freshmen seem to place importance on their racial background /identity and disagreed with the concept that prejudice exists against certain groups. A majority of respondents perceive UM to be more diverse than their home environment. Generally, respondents agreed that UM encourages diversity and supports ethnically diverse students. More than half of freshmen believe that UM facilitates learning on diverse topics or from diverse perspectives. Opinions about diversity and the climate at UM vary by race.

Academics: A few questions on the BSS focused on respondents' academic experiences. Results showed that most 2007 freshmen appeared to be satisfied with their current major and had identified a career direction or interest. Many respondents appeared to be knowledgeable about how to take advantage of academic resources. A majority knew how to contact an academic advisor. About half have met with an instructor and more than a third have met with a TA outside of class.

Responsibility: Freshmen were asked about their perceptions of their level of responsibility versus that of the University's in ensuring that they learn about key aspects of University life. Several trends emerged regarding the degree of responsibility students attributed to themselves versus UM. A greater percentage of students agreed that the University, as opposed to students themselves, was responsible for locating housing and teaching students about campus resources. On the other hand, students appeared to attribute greater responsibility to themselves than UM for developing their academic plans and getting involved on campus. The level of responsibility was less skewed for learning about financial aid topics, with 75% agreeing it was the student's responsibility and 87% agreeing it was UM's.

Background

The Survey

The Beginning Student Survey (BSS) is an annual survey administered to first-time students directly admitted to the University of Maryland from high school. The purpose of the survey is to learn about the beginning student experience, to collect baseline data for future surveys, and understand the perspectives of beginning students on University initiatives. In 2007 the survey was designed to collect data on topics such as the President's Promise Initiative (special undergraduate experiences such as internships, study abroad, living-learning programs, undergraduate research experiences), co-curricular involvement, admissions/reasons for attending UM, learning outcomes, weekly activities, finances, adjustment, diversity, academics, and responsibility. A copy of the surveys can be found in Appendix A.

Methodology

The administration of the survey was achieved through the assistance of various instructors who provided class time in Fall 2007. Surveys were administered in the following courses: ENGL101, UNIV100, BSOS188A/188C, HONR100/HONR100G, GEMS100, and ANSC101. Surveys were also distributed through the Academic Achievement Programs/IED and the Freshmen Connection program.

Students responded directly on printed forms designed for optical scanning. An instruction sheet was provided for instructors and administrators to read, or to be included in a letter that accompanied the survey. Previous years' administrations indicated 20 minutes were required for the survey to be completed.

The survey provided a space for respondents to write their university identification number. When voluntarily provided, it was used to link with official University records to include demographic information in the analysis.

In any given year about 3,000-3,200 students are registered for the courses used in the survey administration. In 2007, 1,988 surveys were returned from these courses and 694 of those surveys were removed because they did not include a university identification number (or the number did not match official records), did not sign the consent form, were a duplicate survey, or were less than 18 years old. Freshmen Connection students were also excluded to allow for longitudinal comparisons with previous BSS analyses. For the remaining respondents, 1,074 of those surveys were first-time students, full time students and were included in this analysis. For each variable there were less than 5% missing responses (4-34 missing on any given item) unless indicated otherwise.

Unless otherwise noted, summaries presented in this report are descriptive in nature and do not indicate that a relevant statistical hypothesis test was conducted. In certain instances, the appropriate significance tests were conducted to determine differences by race, gender, or residency status. These tests were conducted based on literature, previous research, and/or hypotheses from Beginnings sub-group members that supported a potential relationship between the two variables of interest. For significance tests by race, Native American, students with unknown race, and foreign students were excluded due to the small number of respondents.

Survey respondents

The respondents to the 2007 Beginning Student Surveys represent about one-third of the incoming freshman class. As seen in Table 1, the respondents were representative by residency. Men and African

American, Hispanic, and Unknown race respondents are significantly underrepresented in the sample. Women and White and Asian respondents are significantly overrepresented. The respondents in the 2007 BSS had slightly higher SAT scores and high school GPAs when compared to all first-time freshmen. Given these differences, caution should be used with generalizing data to the entire population of first-time freshman.

