

**TRAJECTORY TOWARDS GRADUATION:  
IMPROVING FOUR AND SIX YEAR RATES**

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**TRAJECTORY TOWARDS GRADUATION:  
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Executive Summary**

The initial impetus to explore ways to increase GW's four- and six-year graduation rates came from the Innovation Task Force (ITF). While the Task Force quickly determined that no substantial savings would be generated by increasing graduation rates, the group believed that figuring out ways to increase the number of students graduating in four years was "the right thing to do" and would enhance GW's stature as a university and the success of its students.

GW's retention and graduation rates have steadily increased over the past 10 years. The most recent first to second year retention rate for the class entering in 2011 is 94.3%, a record high for GW. GW's six year graduation rate has increased from 78.8% for the class entering in 1998 to 81.1% for the class entering in 2006. The most recent four year graduation rates, for those entering in 2006 and 2007, respectively, are 73.8% and 74.3%.

Compared to our market basket schools, GW's six-year graduation rate is low, and much lower than the median, and about five percentage points lower than what *US News* estimates it should be. The 81% rate reported for the class entering in 2006 puts GW above University of Miami, American University, Southern Methodist, and Tulane, but below our main competitors, New York University and Boston University. By comparison, Duke, Northwestern, and Washington University graduate 94% of their students.

The Task Force agreed to target five groups of students who have lower than expected graduation rates: Students with high GPAs (3.5 or above); students with GPAs of 2.0 or below; students with financial need who cannot register or complete their degree because they have a Student Accounts hold; students who have 114 or more credits but do not graduate; SEAS students; and underrepresented groups of students. More information, including a discussion about why these groups were targeted, rationales for the Task Force's recommendations, and proposed actions, can be found in the main body of the report.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Increase accessibility, transparency, and use of data on incoming and current students. Continue to provide academic advisors with access to incoming students' high school transcripts, standardized test scores, and other pertinent information (such as students' scores on GW math and language placement tests) that may impact how students are advised about appropriate courses.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Expand to all schools the early identification system whereby students in introductory courses who are doing either exceptional or sub-standard work can be identified early in the semester.**

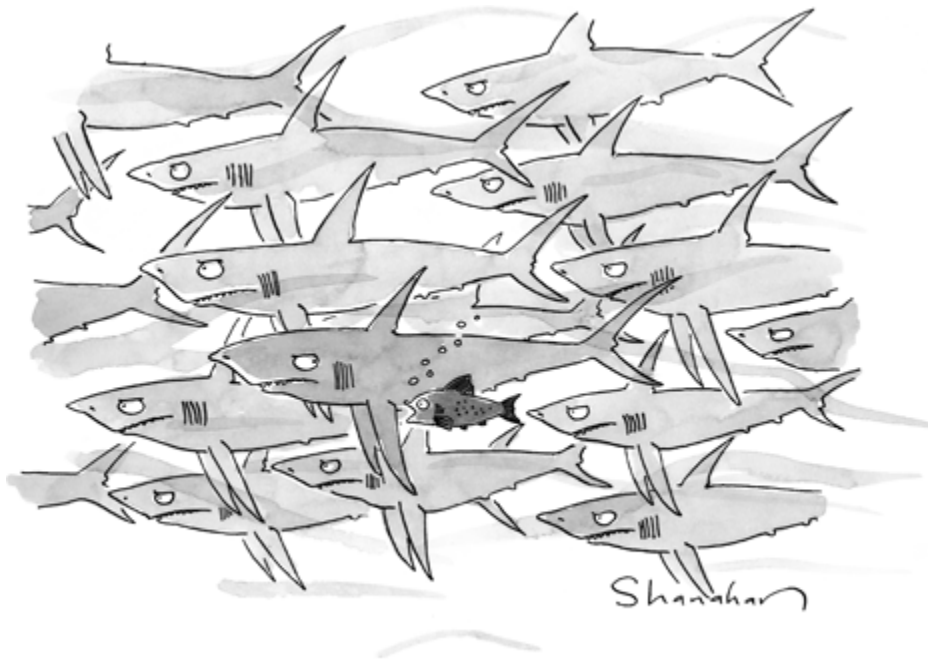
**RECOMMENDATION 3: Continue to refine the process whereby faculty and staff monitoring and using the various early-identification systems currently in place (i.e., Faculty Feedback System, CARE Network, academic probation processes) are working together to identify, share information about, and track students and are informed about any interventions performed.**

**RECOMMENDATION 4:** Continue to identify students who are doing substandard academic work and those not on-track to graduate in four years, design intervention programs to get them back on track, and continue to follow-up with them to ensure they stay on track.

**RECOMMENDATION 5:** Develop a highly structured, multifaceted program (e.g., a summer bridge program, five-year BS degree, online tutorials) to improve new engineering students' academic performances, especially in calculus and science courses, in order to increase persistence in SEAS.

**RECOMMENDATION 6:** Identify students with 114+ credits who are in good academic standing and who do not graduate and work with them to make sure they graduate.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** Revise the Student Accounts hold policy and provide additional support to students in good academic standing who have only one semester's worth of courses to complete and do not have enough funds.



*"It's a great school, but it wasn't my first choice."*

## TRAJECTORY TOWARDS GRADUATION: IMPROVING FOUR AND SIX YEAR RATES

### Introduction

The initial impetus to explore ways to increase GW's four- and six-year graduation rates came from the Innovation Task Force (ITF). According to the *2012 US News Annual Guide to Colleges*, GW's six-year graduate rate of 81% was four points lower than what *US News* predicted it should be. Moreover, GW's rate compared unfavorably with those of our market basket peers, for which the median graduation rate was 89%. The ITF Analytical Support Team (FAST), which is responsible for doing preliminary analyses to learn whether or not there is merit in pursuing an idea, concluded that "retention and six-year graduation rates are affected by numerous inter-related variables and that a concerted effort to monitor these initiatives, uncover the relationships among them, and bring the results to the attention of key decision makers in an insightful manner can add value and help the University discover additional methods to improve retention and graduation rates." FAST estimated that "by accelerating a portion of the students who graduate in five years to, instead, graduate in four years would yield \$168,508 in additional revenue."

A Task Force, chaired by Cheryl Beil, Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment, and including representatives from each of the undergraduate schools, faculty, professional advisors, and key administrators in admissions, financial assistance, registrar, dean of students, and institutional research offices, was convened to explore the feasibility of this initiative. In a preliminary attempt to evaluate the ITF's proposal, an in-depth review of the transcripts of 70 students who entered in 2003 and who, on paper, took five years to graduate revealed that many who were enrolled in GW courses their ninth semester could not have their time-to-graduation accelerated. Many of these students had 1) taken a leave of absence during their sophomore, junior, or senior year and were taking courses to finish their degree; 2) were enrolled in a dual BBA/MBA program; or 3) were enrolled in SEAS and needed five years to graduate<sup>1</sup>. In addition, a fair share of the 70 students were not actually enrolled in courses their fifth year; rather, they were registered as on "leave of absence" to maintain their residency while they took courses elsewhere to complete their degree; Thus, the Task Force concluded that, given these explanations for fifth year enrollment, it was not feasible to expect significant numbers of them to graduate in four years. The additional revenue estimates for this innovative idea would not be realized, and "Trajectory to Graduation" was removed from the list of ITF initiatives.

### The Work of the Task Force

The members of the Task Force were committed to improving student retention and graduation rates and, with the support of the Provost, decided to continue their work. Over the course of the fall 2011 and spring 2012 semesters, the group:

- Read and discussed reports of previous retention/graduation task forces, especially the "Strategic Plan for Increasing Undergraduate Retention and Graduation" (1998), the "Strategic Plan for Increasing Retention and Graduation Rates" (2003), and "Enhancing Undergraduate Retention in the School of Engineering and Applied Science" (2005);
- Reviewed the current literature about improving retention;

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<sup>1</sup> While SEAS is a four-year program, students need to complete more than 120 credits to graduate. Some may need an extra semester or year to complete their requirements.

- Shared “best practices” of what other universities were doing to improve retention;
- Identified attributes that may factor into students’ choices of remaining at or leaving GW before graduation;
- Shared their school and office practices and programs that are designed to increase retention;
- Discussed university policies that might exacerbate or diminish student attrition;
- Deliberated about what GW should do to increase graduation rates.

A major asset of the Task Force was its composition: The members, for the most part, were in positions to implement the changes that were recommended. In fact, many of the changes were implemented while the committee was still discussing ideas. In addition, student retention was examined from admissions, academic, financial, and social integration perspectives: Academic advisors learned about financial aid; deans learned about features in Banner that can enhance identifying students who are excelling or having difficulty in their courses midway through the semester; admissions shared information about the highest level of high school science and math courses taken by new SEAS students; and institutional research identified patterns and clusters of students who leave before graduating.

At its first meeting, the Task Force members identified characteristics of undergraduates who may leave before graduating, with the intent of uncovering commonalities and policies that may impede students’ progression towards graduation. The initial student groups that might be of concern were:

- Students who take five years to graduate
- Students with high GPAs (3.5 or above) who leave
- Students with low GPAs (2.0 or below) who leave
- Engineering students
- Students who don’t return after their study abroad experience
- Underrepresented minority students, especially those who are Black or of Hispanic origin
- Students who leave having a balance of \$500 or more with Student Accounts
- Students with 114+ credits who do not graduate
- First generation students
- Older students returning to school

Policies that were reviewed were:

- Within GW transfer policies
- The Student Accounts hold policy that excludes students with a minimum unpaid balance of \$500 from registering for classes
- Admissions to the University Honors Program after freshman year

Analysis of the data for the identified populations of concern resulted in eliminating some of the suggested groups.

