



CAMPUS
ASSESSMENT
WORKING GROUP

**A Profile of Beginning Students:
2005-2006**

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

Campus Assessment Working Group
A Profile of Beginning Students: 2005-2006

This report was prepared by Sean Simone, graduate assistant in Institutional Research, Planning, & Assessment, in consultation with the Campus Assessment Working Group's Beginnings Subgroup. The following are individuals who worked on this project.

Chair, Beginnings Subgroup:

Dr. Joann Prosser

Beginnings Subgroup Members:

Carolina Rojas Bahr

Zaneeta Daver

Barbara Goldberg

Beverly Greenfeig

Sharon La Voy

Camille McFarlane

Jessica Mislevy

Sean Simone

Dian Squire

Tom Steen

Additional Support:

Eowyn Ellison

Table of Contents

	Page
Executive Summary	5
Background	7
The survey	7
Methodology	7
Survey respondents	7
Findings	100
Academic Advising	100
Special Undergraduate Experiences	12
Learning outcomes	13
Diversity	16
International Experiences	19
Limitations of the Report	22
Appendix A: 2005 Beginning Student Survey	23
Appendix B: 2006 Beginning Student Survey	26
Appendix C: Campus Assessment Working Group	31

List of Tables

	Page
Table 1: Respondent demographics of first-time students in the 2005 Beginning Student Survey	8
Table 2: Respondent demographics of first-time students in the 2006 Beginning Student Survey	9
Table 3: Respondent demographics of transfer students in the 2005 Beginning Student Survey	9
Table 4: Respondent perceptions of academic advising	11
Table 5: Respondent perceptions of academic advising by student type	12
Table 6: Respondents preferred method of advisor contact	12
Table 7: Respondents interest in special undergraduate experiences (President's Promise)	13
Table 8: Self-rated learning outcome skills and abilities of freshman	15
Table 9: Average perceived skill level of learning outcomes by freshman	16
Table 10: Self-rated learning outcome skills and abilities of freshman by diversity exposure	17
Table 11: Perceptions of the campus climate by freshmen, by race	18
Table 12: Perceptions of the campus climate by freshmen, by gender	19
Table 13: Percent of freshman respondents from the U.S. with international travel	20
Table 14: Reasons for international travel for freshman respondents	20
Table 15: Learning outcomes by whether a freshman respondent had international travel	21
Table 16: Learning outcomes by length of a freshman respondent's international travel	22

Executive Summary

The Beginning Student Survey (BSS) is administered annually to a group of students primarily composed of first-time freshman directly admitted to the University of Maryland from high school. The purpose of the survey is to learn about the beginning student experience, collect baseline data for future surveys, and understand the perspectives of new students on University initiatives. This report covers results from two administrations of the BSS (2005 and 2006). In 2005 and 2006, the survey collected data on topics including academic advising, special undergraduate experiences (such as internships, study abroad, living learning programs, and undergraduate research experiences), learning outcomes, student exposure to diversity, and international experiences. The following findings are presented in more detail in the report:

Academic Advising

In 2005, the Beginning Student Survey included questions about a student's academic advising experiences. Two-thirds of students (both transfer and first-time freshmen) note that academic advisors provided accurate information, but just over half of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statements about advisors providing sound guidance, being pleased with the information they received, and being informed of policies and procedures. Approximately half of the respondents noted that they felt advisors spent sufficient time with them or that advisors showed concern for them as individuals. Response differences were present depending on whether a student entered the university as a transfer student or a first-time freshman, with first-time freshmen indicating more positive advising experiences.

Special Undergraduate Experiences

The BSS 2005 included a question to assess what experiences first-time freshmen wished to engage in while at the University, such as internships, study abroad, living-learning programs, undergraduate research experiences, and international experiences. The most popular response was internships followed by study abroad programs and living learning programs. There were also a high proportion of students unsure about whether to participate in some experiences. More than one-third of students were unsure if they intended to participate in leadership programs, research with faculty, or service learning. Providing information to students about these programs may be beneficial.

Learning Outcomes

Questions on learning outcomes were included in the 2006 Beginning Student Survey as part of an ongoing initiative to assess the University's progress toward elevating the quality of undergraduate education. Generally, first-time freshmen felt very confident about their expertise in most learning outcome areas, which include critical analysis and reasoning, scientific and quantitative reasoning, technical competence, information literacy, and written and oral communication. The responses also seem to reveal that exposure to diversity does have a positive effect on achieving these outcomes in the first eight weeks at UM.