Table 1: Respondent demographics of the 2007 Beginning Student Survey compared to the entire first-time freshmen population

		2007 BSS Percent N=1074	Fall 2007 First-Time Full-Time Freshmen N=4237
Race/ethnicity and citizenship	American Indian	<1	<1
	Black/African American	10	13
	Asian American	15	13
	Hispanic	6	7
	White	64	60
	Unknown	3	4
	Foreign	2	1
Gender	Female	51	48
	Male	49	52
Residency Classification	In-state student	65	65
	Out-of-state student	35	35
Other Demographic Information	SAT Score 25 th Percentile	1230	1210
	SAT Score 75 th Percentile	1390	1360
	High School Grade Point Average	4.02	3.90

Findings

This analysis provides data on ten areas covered in the 2007 Beginning Student Survey. These areas include the President’s Promise Initiative/special undergraduate experiences, co-curricular involvement, admissions/reasons for attending UM, learning outcomes, weekly activities, finances, adjustment, diversity, academics, and responsibility. Each of these topics is covered in this report to provide a better understanding of beginning students entering UM in 2007.

Special Undergraduate Experiences

In 2005, the president of the University, Dr. C. D. Mote Jr., established a new program at the University called the President’s Promise Initiative. The initiative was designed to connect undergraduate students with special experiences that would enhance their academic experience. The promise states that “every student who enters the University of Maryland . . . shall have the chance to engage in a special experience that complements the academic curriculum and offers the opportunity for extraordinary personal growth.” Such programs include international experiences, internships, community service-learning, research, learning communities, leadership, and living-learning programs.

The 2007 Beginning Student Survey included four questions to gain a better understanding of how freshmen related to the special undergraduate experiences offered at UM. Two questions assessed the level of familiarity with the President’s Promise Initiative and each type of special undergraduate experience. A third question determined the level of interest for participating in each type of experience. The last question asked respondents what they perceived as the benefits of participating in each of these experiences.

According to the survey, a little more than half (52%) of the respondents were aware of the President’s Promise Initiative. Another fifth of respondents (20%) were unsure about whether they were aware of the Initiative. Table 2 highlights respondents’ level of familiarity with the various opportunities that are part of the President’s Promise Initiative. The highest percentage of responses fell in the “somewhat familiar” category, with responses ranging from 38% to 67% across the opportunities. A third or more of respondents reported being not at all familiar with almost all of the opportunities listed, with international experiences (19% reported not at all familiar) being the one exception. About a quarter reported being very familiar with learning communities and living-learning programs.

Table 2: Respondent familiarity with the President’s Promise Initiative Opportunities

How familiar are you with the following opportunities offered at UM?	Percent indicating:		
	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not at all familiar
International experiences	13	67	19
Internships	9	59	32
Leadership	11	54	35
Learning communities	25	43	32
Living-learning programs	27	38	35
Research	11	50	38
Service-learning experiences	9	48	43

Source: BSS 2007

Note: Some percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 3 shows the President’s Promise Initiative opportunities in which respondents would like to participate. Of the President’s Promise Initiative opportunities, respondents were the most interested in participating in internships (87% would like to participate) and international experiences (73%). Respondents were least interested in living-learning programs (27% reported having no interest in participating) and learning communities (26%). This may be due to the perception that respondents who are not already participating in these two opportunities cannot get involved later on. These two opportunities also have two of the three highest percentages of students who responded “I do not have enough information to decide” (33 and 37% respectively).

Table 3: Respondent interest in President’s Promise Initiative Opportunities

Please rate your interest in participating in the following opportunities before graduating from UM?	Percent indicating:			
	I am currently participating	I would like to participate	I have no interest in participating	I do not have enough information to decide
International experiences	1	73	13	13
Internships(#)	2	87	2	9
Leadership*	7	55	15	23
Learning communities*	18	19	26	37
Living-learning programs*	25	15	27	33
Research*	4	53	20	23
Service-learning experiences*	8	38	21	33

Source: BSS 2007

* Significant difference by race and/or gender

(#) Data would not allow for significance test to be run on this variable.

To determine whether there were differences by race and gender, significance tests were conducted. Generally, White respondents seem less interested than African American and Asian American respondents in participating in the various opportunities. No consistent racial group patterns emerged for Hispanic students. Men seem less interested than women in several of the opportunities, with a few exceptions. Specifically, men expressed greater interest than women in research opportunities, and there were no gender differences for leadership opportunities.