- An analysis of the transcripts of **students who entered in 2003 and who took five years to graduate** suggests that many of these students had the following circumstances: they were not paying tuition their 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> semester (and were on continuous enrollment), their time to graduation could not be accelerated because of a leave of absence taken during one of their prior eight semesters, or they were on a five-year trajectory because of failed courses.

- Very few students did not return to GW after their **study abroad experiences**. Between 2002 through 2007, only 56 students were identified as having not returned to GW after studying abroad. Of this group, only 12 of the 56 (21%) transferred to and graduated from another college or university. An interesting finding is that some of those who left GW and who had not attended one of GW's residential study abroad programs had not transferred their study abroad credits back to GW.
- GW does not have a way of identifying students who are **first generation college students**. On an anonymous survey completed at CI in 2011, only 5% of the incoming students in 2011 indicated that neither of their parents had attended college.
- While there is much literature about the retention or graduation of non-traditional-aged students, GW does not attract these students. About 95% of GW students are traditional-aged students.

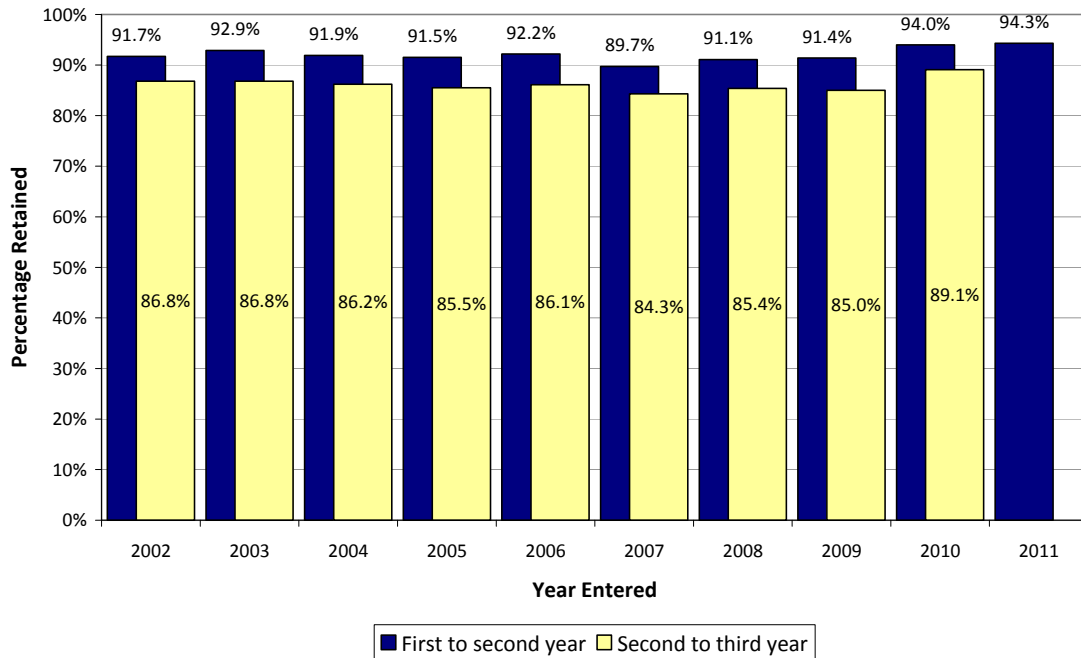
The Task Force agreed to target five groups of students who have lower than expected graduation rates; four subcommittees were formed to explore the retention and graduation of these groups:

- Students with high (3.5 or above) or low (2.0 and below) GPAs
- SEAS undergraduates
- Students with financial need who cannot register or complete their degree because they have a Student Accounts hold
- Underrepresented groups of students

### **Retention and Graduation Rates**

GW's retention and graduation rates have steadily increased over the past 10 years (see Graph 1). The most recent first to second year retention rate for the class entering in 2011 is 94.3%, a record high for GW. By comparison, the first to second year retention rate for the class entering in 2002 was 92.97%. Another 5% to 6% of the students leave after their second year. The second to third year retention rate for the class entering in 2010 was 89.1%, compared to 86.8% for the class entering in 2002.

**Graph 1. First to Second and Second to Third Year Retention Rates**



GW's first to second year retention rate compares favorably with its market basket schools (see Table 1). GW's rate of 94% places it on par with Emory and above NYU, American, Boston, Tulane, University of Miami, and Southern Methodist. Duke, Tufts, University of Southern California, Vanderbilt, and Washington University retain 97% of their entering classes; Georgetown's retention rate is 96%.

**Table 1. Comparison of GW and Market Basket Schools' First to Second Year Retention Rates\***

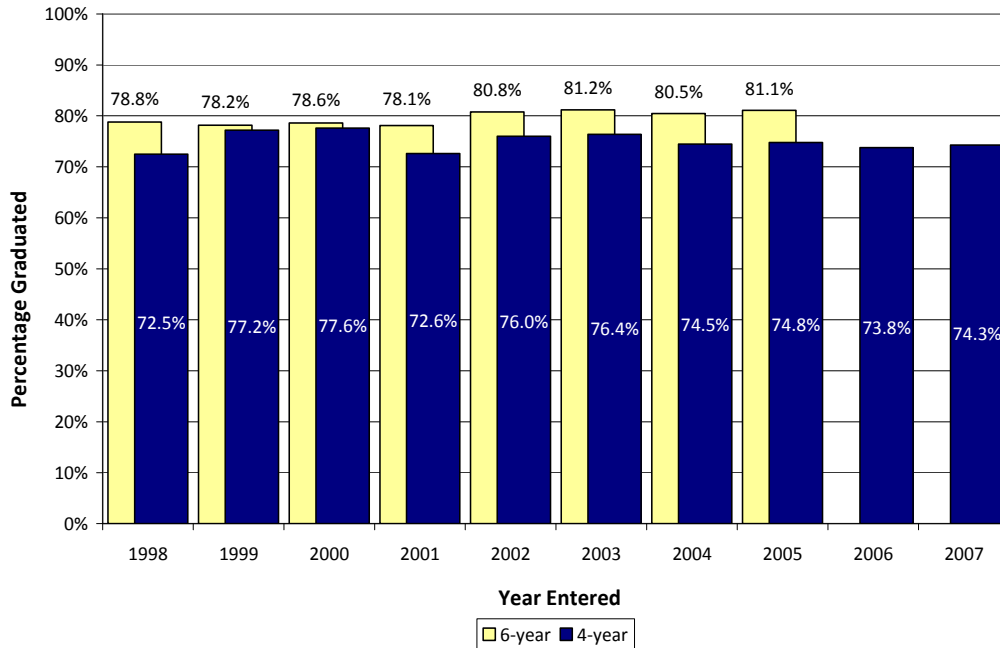
Institution	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Duke University	94%	96%	97%	96%	96%	97%	96%	97%	97%
Tufts University	96%	96%	96%	95%	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%
University of Southern California	95%	95%	96%	95%	96%	96%	97%	96%	97%
Vanderbilt University	94%	94%	95%	95%	96%	96%	97%	96%	97%
Washington University in St Louis	97%	96%	98%	96%	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Georgetown University	94%	95%	97%	98%	97%	96%	95%	96%	96%
Northwestern University	96%	97%	98%	97%	97%	96%	97%	97%	96%
Emory University	92%	93%	95%	94%	94%	94%	95%	96%	94%
<b>George Washington University</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>94%</b>
New York University	92%	92%	92%	93%	92%	92%	93%	91%	92%
American University	86%	86%	87%	89%	87%	86%	88%	90%	91%
Boston University	89%	88%	89%	90%	91%	91%	91%	90%	91%
Tulane University of Louisiana	87%	86%	88%			87%	88%	91%	90%
University of Miami	87%	87%	87%	89%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Southern Methodist University	87%	87%	88%	87%	86%	89%	89%	88%	89%
<b>Market Basket Median</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>95%</b>

\* Sorted by 2010 rates

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS).

GW's six year graduation rate has increased from 78.8% for the class entering in 1998 to 81.1% for the class entering in 2005 (see Graph 2). The four year graduation rate vacillates between a low of 72.5% for the class entering in 1998 and a high of 77.6% for the class entering in 2000. The most recent four year graduation rates, for those entering in 2006 and 2007, respectively, are 73.8% and 74.3%. With the high cost of tuition, it is imperative that more students graduate in four years.

**Graph 2. Four- and Six-Year Graduation Rates**



Compared to our market basket schools, GW's six year graduation rate is low, and much lower than the median, and about five percentage points lower than what *US News* estimates it should be. The 81% rate reported for the class entering in 2006 puts GW above University of Miami, American University, Southern Methodist, and Tulane, but below our main competitors, New York University and Boston University. By comparison, Duke, Northwestern, and Washington University graduate 94% of their students (see Table 2).



**Table 2. Comparison of GW and Market Basket Schools' Six-Year Graduation Rates\***

Institution	Year Graduated								
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Duke University	93%	92%	94%	93%	94%	94%	95%	95%	94%
Northwestern University	93%	93%	93%	93%	93%	93%	94%	95%	94%
Washington University in St Louis	89%	89%	92%	91%	91%	92%	94%	93%	94%
Georgetown University	94%	93%	92%	93%	94%	93%	93%	93%	93%
Tufts University	89%	90%	91%	90%	92%	89%	92%	91%	91%
Vanderbilt University	84%	83%	86%	88%	89%	91%	89%	91%	91%
Emory University	88%	86%	86%	89%	85%	87%	87%	90%	89%
University of Southern California	81%	81%	82%	83%	84%	85%	88%	88%	89%
New York University	78%	79%	80%	83%	84%	85%	84%	85%	86%
Boston University	75%	75%	75%	77%	81%	82%	80%	82%	83%
<b>George Washington University</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>81%</b>
University of Miami	67%	67%	71%	71%	73%	76%	77%	80%	80%
American University	71%	71%	73%	71%	71%	73%	76%	77%	79%
Southern Methodist University	70%	72%	71%	71%	74%	71%	74%	77%	74%
Tulane University of Louisiana	73%	74%	79%	74%	71%	76%	74%	73%	70%
<b>Market Basket Median</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>89%</b>

\* Sorted by 2010 rates

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS).

