

**THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR INCREASING UNDERGRADUATE
RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES
Final Report: January 2003**

Executive Summary

This report represents the work of the Joint Administration/Faculty Senate Committee on Retention of Undergraduates at GW. The Committee was charged with reviewing the 1998 Strategic Plan and reaffirming the progress made on the original recommendations, reviewing those recommendations that have not been fully accomplished and assessing the timetable for their completion, defining new goals and developing strategies to meet those goals, and determining budgetary impact of these goals.

A first-to-second year retention rate of 92% was achieved for the class entering in 1998, and the retention rate has remained constant since then.

There are no easily identifiable reasons why students choose to leave GW. Each student who leaves before graduation has a unique explanation. Analysis of previous reports, current accomplishments of retention-related activities, demographic and academic information about entering students, and reviews of current literature uncovered the following:

- On average, those students with the strongest high school academic profiles are more likely to remain at GW compared to those with the weakest academic profiles.
- Students from GW's primary recruitment market (Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) are more likely to remain at GW than those who are not from those states.
- Receiving merit- or need-based financial aid does not, in and of itself, have any bearing on retention. However, there are differences in family income and amount of aid received between those who remain and those who leave. Those who remain at GW report higher family incomes and receive, on average, larger need-based and/or merit-based packages compared to those who leave.
- Contrary to popular belief, living in Thurston Hall does not increase the likelihood of students leaving GW. A higher percentage of those who live in Thurston, HOVA, and Lafayette Residence Halls remain at GW compared to those living in other Foggy Bottom residences.
- Being involved as freshmen in a living and learning community, regardless of whether or not the community is linked to a course, has a positive impact on retention.
- None of the reasons freshmen give for choosing GW (e.g., academic reputation, location, opportunities for internships), except the availability of merit- or need-based aid, made a difference in retention.

Many of the programs recommended by the 1998 Retention Review have become part of GW's culture and have met with success. The freshmen advising programs in all the schools provide a good introduction to GW, and the identification of and intervention with at-risk students has helped improve retention. However, the Committee noted that the tracking of students and their advisors should be improved.

The following is a summary of the recommendations of the 2002-2003 Retention Review Committee:

- Activities related to BANNER degree audits and other student tracking should be completed.
- The associate deans in each school should review the processes for inter-school communication about interdisciplinary programs.
- Create an atmosphere of academic challenge and engagement. Among the suggested programs are realistic recruitment and admissions plans, more academically focused programming during CI, improved faculty-student interaction, a reputation for and delivery of a strong academic/intellectual experience, development of a school attachment or sense of community, well defined scope and sequence of advising, discussion of the economic realities for financing a GW education, and review of the concept of retention at the school level.

Based on the recommendations of the Committee, the total cost for the programs and initiatives outlined above is \$177,400 each year with an additional \$50,000 for the first year. The cost associated with specific initiatives is as follows:

- Materials and workshops for faculty development: \$15,000 per year.
- A half-time position for CIDD to continue activities for faculty that would otherwise be suspended during the conversion from Prometheus to Blackboard: \$42,000 per year (Salary, fringe benefits, operating expenses).
- Replicating SBPM's community-establishing efforts in other schools: \$10,000 per school (\$50,000 for startup support with the schools absorbing the cost in the future).
- One FTE manager/coordinator for University advisors: \$58,800 per year, including support of a listserv.
- The cost for implementing CAPP is already included in the university budget; however, a FTE position would facilitate testing and maintenance of BANNER data: \$61,600 per year.

The Strategic Plan for Increasing Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rate Final Report: January 2003

Committee Charge and Process

This report represents the work of the Joint Administration/Faculty Senate Committee on Retention of Undergraduates at GW¹. The Committee was charged with:

- reviewing the 1998 Strategic Plan and reaffirming the progress made on the original recommendations;
- reviewing those recommendations that have not been fully accomplished and assessing the timetable for their completion;
- defining new goals and developing strategies to meet these goals; and
- determining budgetary impact of these goals.

The Committee met over the course of seven months.

The first to second year retention rate and the four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates are the product of subtle and perhaps interrelated characteristics of GW students, the institutional environment, and the general economic climate in the United States. There are no easily identifiable reasons why students choose to leave GW. Each student who leaves before graduation has a unique explanation.

In its search for common themes about why students leave, the Committee reviewed previous reports, explored current accomplishments of retention-related activities, analyzed demographic and academic information about entering students, and reviewed current literature (both on the web and in print) on improving retention and graduation rates. What follows is a summary of the Committee's efforts and its recommendations for improving the undergraduate experience.

Current retention and graduation rates

The 1998 Strategic Plan for Increasing Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Rates projected a one percent yearly increase in first to second year retention for each entering class beginning in 1999, with the expectation of achieving a 92% retention rate for the class entering in 2001. A first to second year retention rate of 92% was achieved for the class entering in 1998 and has remained constant since then.

¹ Members: Rachelle Heller, Chair (SEAS), Paul Duff (CCAS/Religion), Joel Cook (SBPM), Craig Linebaugh (AVP AP&SP), Cheryl Beil (Director, AP&A) Melissa Tiarks (Academic VP, Student Association; undergraduate student) Allison Matella (undergraduate student)

Table 1. Projected and actual retention rates

	Year entered										
Returned for:	<u>91</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>00</u>	<u>01</u>
2 nd year	88%	88%	88%	91%	88%	90%	89%	92%	92% <i>90%*</i>	92% <i>91%</i>	92% <i>92%</i>
3 rd year	78%	77%	80%	83%	81%	81%	83%	85%	84% <i>83%</i>	85% <i>85%</i>	-- <i>86%</i>
4 th year	73%	72%	73%	76%	75%	75%	76%	81% <i>76%</i>	79% <i>78%</i>	-- <i>80%</i>	-- <i>82%</i>

*The original projections are in bold and italicized, and, where applicable, are displayed directly below the corresponding actual rates.

The projected four-, five-, and six-year graduation rates for those entering in 2000 are 69%, 71%, and 72%, respectively. The most recent graduation rates have surpassed these projections, producing a 70% four-year rate, and 74% five and six-year rates.

Table 2. Projected and actual graduation rates

	Year entered										
Returned for:	<u>90</u>	<u>91</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>99</u>	<u>00</u>
4 years	54%	60%	58%	60%	65%	66%	66% <i>65%*</i>	66% <i>66%</i>	70% <i>67%</i>	-- <i>68%</i>	-- <i>69%</i>
5 years	63%	67%	66%	68%	73%	73%	72% <i>67%</i>	74% <i>68%</i>	-- <i>69%</i>	-- <i>70%</i>	-- <i>71%</i>
6 years	69%	68%	67%	70%	75%	74%	73% <i>68%</i>	-- <i>69%</i>	-- <i>70%</i>	-- <i>71%</i>	-- <i>72%</i>

* The original projections are in bold and italicized, and, where applicable, are displayed directly below the corresponding actual rates.

The Committee thinks that the current retention and graduation rates are appropriate for GW. Rather than establish new goals, the Committee recommends that the University develop a climate of academic engagement and rigor, increase the geographic diversity of its undergraduates, and continue to improve advising and the maintenance and accessibility of online student records. The recommendation to maintain a 92% retention rate target is, in part, based on the multiple subtle influences on retention (e.g., the economy, acts of terrorism, threat of war) and on the fact that the current model was developed using a formula that includes class rank as one of the predictor variables. In the current freshman class, only 60% of the students graduated from a high school that ranked its students.

New findings about the retention and attrition of GW students

The Committee undertook a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of entering freshmen to determine if any of the information GW has regarding its students is related to students' decisions to remain at or leave GW. The database consisted of 8,528 freshmen who enrolled in the fall semesters between 1998 and 2001. The factors included in the analysis were students' first year GPA, financial aid information, school of enrollment, current enrollment status, high school profile, home state, freshman housing assignments, reasons for choosing to enroll, and their ranking of GW in their college choice. (See Appendix A for a comprehensive report of the findings.)