- **Leadership:** African American respondents were underrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating.” Asian American respondents were overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” White respondents were overrepresented in selecting that they “have no interest in participating” and underrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.”
- **Learning communities:** African American respondents were overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Asian American respondents were underrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating” and “I am currently participating.” White respondents were overrepresented in selecting that they “have no interest in participating” and underrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Women were overrepresented in selecting “I am currently participating” while men were overrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating.”
- **Living-learning programs:** African American respondents were overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Asian American respondents were underrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating” and overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Hispanic respondents were underrepresented in selecting “I am currently participating.” White respondents were overrepresented in selecting that they “have no interest in participating” and underrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Women were overrepresented in selecting “I am currently participating” while men were overrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating.”

- **Research:** Asian American respondents were overrepresented in selecting “I do not have enough information to decide,” “I would like to participate,” and “I am currently participating.” Men are overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.”
- **Service-learning experiences:** African American respondents were underrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating” and overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Asian American respondents were underrepresented in selecting “I do not have enough information to decide” and overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” White respondents were overrepresented in selecting that they “have no interest in participating” and underrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Women were overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Men were overrepresented in selecting “I have no interest in participating.”
- **Internships and International experiences:** Women were overrepresented in selecting “I would like to participate.” Men were overrepresented in selecting “I do not have enough information to decide” and “I have no interest in participating.”

Respondents perceived that participation in President’s Promise Initiative opportunities had a wide range of benefits (Table 4). The most often selected benefit was “to build skills for my intended career” (87%). Even the least often selected benefit (to prepare for graduate/professional school) was perceived as beneficial by almost two-thirds of participants (63%).

Table 4: Respondent perceived benefits of participation in President’s Promise Initiative opportunities

In your opinion, what are the benefits of participating in the experiences listed above? Check all that apply. (see Table 2)	Percent
Support academic plans/curriculum	69
Explore major/career options	79
Build skills for my intended career	87
Prepare for graduate/professional school	63
Make myself more marketable to potential employers	75
Establish networking opportunities	67
Personal interest	80
Other	7

Source: BSS 2007

Student Involvement in Co-Curricular Experiences

The BSS 2007 asked respondents about their involvement in various co-curricular activities as well as their satisfaction with their involvement level. Table 5 shows respondents’ frequency of involvement in various activities at UM. The activities with the highest percentage of involvement (either “sometimes” or “very often/often”) include: residence hall activities, other student group activities, and movie or theater/music performance. The activities with the least reported participation include: organized discussions on race/ethnicity, religious services or activities, and community service activities.

Table 5: Respondent participation in UM co-curricular activities

Since the beginning of the fall semester, how often have you participated in the following activities at UM?	Percent indicating:		
	Very often/Often	Sometimes	Seldom/Never
Other student group activities	25	34	41
Residence hall activities	24	35	41
Intramural sports team or club sport	23	12	65
Movie or theater/music performance	17	28	55
Religious services or activities	17	10	73
Cultural organizations or activities	14	18	68
Fraternity or sorority events	14	20	66
Events that promote diversity	12	22	66
Community service activities	7	21	72
Organized discussion on race/ethnicity	4	9	87

Source: BSS 2007

When asked about their satisfaction with their current level of involvement more than half of respondents (57%) reported they were less involved than they would like to be. Forty-one percent were satisfied with their level of involvement, while only 2% of respondents stated that they were over-involved. Participants were then asked why they were less involved than they would like to be (Table 6). The most frequently selected reasons were: planning to get involved later, have not found a good fit yet, and have to study.

Table 6: Reasons for being less involved than students would like

If you are less involved than you would like, which of the following best describes why? (select one)	Percent
I plan to get involved later	33
I have not found a good fit yet	21
I have to study	20
I do not have time	16
I do not know how to get involved	5
I do not feel comfortable	3
I have to work	2

Source: BSS 2007

Admissions

In order to better understand the factors involved in recruitment of the freshman class, the BSS 2007 asked respondents about their decision to attend UM. Fifty-five percent of respondents stated that UM was their first choice and only 17% said that UM was their third choice or lower. Interestingly, these results are similar to the results from 10 years prior. According to the BSS 1997, 55% of respondents indicated that UM was their first choice institution and 16% indicated it was their third choice or lower. Significance tests were run to see whether there was variation by residency status. Out-of-state students were significantly overrepresented in UM having been their second choice institution, while in-state students were underrepresented in this category.