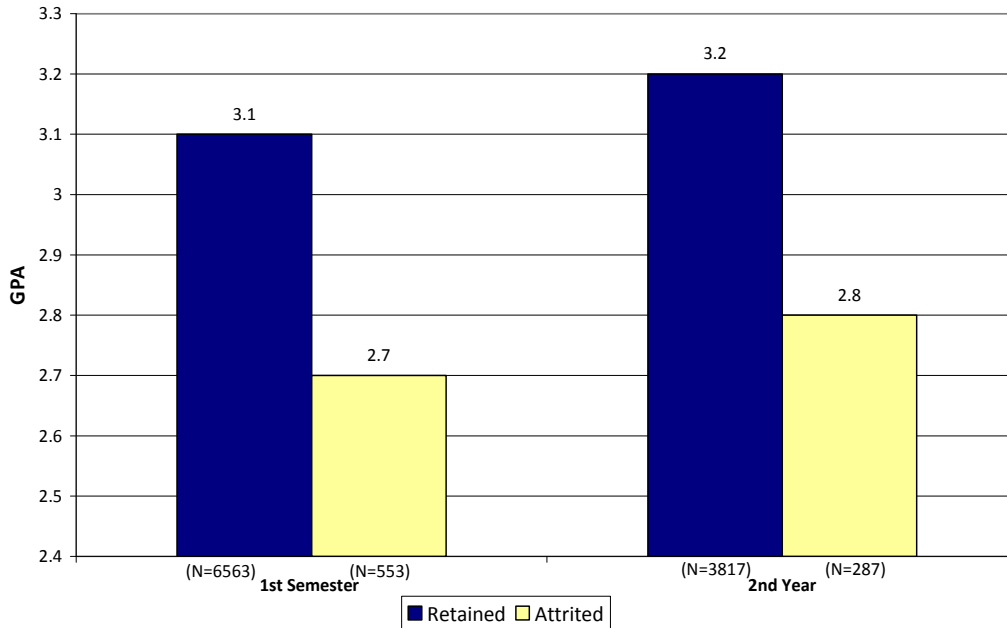
There are no easily identifiable reasons for GW's lower than expected graduation rates. GW's graduation rates vary by year entered, school enrolled in, type of financial aid (merit, need, none), amount of unmet need, race/ethnicity, and, of course, grades, to name the most salient factors. Similarly, there is no simple solution that will improve the rates. The discussion below analyzes enrollment and retention data to help identify the issues surrounding GW's lower than expected graduation rate.

Unless specified, most of the data used in this report includes students who entered as full-time freshmen between 2003 and 2005 (to look at six-year graduation rates) and those entering between 2006 and 2010 (to explore recent retention and graduation information). Follow-up information on students who left prior to graduation came from the National Student Clearinghouse database, which reports enrollment status and deferment information for financial aid students.

### **What We Know about Students who Leave before Graduating**

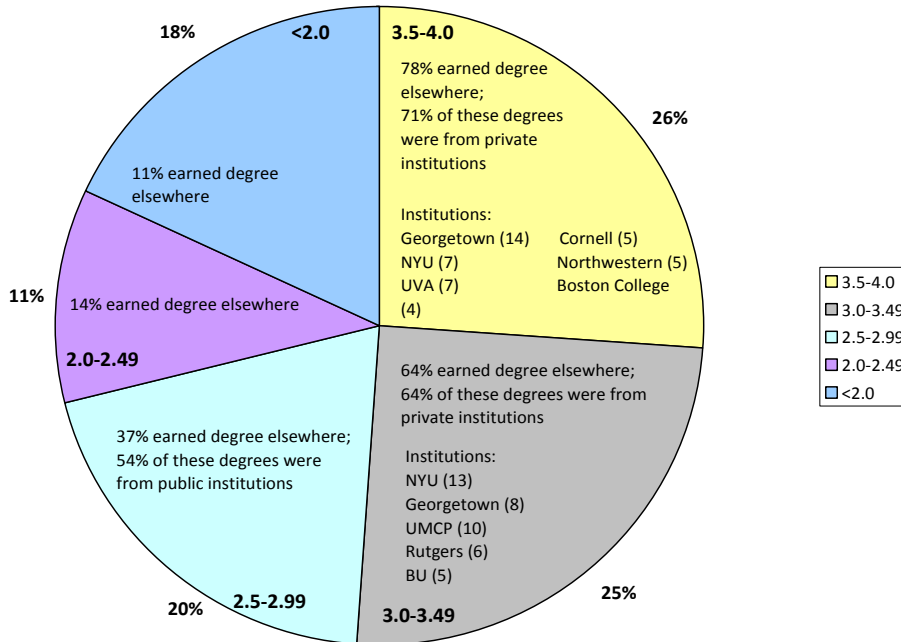
By far the strongest predictor of retention is students' first semester GPA. The average GPA of students who persist to their second year is 3.1; for those who leave after the first year it is 2.7. Similarly, the GPA for those who remain at GW after their second year is 3.2; the GPA of those who leave is 2.8. As these averages indicate, students in good academic standing are leaving GW (see Graph 3).

**Graph 3: First and Second Year Retention/Attrition by First Semester GPA and Second Year GPA: Students Entering 2007-2009**



The explanation for why some students stay and others leave is more complicated than looking at a student’s GPA. By diving more deeply into the data, we have developed a more nuanced picture of student attrition. At the time this report was written, the class entering in 2006 was the most recent cohort to graduate. A total of 484 students entering in 2006 left before graduation, representing about 20% of the entering class. Most left after their first or second year at GW. Of this group, 51% had earned a GPA of at least 3.0: 25% had GPAs between 3.0-3.49, and 26% earned GPAs of 3.50-4.0; 31% earned between a 2.0-2.99; and only 18% left with failing grades.

**Graph 4. 2006 Entering Freshmen who Left GW Before Earning a Degree**



### ***Students with high GPAs***

Of the 125 students with GPAs between 3.5-4.0 who left GW, 78% earned a degree elsewhere. Of this group, 71% of them earned degrees from private institutions (e.g., 4 transferred to Georgetown, 7 transferred to NYU, and others went to GW's market basket schools such as Vanderbilt, Northwestern, Washington University) or ivy-league schools (Brown, Cornell, or University of Pennsylvania). Those who went on to public institutions chose to attend the flagship university in their home state (e.g., 7 transferred to University of Virginia).

For the most part, these high achieving GW students were not at the top of the admissions pool, which helps explain why many did not receive merit aid from GW. However, their choice of transferring to a public or private institution was related to whether or not they received financial assistance from GW. Of the students who transferred, two-thirds received no financial assistance from GW; most of them transferred to private institution. Of the remaining third, those who received financial assistance, most transferred to public institutions.

### ***Students with low GPAs***

On the opposite end of the spectrum, 18% of the students who left earned GPAs below 2.0; another 11% left with GPAs between 2.0 to 2.49; and 20% left with GPAs between 2.5-2.99. Those in the 2.5-2.99 range who transferred were more likely to attend public institutions. One can easily imagine parents telling their student that they have to earn higher grades if they want to remain at GW.

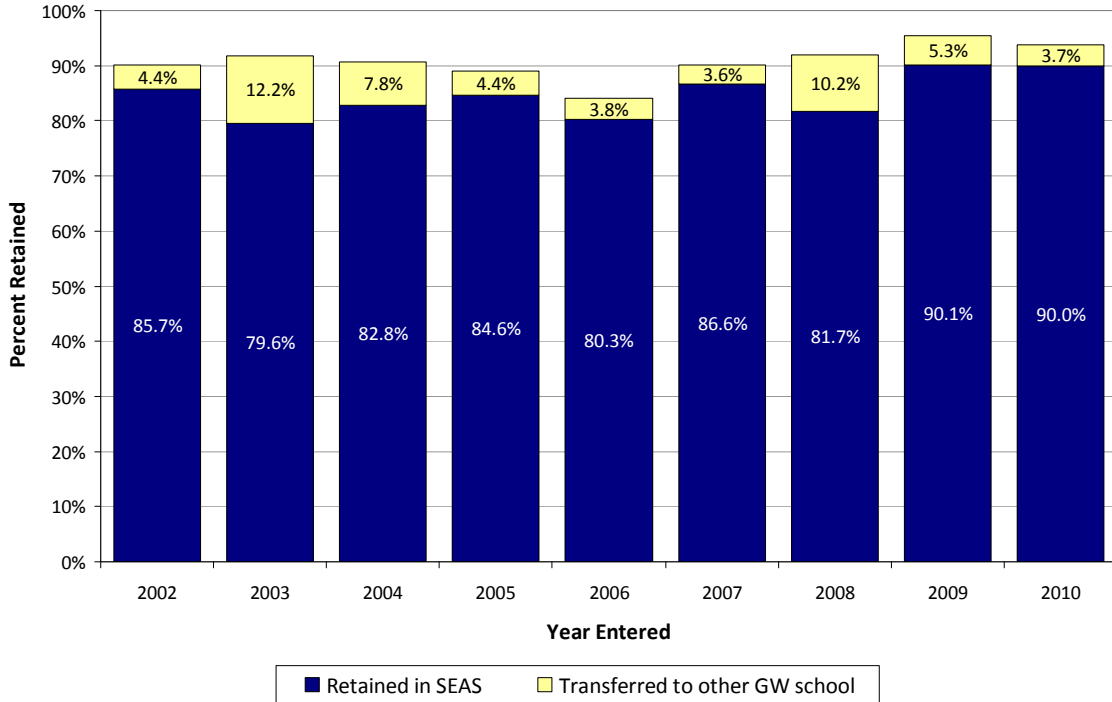
Students with GPAs below 2.0 may lose (or are warned that they will lose) their financial aid because they are not making adequate academic program, are put on probation; or, in extreme situations, are suspended. Many have accumulated debt, making it difficult for them to transfer elsewhere in the future. With better advising and monitoring the classes they take, some of these students may be able to succeed academically at GW. Early intervention and help learning how to study more effectively may save these students from failing.