On average, students with the strongest high school academic profile are more likely to remain at GW compared to those with the weakest academic profile. Similarly, the average GPA of students who remain at GW is higher than the GPA of those who leave. However, students with strong high school profiles are more likely to receive a merit scholarship from GW that may increase their likelihood of remaining at GW.

Students from GW's primary recruitment market (Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) are more likely to remain at GW than those who are not from these states. This is particularly true for students in the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Business and Public Management. Moreover, a smaller percentage of students with strong high school backgrounds who are not from the east coast are likely to remain at GW compared to those from GW's primary market.

Receiving merit- or need-based financial aid does not, in and of itself, have any bearing on retention. However, there are differences in family income and amount of aid received between those who remain or leave. Typically, those who remain at GW report higher family incomes and receive, on average, larger need-based and/or merit-based financial aid packages compared to those who leave.

Contrary to popular belief, living in Thurston Hall does not increase the likelihood of students leaving GW. A higher percentage of students who live in Thurston, HOVA, and Lafayette Halls remain at GW compared to those who live in other Foggy Bottom residences. The four halls with higher attrition rates are Mitchell (which is made up of single rooms), Strong (which is all women), Madison, and Crawford Halls. However, the number of people sharing a room has a small impact on retention. Those who are assigned to single rooms or a room with five other roommates are more likely to leave than those assigned to rooms with two to four other roommates.

Being involved in a freshman living and learning community, regardless of whether or not the community is tied to a course, has a positive impact on retention. A higher percentage of students who live in residential communities their first year remain at GW compared to those who do not reside in a community. The community's linkage to a credit-bearing course has no bearing on retention; whether the living/learning community is located at either Foggy Bottom or Mount Vernon also does not affect retention rates.

Finally, none of the reasons freshmen give for choosing GW (e.g., academic reputation, location, opportunities for internships) except the availability of merit or need-based aid made a difference in retention. Those who rank GW as their first choice are no more likely to remain at GW than those who rank it second, third, or fourth. Similarly, those who choose GW for its location, for a rigorous academic experience, or its diverse student body are no more likely to remain than those who did not choose it for these reasons.

Determination of unmet needs based on previous plans

The Committee reviewed the recommendations of the 1998 Strategic Plan and the lists of programs and activities that were implemented to improve retention². Many of these programs have become part of GW's culture and have met with success. The freshmen advising programs in all the schools provide a good introduction to GW, and the identification of and intervention with at-risk students has helped improve retention. However, the Committee noted that the process of keeping track of which faculty members are advising which students needs to be improved. For example, CCAS and SEAS students are assigned a faculty advisor when they matriculate. However, if a faculty member goes on sabbatical, his or her advisees are not automatically informed of this, nor are they given a new advisor. Similarly, when a student declares or changes his or her major, there is no process whereby the student's advising records are forwarded to the new advisor.

With the proliferation of interdisciplinary degree programs, it is very important that students' records be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure that all school, major, minor, and secondary field requirements have been fulfilled, especially as students approach graduation. In addition, there is inconsistency across schools concerning the placement of students on academic probation or suspension. The committee recommends that:

- activities related to BANNER degree audits and other student tracking be completed. Once completed, professional advisors and faculty have to be briefed on what they can expect from the degree audit and other records in BANNER. Records about a student's academic advisor should be continually updated;
- associate deans in each school review the processes for inter-school communication about multidisciplinary programs. The associate deans should review the internal school processes on probation and retention to insure that students are quickly and fully advised of their status and options; and
- review academic probation and suspension policies across schools to determine whether more consistency across schools is needed.

² See Appendix B for a list of the recommendations and the dates of implementation.

Description of new goals, and possible strategies to meet those goals, for the continuous improvement of retention and graduation rates in an environment of academic excellence

In addition to the demographic data analysis mentioned above, the Committee read reports about activities undertaken by schools similar to GW, and developed and disseminated a short survey for faculty inquiring about different aspect of faculty-student interaction. The tables summarizing the findings and a brief analysis of faculty comments may be found in Appendix C.

Just as there is no single cause for students' leaving GW, there is no single effect that will produce a strong GW culture to support retention. The Committee believes, however, that GW's intellectual culture could be improved, and while there is not evidence that this would improve retention, it is expected that it will, at a minimum, create an atmosphere of academic challenge and engagement. Among the suggested programs to achieve this goal are:

- realistic recruitment and admissions plans;
- more academically focused programming during CI;
- improved faculty-student interaction;
- reputation for, and delivery of, a strong academic/intellectual experience;
- development of a school-based attachment or sense of community;
- well-defined scope and sequence of advising;
- discussion of the economic realities for financing a GW education; and
- review of the concept of retention at the school level.

Moreover, each of these areas represents, in and of itself, areas for further development.

Before detailing these areas, it is important to capture some of the Committee's discussion about the relationship between retention rates and the academic climate at GW. The discussion was most often led by the student members of the committee who noted that "students who stay are eager for academic challenge." The literature on retention supports this notion. While the review of GW data indicates some support for the relationship between academic rigor and retention (the retention rate for University Honors students is higher than the rate reported for all students), the academic literature on retention often states that academic rigor may have a positive impact³. (NB: The committee cautions that increased rigor should be coupled with increased engagement between students and faculty.)

Increase socio-economic and geographic diversity of students. Our review indicated that two-thirds of GW students come from the Mid-Atlantic States (Connecticut,

³The literature is divided, noting that students who are less well prepared may leave an institution if the program is too rigorous, but that students who are well prepared enjoy a meaningful and rigorous academic program. (See, for example, Villela, and Hu, 1991, and Georgia Institute of Technology, 2000.)

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia). Students from other areas may have difficulty finding their “niche” at GW or finding others of similar backgrounds. Those who live far from Washington, DC are often at a loss during short vacations, finding it too expensive or impractical to go home for Thanksgiving or Presidents’ Weekend. Others may find the urban setting more stressful than expected. These factors may help explain why students who leave hail from small cities and towns outside the mid-Atlantic region or east coast.

Recommendations: It is suggested that program ambassadors, urban survival guides, and community building programs that are currently in place in SBPM and in SEAS (see below) may enhance students’ integration into the social communities at GW. These projects might be expanded to the other schools and put in place during recruitment and include student emissaries to the relevant students’ home high schools and within the schools at GW.

Since GW will (and should) continue to admit more students from areas beyond the Mid-Atlantic States, GW should strive to create communities for them. For example, upper-class students can serve as ambassadors at regional high school visits during school breaks and to welcome entering students from their home regions. Additionally, more material that addresses the realities of living in a big city should be included in the information sent to students prior to their matriculation.

More academically focused CI programming. When students arrive at CI, they are confronted with a program that emphasizes the “fun” aspects of college life with little attention paid to the intellectual life of a university. The student members of our committee suggest that this sends students the wrong message.

Recommendation: It is suggested that students be given a more balanced picture of the University when they first arrive on campus during CI.

Improve faculty-student interaction. The faculty survey (Appendix D) indicated that an overwhelming majority of GW faculty are concerned about undergraduates and would like to have more time for and better quality interactions with these students. One faculty member reported the success of holding “office hours” in the Marvin Center, and others described their schools “Take a Professor to Lunch” programs⁴ as effective ways to improve faculty-student interaction. Expanded undergraduate research programs may increase faculty-student interaction in addition to enhancing students’ academic engagement.

Faculty expressed deep concern for class size and noted the negative impact that large classes have on quality faculty-student interactions. Faculty members are concerned about the non-intellectual nature of GW’s culture and would like to see a more engaged, enthusiastic student body. Faculty-student interactions take time. Faculty members are

⁴ Although SEAS’ program for sophomores is still in effect, CCAS’ program is now suspended.

willing to spend more time with students, but this would require that they have fewer students and that they receive significant credit toward promotion and tenure for their efforts. Faculty time with students is often expended at the expense of research or other non-teaching activities.

Recommendation: Schools are encouraged to find ways to insure that faculty are not penalized (in faculty reviews) for research time lost to student interactions. The role and impact of faculty advisors on student success and student satisfaction cannot be stressed enough. Students need someone who knows them and upon whom they can rely to lead and mentor them. It makes a student “feel like someone.”