The BSS 2007 also asked respondents about the factors that most contributed to a student’s decision to attend UM (Table 7). The factors that were most frequently selected as the top factor in a respondent’s decision to attend UM were: the cost of attendance, reputation of the University in general, and reputation of a particular academic discipline/major. The following were selected most frequently as one of the top three factors: reputation of the University in general, cost of attendance, and UM being close to home, and reputation of a particular academic discipline/major.

Table 7: Factors contributing to decision to attend UM

Select the top three factors that contributed most to your decision to attend UM:	Percent indicating:	
	% ranked as top factor in decision	% ranked as top 3 factors in decision
Cost of attendance	24	52
Reputation of University in general	19	53
Reputation of a particular academic discipline/major	17	41
Close to home	11	48
Existence of a particular academic discipline/major	6	22
Geographic location (Washington DC Metro area)	6	31
Size of institution	5	31
Living and Learning Programs	3	17
Activities that complement academics	3	22
Reputation of athletic programs	3	25
Diversity of student body	2	18
Far from home	1	14

Source: BSS 2007

Note: This variable had a higher number of missing responses (approximately 90)

Additionally, if they had decided to attend UM because of that particular program/major, respondents were asked whether they are enrolled in that desired program/major. A vast majority (86%) of respondents who came to UM because of a particular program/ major were currently enrolled in their desired program or major.

Learning Outcomes

Questions on learning outcomes were included in the 2007 Beginning Student Survey as part of an ongoing initiative to assess the University’s progress toward elevating the quality of undergraduate education. Respondents were asked to assess their abilities on 10 skills and abilities (using a scale: very strong, strong, adequate, weak, and very weak). The data in this section should be used to supplement data from course evaluations and other assessments because they are self-reported perceptions from the respondents. Respondents indicating that they were “weak” in a skill, for example, could mean that they were not proficient, or that they were proficient but not confident in the use of the skill.

Generally, freshmen seemed to be confident in their skills and abilities. For each of the 10 learning outcome areas, a majority of respondents (79% or more) rated themselves as at least adequate (Table 8). More than half of respondents rated themselves as strong or very strong in five out of the ten learning outcomes (seeing relationships among ideas, using electronic resources, interpreting graphs, using quantitative methods, and writing effectively). The learning outcome areas where respondents were least confident were in framing a research question, speaking effectively, and organizational/time management skills. However, even in these areas less than one-quarter of respondents felt that their abilities were “weak” or “very weak.”

Significance tests were conducted to determine if there were differences by race. Generally, White respondents perceived they had higher skills than the self-perceptions of the other three groups. In addition, Asian American respondents perceived themselves as having higher skills than the self-perceptions of the African American and Hispanic respondents on quantitative skills. Specific racial group differences were as follows:

- **Organizational and time management:** White respondents rated themselves higher than African American and Hispanic respondents rated themselves.
 - **Seeing relationships, similarities, and differences among ideas:** White respondents rated themselves higher than Asian American respondents rated themselves.
 - **Writing effectively:** White respondents rated themselves higher than African American, Asian American, and Hispanic respondents rated themselves.
 - **Speaking effectively:** White respondents rated themselves higher than Asian American respondents rated themselves.
 - **Presenting a persuasive argument:** White respondents rated themselves higher than Asian American respondents rated themselves.
 - **Interpreting graphs, tables, and/or formulas correctly:** Asian American and White respondents rated themselves higher than African American and Hispanic respondents rated themselves.
 - **Using quantitative methods to solve problems:** Asian American and White respondents rated themselves higher than African American and Hispanic respondents rated themselves.
 - **Understanding various research designs and approaches:** Asian American and White respondents rated themselves higher than African American respondents rated themselves.
- No significant differences for:** using electronic information resources and framing a research question.

Table 8: Self-rated learning outcome skills and abilities of freshmen

How would you rate your abilities in the following areas?	Percent indicating:		
	Very strong/ Strong	Adequate	Weak/ Very weak
Seeing relationships, similarities and differences among ideas*	72	25	3
Using electronic information resources (e.g. Internet, databases, on-line journals)	65	29	6
Interpreting graphs, tables, and/or formulas correctly*	61	32	7
Using quantitative methods (e.g., algebra, statistics) to solve problems*	59	28	12
Writing effectively*	52	36	12
Presenting a persuasive argument*	50	40	10
Speaking effectively*	45	40	15
Organizational and time management skills*	43	41	16
Understanding various research designs and approaches*	41	44	15
Framing a research question	30	48	22

Source: BSS 2007

*Significant difference by race

Note: Some percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

Weekly Activities

In order to gain a better understanding of how freshmen spend their time, the BSS 2007 asked respondents about their weekly activities. Results indicate that of the activities listed, respondents spent the most time preparing for class or studying outside of the classroom (Table 9). Sixty-four percent of respondents spent at least 11 hours per week studying. Most respondents (79%) also participated in at least one hour of organized student activities per week. Lastly, a vast majority of respondents (over 90%) did not spend time in an average week working on-campus or off-campus.