In years past a warning system was in place to identify those students taking introductory courses who were doing C- or below graded work. Once identified, these students would receive letters from an associate dean or advisor informing them that they were in danger of failing; students were encouraged to talk to their professor, meet with an advisor, and attend study skills workshops offered at the University Counseling Center. The system relied upon the efforts of CCAS faculty, who would identify the students, and associate deans, who would collect and distribute the information. While the system worked for some students, in truth, it was an inefficient and cumbersome process; too often students were either not identified, or, if identified, received the information near the end of the semester.

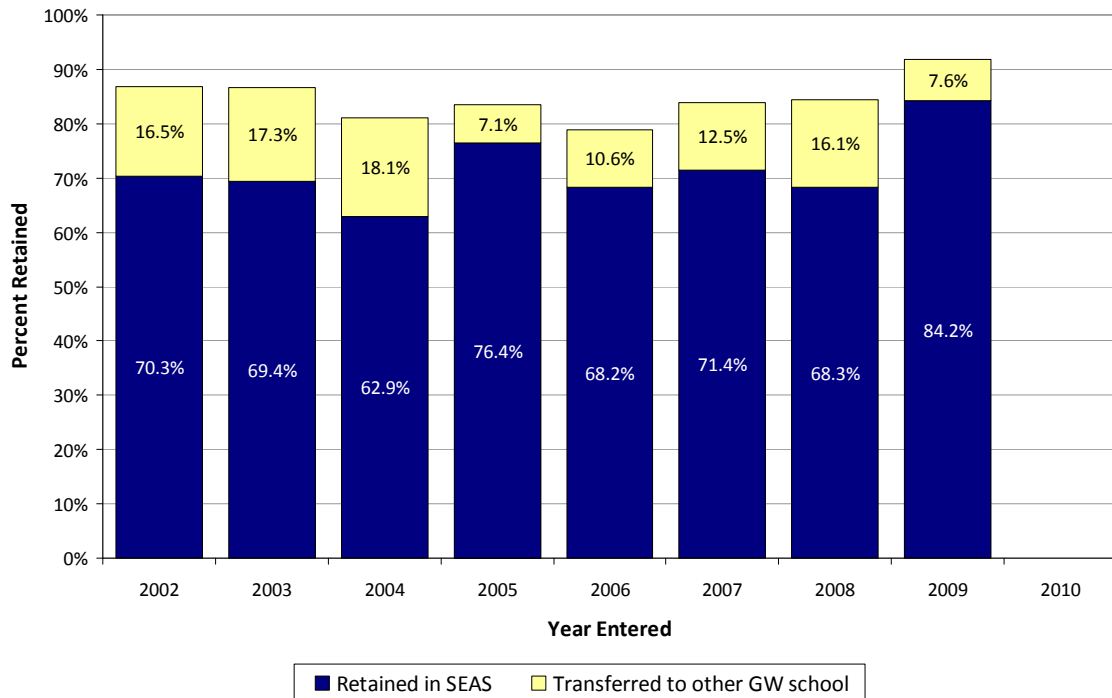
### ***SEAS undergraduates***

The first to second year retention rate for engineering students varies considerably, with 79.6% of the class entering in 2003 returning compared to a high of 90% of the class entering in 2009 returning (see Graph 5). Similarly, the second to third year retention rate varies from a low of 62.9% of the class entering in 2004 returning compared to 84.2% of the class in 2009 returning (see Graph 6).

**Graph 5. SEAS: First to Second Year Retention Rates**



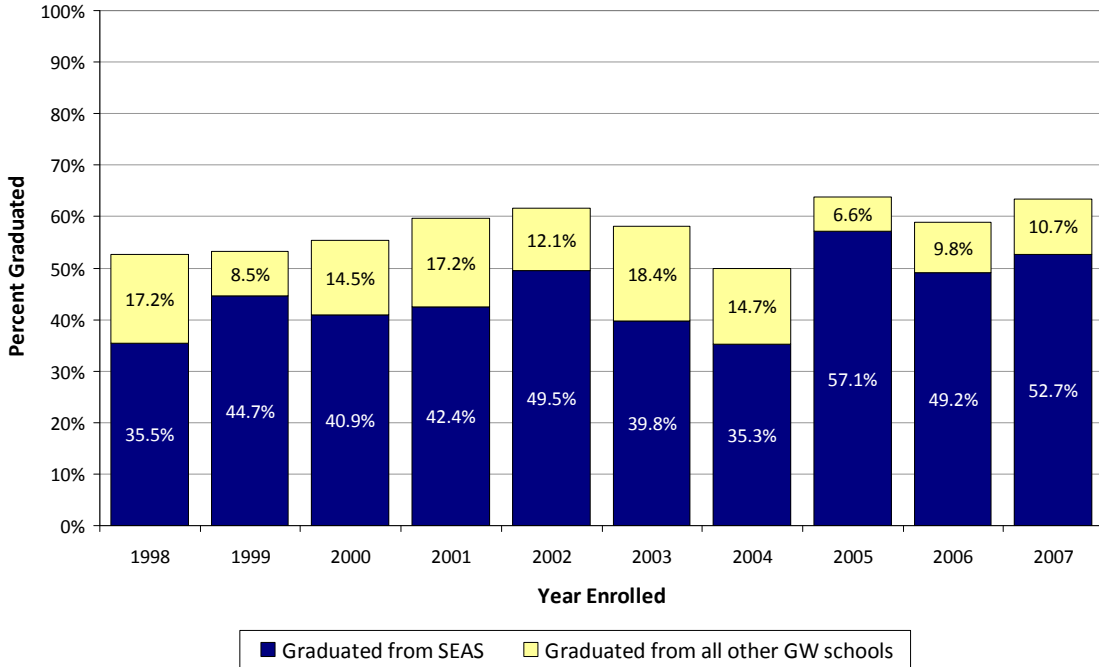
**Graph 6. SEAS: Second to Third Year Retention Rates**



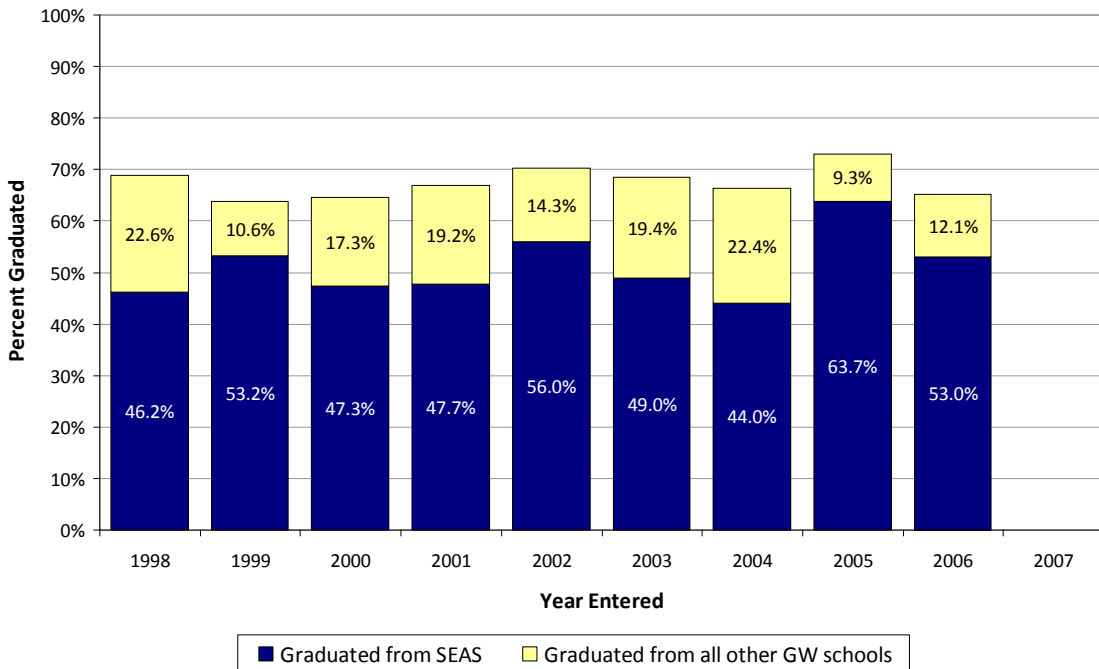
The four year graduation rate for engineering students who remain in SEAS ranges between only 35.5% of the class entering in 1998 to 52.7% of the class entering in 2007. The four year graduation rate was highest for the class entering in 2005 at 57.1% (see Graph 7). Five year graduation rates are substantially higher, ranging from 46.2% of the class entering in 1998 to 53% of the class entering in 2006 (see Graph 8). Another 1% of the entering class graduates in

six years (see Graph 9). While these rates are similar to national averages for engineering students, the number and percentage graduating in engineering is much lower than the retention and graduation rates for other GW schools and colleges.