Create a reputation for, and delivery of, a strong academic/intellectual experience.

There is a need to raise the academic expectations for GW students. Many of our rigorous programs go un-noted or minimally advertised. GW has plush residence halls, a state-of-the-art health and wellness center and a newly renovated student center but many marginal classrooms.

Recommendations:

1) Have departments that award AP credit for introductory courses review their policy to ensure that students who earn a score of 4 or 5 are sufficiently knowledgeable about the subject matter to take more advanced courses in the department.

2) Advance a rigorous writing program.

3) Offer a variety of undergraduate research opportunities across the disciplines. As it is difficult for students and others to find web-based references intuitively, advertise these opportunities widely in recruitment materials and materials for registered students. Provide clear specification of the opportunities, without apology⁵. Faculty who receive grants for which a research experience for undergraduates is easily available (i.e., National Science Foundation REU program) should be directed and supported by the Office of Research Services to apply immediately for the set-aside. Undergraduate research should be widened to include extracurricular opportunities such as writing for journals and literary magazines.

4) Support the study abroad opportunities of the most academically challenging programs that have been approved by the Study Abroad Office.

5) Extend faculty availability and classroom engagement. Provide faculty development programs to share our wealth of ideas on new pedagogic techniques. Promote and disseminate materials from GW programs directed at classroom change, such as *Respondex* and those courses developed under the Hewlett grant. Additional avenues to increasing student engagement and faculty involvement include offering smaller classes,

⁵ A description of the research project that may be considered for a Gamow Undergraduate Research Fellowship begins: “*Because freshmen and sophomores generally will not be ready to conceive and design meaningful research projects of their own...*” It is understood that young students are not ready for independent research, but the terminology used in promoting all research experiences should be cast in the most positive and strong light.

providing more opportunities for faculty collaboration, and developing a program for visiting and part-time faculty to increase their awareness of the issues and influences on undergraduate education.

6) Conduct an assessment of the impact of freshmen and sophomores in upper-division courses for which there are no prerequisite courses. Are entering students experienced and knowledgeable enough academically to enroll in an upper-level course, or are the faculty in these courses teaching to the lowest common denominator?

7) Hire a half-time person to coordinate and support faculty development to offset the demands that have been placed on CIDD/ITL related to the conversion from Prometheus to Blackboard.

8) Consider renovating classrooms to allow for differing venues (e.g., discussion, group projects) that support and promote varied learning environments.

Develop a stronger school attachment and a greater sense of community among undergraduates. GW is a medium-size university in a large urban center, but it can feel extremely big and impersonal. Students who grew up in small towns outside of the Mid-Atlantic states may have trouble adjusting to this environment. Some curricula, especially in SBPM and SEAS, require students to take as much as two years' worth of courses in schools and/or departments outside their own, thereby delaying the engagement and any sense of attachment to one's school and major.

Recommendation: Model and expand the efforts of programs such as those described in the SBPM outline below to create a strong sense of community within schools and departments.

Advising. The current advising components are successful individually, but they often do not work effectively together. For example, advising folders often do not follow students from one stage to another. Faculty advisors may leave for sabbatical, and students do not find out until they try to contract their advisor. Unavailability of one's advisor presents serious problems for students who are searching for letters of recommendations as they near graduation. There are not enough professional advisors in most schools. Faculty advisors, while experts on the proper courses to provide an education in a field, are usually unaware of the issues related to retention and graduation. In addition, no listserv exists for the professional or faculty advisors, and there are no organized venues for information sharing across the schools such as workshops to discuss shared concerns and solutions. Moreover, advisors often work without detailed information about the academic history of the students they are advising. For example, while the four-year plan is completed in the freshman advising workshop (in CCAS), it is not reviewed or shared with subsequent advisors. Finally, there is no efficient way for faculty to track the academic progress and grades of their students.

Recommendations:

- 1) Institute a process in which students are advised of faculty sabbaticals at the time of the award to the faculty. Students will then have time to plan for needed letters and advice. Indicate as soon as possible the faculty advisor who will take over during the sabbatical
- 2) Hire a half-time support person to manage a listserv and to gather and disseminate information among advisors. It would be best to have one such person for CCAS alone and a second half-time person for the other schools.
- 3) Insure good BANNER data including the name of students' current faculty advisors. This may require additional staffing in the individual departments as degree audits devolve from the school to the department.
- 4) Implement the CAPP degree audit features of BANNER to the extent feasible and provide desktop training for all advisors.
- 5) Implement the Banner Advising Module to make it easier for faculty and professional advisors to keep track of their advisees.

Economic realities for financing a GW education. Review of the demographics of GW students indicated as a “*mobile middle*.” These are students who have strong but not outstanding high school academic profiles and, therefore, receive little or no merit aid. These students, who are not tied to GW by financial packages, often have academic records that are strong enough for them to transfer elsewhere. While a student who does not qualify for merit aid upon matriculation will be automatically awarded merit aid after earning 30 hours if his or her GPA is over 3.7, the committee is concerned that this program may inadvertently encourage students to reduce the academic rigor of their programs. Some students may be encouraged to take courses that will insure them of good grades and to avoid academically challenging courses so that their GPA stays high enough to garner the merit aid.

Previous reports from the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment indicate that approximately 75% of GW students are working part-time and that approximately 15-20% are working more than 20 hours a week to help finance their education. Paired with that fact is the reality that approximately 55-60% of undergraduates receive financial aid and that financial aid from GW (as opposed to federal aid) is limited to eight semesters. While this is not the optimal solution for addressing graduation in more than 4 years, students for whom a belated graduation is related to serious extenuating circumstances need to know that they can petition for continued support beyond the eighth semester. Beyond that, GW has to seek ways to provide courses delivered by distance education to students who choose to return home after 8 terms (based on financial expediency) and for those who are carrying an overly demanding work schedule to meet the financial demands of the University.

The Committee discussed the idea of a campus-based student work pool (outside of aid-related work-study programs) that would tie working students more closely to the GW community and so decrease the risk of such students leaving. However, it ultimately concluded that such an arrangement is not practical, as students' work schedules and GW staffing needs are often incompatible. While the concept of an on-campus student work force would permit students who need to work to augment their aid packages, the Committee could not come up with a practical way to implement such a workforce that would effectively serve both students and GW's needs.

Recommendations:

- 1) Review the requirements for merit aid for students at GW and be mindful of possible negative academic influences of such aid.
- 2) Distribute information about how to obtain financial aid after the eighth semester.
- 3) Continue to review possible opportunities for on-campus student employment.

Review the concept of retention at the school level. There is no single cause that affects the retention rate. The school-by-school review of the data in Appendix C is compelling. The variations in retention by school, home region, admissions rating, and GPA are among the items worthy of detailed review.

Recommendation: Individual schools should review and analyze the data in light of their undergraduate programming. These reports should be shared with the entire school community by Fall 2003. GW should support, at least in part, one program per school developed in reaction to this review.

Determination of the budgetary impact of those goals

Based on the recommendations of the committee, the total cost for the programs and initiatives outlined above is \$177,400 each year with an additional \$50,000 for the first year.

The costs related to that total are:

- Materials and workshops for faculty development \$15,000
- Half-time personnel for CIDD to aid in activities for faculty moving from Prometheus to Blackboard (Salary and benefits) \$42,000
- Modeling SBPM community-establishing efforts in other schools \$10,000 per school
(\$50,000 for a one-time support with schools absorbing the cost in the future)
- One FTE coordinator for university advisors including support of a listserv \$58,800
- The cost for implementing CAPP is already included in the university budget model. Beyond this, a FTE position to facilitate testing and maintenance for BANNER data \$61,600

The quality of learning environments is critical to student engagement, learning, and retention, and efforts are underway to address this issue. Several classrooms will undergo upgrades in summer 2003.

Student Retention Activities Since 1999

Below is a summary of the retention activities that each of the undergraduate schools has undertaken since 1999.