Table 9: Respondent weekly activities

Please indicate how many hours per week you typically do each of the following:	Hours:				
	0 (no hours)	1-10	11-20	21-30	More than 30
Prepare for class or study outside the classroom	>1	36	42	17	5
Participate in tutoring and/or studying groups	50	47	2	1	0
Participate in organized student activities	20	64	11	3	1
Work at an on-campus jobs	93	5	2	1	>1
Work at an off-campus job	92	5	2	1	>1

Source: BSS 2007

Note: Some percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

While most respondents did not spend time working on or off campus during the week, the BSS investigated the reasons that the 7% work at an on campus job and 8% work at an off campus job. It appears that the small percentage of respondents who worked did so for personal expenses or for extra spending money. More than half of the respondents selected “personal expenses” or “extra spending money” as very important reasons for being employed (Table 10). Gaining work experience (either generally or in a field related to their career path) and paying for college were also very important reasons for more than a third of the freshmen who work.

Table 10: Respondent self-identified reason for working

How important are each of these reasons in your decision to work?	Percent indicating:		
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Pay for my college education (tuition, books)	39	27	34
Pay for personal expenses	55	30	15
Support family obligations	16	24	60
Earn extra spending money	54	34	12
Gain general work experiences	35	42	23
Gain work experience related to my future career	39	28	33
Fill open space in my weekly schedule	7	23	70

Note: Only respondents who work were asked to complete this item (N=300).

Source: BSS 2007

Finances

The BSS 2007 included two questions about student finances. The same questions were also asked on the BSS 1997. A majority of freshmen in both 2007 and 1997 believed that they would be able to afford college in the short term, but more than 40% agreed that they were concerned that they would ultimately be able to finance their college education. There were slight differences between the 1997 and 2007 respondents. When compared to the 1997 respondents, it appears that a slightly smaller proportion of 2007 respondents were able to finance their education in the short term, yet a slightly smaller proportion were concerned about their ability to finance their education in the long term (Table 11). Significance tests were conducted to determine if there were differences by race on the 2007 survey. African American respondents were significantly more concerned with their ability to finance their college education than White respondents.

Table 11. Finances: Longitudinal Analysis

	Percent indicating strongly agree/agree:	
	BSS 1997 N=1069	BSS 2007 N=1074
Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:		
I am concerned about ability to finance college education.*	42	40
I am able to afford to enroll next semester.	88	83

*Significant difference by race in 2007

Source: BSS 1997 and 2007

Adjustment

Because the Beginning Student Survey is given to students eight weeks into the semester, the BSS 2007 asked questions about student's initial adjustment to UM.

Overall, it appears that most freshmen perceived that they were adjusting well to both the academic and social aspects of college. Slightly more than half indicated that both their academic and social adjustment had been about the same as they had expected. For both social and academic adjustment, about a quarter of respondents indicated that their adjustment was easier than expected and a quarter found that it was more difficult than they expected. Additionally, 77% agreed or strongly agreed that they are adjusting to the academic work of college. Related to social adjustment, 91% agreed or strongly agreed that they had made campus friends and 72% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt as though they were a part of the UM community.

Respondents were asked a number of questions to determine their overall satisfaction levels with UM. It appears that respondents were generally satisfied with their experience at the University. For each of the items related to general satisfaction, a vast majority (over three-quarters) of respondents responded positively (Table 12). A majority of respondents felt proud to be students at UM, liked being at the institution, and would have recommended UM to others.

Table 12: Respondent attitudes towards UM

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:	Percent indicating:		
	Strongly agree/ Agree	Neutral	Disagree/ Strongly disagree
I'm proud to be a student at this university.	86	11	3
In general, I like being a student here.	88	9	3
I would recommend UM to my family and friends.	82	15	4
If I had to do it all over again, I would still enroll at UM.	76	16	8

Source: BSS 2007

Note: Some percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding

Continued enrollment could be seen as another measure of satisfaction. Almost all respondents who took the survey (99%) indicated that they intended to enroll at UM the following semester. Only 14% agreed or strongly agreed that they often think about changing universities.