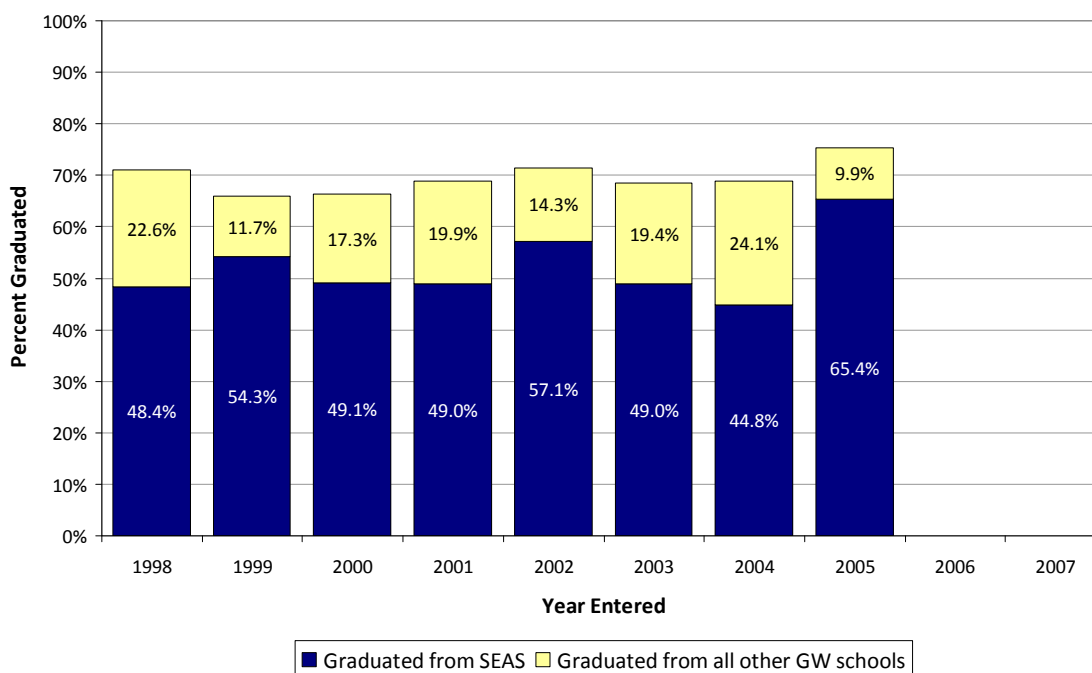
**Graph 7. SEAS: Four-Year Graduation Rates**



**Graph 8. SEAS: Five-Year Graduation Rates**



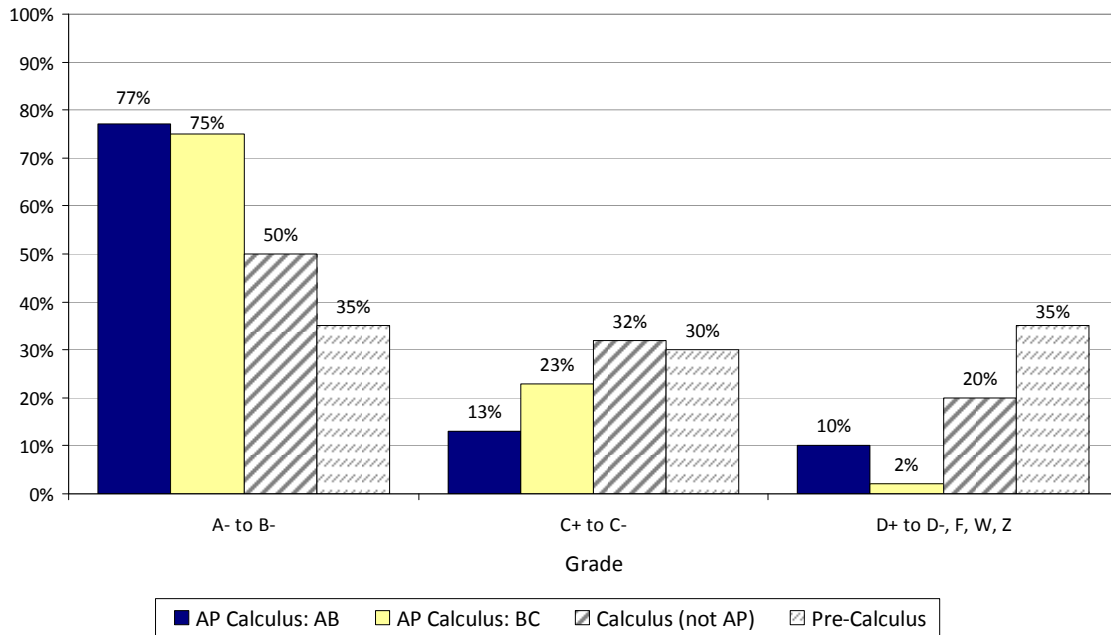
**Graph 9. SEAS: Six-Year Graduation Rates**



The curriculum for entering SEAS students is demanding and allows little flexibility in the courses students can take. All first semester students take a calculus course; most take at least one science course. The Mathematics Department offers a number of versions of introductory calculus for undergraduates, depending upon their level of preparedness. For those who took calculus in high school, the standard courses are either Math 1231 (Single Variable Calculus 1) and Math 1232 (Single Variable Calculus 2), both required for engineering students (except those majoring in computer science). For those who are not academically prepared to take Math 1231, Math 1220 and 1221 (Calculus with Pre-Calculus) may be a better option. However, very few students entering SEAS take Math 1220. Instead, regardless of their high school math experience, they enroll in Math 1231 as Math 1220 or 1221 would take students out of the curriculum sequence, and add another semester to their completion of requirements

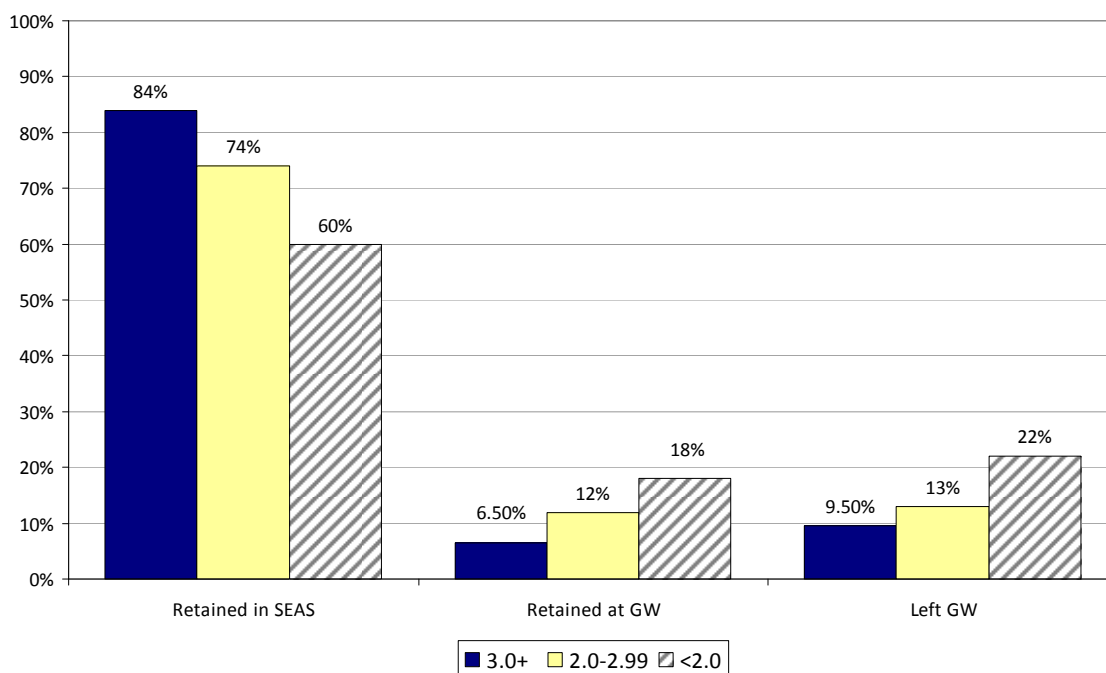
First semester grades are highly correlated with student retention and ultimately predict students' graduation from GW. For SEAS students, level of high school math is a strong predictor of students' performance in introductory calculus courses at GW (see Graph 10). Students who took AP Calculus in high school, regardless of whether or not they took the AP exam, earned higher grades in Math 1231 compared to those whose highest level of high school math was pre-calculus. Over 75% of those who took AP Calculus (either AB or BC versions) earned a grade of B- or above in Math 1220, 1231, 1232, or 1233; 50% of those who took calculus (not AP calculus) in high school earned a grade of B- or above in Math 1220, 1231, 1232, or 1233. Only 35% of those who took pre-calculus in high school earned a grade of B- or better in Math 1220, 1231, or 1232.

**Graph 10. Grade in College Calculus Course by Highest High School Calculus Course**



The ripple effect continues, as students' performance in Math 1231 is highly and positively correlated with their grade in Math 1232:  $r^2=.69$ . The grades in Math 1231 that differentiated between those who did poorly or marginally in Math 1232 (a grade of C- or below) ranged between a C+ to a C- (or below). More importantly, students' grades in Math 1231 have an impact of whether or not students stay enrolled in an engineering program. Eighty-four percent of those who earned at least a B grade in Math 1231 remained in SEAS, compared to 60% who earned less than a C grade (see Graph 11).

**Graph 11. Grades in Math 1231 and Retention**



In addition to calculus, most first semester students, except those in Computer Science, must take a biology or chemistry course designed for majors (those in biomedical engineering take both science courses) and a university writing course. Second semester courses in most programs include a second semester of calculus and university physics 1. The prerequisite for the physics course is Math 1231 (calculus 1); and university physics 1 and math 1232 are corequisites; students must enroll in both courses simultaneously. Failure to do so results in students falling behind in the curricula, and being ineligible to take required second-year courses.

Not all entering students have the requisite background in science, calculus, and writing to master these courses. Some may need to develop study skills and habits necessary to succeed in an engineering program, and others may do better learning these skills at a slower pace that will foster their success.