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences

With the largest undergraduate student enrollment at the University (5,300 active students), the Columbian College faces significant challenges in attempting to maximize the personal attention that correlates highly with increased student satisfaction and retention.

Curricular and Programmatic Initiatives

Academic Initiatives. Since their inception in 1999, the Dean's Seminars have offered incoming freshmen the opportunity to participate in small, seminar-style classes taught by experts in their field. These seminars provide immediate individualized contact for first-semester students with faculty who are sharing their excitement about the academic life and their own area of academic interest and research. Since 1999, five to eight of these seminars have been offered each Fall semester. CCAS is poised to significantly increase

the number of Dean's Seminars offered; more than 40 Dean's Seminars will be offered in the 2003-2004 academic year, approximately half in the Fall and half in the Spring.

In addition to the Dean's Seminars, in the 2002-2003 academic year the grant-funded Hewlett Seminars have introduced and extended the use of inquiry-based learning and incorporated a focus on Washington, D.C. Enrollment is limited to freshmen in some of these sections. The Hewlett Seminars offer another opportunity for students to establish strong ties to faculty and the College.

The freshman semester course in CCAS is the Freshman Advising Workshop (FAW). Since 1999, the number of sections of FAW has been increased, and the consistency of instruction has been enhanced through the creation of a Leader's Guide and by maintaining frequent contact with FAW faculty advisors. Training of the peer advisors and staff has been extended and improved, and a CCAS Student Planner has been developed as the required text for the course. In addition, an advising web site has been developed and will be expanded and included in the planned CCAS website.

Curricular changes since 1999 have provided students with a more flexible set of General Curriculum Requirements (GCR), enabling them to move more smoothly through the curriculum. The revised GCR also enhance academic rigor, enabling students to satisfy the GCR with upper-level courses rather than almost exclusively with large introductory survey-style courses as in the past.

Cross-school majors have been established with ESIA and SEAS so that students have additional flexibility in enriching their CCAS programs.

Programmatic Initiatives. Colonial Inauguration (CI) advising has been expanded to provide students with an early attachment to CCAS faculty through individual advising appointments on day two of CI. Faculty advisors are provided with extensive informational materials and a full day of training. Students are given academic advising schedules and necessary information before meeting with faculty advisors. The advising component of the CI web page has been expanded to better prepare students for their meeting with faculty advisors.

The Student Services Center has contributed to expanding and enhancing advising for majors by working directly with department chairs and undergraduate advisors. In a series of meetings between the Director of Advising and all department chairs, issues involving advising were addressed, materials were prepared and made available to department faculty, and the processes used to clear students for graduation were fully explained to faculty.

One full-time advisor is dedicated to pre-professional advising for the health professions and one part-time advisor is dedicated to pre-professional advising for law. These advisors serve the entire GW community, working with students from all schools as well as with alumni/ae.

Professional advisors in CCAS have worked with the retention initiative of the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment to work with at-risk students to develop retention strategies.

The process of graduation review and clearance has been revised to make greater use of electronic record keeping, and to make possible early intervention if students are lacking requirements.

Resource Initiatives. In the absence of a computerized degree audit, the Balance Sheet prepared for each CCAS student has been revised to give students a clearer understanding of their status and to enable them to identify and complete requirements in a timely manner. The revised Balance Sheet is transparent to all users, thus assisting faculty in advising students in the major as well.

Students are now served by a professional advising staff that has increased since 1999 from four full-time and one part-time advisor to seven full-time advisors, one full-time pre-health professions advisor, a part-time pre-law advisor, and a director of advising. With the addition of an office manager to coordinate appointments and paper flow, the advising staff is able to devote more time to more students, thus strengthening their identification with the Columbian College and increasing the likelihood of a smooth and productive progress through the curriculum.

Elliott School of International Affairs

Retention is part of, but not the only aspect of, a major effort conducted by the ESIA Task Force on Student-Faculty Engagement over the last academic year and received by the faculty in Fall 2002. The Task Force reported on a number of issues affecting both graduate and undergraduate retention. The quality of the faculty-student interaction and the level of challenge inside and outside the classroom were key features of this report. The findings were discussed at the Faculty Retreat at the beginning of the current academic year, and ESIA faculty and staff are working on implementing recommendations and responding to some of the results of the surveys conducted as part of the task force's investigations.

For students who appear to be having difficulties, the Elliott School works with faculty teaching freshman classes to identify and send warnings by the middle of the term. Students whose GPA falls below a 2.0 receive warnings and are placed on academic probation. They must see an advisor in the Office of Academic Advising and Student Services in order to register for their next term.

If students withdraw from the university, the Elliott School is not always informed; when it is informed, the Director of Academic Advising and Student Services (AASS) will contact the student to seek permission to pass on the student's contact information to the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment so that they can be asked to fill out an exit survey. (The Elliott School helped design this survey).

New programs. The Elliott School has recently been able to increase its advising staff by one full-time advisor. With the rising enrollment of the Elliott School, the new advisor has been used to handle the existing (increasing) load of advising work.

The keystone of the Elliott School freshman advising is the ESIA IAFF 005 course. This is a required course for all ESIA freshmen; one-half of the freshman class takes it in the fall, the other half in the spring. It is a large lecture class which has guest speakers and other functions. It is also broken out into discussion sections of 25-30 students so that students may meet in small groups in addition to the large class meetings. Current class size is approximately 240.

At this time, the only freshman seminar offered by ESIA is connected to the Fulbright Floor Living and Learning Community in Lafayette Hall. All of the residents (20) on this floor take IAFF 005 in the same section, and their TA is also the resident CF for the floor. In the spring semester, they all take a course on the general theme of "Culture in International Affairs" (the specific focus of the course varies depending on the faculty member who teaches it).

Academic Issues. The Elliott School's advising procedures have been enhanced by the integration of the Internet and e-mail into contacts with students (this began before 1999). The Elliott School uses listserv lists for mass communication, and some advising communication is carried out via e-mail, though the importance of face-to-face discussions with students is stressed in order to ensure a proper, fully-contextual process of academic advising. A newsletter devoted solely to advising questions has been introduced; it is sent out to Elliott School students once at the beginning of each term, and once in the middle of the term before the registration period for the next term begins. The Office of Academic Advising and Student Services has been able to introduce daily drop-in advising; previously, except for certain blocks of time, students were required to have an appointment to see an advisor. Response to the drop-in advising has been very positive, and it is in great demand.

Curriculum and Co-Curricular Enhancements. Highlighted here is the introduction of the 5-year co-terminal BA-MA degree, something that should be attractive to highly qualified Elliott School undergraduates, especially if they bring in with them a lot of advanced credit. Also, with the construction of the 1957 E St. building, the co-curricular aspects of the Elliott School's undergraduate offerings have been enhanced by the creation of the Living and Learning Community known as "Top of the World" (for juniors and seniors), a block of rooms on one floor of the residential section of the new building.

A regular (one per semester) forum with the Dean and Associate Dean for Curricular and Student Affairs has also been instituted. All undergraduates are invited to this town-hall format, questions and answers, and general discussion forum. This meeting provides another avenue through which students can feel that their views are being heard, and thus will have a positive impact on retention issues.

The Elliott School trusts that integration of the findings of the Task Force on Student-Faculty Engagement into the functioning of the Elliott School at both the undergraduate and graduate level will have positive impacts on the School's student retention.

School of Business and Public Management

Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities. In January 1999, SBPM faculty held a retreat, Target 21 Conference, and reviewed the entire four-year BBA curriculum and a series of questions/issues, one of which was academic rigor. The following initiatives came out of the Conference:

1. Course templates for 17 core courses were adopted with lead instructors to manage each course. (Some core courses are offered 10 to 15 times annually using a variety of tenure track, contract, and adjunct faculty.)
2. Field rigor was increased by adding an additional upper-level required analytical tools course, multiple regression or multivariate analysis, and narrowing the scope of field tools and business field electives. The result is that business fields moved from four courses that develop competency in marketing, finance, human resources management, etc. to seven courses.
3. SBPM's participation in the University Honors program was expanded. Efforts included helping with recruiting (the Associate Dean called most of the honors prospects in 1999 and 2000), establishing a school honors task force, and expanding honors course offerings with the goal of a business honors and a university honors course for business students to be offered at the sophomore, junior and senior year, annually. The honors program in SBPM grew from 20 students in 1998-99 to 100 honors students in 2000-01.
4. SBPM developed an academically rigorous study abroad program in Paris as an option for SBPM students who wished to study abroad.