Diversity

In a continuing effort to better understand the diversity climate at UM, the 2007 Beginning Student Survey included questions about race/ethnicity and campus climate. The purpose of these questions was to determine if the University continues to foster a supportive environment for the many diverse groups on campus. The questions aid in understanding the racial identity/attitudes about diversity of the 2007 freshmen class as well as their perception of UM's diversity climate.

Freshmen Racial Identity/Attitudes about Diversity

To better understand freshmen perspectives on their own racial identity and on diversity more generally, respondents were asked about their personal racial identity, attitudes of prejudice, socialization/coursework with students not of their own race, and the racial composition of their home town.

In general, about two-thirds of freshmen seem to place importance on their racial background /identity (Table 13). Significance tests were run to determine whether there was variation on these items by race. Generally, it appears that racial/ethnic identity was more salient for students of color than for White students.

- I identify with my ethnic and racial background: African American respondents were more likely to agree than Hispanic and White respondents; Asian American respondents were more likely to agree than White respondents.
- My ethnic or racial background is important to me; Diversity is important to me; and My ethnic or racial background guides my thinking or behavior: African American, Asian American, and Hispanic respondents were more likely to agree than White respondents on all three items.

Table 13: Respondent personal racial identity

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:	Percent indicating strongly agree/agree:
I identify with my ethnic and racial background.*	62
My ethnic or racial background is important to me.*	60
Diversity is important to me.*	67
My ethnic or racial background guides my thinking or behavior.*	26

*Significant difference by race
Source: BSS 2007

Most respondents (about three-quarters of freshmen) disagreed with prejudicial attitudes toward other groups (Table 14). Yet, about a tenth of respondents agree or strongly agree that some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups (10%), that it is ok for some groups to have more of a chance in life than others (10%), and that it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups to get ahead in life (13%). Please note that social desirability may have influenced these results. Significance tests were run to determine whether there was variation on these items by race. Generally, attitudes of prejudice did not seem to vary by race. One exception was that Asian American respondents were more likely than White respondents to agree that it was sometimes necessary to step on other groups in order to get ahead in life. No significant differences by race were found for the other two items, and the last item had insufficient variation to allow for significance testing.

Table 14: Attitudes of prejudice

Please indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:	Percent indicating disagree/strongly disagree:
Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.	78
It's OK is some groups have more of a chance in life than others.	74
To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.*	72
It would be good if groups could be equal. (#)	3

Source: BSS 2007

*Significant difference by race

(#) Data would not allow for significance test to be run on this variable.

Thirty-five percent of freshmen have at least 40% of their top 10 friends who are not of their own race (Table 15). A similar percentage (40%) of freshmen study or do course work with at least 40% of people who are not of their own race (Table 16). Significance tests were run to determine whether there were differences by race. African American, Asian American, and Hispanic students socialize and study with significantly more people not of their own race when compared with White students. In addition, Hispanic students socialize and study with more people not of their own race than African American students.

Table 15: Socialization with students not of own race

Think of the 10 people at UM that you most often socialize with: What percentage of them are of a different race or ethnicity than you?*	Percent
0-20%	40
21-40%	26
41-60%	16
61-80%	9

81-100%	9
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Source: BSS 2007
*Significant difference by race

Table 16: Study or coursework shared with students not of own race

Think of the 10 people at UM that you study or share course information with:	
What percentage of them are of a different race or ethnicity than you?*	Percent
0-20%	28
21-40%	31
41-60%	20
61-80%	11
81-100%	9

Source: BSS 2007
*Significant difference by race

Table 17 shows the racial/ethnic composition of the respondent’s neighborhood, high school, and friends from home compared to UM. About two-thirds of respondents viewed UM as “slightly more diverse/much more diverse” than their neighborhood, high school, or friends from home. Significance tests were run to determine whether there were differences by race. White respondents were significantly more likely than African American, Asian American, and Hispanic respondents to indicate that UM is more diverse than their home neighborhood, high school, or friends. Additionally, Asian American respondents were more likely than Hispanic respondents to indicate that UM is more diverse than their high school.