Further compounding this issue is that the financial aid packages for most SEAS students are much more generous than the packages offered to students in other schools. These packages are available only to students who remain in SEAS; the package changes if they transfer to another GW college or school. Thus, many students feel compelled to remain in SEAS as long as possible, dropping out once they lose their financial aid because of failure to made satisfactory academic progress. Only those in good academic standing can transfer to another GW college or school.

***Students with 114+ credits who leave GW***

An average of 30+ students a year earn at least 114 credits and do not return to GW to complete their degrees within six years. We purposefully chose to limit the pool to those with 114+ credits, as these students are able to “walk” at Commencement ceremonies. Perhaps they take the president’s conferring degree statement literally.



### Students with 114+ credits who become caught up in work

Almost all of the 114+ credits students are in good academic standing, defined by having a GPA of at least 2.0. Although each student has his or her own explanation and circumstances for not graduating, we suspect that many of them are caught between having “Potomac Fever” and the need to earn money to help finance their education. While we cannot support this theory with empirical evidence, a consequence of students’ working, interning, or volunteering more than 20 hours a week may be that they do not ultimately complete their degree.

GW’s high tuition, room, and board costs coupled with the expense of living in Washington, DC make GW an expensive school to attend. While the Student Financial Assistance Office does its best to meet students’ financial need with grants, work study, and loans, some students find it difficult to make ends meet. A recent study<sup>2</sup> (2010) of GW students’ paid and unpaid work experiences found that two-thirds of all GW undergraduates are working for pay, interning, or volunteering their time; 20% of them are participating in more than one of these activities (see Table 3). Over half the students (55%) who are working for pay use the money to help finance their education.

**Table 3. Paid work experience**

	Total	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
<b>Percent distribution of students with paid work experience by job type (multiple response)</b>					
Work-study on campus	38%	30%	39%	45%	34%
Work-study off campus	21%	39%	23%	13%	6%
Regular (non-work study) employment on campus	17%	10%	17%	20%	18%
Regular (non-work study) employment off campus	29%	25%	25%	28%	48%
Paid internship/Co-op	10%	4%	8%	12%	16%
Other	2%	-	-	-	-
<b>Average hours per week by job type</b>					
Work-study on campus	11.6	11.5	10.98	11.9	12.3
Work-study off campus	9.6	8.3	10.1	10.7	10.6
Regular (non-work study) employment on campus	13.9	8.9	13.9	12.7	22.4
Regular (non-work study) employment off campus	19.9	17.3	12.2	20.4	28.2
Paid internship/Co-op	15.3	13.0	16.3	12.9	19.1
Other	5.8	1.0	5.0	15.0	3.0
<b>Mean hours/week (per job)</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>15.9</b>
<b>Average wage per hour by job type</b>					
Work-study on campus	\$9.82	\$9.31	\$9.93	\$9.92	\$10.07
Work-study off campus	\$12.01	\$11.70	\$12.17	\$11.94	\$13.63
Regular (non-work study) employment on campus	\$10.52	\$9.31	\$10.22	\$11.19	\$11.44
Regular (non-work study) employment off campus	\$17.59	\$13.60	\$13.59	\$12.89	\$31.33
Paid internship/Co-op	\$15.49	\$10.00	\$13.12	\$12.44	\$23.89
Other	\$21.67	\$40.00	\$10.00	-	\$15.00
<b>Mean wage/hour (per job)</b>	<b>\$14.70</b>	<b>\$15.65</b>	<b>\$12.10</b>	<b>\$11.68</b>	<b>\$17.56</b>
<b>Mean hours/week (per student)</b>					
<b>Mean hours/week (per student)</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>16.2</b>	<b>24.2</b>
<b>Mean wage/hour (per student)</b>					
<b>Mean wage/hour (per student)</b>	<b>\$12.58</b>	<b>\$11.38</b>	<b>\$11.39</b>	<b>\$11.41</b>	<b>\$19.95</b>

<sup>2</sup> The Office of Survey Research and Analysis surveys students receiving need- or merit-based aid asking them about their out-of-class experiences including number of hours working, type of employment or internship, location of experience, reasons for engaging in these activities, and the benefits and drawbacks derived from these experiences.

On average, students spend about 15.5 hours a week working for pay. However, the number of hours working depends upon students' year in school and the location and type of paid employment. For example, 69% of the freshmen completing the survey were participating in work-study jobs either on- or off- campus, compared to 40% of the seniors. Those who are employed in these jobs typically work between 10 to 12 hours a week. Freshmen who work on campus in non-work study jobs average 8.9 hours a week compared to seniors, who work 22.4 hours a week on average. Those employed off campus work more hours: on average freshmen work 17.3 hours off campus compared to the 28.2 hours a week that seniors work. When all activities are combined, freshmen spend approximately 12.1 hours a week, seniors 24.2 hours a week. The average hourly wage earned by students working off campus is approximately \$18/hour, compared to \$10 to \$12 an hour for students employed in work-study jobs.

Research on student attrition consistently indicates that the more hours students work the more likely they are to shift from full-time to part-time enrollment and the less likely they are to complete their degree (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). The tipping point between persistence and attrition seems to be when students work more than 15-20 hours per week off-campus. Moreover, students who spend many hours off campus working, interning, or volunteering are less likely to integrate into the campus community, more likely to take fewer courses, and meet less often with faculty during office hours. Approximately one-third of the GW students who were employed (38%) or doing unpaid internships (33%) indicated that their employment somewhat or greatly impeded the amount of coursework they were able to complete, and 33% indicated it somewhat or greatly impeded their GPA or grades.

***Students with 114+ credits who do not graduate because of a Student Account hold:***

Regardless of the number of hours completed, there are students who leave GW with a Student Account hold on their account. Typically, these students owe a substantial amount of money to GW, and their accounts have been sent to a collections agency, which means they have to pay twice the amount owed. Having a hold means that students cannot access their transcript. Without a transcript they are unable to transfer to another college or university; some may not be able to apply for jobs in which a college transcript is needed.

The actual number of students who earned 114+ credits and had a hold on their account was small. However, because they were so close to graduation, the committee thought it was in the university's best interest to help them graduate.

Other patterns that emerged in the 114+ credit group are students: with a course in progress from their final semester who do not complete the course; who withdrew from courses or earned poor grades their final semester; or on continuous enrollment or leave of absence in their final semester.

Finally, we discovered another small number of students who seem to have the hours needed to graduate and no hold on their account but for inexplicable reasons failed to apply for graduation or graduate.

### ***Underrepresented groups***

Over the past ten years, the six year graduation rate for Black and Hispanic students has increased substantially. For example, of the 109 black students entering GW in 1994, 64 (58.7%) graduated. Of the 126 entering in 2004, 99 (78.6%) graduated. The most impressive gains were made recently. For Hispanic students, 60.6% of the 66 students entering in 1994 graduated in six years. By 2004, the number of Hispanic students entering had almost doubled, from 66 to 118. Of this group, 78% had graduated. Comparatively, the increase in graduation rates for Asian or White students was much smaller (see Graph 12), and recent graduation rates for unrepresented groups appear to be approaching the overall rate. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the academic and financial records of underrepresented student groups did not reveal any pattern or explanation for their leaving beyond what is noted above, so we did not formulate recommendations specific to underrepresented students.

**Table 4. George Washington University Graduation Rates - Completed within 6 years**

Year Entered	Black			American Indian			Asian		
	Enrolled	Graduated	%	Enrolled	Graduated	%	Enrolled	Graduated	%
1994	109	64	58.7	7	3	42.9	195	160	82.1
1995	78	56	71.8	4	4	100.0	163	121	74.2
1996	103	61	59.2	4	4	100.0	194	138	71.1
1997	94	57	60.6	9	6	66.7	184	143	77.7
1998	102	64	62.7	4	1	25.0	171	140	81.9
1999	93	65	69.9	6	5	83.3	213	176	82.6
2000	97	71	73.2	4	3	75.0	189	146	77.2
2001	128	90	70.3	8	5	62.5	266	209	78.6
2002	113	80	70.8	2	1	50.0	199	159	79.9
2003	75	59	78.7	5	5	100.0	209	161	77.0
2004	126	99	78.6	9	8	88.9	235	193	82.1
2005	135	93	68.9	5	4	80.0	244	194	79.5

Year Entered	Hispanic			White			Nonresident		
	Enrolled	Graduated	%	Enrolled	Graduated	%	Enrolled	Graduated	%
1994	66	40	60.6	1,002	771	76.9	82	34	41.5
1995	64	41	64.1	920	692	75.2	93	53	57.0
1996	71	41	57.7	1,083	828	76.5	67	36	53.7
1997	83	53	63.9	1,103	854	77.4	79	48	60.8
1998	82	60	73.2	1,184	953	80.5	59	32	54.2
1999	82	60	73.2	1,428	1,137	79.6	82	57	69.5
2000	85	62	72.9	1,427	1,142	80.0	73	60	82.2
2001	105	77	73.3	1,696	1,354	79.8	101	66	65.3
2002	90	69	76.7	1,518	1,240	81.7	66	50	75.8
2003	99	74	74.7	1,550	1,291	83.3	65	49	75.4
2004	118	92	78.0	1,763	1,439	81.6	99	80	80.8
2005	135	114	84.4	1,562	1,273	81.5	86	72	83.7

Year Entered	Unknown			Total		
	Enrolled	Graduated	%	Enrolled	Graduated	%
1994	107	76	71.0	1,568	1,148	73.2
1995	73	48	65.8	1,395	1,015	72.8
1996	135	94	69.6	1,657	1,202	72.5
1997	172	128	74.4	1,724	1,289	74.8
1998	185	147	79.5	1,787	1,397	78.2
1999	216	154	71.3	2,120	1,654	78.0
2000	224	163	72.8	2,099	1,647	78.5
2001	262	202	77.1	2,566	2,003	78.1
2002	295	245	83.1	2,283	1,844	80.8
2003	257	196	76.3	2,260	1,835	81.2
2004	273	202	74.0	2,623	2,113	80.6
2005	241	203	84.2	2,408	1,953	81.1

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics  
Institutional Research and Planning, 07/24/2012

### Recommendations

The remainder of this report will focus on what we believe would have the greatest impact on improving retention and graduation rates. Many recommendations reflect what is considered in the field “good practice” and should be put in place to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience for all students. As noted above, some of these recommendations have already been piloted or were put into place while the Task Force was meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Continue to increase accessibility, transparency, and use of data on incoming and current students. Provide academic advisors with access to incoming students’ high school transcripts, standardized test scores, and other pertinent information (such as students’ scores on GW math and language placement tests) that may impact how students are advised about appropriate courses.**

**RATIONALE:** As indicated above, first semester GPA is the strongest predictor of students’ retention and ultimate graduation. Making sure that students are enrolled in the appropriate introductory courses given their interests and prior coursework helps launch their college careers in a positive way. However, to properly advise incoming students about courses, faculty and professional advisors need to have access to students’ high school and college transcripts, test scores, and other relevant information.