Diversity

In a continuing effort to better understand the diversity and climate at UM, the 2006 Beginning Student Survey included questions about race/ethnicity, gender, and campus climate. Significant differences exist regarding the perception of climate by race, but for the majority of questionnaire items, there was agreement that the campus was supportive of different perspectives. An analysis by gender found some differences in perception of the climate, but the differences were also small, with a majority of respondents finding a positive environment.

International Experiences

As a result of an increased interest in study-abroad initiatives at the University and in the President's Office through the President's Promise, the BSS 2006 included a number of questions regarding freshmen international experiences. A large number of first-year freshmen have had exposure to a language other than English. Nearly 65% of respondents note that they speak a language other than English at least "somewhat well." Twenty-one percent of those who speak another language indicate they are native speakers.

Additionally, a large number of first-year freshmen have been outside the United States. For those respondents who identified the United States as their home country, 85% have visited another country before attending UM. Most of the respondents spent one month or less outside the U.S., while more than one-fifth of respondents spent more than a month in another country.

Respondents who traveled internationally before attending UM, and those respondents spending more than a month outside the United States, were significantly more likely to perceive expertise in skill areas such as adapting to another country's culture, language proficiency, and adapting to another culture.

Background

The survey

The Beginning Student Survey (BSS) is administered annually to a group of students primarily composed of first-time freshman directly admitted to the University of Maryland from high school. The purpose of the survey is to learn about the beginning student experience, collect baseline data for future surveys, and understand the perspectives of new students on University initiatives. This report covers results from two administrations of the BSS (2005 and 2006). In 2005 and 2006, the survey collected data on topics including academic advising, special undergraduate experiences (such as internships, study abroad, living learning programs, and undergraduate research experiences), learning outcomes, student exposure to diversity, and international experiences. Copies of the 2005 and 2006 surveys can be found in Appendices A and B respectively.

Methodology

The administration of the two surveys was achieved through the assistance of various instructors who provided class time in Fall, 2005 and Fall, 2006 and other administrators who helped distribute surveys via other methods during that time. Surveys were administered in the following courses: ENGL101, UNIV100, BSOS188A/188C, HONR100/HONR100G, and ANSC101. Surveys were also distributed through the Academic Achievement Programs/Intensive Education Development.

Respondents completed printed forms designed for optical scanning. An instruction sheet was provided for instructors and administrators to read, and the survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Surveys were visually inspected prior to scanning; stray marks were erased, and responses were darkened as needed. Reviews for potential sources of error associated with patterns of missing values revealed no significant concerns.

The survey provided a space for students to write their student 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 approximately 3,000-3,200 students are registered for the courses used in the survey administration. In 2005, 2,710 surveys were returned from these courses and 471 of those surveys did not include a student identification number. Two thousand, one hundred and eight (2,108) first-time freshmen directly admitted from high school completed the survey and included their student identification numbers, forming the basis of the sample for this analysis. One portion of the analysis uses data from 131 transfer students who also completed the BSS 2005. Of the 2,181 returned surveys from the BSS 2006, 1,521 first-time freshmen included their student identification number and therefore comprised the BSS 2006 sample for this analysis.

Survey respondents

The respondents to both the 2005 and 2006 Beginning Student Surveys represent about half of the incoming freshman class. As seen in Tables 1 and 2, the respondents were representative by race, gender, residency, and full-time status. The respondents in the BSS 2005 had lower SAT scores and high school GPAs as compared to all 2005 first-time freshmen, which is likely due to the fact that first-time freshmen with high SAT verbal scores are exempt from taking ENGL101. This difference is not seen as starkly in the BSS 2006. Although some cautions should be used with generalizing data to the entire population of

first-time freshmen because random sampling was not utilized, the sample seems representative in most categories.