Table 17: Racial/ethnic composition of home compared to UM

How would you compare the racial/ethnic composition of the following?*	Percent indicating: UM slightly more diverse/ much more diverse:
Neighborhood where I grew up	68
My high school	61
My friends at home	64

Source BSS 2007
*Significant difference by race

Perception of UM’s Diversity Climate

Respondents were asked a number of questions related to their perception of UM’s climate around diversity. They were asked where they received information on diversity, how diversity and their learning were related, and how they perceived UM’s support for diversity.

Respondents were asked “to indicate the extent to which the following provided information about diversity at UM.” The list of examples included a range of information sources (e.g., brochures, posters, listserves) and interactive opportunities (e.g., working in class groups, clubs/organizations, discussions with friends/roommates).The top three sources that provided information about diversity at UM “to a great extent” were the summer 2-day orientation (47%), the UM website (42%), and campus tours/admissions information sessions (39%).

About 44% of freshmen believed that diversity will be a facilitator for their learning. Additionally, more than 55% of freshmen believed that UM facilitates learning about different cultures and engaged in discussions from multiple perspectives (Table 18). Significance tests were run to determine whether there were differences in these items by race. There was only one item with significant differences. African American, Asian American, and Hispanic respondents were more likely than White respondents to agree that diversity will facilitate their learning.

Table 18: Student Learning About Diversity

Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:	Percent indicating strongly agree/agree:
Diversity will facilitate my learning.*	44
My experiences at UM have challenged me to think about things from a different perspective.	57
At UM, I have been able to gain a better understanding and appreciation of other cultures.	55
At UM, I have been able to engage in discussions that bring in multiple perspectives.	71
At this university, I have been able to learn about different cultures.	65

Source: BSS 2007

*Significant difference by race

A majority of respondents seem to agree that UM encourages diversity and supports ethnically diverse students through discussions, clubs and events, valuing diverse perspectives, fostering respect for cultural differences, etc (Table 19). Significance tests were run to determine whether there were differences by race. Only one item showed significant differences by race. White respondents were significantly more likely than African American respondents to agree that students are treated fairly here regardless of their race.

Table 19: Perception of UM's support of diversity

Indicate how much you agree/disagree with the following:	Percent indicating strongly agree/agree:
Students are encouraged to discuss a range of ideas and to explore diverse perspectives in their courses.	69
UM has made a special effort to help racial and ethnic minority students feel like they 'belong' on campus.	57
The different perspectives that students from diverse backgrounds bring to campus are valued at UM.	74
This university actively promotes appreciation for diversity through clubs and university wide events.	81
This university fosters respect for cultural differences.	82
Students are treated fairly here regardless of their racial/ethnic background.*	69

Source: BSS 2007

*Significant difference by race

Academics

A few questions on the BSS 2007 focused on students' academic experiences, including their satisfaction with their major, whether they had identified a career direction, their satisfaction with their English 101 class, their understanding of how to contact an advisor, and whether they received assistance from faculty/TAs outside of class. Results show that most freshmen appear to be satisfied with their current

major (62%) and have identified a career direction or interest (71%). It is interesting that there are slightly fewer respondents that are satisfied with their major than those who have identified a career interest. This may indicate that a small percentage of respondents are unsatisfied with their major because it does not align with their career direction or interest. Sixty-four percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their English 101 course is organized and taught in a way that allows them to learn well (Table 20).

Many respondents appear to be knowledgeable about how to take advantage of academic resources. A majority (76%) agreed that they know how to contact an academic advisor. Just under half have met with an instructor and 39% have met with a TA outside of class (see Table 21).

Table 20: Respondent perception of English 101*

	Percent indicating:				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My English 101 course is organized and taught in a way that allows me to learn well. (N=478)	25	39	21	9	6

Source: BSS 2007

Note: Excludes respondents who selected “Not Applicable”; N=585

Table 21: Respondent contact with instructional staff outside of class

	Percent indicating:		
	Yes	No	Not Applicable
I have met with one or more of my instructors (excluding TAs) outside of class (e.g. during office hours or at another time).	47	52	1
I have met with one of my TAs outside of class (e.g. during office hours).	39	60	1

Source: BSS 2007

Responsibility

A series of juxtaposed questions exploring student perceptions of their level of responsibility in learning about key aspects of University life versus the University’s responsibility to teach the students about these areas were presented on the BSS 2007 (see Table 22). A greater percentage of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that it is a student’s responsibility versus UM’s to develop his or her academic plan (84% vs. 50%) and get involved at UM (81% vs. 62%). While over two-thirds of respondents indicated that it is a student’s responsibility to learn about financial aid options (75%) and campus resources (66%), more respondents (87% for both items) agreed it was UM’s responsibility to help students learn about these areas. The majority of respondents (88%) agreed that the University has the responsibility to locate housing for students whereas only a third of respondents agreed that a student should be responsible for locating their own housing.