The Admissions Office maintains its own database (Nolij) containing students’ high school transcripts, application for admissions, test scores, and letters of recommendation. The database is not accessible to others outside the Admissions Office, and most of the applicant information is not downloaded into Banner. Moreover, scores on AP tests taken during students’ senior year are not available until mid-July, after students have registered for first semester courses. Without access to high school transcripts, academic advisors do not have knowledge about incoming students’ academic strengths and where they may need assistance.

Students who plan to continue studying a foreign language that they took in high school must take a language placement test to ensure they are placed in the appropriate level course. Similarly, students considering taking a calculus course must take a math placement test which provides guidance about which introductory calculus course is most appropriate for them. Neither of these placement scores is recorded in Banner. Instead, academic advisors are dependent upon students “remembering” their scores.

**PROPOSED ACTION:**

*Admissions Office*

- Continue to ensure that all academic advisors working with undergraduates have access to high school and other college transcripts and other relevant high school information that is only available in Noli;
- Continue to provide academic advisors with access to students’ standardized test scores and high school ranks, both of which are available in Banner;
- Continue to provide advisors with students’ AP scores as soon as they are released in the summer, so that advisors can make sure that students have the necessary background to enroll in certain courses and that they are not enrolling in courses for which they received AP credit.

*Registrar’s Office*

- Both math and foreign language placement tests should be available in Banner. Scores on these tests should be recorded in Banner and accessible to academic advisors and students.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Expand to all schools the early identification system whereby students in introductory courses who are doing either exceptional or sub-standard work can be identified early in the semester.**

RATIONALE: Two clusters of students who are at risk for leaving GW prior to earning their degrees are students with high GPAs (3.5+) and those with GPAs of 2.0 or below. As noted above, many of the students with high GPAs are not receiving either merit- or need-based aid. They have the luxury of not relying on the amount of financial assistance they receive to determine where they can transfer. Obviously, these academically strong students are the ones we want to retain.

On the opposite end of the spectrum approximately 60 students a year leave because their GPA is 2.0 or below. These students leave because they are doing substandard work; many leave with debt, making it difficult for them to transfer elsewhere in the future. With better advising and monitoring of the courses they take, some of these students may turn out to be good students who need some assistance and remedial work and better study skills to help them adjust to college.

The Faculty Feedback System in Banner is designed to gather information from faculty about how students are performing in their classes. It is attached to faculty enrollment reports in Banner and is easy to access. Faculty have the choice of either entering a current grade, selecting an issue about a student’s performance (e.g., noting that students are not attending class) they wish to report, or entering written comments about a specific student. The Task Force was so excited about this feature that the Registrar’s Office rolled it out to all schools for

all students for the spring semester. Reports identifying students in the Faculty Feedback System were developed and are available in DataMart for the use of all.

The Faculty Feedback System is a terrific tool, but is effective only if it is used. Faculty need to be encouraged to have graded assignments, quizzes, or tests early in the semester (preferably within the first six weeks of the semester) so they can input information about students' academic performance into the Feedback System. Professional and faculty advisors need to access the information, and, when appropriate, intervene in a timely fashion. Intervention has a better chance of succeeding if students are identified and contacted early in the semester, before they get into serious academic trouble.

#### PROPOSED ACTION

*Registrar, Deans' Offices, and University Counseling Center*

- Develop an implementation plan for an expanded roll-out of the Faculty Feedback System. The plan should include standardization of the information collected (if appropriate); indication of who or which office(s) has access to this information; designation of which office(s) or person(s) is responsible for disseminating information about students of concern; which office or person is responsible for following-up with students of concern and exceptional students; a timetable for collecting and disseminating information about students; and a plan for publicizing this feature.
  - Undergraduate and graduate deans should encourage their faculty to assign graded work early in the semester (preferably during the first six weeks of the semester);
  - Faculty teaching introductory courses need to be made aware of and instructed on how to input information about their current students into the system; advisors, faculty, deans, and others for whom this information is important need to be instructed about how to access this information in DataMart;
  - Faculty should be informed about this feature during new faculty orientation;
  - Faculty should be encouraged to use the feature early (preferably during the first four to six weeks of the semester) in the semester; the Provost's office can emphasize the importance of this effort with both deans and faculty;
  - A protocol should be developed on how best to work with students who are doing substandard work. Once identified, advisors and other academic support services providers should work with these students to identify problems that may be causing their poor performance and help them improve their study skills;
  - With this in mind, the University Counseling Center should be commissioned to assess its resources for supporting struggling student, ensure adequate availability of and publicity for study skills and time management workshops, and possibly develop new support services;
  - The Educational Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate should draft a resolution proposing that faculty actively use the Faculty Feedback System to identify outstanding or at-risk students early in the semester. The resolution should propose that faculty assign graded work within the first four weeks (but not later than eight weeks) in the semester and to record this information in Banner once they have a basis for judgment.
- Students doing excellent work should be identified early in their academic careers with the goal of engaging them and further developing their talents. These students should

be encouraged to take challenging courses, to apply for research fellowships, and to build relationships with faculty working or teaching in their fields of interest. By better integrating exceptional students into the academic mission of the university, we hope many will consider completing their degrees at GW.

- Exceptional students should be paired early in their academic career with a faculty mentor, preferably in a field the student is interested in, who will nurture them;
- If appropriate, students should be encouraged to apply to the Honors Program and apply for research fellowships;
- Additional funds should be made available to these students for summer research or project support;
- When appropriate, merit aid should be awarded to those who may not have received it in the past.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Continue to refine the process whereby faculty and staff monitoring and using the various early-identification systems currently in place (i.e., Faculty Feedback System, CARE Network, academic probation processes) are working together to identify, share information about, and track students and are informed about any interventions performed.**

RATIONALE: The Faculty Feedback System in Banner and the CARE Network were put into place in the past year to identify students of concern and supplement the long-standing processes in the schools to put low-performing students on academic probation. The Faculty Feedback System is managed by the Registrar’s Office; faculty are the primary source for identifying students. The CARE Network<sup>3</sup> was established by the Dean of Students office to identify and respond to students needing academic, social, and/or psychological support. Students are identified through multiple sources and are assigned a case manager who will work individually with the student to make sure they are connected to the appropriate support systems.

Regardless of the system in which the students are identified, it is important that the academic and student affairs offices and personnel continue to work together to communicate about and follow-up with students who are not attending classes, seem distressed, are doing poorly in class, are exhibiting inappropriate behavior, and so on.

#### PROPOSED ACTION

##### *Advisors and dean of student affairs staff*

- Professional academic advisors from each of the colleges, schools; advisors for students in special programs (i.e., Honors, Women’s Leadership); and advisors working with student athletics and disabled, international, and multicultural students) should be members of the CARE Network;
- Procedures and timelines should continue to be developed that include publicizing the various systems so that they are used to identify appropriate students; assigning point persons for each system who are responsible for keeping tabs on new additions and

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<sup>3</sup> At the time this report was being released the associate dean of student affairs, who was responsible for managing the CARE Network, resigned from her position. We urge the Dean of Student Affairs to appoint a replacement as soon as possible to ensure that students entered into the system are assigned case managers and follow-up assistance is provided .

- making sure that this information is passed on to the appropriate office; and instituting follow-up procedures;
- Academic and student affairs representatives should meet at least once a semester to review and revise procedures, analyze extreme cases, and brainstorm alternative solutions to problematic scenarios.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Continue to identify students who are doing substandard academic work and those not on-track to graduate in four years, design intervention programs to get them back on track, and continue to follow-up with them to ensure they stay on track.**

RATIONALE: Technology (i.e., Faculty Feedback System and CARE) helps simplify the process of identifying students at risk and of tracking students' academic progress (using DegreeMap). Once students are identified, academic advisors need to take the lead in developing and implementing intervention strategies to increase students' academic adjustment and performance.

Research on academic advising consistently indicates its important role in students' persistence and eventual graduation (Terenzini and Pascarelli, 2005). Advisors are an integral part of the educational process and can enhance student learning and their development. One of the core values of academic advising put forth by the National Academic Advising Association is "Advisors are responsible to the individuals they advise." Through "regular student contact...advisors gain meaningful insights into students' diverse academic, social, and personal experiences and needs. Advisors use these insights to assist students as they transition to new academic and social communities, develop sound academic and career goals, and ultimately, become successful learner<sup>4</sup>."

Whether it is helping students improve their study and test-taking skills, developing effective time management skills, suggesting tutors, encouraging meetings with faculty, or helping students select the most appropriate courses, advisors need to work individually with these students to provide the scaffolding they need to succeed.