Table 1: Respondent demographics of first-time students in the 2005 Beginning Student Survey

	2005 BSS First- time freshmen (n=2108)	Fall 2005 First- time freshmen (N=4212)
	Percent	Percent
Race/ethnicity and citizenship		
American Indian: U.S.	<1	<1
Black/African American: U.S.	12	14
Asian: U.S.	15	13
Hispanic: U.S.	6	6
White: U.S.	57	58
Unknown: U.S.	8	9
Foreign	1	1
Gender		
Female	53	50
Male	47	50
Full-time status		
Full-Time Student	100	100
Part-Time Student	<1	<1
Residency Classification		
In-state student	67	66
Out-of-state student	33	34
Other Demographic Information		
SAT Score 25 th Percentile	950	1210
SAT Score 75 th Percentile	1150	1360
High School Grade Point Average	3.94	3.97

Source: BSS 2005

Table 2: Respondent demographics of first-time students in the 2006 Beginning Student Survey

	2006 BSS First-time freshmen (n=1521)	Fall 2006 First-time freshmen (N=3962)
	Percent	Percent
Race/ethnicity and citizenship		
American Indian: U.S.	<1	<1
Black/African American: U.S.	14	16
Asian: U.S.	14	14
Hispanic: U.S.	7	7
White: U.S.	59	56
Unknown: U.S.	5	6
Foreign	1	1
Gender		
Female	50	48
Male	50	52
Full-time status		
Full-Time Student	100	100
Part-Time Student	<1	<1
Residency Classification		
In-state student	69	71
Out-of-state student	31	29
Other Demographic Information		
SAT Score 25 th Percentile	1200	1190
SAT Score 75 th Percentile	1370	1370
High School Grade Point Average	3.96	3.89

Source: BSS 2006

Where appropriate, comparisons were made of first-time freshmen and new transfer students. Table 3 displays the demographic information for transfer students in the BSS 2005 (Please note that transfer data for the BSS 2006 was not analyzed). The transfer respondents are less representative of the population of transfer students at UM, with minority students less likely to respond and women more likely to respond. This may be partly attributed to the smaller number of transfer students in the survey.

Table 3: Respondent demographics of transfer students in the 2005 Beginning Student Survey

	2005 BSS Transfer Students (n=131)	Fall 2005 Transfer Students (N=2652)
	Percent	Percent
Race/ethnicity and citizenship		
American Indian: U.S.	1	1
Black/African American: U.S.	13	15
Asian: U.S.	6	12
Hispanic: U.S.	8	6
White: U.S.	57	50
Unknown: U.S.	6	12
Foreign	10	5
Gender		
Female	57	51
Male	44	49
Full-time status		
Full-Time Student	96	83
Part-Time Student	4	17
Residency Classification		
In-state student	64	78
Out-of-state student	36	22

Source: BSS 2005

Findings

This analysis provides data on five areas covered in the two Beginning Student Surveys administered in 2005 and 2006. These areas are academic advising, special undergraduate experiences, learning outcomes, diversity, and international experiences. Each of these topics is covered in this report to provide a better understanding of beginning students entering UM from 2005 to 2006.

Academic Advising

Since 2001, the Provost's Commission on Academic Advising has worked to study academic advising on campus and develop interventions if necessary. On the 2005 University of Maryland Student Survey, the Commission assisted with the development of questions to gain a better understanding of the issues related to an undergraduate's academic advising experiences. Respondents were asked to rate their own participation in the advising process, the preferences for meeting with advisors, and their satisfaction with their advising experience. These questions were repeated on multiple CAWG surveys, including the 2005 Beginning Student Survey.

As Table 4 shows, two-thirds of transfer students and first-time freshmen noted that academic advisors provided them with accurate information, but just over half of respondents *strongly agreed* or *agreed* with statements about advisors providing sound guidance, being pleased with the information they received, and being informed of policies and procedures. Approximately half of the respondents in this study noted that their advisors spent sufficient time with them or that advisors showed concern for them as individuals.