Table 22: Student perceptions of their responsibilities versus those of the University

I believe it is a student's/UM's responsibility to help students to...	Percent indicating strongly agree/agree:	
	Student	UM
Develop his or her academic plan	84	50
Get involved at UM	81	62
Learn about financial aid options	75	87
Teach students about campus resources	66	87
Locate housing	34	88

Source: BSS 2007

Limitations of the Report

A number of limitations should be noted when sharing this report with colleagues. First, the findings cannot be automatically generalized to the entire freshmen population since the BSS was not administered to a random sample of students, but to a convenience sample of those taking ENGL101, UNIV100, BSOS188A/188C, HONR100/HONR100G, GEMS100, and ANSC101 courses. Second, while the BSS07 dataset was representative of the entire freshmen population with regards to state residency, it varied on several other demographic and incoming variables including: gender, race, SAT and high school GPA (see Table 1 for details). While most of these were modest differences, nevertheless it warrants some caution when generalizing the results. Finally, data in this report are self-reported and may not be the most accurate measures of some areas, such as learning outcomes. The data are helpful in portraying a perception of expertise or of confidence in a skill or area, but it should not be used to infer actual ability or skill. Despite these limitations, this report is helpful in directing future study on President's Promise Initiative/special undergraduate experiences, co-curricular involvement, admissions/reasons for attending UM, learning outcomes, weekly activities, finances, adjustment, diversity, academics, and responsibility.

Appendix A: Beginning Student Survey 2007

University of Maryland
Beginning Student Survey
Fall 2007
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title: UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

I certify that I am 18 years of age or older, and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Dr. Charles Stangor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.

The **purpose** of this project is to examine how college students perceive their university and their relationships with others, and to study how these variables relate to college achievement. This project will provide data for research and institutional purposes. For example, data from the project will help the University to learn about the college experiences, opinions, and progress of students, and the effects of diversity. Data may also be used by different departments within the University, for instance; to enhance our understanding of what helps students succeed and what might cause difficulties; for internal and external reporting, and to improve the quality of the education, programs and services offered by the University.

The **procedure** for this experiment involves completing a questionnaire that focuses on your college experiences. The questionnaire should take about 20 minutes to complete. Your directory and student ID may be used to link responses from this survey to other survey responses and to academic, financial and other information maintained by the University about you.

All information collected during this project will be kept **confidential**. All records will be stored on password-protected computer servers. Only members of the research team, including Dr. Cheri Ostroff and Sharon A. La Voy, Director of Assessment, and the people who directly report to these individuals, will have access to these records. Presentations or publications of the study will be based on grouped data and will not reveal your identity. At the conclusion of this study copies of written material will be shredded and discarded.

You may experience mild discomfort due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions. Whenever confidential information is collected there is some risk that this information may somehow be inappropriately disclosed. However, you understand that the researchers are taking clear and specific steps to guard the confidentiality of the information you provide (as outlined in the section on *Confidentiality*).

Although this project is not designed to help you personally, the researchers hope to gain valuable information about how students perceive their college experiences and how these perceptions influence their college achievement.

Please note that by signing this form, you agree that:

- You have freely volunteered to complete a survey questionnaire.
- You may ask questions before, during, and after the survey.
- You may contact the researchers at any time to obtain information about the project.
- You may withdraw from the project at any time without penalty.

Contact Information:

If you have further questions or concerns about this study, you may contact either the primary investigator (*Dr. Charles Stangor*, 301-405-5921) or the campus Institutional Research Board (301-405-0678).

Appendix B: Campus Assessment Working Group

Campus Assessment Working Group

The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) was created in 1996 and is currently chaired by Robert E. Waters, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs and Special Assistant to the President. CAWG is dedicated to building a culture of evidence at the University of Maryland. One way of accomplishing this task is by administering large-scale surveys to cross-sections of undergraduates on a regular basis, thereby gathering evidence regarding the student experience from multiple perspectives. CAWG presently consists of four subgroups covering various aspects of the student experience.

More information about CAWG is available on the website: www.umd.edu/cawg or from

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