New freshmen and sophomore teaching programs or initiatives. As part of the Target 21 Conference, the Organizational Behavior course, which is normally offered in most business programs at the junior year, was pushed down to the freshman year. Up until that time, the only SBPM-specific program that freshmen enrolled in was the First Year Development Program (FYDP). FYDP and the Organizational Behavior course work together toward accomplishing goals of norming students toward business and teaching important materials in individual behavior, group dynamics, and leadership that are used immediately and in the subsequent years.

Curricular and Co-curricular initiatives. SBPM was fortunate to have a creative and energetic Associate Dean, Lois Graf, who recognized the importance of co-curricular programs and established a large number with strong support of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and employers. Many of these programs continue and are supplemented by additional initiatives. These initiatives include the Mintz Sophomore Getaway, Back to Business, Project SBPM, New York Trip, the student publication The Gateway, an honors business student speaker series called the Business Forum, and the Leadership retreat. The First Year Development program has been revised to increase the usage of

peer mentors. New training programs for these peer mentors include a retreat and monthly training meetings. Another new program is JOBS: Jobs for Business Students, which focuses on student professional development and careers. This program has been jointly developed with the University Career Center and is offered annually. JOBS was first offered in 2001.

School of Engineering and Applied Science

SEAS has implemented a number of activities, programs, and personnel to improve retention of undergraduate students. These efforts include new freshman courses, an additional professional advisor, a new student mentor network, a living and learning floor in HOVA, and several new degree programs and curriculum options.

New freshman courses. Five new freshman courses have been introduced with the primary emphasis of providing more career information about the various majors, building more communities within the majors, and adding to SEAS students' success skills. Two one-credit courses in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, MAE 01 and 02, offered in each of the first two semesters, focus on team work and group projects, track students' progress in their mathematics and physics courses, provide career information, and have students participate in a group design-and-build competition. Other one-credit courses are CE 01 for civil and environmental areas and ECE 01 for electrical, computer, and biomedical engineering areas. The subject matter covered in these courses is similar to that discussed for MAE 01. In addition, a new three-credit Computer Science course, CS 41, that comprises a broad introduction to all aspects of computer science, was introduced.

Executive Associate for Student Services. A full-time position of Executive Associate for Student Services was established to mitigate or eliminate factors that may have the potential to cause students to transfer from SEAS. The primary focus is the early identification of and intervention with students having academic problems. Services include providing tutors and making referrals to other university support services as needed. The "*Take a Professor to Lunch*" program was created to encourage sophomore students to meet with SEAS faculty. Lunch tickets to the eateries in the Marvin Center are provided.

Freshman Retreat. Beginning in the Fall 1999 semester, the freshman class participates in a weekend retreat at Camp Letts, Maryland. Its main function is to build a sense of community within the engineering school by bringing together faculty and staff as well as new and current students in engineering-related activities. Activities include a ropes course and other team building exercises, a simple engineering design competition, an introduction to SEAS student-groups, sports activities, and time for relaxing and getting acquainted.

SEAS SPAN. In the Fall 2001 semester a Student Peer Advising Network was established to connect small groups of freshmen with successful upper-class student mentors. The purpose was to enable the freshmen to get to know individuals who had

successfully navigated the pitfalls of the freshman year and who were willing to share the things that had worked for them.

HOVA Living and Learning Floor. A freshman engineering and computer science living and learning floor in HOVA residence hall was launched in the Fall 2002 semester. The community facilitator (CF), a graduate student in computer science, lives with the students and organizes activities around engineering and computer science. Initial feedback from the students and the CF has been positive.

New Curriculum Opportunities

BS in Biomedical Engineering. A new undergraduate BS degree has been approved for the Fall 2002 semester. This program will prepare students for careers and graduate study in Biomedical Engineering and will enhance student's background and application for admission to medical school.

Aerospace Engineering Option in Mechanical Engineering. An Aerospace Engineering option has been established as part of the Mechanical Engineering program. All of the key courses that are normally included in Aerospace Engineering have been added to the Mechanical Engineering curriculum through the appropriate use of electives and course substitutions. Graduates of this option will be eligible for career opportunities in both the Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering fields.

Bioinformatics Option in the BA and BS Programs in Computer Science. An option in Bioinformatics has been approved for the BA and BS programs in Computer Science. Graduates will be capable of dealing intelligently with the massive amounts of data collected by modern diagnostic tools to help medical personnel make decisions.

Five Year BA or BS Degree and MS Degree in Computer Science. Programs have been established whereby students may earn either a BA or BS in Computer Science and an MS in Computer Science in five years. These programs will be attractive to students interested in a basic computer science degree coupled with a strong specialization in one of the key areas of computer science. There are eight areas of graduate emphasis from which students may select when they decide to pursue this program.

University Counseling Center

Last year the University Counseling Center had 1434 service contacts related to academic support services as well as 398 for Peer Tutoring, 776 for education and prevention services, 1227 for consultation and training (not all students), and 126,000+ hits on its informational website. 757 students came in for individual therapy (over 3000 sessions), and others made appointments for career counseling and testing. There were over 1600 service contacts through the Call-a-Counselor service either from students or from parents/faculty/staff concerned about students.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Why students leave GW before graduation: An analysis of the demographic variables of students entering between 1998 to 2001

Method

The data used for the analysis below come from a variety of sources and relies heavily on university records for accuracy. It includes 8,528 students who enrolled as freshmen between 1998 and 2001. Students' GPA, financial aid information, school of enrollment, and current enrollment status (enrolled, graduated, not enrolled) come from student records (Banner). Housing Services provided data for freshmen housing assignments. The psychosocial information about why students chose to enroll comes from surveys distributed to new students at Colonial Inauguration. Data from these sources were merged using students social security number or PIDN (personal identification number).

Academic Quality of Incoming Students

The Admissions Office ranks all admitted students on a five-point scale⁶. For example, those given the highest admissions rating (AR-1) are typically in the 90-95 percentile of their high school class and have a total SAT of at least 1350.

A higher percentage of GW's best and brightest admitted students (AR-1) are likely to remain at GW compared to their peers with lower ratings. The only school for which retention varied significantly by admissions rating is CCAS.

Admissions rating	Total	CCAS	ESIA	SBPM	SEAS
AR-1	89%	90%	88%	89%	83%
AR-2	84%	84%	85%	87%	75%
AR-3	84%	83%	86%	85%	81%
AR-4	85%	86%	86%	88%	76%

The mean SAT scores of those who stay and leave are very similar. There is no statistically significant difference between the mean SAT scores of those who leave or stay at GW.

Caveat: Almost all students with an admissions rating of 1 receive merit aid. The percentage of AR-2 students receiving merit aid has declined considerably over the past few years. Students with AR-3 and AR-4 do not receive merit aid.

Grades at GW

The cumulative GPA for those who stay at GW is 3.16; for those who leave, it is 2.68. However, if those with a GPA of less than 2.0 are removed from the pool (assuming they do not have a choice about staying), the difference between the GPAs of the retained or attrited group is smaller.

⁶ Very few admitted students are ranked a 5.

Mean GPA by enrollment status

	Total	CCAS	ESIA	SBPM	SEAS
Retained	3.16	3.18	3.22	3.14	2.81
Attrited	2.68	2.77	2.69	2.59	2.05

**Mean GPA by enrollment status
(Excludes those whose GPA <2.0)**

	Total	CCAS	ESIA	SBPM	SEAS
Retained	3.20	3.21	3.24	3.16	2.94
Attrited	3.05	3.07	3.05	3.08	2.64

Caveat: I would caution against making the assumption that we are retaining better students. At this point, the GPA used for comparisons is cumulative. For those entering in 1998, their cumulative GPA may represent eight semesters of grades; those who left have fewer semesters of grades included in their GPA.