Table 4: Respondent perceptions of academic advising

	All Respondents (2239)
	Percent "Strongly Agree/Agree"
Academic advisors have provided me with accurate information.	67
Academic advisors have provided me with sound guidance.	56
I am pleased with the academic advising I have received.	55
Academic advisors have helped me find answers to my questions about departmental policies and procedures.	55
Academic advisors have helped me find answers to my questions about university policies and procedures.	54
Academic advisors have shown concern for me as an individual.	50
Academic advisors have spent sufficient advising time with me.	48
Academic advisors have taught me how to find information about campus resources (learning assistance, career programs, counseling).	48

Source: BSS 2005

When looking at differences by type of new student (freshman or transfer), there are different perceptions of the advising process (see Table 5). Transfer students rated three of eight advising experiences significantly lower than first-time freshmen. Transfer respondents were less likely to agree with the statement that academic advisors provide accurate information. With the transfer credit process, advisors may have more complex information to provide to transfer students as compared to first-time freshmen. It also appears that transfer students were less satisfied with advisors' explanations of University and department policies, suggesting their needs and/or perceptions in these areas are not the same as direct admits.

Table 5: Respondent perceptions of academic advising by student type

	Freshman (n=2108)	Transfer (n=131)
	Percent "Strongly Agree"/"Agree"	Percent "Strongly Agree"/"Agree"
Academic advisors have provided me with accurate information. *	67	55
Academic advisors have provided me with sound guidance.	56	48
I am pleased with the academic advising I have received.	55	49
Academic advisors have helped me find answers to my questions about departmental policies and procedures. */+	55	49
Academic advisors have helped me find answers to my questions about university policies and procedures. */+	54	53
Academic advisors have shown concern for me as an individual.	50	40
Academic advisors have spent sufficient advising time with me.	49	47
Academic advisors have taught me how to find information about campus resources (learning assistance, career programs, counseling).	48	40

Source: BSS 2005

* Significant differences at the .05 level.

*/+ There is no statistical difference between transfer and freshman who agree with this statement. A higher proportion of transfer students than freshman disagreed with this statement than would be predicted and these differences were significant at the .05 level.

When reviewing preferred methods for contacting an academic advisor, there are few differences between transfer and first-time freshmen responses (see Table 6). When compared to first-time freshmen, a smaller proportion of transfer respondents preferred a scheduled appointment and a higher proportion preferred using other methods. Overall, the majority of transfer students preferred a scheduled appointment, similar to first-time freshmen.

Table 6: Respondents' preferred method of advisor contact

	Freshman (n=2108)	Transfer (n=131)	Total (2239)
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Scheduled appointment	60	52	60
Walk-in assistance	28	29	28
Telephone conversation	1	4	1
E-mail exchange	8	11	8
Submitted question on a web form	<1	0	<1
Self-help on a website	2	4	2

Source: BSS 2005

Special Undergraduate Experiences

In 2005, the President of the University, C. D. Mote Jr., established the President’s Promise Initiative, a program designed to connect undergraduate students with special experiences that will 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 BSS 2005 included a question to assess what experiences first-time freshmen wished to engage in when entering the University. As shown in Table 7, the most popular response was internships, followed by study abroad programs and living-learning programs. A high proportion of respondents were unsure about whether to participate in specific experiences. More than one-third of students were unsure about participating in leadership programs, research with faculty, or service learning.

Table 7: Respondents interest in special undergraduate experiences (President’s Promise)

	Freshman Respondents (n=2108)		
	Yes Percent	No Percent	Not Sure Percent
Internship	85	3	12
Study abroad program	61	14	24
Leadership program	42	19	36
Research with faculty	41	20	37
Service learning	38	21	38
Students Actively Participating in a Living learning program +	55	45	---

Source: BSS 2005

+ Data about living learning programs came from institutional data.

Learning Outcomes

Questions on learning outcomes were included in the BSS 2006 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 19 skills and abilities (using the scale *very strong*, *strong*, *neutral*, *weak*, and *very weak*). The skills and abilities correspond with the following five learning outcomes categories that mirror broad university-wide learning outcomes for all undergraduates:

- Written and oral communication (WOC)
- Critical analysis and reasoning (CAR)
- Information literacy (IL)
- Technical competence (TC)
- Science and quantitative reasoning (SQR).

The questionnaire items were used to develop composite measures of each of these learning outcome areas. The data in this section should be used to supplement data from learning outcomes assessments

because they are self-reported perceptions from the respondents. A respondent's indicating that they are *weak* in a skill, for example, could mean, among other interpretations, that they are not proficient, or that they are proficient but not confident in the use of the skill.