#### PROPOSED ACTIONS:

##### *Advisors:*

- Professional advisors should continue to be proactive, identifying and following up with students who appear to be experiencing academic difficulty, whether it is in the form of earning poor or incomplete grades, a drastic decline in academic performance, dropping or withdrawing from courses, failing to attend class, or registering for inappropriate courses.
- Procedures for monitoring students on probation, including limiting the number of courses they can take, should be established for each school<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> NACADA. (2005). NACADA statement of core values of academic advising. Retrieved from the *NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources* Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Clearinghouse/AdvisingIssues/Core-Values-Declaration.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Some schools, such as CCAS, ESIA, and SB, are already doing this.



**RECOMMENDATION 5: Develop a highly structured, multifaceted program (i.e., a summer bridge program, five-year BS degree) to improve new engineering students' academic performances, especially in calculus and science courses, in order to increase persistence in SEAS.**

**RATIONALE:**

As discussed above, the lower retention and graduation rates of SEAS students can be explained by a number of factors. The heavy science and math first-year curriculum is demanding even for GW's top students. Most degrees in SEAS require between 126-132 credits, 6-12 credits more than are required in the other schools; to graduate in four years, students must take more than the recommended 15 credit hours most semesters. The generous financial aid package put in place to increase enrollment in SEAS is contingent upon students remaining in SEAS. When combined, these factors can make it very difficult for some students to complete an engineering degree.

The Mathematics Department recommends that those who score below 75 on the Math Placement Test (or an equivalent score on the AP Calculus or SAT II Math tests) should enroll in a two-semester calculus/pre-calculus sequence. However, students who enroll in Math 1020 and 1021 (calculus with pre-calculus) fall behind their peers, as they cannot take Physics 1021 concurrently with Math 1232, both courses that are required in students' second semester.

Those students who opt to take Math 1231 without adequate high school preparation are setting themselves up to fail. Students earning low grades in Math 1231 tend to do poorly in Math 1232; some will fail the second course. The correlation between grade in Math 1231 and Math 1232 is very high ( $r^2=.69$ ).

The few studies that have looked at the effects of summer bridge programs on retention found that program participants were more likely than nonparticipants to persist into their second year of college<sup>6</sup> (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). Typically, bridge programs are offered to incoming students. Another option is for GW to develop a bridge program between students' freshman and sophomore year or enhance tutorial support for students in math courses.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS:**

*Advisors and Math Department*

- By providing advisors access to students' high school transcripts, (Recommendation 1), SEAS advisors should be able to guide students about the most appropriate courses for them to take given their high school experience. For example, students with low SAT writing scores or those for whom English is a second language should be discouraged from taking UW 1020 their first semester if they are also taking two science and a calculus course;
- Advisors should work with incoming students to make sure they are placed in the appropriate level of introductory calculus based on their high school transcript and math placement test scores. Students who have taken only pre-calculus in high school should

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<sup>6</sup> Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How College Affects Student, Volume 2: A Third Decade of Research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- be informed that they must either take calculus at a community college prior to enrolling in SEAS or they should enroll in calculus with pre-calculus (Math 1020-1021);
- Math placement tests (or an equivalent standardized test score) should be required for all students who are planning to enroll in any of the introductory calculus courses (Math 1220 or, 1231). Only those students who place into a particular introductory calculus course should be permitted to register for that course;
- Create small sections of calculus courses for SEAS students so that the professor can work with them to master the material. Provide engineering problems for students to solve. Also require that homework be turned in and checked;
- A prerequisite for Math 1232 should be earning at least a B- in Math 1231. Students who have earned a C or worse in Math 1231 should repeat the course and not be allowed to enroll in Math 1232.

#### *SEAS*

- Tutors should continue to be available for students in calculus and other introductory science courses. Tutoring should be mandatory for any student doing substandard work by the middle of the semester;
- Consider making available online tutorial programs that allow students to work through problems on their own;
- Develop and provide funding to support a summer bridge program either prior to students' first semester whereby students can live on campus and take a pre-calculus and writing course in the summer or between their freshman and sophomore year, if they fall behind.

#### *Admissions and Student Financial Assistance*

- Consider enrolling potential engineering students who do not have the requisite math and science skills in a university college program, modeled after one at the University of Maryland, whereby students are given more time to master the introductory courses needed to succeed in engineering. If they master these courses they can apply to SEAS in their sophomore year or choose to remain in the university college and select a different major better suited to their academic strengths;
- Generous financial assistance packages should be made available to students who earn high grades in introductory calculus and science courses during their first year and who either want to continue in SEAS or transfer into SEAS from another school. The financial aid incentive should be used to attract and keep students who demonstrate academic success.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6: Identify students with 114+ credits, who are in good academic standing, and who do not graduate and work with them to make sure they graduate.**

**RATIONALE:** As mentioned above, there are a number of students who have completed 114+ credits and do not graduate. Usually it is a combination of circumstances that conspire to keep them from completing their degree. Each student has a unique story to explain it. However, with proactive and continuous outreach to those students for whom graduation is realistic, we can get many to complete their degrees.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

*Advisors*

- Identify students who should be graduating or should have graduated recently but have not applied for graduation or have not graduated. Determine what coursework they are missing and what they need to graduate, as well as the circumstances that are keeping or that kept them from graduating;
- Make contact with such students to convey interest in helping them graduate and find out what issues are keeping or have kept the student from graduating. Advise the students on what they need to do to graduate and work with them to facilitate their completing coursework and requirements, petitions, and paperwork so they earn their degree;
- With support from the Council of Associate Deans, work, on the one hand, toward more consistent policies across schools on matters such as academic probation, residency requirements, and the like, but also institute appropriate and agreed-upon forms of flexibility for students who are close to meeting graduation requirements (e.g., allow a waiver of full residency requirements to allow a student to take a course or two elsewhere rather than through GW, loosen standards regarding which courses can satisfy which requirements);
- Where financial considerations are involved, contact Student Accounts and/or Student Financial Assistance to help put in place appropriate arrangements for the individual student.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Revise the Student Accounts hold policy and provide additional support to students in good academic standing who have only one semester's worth of courses to complete and do not have enough funds.**

RATIONALE: Student Accounts has a policy whereby students who have an unpaid balance of \$500 or more cannot register for classes. When we look at students who leave GW before completing their degree, by far the largest group is those who owe money or have a student account hold. An updating of this policy could benefit students at any point in their academic career by making it easier for them to continue their studies unimpeded. Of special concern are those students who are within a semester (15 credits or less) of graduating who cannot register because of a student account hold.

The policy of not letting students register if they have a balance of \$500 or more was instituted many years ago, when tuition was much lower. The minimum balance has not been increased commensurate with the increase in tuition. Moreover, little is done currently to assist students who are almost eligible to graduate and who have modest unpaid balances to graduate.

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

*Advisors*

- Identify students who should be graduating or should have graduated recently but have not and determine what coursework they are missing, whether they have a student account hold, and so on. Make contact with such students to convey interest in helping them graduate and find out what issues have kept the student from graduating. Make recommendations to Student Accounts and/or Student Financial Assistance about how to proceed on a case by case basis.

### *Student Accounts*

- Increase the \$500 student account hold minimum to \$1500, so it is more in line with the increase in tuition;
- Prior to registration or the beginning of the semester, run a list of students who have earned 105 credits or more, are in good academic standing, and cannot register because of a student accounts hold. Together with the Financial Assistance office and the student's advisor, work out a payment plan so students can complete their coursework.

### *Student Financial Assistance*

- Set aside money in the financial aid budget and develop a scholarship fund that is designed specifically for students near graduation who need extra funds to graduate;
- Provide financial aid counseling, scholarships, or loans to help students reduce their balance (and thus lift their student account hold);
- Create financial literacy programs for upper class students and their parents;
- Create a student financial assistance counselor position to work with students experiencing financial difficulty who are near completion of their degree;
- Provide academic advisors with the direct telephone numbers of the appropriate financial assistance counselors so that they can communicate about students experiencing financial problems.

## **Implementation and Assessment**

As stated above, the original goal of the Task Force was to increase revenue by increasing graduation rates and shortening students' time to graduation. While the Task Force did not identify significant sources of revenue or savings, it has purposefully not proposed recommendations that will cost the university significant additional money. Rather, the recommendations above build on resources that have been recently put in place using ITF money (i.e., DegreeMap, the CARE Network, additional professional advisors in almost all the undergraduate schools).

Some of the recommendations stated above have been implemented. Others should be implemented during Academic Year 2012-2013. To move this process along, the Task Force recommends that the following people, offices, and advisory groups be responsible for oversight of these recommendations.

- Associate Provost for Student Financial Assistance will oversee all recommendations related to student financial assistance and student accounts;
- Registrar will oversee all recommendations related to the expanded roll-out of the Faculty Feedback System and recording placement test scores in Banner;
- Associate Provost for Undergraduate Admissions will ensure that admissions files in Nolij continue to be accessible to all advisors;
- The Provost will seek the deans' support for the Task Force's recommendations so that recommendations dependent on the efforts of the schools' academic advisors are implemented;
- The Academic Advising Advisory Committee will oversee implementation of recommendations related to academic advising across the schools, including coordination with respect to the CARE Network and the University Counseling Center's academic support programs;

- Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment will oversee the implementation of all recommendations and report, annually, to the Provost on improvement in retention and graduation rates.

### **Conclusion**

As we tried to show in this report, there is no “silver bullet” that will magically increase GW’s graduation rates. Students leave for a variety of reasons, some of which are interrelated and some of which are unique to the student. However, it is important to keep in mind that each student who earns a degree helps increase GW’s graduation rate. For every 25 students who we help to graduate, GW’s graduation rate increases by 1 percentage point. Our hope is that if the recommendations above are implemented, they will not only increase GW’s graduation rates but make the undergraduate experience something that students will remember fondly.