Students' Home Region

Home region is defined as the state or country students list in their permanent address. For purposes of this study, home region is divided into two groups: "mid-Atlantic" and "other." Mid-Atlantic region is defined broadly and includes those east coast states that are considered GW's primary market for recruitment and which a high percentage of GW students call home. The states included in the mid-Atlantic grouping are: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. Approximately 62% of all students in the data set are from the mid-Atlantic region. The students who do not consider these eight states and DC home were placed in "Other" region.

Overall, students who are *not* from the mid-Atlantic region (other) are more likely to leave GW than those who are from the mid-Atlantic region. However, when looking at differences within each school, the retention of students by home region is significantly different only for students in CCAS and SBPM.

Percentage of students who remained at GW by Home Region

	Total	CCAS	ESIA	SBPM	SEAS
Mid-Atlantic	86%	86%	87%	89%	78%
Other	83%	83%	84%	83%	77%

The combination of students' home region and their admissions rating produces interesting findings. A higher percentage of the "better" mid-Atlantic region students remain at GW compared to their peers from other states.

**Percentage of students who remained at GW
by admissions rating and home region**

	AR-1	AR-2	AR-3	AR-4
Mid-Atlantic	91%	86%	86%	86%
Other	86%	82%	81%	84%

Interestingly, students who are not from the mid-Atlantic region tend to earn slightly higher grades regardless of whether they leave or stay at GW.

Cumulative first year GPA of students who remained or left GW by home region

	GPA of those Retained	GPA of those Attrited
Mid-Atlantic	3.14	2.63
Other	3.19	2.75

Financial reasons

Receiving merit or need-based financial aid does not, in and of itself, have any bearing on retention; 85% of students who received some form of financial aid remained at GW as did 85% of those who did not receive any form of aid. However, there are statistically significant differences in family income and amount of aid received between those who remained or left. Typically, those who remained at GW reported higher family incomes and received, on average, larger need- and merit-based financial aid packages compared to those who left.

**Mean financial aid packages and family income of those who received
financial assistance by enrollment status**

	Remained	Attrited
Family income ⁷	\$97,200	\$87,600
Average institutional aid package	\$12,900	\$11,800
Average merit aid package	\$10,500	\$ 9,200
Average amount of financial aid paid	\$20,000	\$18,800

The interaction between financial aid and home region affects retention in interesting ways. Of the full-payers (those not receiving any financial assistance from GW) who left GW, 34% are from home states outside of the mid-Atlantic region compared to 29% who were from the Mid-Atlantic states. There is no difference in the entering academic qualifications of these two groups.

However, a higher percentage of highly qualified students who were not from the mid-Atlantic region who were on financial aid chose to leave compared to their mid-Atlantic counterparts on aid who chose to leave.

⁷ Family income is available only for those students who applied for and received any form of financial assistance.

Comparison of the admissions rating of students who left and who received financial assistance by home region

	Mid-Atlantic	Other
AR-1	9%	17%
AR-2	44%	44%
AR-3	29%	27%
AR-4	18%	12%

Thus, a higher percentage of students not from the mid-Atlantic region who left GW were either full-payers or have higher academic profiles than their mid-Atlantic counterparts who left.

First year residence

Contrary to popular belief, living in Thurston Hall does not increase the likelihood of students leaving GW. A higher percentage of students who lived in Thurston, HOVA, and Lafayette Halls remained at GW compared to those who lived in other Foggy Bottom residences. The four halls with higher attrition rates are Mitchell (which is made up of single rooms), Strong (which is all women), Madison, and Crawford Halls. Strong, Madison, and Crawford Halls have a combination of freshmen and upper-class students living there.

Percentage of students who remained at GW by residence hall assignment

Thurston	Crawford	HOVA	Lafayette	Madison	Mitchell	Strong
86%	82%	88%	87%	83%	83%	80%

The number of people sharing a room has a small impact on retention. Interestingly, it is those who were assigned a single room or a room with five other roommates (a “six”) this first semester who left GW.

Percentage of students who remained at GW by residence hall room size

Room size	1	2	3	4	5	6
Retained	83%	86%	87%	87%	86%	84%

Being involved as freshmen in a living and learning community, both academic and not academic, has a positive impact on retention. A higher percentage of students who lived in a residential community their first year remained at GW compared to those who did not reside in a community. . The community’s linkage to a credit-bearing course has no bearing on retention; whether the living/learning community is located at either Foggy Bottom or Mount Vernon also does not affect retention rates.

Percentage of students who remained at GW by placement in residential community

Living in a living/learning community	88%
Not living in a living/learn community	84%

Caveat: The expansion of freshmen living and learning communities began in Fall 2000. Prior to that, fewer than 200 students were involved in an academic or non-academic residential program. Thus, the increase in retention of students in residential communities may be affected by their number of years at GW. There is an inverse correlation between retention rates and number of years at GW. The more years a cohort of entering students is enrolled at GW, the lower the retention rate.

Reasons for choosing GW

At Colonial Inauguration, new students complete a survey inquiring about the importance of several factors in their choice of enrolling at GW. The factors included: GW's location, availability of merit or need-based aid, GW's academic reputation and academic experience, its diverse student body, opportunities for work experiences, and their ranking of GW in their choices of universities to enroll. None of the reasons freshmen gave for choosing GW⁸, except the availability of merit- or need-based aid, made a difference in retention. Those who ranked GW as their first choice were no more likely to remain at GW than those who ranked it as their second, third, or fourth choice. Similarly, those who chose GW for its location, for a rigorous academic experience, or its diverse student body were no more likely to remain than those who did not choose it for these reasons.

Recommendations

1. Develop retention programs directed at students who are not from the mid-Atlantic region, such as additional programs like the Ambassadors Program (having upper class students serve as ambassadors to incoming students from their home state).
2. Encourage the development of more community living options. Avoid assigning freshmen to single rooms and to halls where freshmen are in the minority.
3. Striking a balance between awarding need-based and merit-based aid. The aid packages benefit the more affluent and academically able student. We are losing the middle-of-the-road academic student who may greatly increase the socio-economic diversity of undergraduates.

GW is revising its financial aid policy to increase the amount of merit aid offered to its top students. Given that the pool of money available for any aid is fixed, increasing merit aid means that there is less need-based aid available for needy students.

Currently, students who were not offered merit aid when they initially enrolled in GW are offered a \$10,000 merit scholarship if they earn a 3.6 GPA after taking 30 credits at GW. Awards are made once a year at the end of the spring semester. Starting with the class entering in 2003, Presidential Merit Scholarships of \$12,000 will be offered to those who

⁸ The data was collected from a New Student Survey distributed to all freshmen attending Colonial Inauguration.

after 30 credits at GW earn a 3.7 GPA and who are not receiving merit aid. In addition, students who have earned 60 credits at GW and have a GPA of 3.8 will receive a Presidential Recognition Award of \$2,500-\$4,000 on top of the merit award they receive. Both groups must maintain a 3.2 GPA, which is up from 3.0 in prior years.

While we certainly want to keep our better students, I am concerned that financial aid will not benefit the truly needy. Tying awards to GPA may result in students taking less rigorous courses and increase student “haggling” with professors over grades, since so much money is at stake. Moreover, it is not clear that the merit aid will improve retention. The merit aid is awarded after spring semester grades are posted. By that time, students who planned on transferring elsewhere may have received word about their admission status and made arrangements to leave GW. It may be that the award benefits those who were not planning to leave GW or who had not been accepted at another institution.