Examining the relative order of these self-ratings (rank, in Table 8) is one way to understand the areas in which respondents believe they have expertise. Table 8 lists the 19 skills and abilities in order by percent of students' belief that they were *strong* or *very strong* in those skills/abilities. Many of the critical analysis and reasoning outcomes appear at the top of the list, with 70% or more of the respondents indicating that they had were *strong* or *very strong* those abilities. The science and quantitative reasoning items had a great variation in responses, with only 50% of the respondents indicating strong/very strong for the "understanding research designs and approaches" item, while 69% of respondents indicated strong/very strong for "interpreting graphs, tables, and/or formulas correctly." A majority of the Writing and Oral Communication outcomes were at the bottom of the list, with only 59% of respondents indicating strong/very strong for "writing effectively," "presenting and effective argument," and "speaking effectively."

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

Skill/Ability	BSS 2006 (n=1521)		UMSS 2005 (n=1787)
	“Very Strong”/“Strong” Percent	Rank	Rank
Applying what you learn to other situations (CAR)	81	1	2
Seeing relationships, similarities, and differences among ideas (CAR)	79	2	3
Listening effectively (WOC)	77	3	5
Using electronic information resources (e.g., Internet, databases, e-journals) (TC)	76	4	1
Revising your thinking based on new information (CAR)	71	5	8
Understanding diverse cultural, political, and intellectual views (CAR)	70	6	9
Using information responsibly (IL)	70	7	4
Interpreting graphs, tables, and/or formulas correctly (SQR)	69	8	6
Using quantitative methods to solve problems (SQR)	66	9	11
Recognizing appropriate uses of mathematical and statistical methods (SQR)	63	10	13
Finding information that you need (IL)	59	11	7
Producing visual displays of information (TC)	59	12	12
Presenting a persuasive argument (WOC)	59	13	15
Writing effectively (WOC)	56	14	13
Speaking effectively (WOC)	54	15	16
Evaluating the reliability of information (IL)	52	16	10
Understanding various research designs and approaches (SQR)	50	17	18
Using a spreadsheet to perform data analysis (TC)	40	18	17
Framing a research question (IL)	34	19	19

Source: BSS 2006 and UMSS 2005
Learning Outcomes Category:
 CAR: Critical Analysis and Reasoning
 IL: Information Literacy
 SQR: Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning
 TC: Technical Competence
 WOC: Written and Oral Communication

Overall, it appears that students believe they have expertise in most of these learning outcome areas. As shown in Table 9, the average scores for the learning outcomes range from 3.6 to 3.9 on the five-point

scale, where one represents *very weak* and five represents *very strong*. When examining the relative order of these scores, the respondents who report the most expertise with critical analysis and reasoning also indicate the least expertise in information literacy. The item with the most variation in responses was scientific and quantitative reasoning, with a large number of students scoring this item as *strong* and *very strong* and just as many *weak* and *very weak*.

Table 9: Average perceived skill level of learning outcomes by freshman.

	Average Selection	Standard Deviation
Critical analysis & reasoning	3.9	.58
Scientific & quantitative reasoning	3.7	.74
Writing and oral communication	3.7	.63
Technical competencies	3.7	.67
Information literacy	3.6	.62

Source: BSS 2006

Each area listed above is comprised of an average of three to four questions that represent an aspect of the skill. The average score is from a five-point scale ranging from *very strong* to *very weak*, where one represents *very weak* and five represents *very strong*. Scores from the survey were reverse coded so that a high score represented "Very Strong."

Diversity, Learning Outcomes, and Climate

In a continuing effort to better understand the educational benefits of diversity, the 2006 Beginning Student Survey included questions about race/ethnicity, gender, and campus climate. The purpose of these questions was to investigate issues of diversity and its affect on campus. This analysis focuses on race/ethnicity and gender.

The 2006 Beginning Student Survey included a number of questions asking respondents about their exposure to diversity in their first eight weeks at the University and if this exposure caused them to reflect on racial/ethnic differences, gender differences, and an understanding of different perspectives. Using a composite measure of diversity exposure while at the University, Table 10 indicates whether this exposure was related to a respondent's perception of skills and abilities toward their learning outcomes. The data show that exposure to diversity has a relationship to a respondent's perceptions in all learning outcome categories except for scientific and quantitative reasoning. Table 10 shows the percent differences in the respondents who scored high on the composite measure (above the 66th percentile [1 standard deviation]) and everyone else.