Appendix B. 1998 Undergraduate Retention and Graduation Strategic Plan Update: January 2000 through May 2001

Recommendation	<u>Implementation Date:</u>	Responsible Parties	Description
1) <u>ACADEMIC PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT:</u>			
a. Establish office	July 1998	AVP – Academic Affairs	Office consists of Director and Assistant Director of Academic Planning and Assessment and a half-time Research Assistant who focuses on retention.
b. Appoint Advisory Council on Undergraduate Retention and Graduation	Fall 1998	Academic Affairs / Academic Planning and Assessment	Use Mount Vernon campus Executive Committee and Council of Associate Deans as advisory groups when needed (Fall 1998)
2) <u>ADVISING:</u>			
a. Hire additional professional advisors to support staff to implement recommendations	Phase-in plan began Summer 1999	Academic Affairs / Associate Deans	Funds to hire three addition advisors (one in SEAS and two in CSAS) were made available. CSAS created the position of director of academic advising, which was filled in August 2000, and added 1.5 advisors. SEAS created the position of coordinator of student services, which was filled in November 1999. The plan to achieve a student: advisor ratio of 250:1 over the next six years has been put on hold because of other funding priorities and space limitations.
b. Provide freshmen advisors with high school records, SAT scores, class rank, scores on placement tests, and admissions ratings of advisees	Summer 1998	Admissions / Deans	All information is given to freshman advisors prior to Colonial Inauguration.
c. Provide schools with a list of school-specific risk indicators for their students	Summer 1998	Academic Planning and Assessment	Only SEAS has been given a list of risk indicators. For the other schools, risk is associated with improper placement in first semester courses.
d. Review CI registration; contact students whose course loads should be changed		Deans / Advisors	It has been done on an ad hoc basis. The substantial increase in the size of the freshman class has made it very difficult to implement.
e. Deliver fall semester grades to advisors before the start of spring courses and make contact with students who failed fall course(s) or have registered for inappropriate courses	January 1999	Registrar / Deans / Advisors	A university-wide effort to contact students at risk was put in place. In addition to involving academic advisors, advisors in International Services, Community Living and Learning Center, Disabled Student Services, Athletic Support Services, and Multicultural Student Services contacted students connected to their services.
f. Advisors to meet with all freshmen early in spring semester	Spring 1999	Deans / Advisors	Implemented through advising holds.
g. Require all first, second, and third semester students to meet with their advisors before registering for classes	Fall 1998	Deans / Advisors	Implemented through advising holds
h. Provide professional staff advising for students who are doing substandard work	September 1999	Deans / Advisors	Implemented in 1999 in all schools except SEAS. SEAS hired a coordinator of student services in November 1999.
i. Provide more intensive advising for minority students	Fall 1999	Multicultural Student Services / Dean of Students	
j. Provide more intensive advising for international students	Spring 1999	International Services / Dean of Students	
k. Develop workshop to educate faculty advisors in CSAS and SEAS	August 1998	Associate Dean / CSAS Associate Dean / SEAS	Manual developed and distributed; training implemented.

Recommendation	Implementation Date:	Responsible Parties	Description
l. Increase amount of feedback provided before 7 th week of classes in lower division courses; make consistent and more effective use of midterm warnings for freshmen and sophomores	Fall 1999	Deans / Faculty / Advisors	Mid-semester warnings are sent to all freshmen and sophomore doing substandard work in introductory courses. However, not all professors give quizzes, exams, or have papers due before the 7 th week of the semester.
m. Contact students who have earned at least 111 credits and are not currently registered. Review and amend residency requirements	Spring 1999	Advisors/Academic Planning and Assessment	
n. Develop an Academic Success Center	*	Student and Academic Support Services/Dean of Students	On hold
3) RESIDENCE LIFE:			
a. Train Community Living and Learning Center staff to identify patterns of behavior which place students at risk	Fall 1998	Academic Planning and Assessment / Community Living and Learning Center	
b. Train Community Living and Learning Center staff to identify at-risk students and to recommend appropriate services for assistance	Fall 1998	Community Living and Learning Center / University Counseling Center	
4) STUDENT AWARENESS:			
a. Advertise academic support services in the <i>Hatchet</i>	Fall 1998	University Counseling Center	
b. Develop website promoting academic success	Spring 1998	University Counseling Center	An excellent website has been on-line since 1998.
5) BANNER IMPROVEMENTS:			
a. Increase staffing in Registrar's office to enter and maintain degree requirements	2000	Academic Affairs / Registrar	Director and Assistant Director were hired. Detailed project plan forthcoming.
b. Train individuals in degree audit program	2000	Registrar	Degree audit staff has received training from an SCT representative.
c. Program course pre- and co-requisites into Banner. Ensure that blocked registration is overridden by instructor only	*	Registrar / Deans	On hold
d. Utilize Banner object analysis function to facilitate identification of students with W, F, I, and Z grades or notations. Identify students with gaps between earned and attempted credit hours	June 2000	Registrar / Academic Planning and Assessment	List is provided by Institutional Research.
6) FINANCIAL AID:			
a. Analyze students' self-reported indebtedness, employment practices, and financial aid	Fall 1999	Academic Planning and Assessment	
b. Explore increasing work study awards	Fall 1999	Academic Planning and Assessment / Financial Assistance	Done on a case-by-case basis as increase in work-study may reduce amount of grant aid.

Recommendation	Implementation Date:	Responsible Parties	Description
c. Increase PREP/PAL grants	*	Academic Planning and Assessment / Financial Assistance	Not applicable (PREP Program terminated as of Fall 1999)
7) CURRICULUM AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES:			
a. Facilitate departmental and school efforts to develop more challenging academic experiences	Fall 1999	Deans / Departments / Academic Affairs	<u>CSAS:</u> 1) Freshmen Seminar courses 2) Revised the general curriculum requirements 3) Revised Freshmen Advising Workshop curriculum and decreased class size to 15 students (Fall 2000) <u>ESIA:</u> 1) Created second major with CSAS and SEAS. 2) Developed regional minors in Africa, Asia, Europe, Russia, Latin America, and the Middle East. 3) Raised academic requirements for internship program in IAFF 198. <u>SBPM:</u> 1) Revised Freshman Year Development Program to include monthly speaker series. <u>SEAS:</u> 1) Created BA degree in SEAS to provide academic avenues for students interested in technology and engineering in the broader context of a liberal education. 2) Developed Electrical and Computer Engineering program. 3) Created second major with ESIA.
b. Increase number of sections of lower division courses taught by faculty	*	Deans / Departments / Academic Affairs	
c. Provide support for departmental and school efforts to develop more extensive co-curricular activities in support of academics	Fall 1999	Deans / Departments / Academic Affairs	

Appendix C: Faculty-Student Interaction at GW: Survey results

Table 1. Characteristics of the sample

		Percent (N= 294)
<u>Faculty rank</u>		
Assistant		29%
Associate		27%
Full		36%
Part-time/Visiting		5%
Other		<1%
<u>Tenure</u>		
Yes		73%
No		27%
<u>School</u>		
	N	
CCAS	193	66%
ESIA	17	6%
SBPM	39	13%
SEAS	19	7%
SMHS	14	5%
SPHHS	5	2%
CPS	2	1%

Table 2. Level of interaction with undergraduate students by school

	Percent (N= 259)	CCAS (N= 186)	ESIA (N= 15)	SBPM (N= 29)	SEAS (N=17)	SMHS (N= 10)
Excellent	34%	35%	20%	21%	53%	30%
Good	50%	49%	53%	55%	35%	50%
Average	13%	12%	27%	17%	12%	0
Fair	2%	1%	0	3%	0	10%
Poor	2%	2%	0	3%	0	10%

Table 3. Level of interaction with graduate students by school

	Percent (N= 218)	CCAS (N= 129)	ESIA (N= 17)	SBPM (N= 35)	SEAS (N= 19)	SMHS (N=10)	SPHHS (N= 5)
Excellent	45%	53%	41%	23%	37%	30%	60%
Good	43%	34%	59%	63%	53%	60%	20%
Average	10%	11%	0	11%	11%	0	20%
Fair	2%	2%	0	3%	0	10%	0
Poor	<1%	1%	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4. Level of interaction with undergraduate students by faculty rank (excludes faculty who do not interact with undergraduate students)

	Full (N= 96)	Associate (N= 68)	Assistant (N= 75)	Part-time/ Visiting (N= 16)
Excellent	34%	18%	45%	37%
Good	46%	63%	45%	37%
Average	15%	15%	9%	19%
Fair	2%	1%	0	6%
Poor	3%	3%	0	0

Table 5. Level of interaction with graduate students by faculty rank (excludes faculty who do not interact with undergraduate students)

	Full (N= 91)	Associate (N= 65)	Assistant (N= 52)	Part-time/ Visiting (N= 6)
Excellent	47%	42%	42%	67%
Good	41%	51%	40%	33%
Average	9%	6%	15%	0
Fair	3%	2%	0	0
Poor	0	0	2%	0

Table 6. Level of agreement with the statement: “It is important to increase the level of faculty-student interaction at GW” by school

	Percent (N= 289)	CCAS (N= 192)	ESIA (N= 17)	SBPM (N= 39)	SEAS (N= 19)	SMHS (N= 14)	SPHHS (N= 5)
Definitely agree	50%	55%	59%	28%	47%	36%	60%
Somewhat agree	34%	29%	35%	49%	32%	50%	40%
No opinion	12%	14%	6%	18%	11%	0	0
Somewhat disagree	3%	3%	0	3%	0	14%	0
Definitely disagree	1%	1%	0	3%	11%	0	0

Table 7. Level of agreement with the statement: “It is important to increase the level of faculty-student interaction at GW” by faculty rank

	Full (N= 106)	Associate (N= 77)	Assistant (N= 85)	Part-time/ Visiting (N= 16)
Definitely agree	49%	47%	53%	50%
Somewhat agree	33%	40%	31%	19%
No opinion	13%	10%	11%	31%
Somewhat disagree	2%	3%	5%	0
Definitely disagree	3%	0	1%	0

Table 8. Factors that limit faculty interaction with students by school

	Total (N= 289)	CCAS (N= 192)	ESIA (N= 17)	SBPM (N= 39)	SEAS (N= 19)	SMHS (N= 14)	SPHHS (N= 5)
Satisfied with the current level of interaction with undergraduate students	38%	42%	18%	31%	53%	29%	20%
Satisfied with the current level of interaction with graduate students	32%	30%	24%	31%	47%	50%	40%
Own research activities	24%	26%	35%	21%	16%	14%	0
Other university responsibilities	37%	35%	53%	44%	32%	43%	0
Lack of undergraduate student interest	31%	31%	65%	21%	37%	21%	20%
Lack of graduate student interest	15%	8%	29%	28%	32%	0	60%
Lack of incentive (e.g., tenure, promotion, salary, etc.)	23%	21%	29%	28%	32%	14%	28%
Distance from home to campus	18%	18%	24%	23%	26%	0	40%
Other	18%	22%	18%	10%	5%	14%	0

Table 9. Factors that limit faculty interaction with students by faculty rank

	Total (N= 282)	Full (N= 105)	Assistant (N= 84)	Associate (N= 77)	Part-time/ Visiting (N= 16)
Satisfied with the current level of interaction with undergraduate students	38%	38%	44%	32%	38%
Satisfied with the current level of interaction with graduate students	32%	43%	25%	22%	0
Own research activities	24%	19%	24%	31%	25%
Other university responsibilities	37%	39%	27%	49%	19%
Lack of undergraduate student interest	32%	40%	21%	30%	38%
Lack of graduate student interest	15%	19%	8%	16%	13%
Lack of incentive (e.g., tenure, promotion, salary, etc.)	23%	11%	32%	27%	31%
Distance from home to campus	18%	16%	23%	17%	19%
Other	19%	23%	14%	17%	25%

Table 10. Factors that limit faculty interaction with students by tenure status

	Total (N= 288)	Tenured (N= 210)	Not tenured (N= 78)
Satisfied with the current level of interaction with undergraduate students	38%	38%	37%
Satisfied with the current level of interaction with graduate students	31%	38%	14%
Own research activities	23%	27%	15%
Other university responsibilities	36%	40%	28%
Lack of undergraduate student interest	31%	35%	22%
Lack of graduate student interest	14%	15%	13%
Lack of incentive (e.g., tenure, promotion, salary, etc.)	22%	22%	23%
Distance from home to campus	18%	17%	22%
Other	18%	19%	17%

Summary of Faculty Suggestions to Improve Faculty-Student Interactions

Suggestions by faculty for increasing faculty-student interaction fall into two categories. The first category focuses on what might be called the physical obstacles to better faculty-student interaction at GW. The second category focuses on the need for a change in the culture of GW.

Physical Obstacles to Better Faculty-Student Interaction

Of the first category, the most frequently heard suggestion for improving faculty-student interaction was to decrease the number of large classes. Many cite this as one of the greatest obstacles to faculty-student interaction at GW. In the words of one faculty member:

When I got to GW 8 years ago, I rarely taught a 100-level class with more than 25 students. I got to know the students and their writing in those classes very well. Now I never teach a 100-level class with fewer than 40 students. I have to give more exams, assign fewer papers, and eliminate discussion (you can't have a discussion with 40 students). When I complain about this, I am told we have more students now, and "the Deans" will be mad if we put lower caps on courses and shut too many students out. The fact is, if my courses weren't capped at 40, they'd have 60. We keep admitting more students and expect students to get as much interaction with the faculty.

Also mentioned by a few respondents is the large number of advisees that freshman advisors are currently assigned in CCAS. In answer to these problems, a number of faculty suggest more full time faculty lines, particularly in departments that teach the most students.

Other faculty comments focus on problems revolving around campus space. Several faculty members point out that facilities are inadequate for both formal and informal meetings with students. Many classrooms are inadequate for interactive classes, and seminar rooms are difficult to find. Some complain that facilities for informal meetings with students do not exist. One person suggests that "lounge" type facilities within academic buildings could encourage more informal interaction between students and faculty. Another notes that he/she would be glad to host a pizza/soda gathering for a class (and pay for it him/herself) but would not know where on campus such an event could take place.

A few faculty members suggest that faculty-student interaction could be improved if faculty lived on or closer to campus (in campus housing). A few others recommend that the high cost of parking can discourage faculty from coming to campus.

Several note that the lack of transportation (a bus, for instance) or the lack of university funding thwarts curriculum enhancing trips off campus, trips that could facilitate informal faculty-student contact.

A number of faculty lament the passing of Lester Lefton's funding for taking students to lunch. Those who took advantage of this program thought it very successful.

The Culture at GW as an Impediment to Better Faculty-Student Interaction

As noted above, many respondents note that a cultural change is necessary to increase faculty-student interaction to any significant degree. On the one hand, faculty note that students often work too many hours off campus. On the other hand, some faculty criticize the university for encouraging students to focus their time on too many things besides the classroom (e.g., work, internships, extracurricular activities). One faculty member suggests that

[We should] focus on the funds that Rice Hall isn't giving to academic departments—and try to get some of the funds back from the Chernak/SASS empire, with its infinite resources to spend on utterly trivial fun 'n' games.

In response to the current culture on campus, one faculty member suggests that “[We need] to move [students] from being high-end consumers of education to being a community of intellectuals.” One way to do this, suggest a number of faculty respondents, would be to increase the opportunities for undergraduate research. Another way would be to encourage (or require) students to meet with faculty.

Not all faculty feel that the problem can be attributed only to misguided student priorities. A number of faculty criticize their colleagues for not being responsive enough to students, saying, “[we need to] create departmental cultures in which it is usual for faculty to be in their offices—often with doors open—rather than away from campus as much as possible.”

A great number of respondents suggest that a change in the reward system is necessary to facilitate the needed cultural change at GW. Quite a few note that those who spend significant time interacting with students are, in effect, penalized because they are “less productive.” The following comment articulates the sentiment expressed by many:

As in many institutions of higher learning, there is a disconnect between what is said (teaching and faculty-student interaction is important) and what is rewarded (funded research). Until this fundamental issue is resolved, teaching and mentoring will always take a back seat to scholarship.