Table 10: Self-rated learning outcome skills and abilities of freshman by diversity exposure.

	High Exposure in First 8 weeks (n=215)	Low Exposure in First 8 Weeks (n=1291)	Sample (n=1521)
	Percent "Very Strong"/ "Strong"	Percent "Very Strong"/ "Strong"	Percent "Very Strong"/ "Strong"
Critical Analysis and Reasoning **			
Seeing relationships, similarities, and differences among ideas	92	77	79
Applying what you learn to other situations	91	79	81
Understanding diverse cultural, political and intellectual views	86	67	70
Revising your thinking based on new information	82	69	71
Information Literacy **			
Using information responsibly	84	67	70
Finding information that you need	74	57	59
Evaluating the reliability of information	66	50	52
Framing a research question	46	32	34
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning			
Interpret graphs and or formulas appropriately	76	68	69
Using quantitative methods (e.g. algebra, statistics) to solve problems	72	64	65
Recognizing appropriate uses of mathematical and statistical methods	70	61	63
Understanding various research designs and approaches	60	49	50
Technical Competence **			
Using electronic information resources	88	75	77
Producing visual displays of information	74	57	59
Using a spreadsheet to perform data analysis	46	38	39
Written and Oral Communication **			
Listening effectively	85	75	77
Presenting a persuasive argument	68	58	59
Speaking effectively	66	53	55
Writing effectively	64	55	56

Source: BSS 2006

** Significant at the .01 level

In addition to analyzing learning outcomes, this analysis also focused on how different racial/ethnic and gender groups perceived climate at UM. Two types of questions were included in the 2006 Beginning

Student Survey. Several questions focused on behaviors modeled by University faculty and staff to foster a diverse environment, while a few questions focused on discrimination and conflict based on difference. As shown in Table 11, which looks at race and campus climate, there are some significant differences in response patterns by race and ethnicity. African-Americans are less likely to report that the “. . . University does not tolerate discrimination” when compared with the other racial ethnic groups (57% responding compared to an average of 72%). Asian-American students are slightly less likely to indicate that different perspectives from diverse backgrounds “. . . are valued at this University.” White students were significantly more likely than Asian-American students to agree with the statement that “[t]he University fosters respect for cultural differences.” For most positively-worded climate items, almost all racial/ethnic groups report that they *agree* or *strongly agree*, ranging from 61% of the respondents to a high of 88%.

There were significant differences in how the racial/ethnic groups responded to the negatively-worded climate questions. When responding to questions about discrimination as a problem at the university and racial conflict at the university, African-Americans were slightly more likely to agree with those statements, but the percentages did not go above fifteen percent. About nine percent of all students *agree* or *strongly agree* that discrimination is a problem at the University, and five percent *agree* or *strongly agree* that there is a lot of racial conflict at this University.

Table 11: Perceptions of the campus climate by freshmen, by race.

	Asian-American (n=219)	African-American (n=209)	Hispanic-American (n=103)	White (n=897)	Total (1521)
	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”
This university does not tolerate discrimination. ***	72	57	79	75	72
This university has made a special effort to help racial and ethnic minority students feel like they “belong” on campus.	61	62	67	65	64
This university actively promotes appreciation for diversity through clubs and university-wide events.	79	81	88	83	82
The different perspectives that students from diverse backgrounds bring to the campus are valued at this university. *	77	81	85	86	83
This university fosters respect for cultural differences. ***	78	80	88	89	86
Discrimination is a problem at this university. **	11	15	6	8	9
There is a lot of racial conflict at this university. ***	5	12	3	3	5

Source: BSS 2006

International students were removed from this analysis. There were not enough American Indian students to be included in this table.

*Significant difference at the .05 level.

**Significant difference at the .01 level.

***Significant difference at the .001 level.

Table 12 displays questions regarding perceptions of campus climate by gender. Though a majority of both genders consistently perceive a supportive climate on campus, the chart does show some significant differences. Females were less likely to agree with the statement that the perspectives of males and females are valued equally, but three-quarters of female respondents agreed with that statement. A question about “different perspectives of students from diverse backgrounds” showed similar results, with females slightly less likely to agree with the statement than males. Though only 3% of respondents indicated that “. . . [t]here is a lot of conflict between male and female groups at this university,” men were slightly more likely to agree with that statement. Overall, a majority of both males and females perceive that the campus is supportive of different gender perspectives.

Table 12: Perceptions of the campus climate by freshmen, by gender.

	Males (n=753)	Females (n=768)	Total (n=1521)
	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”	Percent “Strongly Agree”/“Agree”
This University does not tolerate discrimination.	71	72	72
The perspectives of males and females are valued equally at this University. **	81	75	78
Students are treated fairly here regardless of their gender.	87	86	87
The different perspectives that students from diverse backgrounds bring to the campus are valued at this University. ***	87	80	83
Discrimination is a problem at this University.	10	9	9
There is a lot of conflict between male and female groups at this University. *	5	2	3

Source: BSS 2006

*Significant at the .05 level.

**Significant at the .01 level.

*** Significant at the .001 level.

International Experiences

As a result of an increased interest in study-abroad initiatives at the University and through the President’s Promise Initiative, the 2006 Beginning Student Survey included a number of questions about international experiences. This report provides baseline information about beginning students’ international experiences, and how experiences before attending UM influence some potential learning outcomes of international travel.

A large number of first-time freshmen have been exposed to a language other than English. Nearly 65% of respondents note that they speak a language other than English at least “somewhat well.” Twenty-one percent (21%) of those who speak another language indicate they are native speakers.

A large number of first-time freshmen have been outside the United States. For those respondents who identified the United States as their home country, 85% had visited another country before attending UM (the proportion increases to 86% when you include international students). As Table 13 shows, most of the students spent one month or less outside the U.S., while more than one-fifth reported spending more than a month in another country.

Table 13: Percent of freshman respondents from the U.S. with international travel.

Period of Time Outside of United States	Percent (n=1394) ¹
Never been outside the United States	15
Less than one month	58
Between one month and one year	18
More than one year	9

Source: BSS 2006

¹ Respondents who did not identify the United States as their home country were excluded from these calculations.

The reasons for international travel are varied. The majority of respondents who indicated that they have traveled internationally have done so because of vacation or recreation. About one-fifth of the students who have traveled stated they did so because of an organized field trip. Table 14 lists in order of the number of responses the reasons why respondents traveled.

Table 14: Reasons for international travel for freshman respondents.

	Percent (n=1184) ¹
Vacation/recreation	65
Field trip	21
Athletics/sporting competitions	12
Missionary or religious trip	10
Non-academic program (not including vacation/recreation)	9
Study abroad	5
Lived outside of US because of parent's employment	5
Reciprocal exchange/student exchange program	4
Internship or coops	4
Other experiences	3
Student ambassador	2
Lived outside of US because of my own employment (including military/government service)	1

Source: BSS 2006

¹ Respondents who did not identify the United States as their home country, or who identified the US as their home country but never traveled internationally, were excluded from these calculations.

To better understand the potential effects and benefits of international travel before coming to UM, the 2006 BSS asked a number of follow-up questions regarding respondents' perceived expertise in relation to a number of learning outcomes, using a five-point scale ranging from *very strong* to *very weak*. The outcomes included:

- Adapting successfully to different cultural expectations other than your own;
- Demonstrating knowledge of a host country's culture;
- Articulating differences between your culture and that of another country;

- Demonstrating proficiency in a host country’s language other than your native tongue.

As indicated in Table 15, the four outcomes measuring the effects of international travel show significant differences when comparing those respondents who traveled and those who did not. The data also indicate that there is greater effect on international travel based on the length of time a student travels away from the United States. Of those students who traveled, respondents with extended stays (beyond one month) were more likely to respond *strong* or *very strong* to each of the learning outcome statements. Table 16 compares the respondents with extended international travel with those only staying a month or less. Further study is required to see if a structured study-abroad program in college has more benefits.

Table 15: Learning outcomes by whether a freshman respondent had international travel.

	International Travel Experience (n=1184)	No International Travel Experience (n=210)	Sample (n=1394) ¹
	Percent “Very Strong”/“Strong”	Percent “Very Strong”/“Strong”	Percent “Very Strong”/“Strong”
Adapting successfully to different cultural expectations other than your own. ***	63	49	61
Demonstrating knowledge of another host country’s culture. ***	40	23	39
Articulating differences between your culture and that of another country. ***	55	37	53
Demonstrating proficiency in a host country’s language other than your native tongue. ***	21	9	19

Source: BSS 2006

¹ Respondents who did not identify the United States at their home country were excluded from these calculations.

***Significant at the .001 level.

Table 16: Learning outcomes by length of a freshman respondent’s international travel.

	One or More Months Outside US (n=375)	Less than One Month or Never Outside US (n=1019)	Sample (n=1394) ¹
	Percent “Very Strong”/“Strong”	Percent “Very Strong”/“Strong”	Percent “Very Strong”/“Strong”
Adapting successfully to different cultural expectations other than your own. **	69	58	61
Demonstrating knowledge of another host country’s culture. ***	53	32	39
Articulating differences between your culture and that of another country. ***	67	48	53
Demonstrating proficiency in a host country’s language other than your native tongue. ***	38	13	19

Source: BSS 2006

¹ Respondents who did not identify the United States at their home country were excluded from these calculations.

** Significant at the .01 level.

*** Significant at the .001 level.

Limitations of the Report

A number of limitations should be noted when sharing this report with colleagues. This report is not a random sample of students. Because the BSS 2005 and BSS 2006 were administered in freshmen English courses, many high-ability students who were exempt from this course were not included in this analysis. Additionally, the data 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 the data should not be used to infer actual ability or skill.

Despite these limitations, this report is helpful in directing future study on learning outcomes, diversity, and international experiences and how these items relate to each other. Additionally, this report may be used to inform some policy decisions about the factors that encourage learning outcomes (such as international experiences or diversity within the classroom), or to fund additional studies on these topics.

Campus Assessment Working Group
A Profile of Beginning Students: 2005-2006



As a result of your experience at UM, how comfortable are you interacting with people different than you?

- more comfortable
- about the same
- less comfortable

How many UM classes have encouraged you to:

none | some | most

- Engage in discussions that bring in multiple perspectives
- Critically examine your own beliefs regarding race and ethnicity
- Interact with students from racial or ethnic backgrounds different from yours
- Work in small, ethnically diverse groups with other students

Is there at least one language other than English that you can speak?

- Yes, I speak fluently (native speaker)
- Yes, I speak fluently (non-native speaker)
- Yes, I speak fairly well
- Yes, I speak somewhat well
- No

Which of the following describes your **most significant** experience outside of your home country prior to attending the University of Maryland? (choose only one)

- Internship or co-op
- Reciprocal exchange/Student exchange program
- Study Abroad
- Field trip
- Employment
- Missionary or religious trip
- Military/Government
- Lived outside of your home country (not including military/government)
- Vacation/Recreation travel
- Non-academic program (not including vacation/recreation travel)
- I have not traveled outside my home country prior to attending UM
- Other:

Do you consider the United States your home country?

- Yes
- No

How has the international experience selected above contributed to the following?

No international experience | quite a bit | some | little or none

- Adapt successfully to different cultural expectations other than your own.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the host country's culture(s).
- Demonstrate increased proficiency in the host country's language (if different from your native language(s)).
- Demonstrate knowledge of factors that contribute to intercultural misunderstandings.
- Articulate changes in personal attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions brought about by the experience.
- Articulate differences between your culture and that of the host country's culture(s).
- Develop an appreciation for cultural diversity in society and the workplace.

How would you rate your abilities in the following areas?

weak | adequate | strong

- Listening effectively
- Writing effectively
- Speaking effectively
- Presenting a persuasive argument
- Seeing relationships, similarities and differences among ideas
- Revising your thinking based on new information
- Applying what you learn to other situations
- Understanding diverse cultural, political and intellectual views
- Producing visual displays of information
- Using a spreadsheet to perform data analyses
- Framing a research question
- Finding information that you need
- Evaluating the reliability of information
- Using information responsibly
- Understanding various research designs and approaches
- Using quantitative methods (e.g., algebra, statistics) to solve problems
- Interpreting graphs, tables, and/or formulas correctly
- Recognizing appropriate uses of mathematical and statistical methods
- Using electronic information resources (e.g., Internet, databases, on-line journals)

1



Appendix C: 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

Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment
1101 Mitchell Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
301-405-5590
cawg@umd.edu