

**Task Force on Research Productivity
Results of Faculty Survey**

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Executive Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The online survey of the Task Force on Research Productivity received a strong response rate from faculty, with 227 responses received. Those responses identified a number of areas which faculty perceived to interfere with increasing research productivity and securing additional external funding. Important areas singled out by the numerous comments received included lack of space for research activities; lack of technical and clerical/budget support, particularly at the departmental level; workload [teaching and service] too high for research; lack of support from OSP, and lack of budget to support research. The items which received the strongest negative comments from faculty included financial items [budget management, Banner, fiscal policies, purchasing], and research compliance, especially the IRB. Perhaps the most damning comments were several statements to the effect that Mason has failed to develop an effective research culture, and that faculty are assailed from all sides with impediments and roadblocks to publication and funding. Some of these were accompanied by statements that faculty are forced by the lack of facilities/support to do their research in non-Mason facilities, depriving Mason of funding. The committee suggests that the university use the results of this survey to take a broad look at many areas that may be improved in an effort to eliminate faculty barriers, as this holistic approach may better facilitate change in the research culture at Mason. Some target areas where processes or policies may be improved include:

Deans and Directors: assess staffing in order to request/allocate support staff to effectively support scholarship, including technical support, purchasing staff, and budget analysts, as appropriate. Insure that your own unit has adequate support for research and grants. Identify and request needed space and DE to support scholarship. Instill research culture among staff where needed.

Budget: enhance budget software and fiscal practices to make sure financial data is accurate, timely and easy to use. Provide information and workshops to faculty and support staff who want to better understand software and budget procedures.

Compliance: assume a more proactive approach to facilitate scholarship that is fully compliant. Currently, activities of the compliance office are viewed as obstructive of scholarship. Develop guidance materials that will facilitate a better understanding of compliance procedures and work more closely with faculty so that applications are processed as efficiently as possible.

OSP: review practices [already in progress] with a view toward increasing support for faculty in obtaining/managing funding.

In summary, Mason, despite its stated intentions of growing its research funding, currently has a number of perceived internal barriers to scholarship and funding. Growing the funding depends on a reduction of those barriers and a collaborative effort on the part of administration and faculty to develop effective systems and processes to support research.

Charge and History

The Task Force on Research Productivity was established by the Faculty Senate, with the following charge:

The Task Force is charged to:

- 1. survey the Faculty about all aspects of management of research and grants that affect productivity;*
- 2. discuss whatever problems or issues that are identified with relevant offices and individuals and to seek to resolve the concerns of Faculty; and*
- 3. report its findings, in both written and oral form, to the Faculty Senate at the April, 2008 meeting.*

The final report should recognize both the strengths and deficiencies of the research environment, should specify the steps that have been taken to resolve problems or deficiencies and state what issues still need to be addressed.


The Task Force shall consist of three faculty members elected by the Senate, one of whom must be a Senator, a Provost's appointee and a representative of the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Rationale: *George Mason University aspires to increase externally funded research and to gain status as a world-class research university. Concerns have been expressed about various issues that directly and negatively affect the research efforts and productivity of Mason Faculty, e.g., lengthy approval times for both human and animal experiments; problems with the Office of Sponsored Programs; difficulties with budget management software; and onerous requirements for conducting lab and other research.*

In Fall, 2007, the Task Force met several times, consulted informally with a number of chairs to determine what areas to include on an all-faculty questionnaire to determine faculty perceptions of impediments to research and funding. The resulting questionnaire [questions and ratings attached] was posted on Survey Monkey and announced to faculty through a Faculty Senate All-Faculty email, and also by asking associate deans for research to announce to their own faculty. After an approximately six-week response period, the Task Force reviewed the ratings and summarized the comments.

It was not the intent of the Task Force to conduct a detailed item analysis before proceeding, but rather to develop a sense of the faculty regarding areas perceived as impediments to research and funding. The preceding summary, the attached summaries of ratings, and the following summaries of comments appear to support the conclusions we reach, and we now move to contact offices responsible for areas perceived by faculty as impeding research and funding.

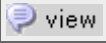
Summary of Ratings

| 1. I. Facilities | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Supports my research | Supports my research a little | Has no impact on my research | Impedes my research a little | Impedes my research a lot | Rating Average | Response Count |
| a. the SPACE available to you for conducting research [if you have/need specialized space such as animal housing or biocontainment facilities, please outline in the comments section] | 22.7% (46) | 12.8% (26) | 32.0% (65) | 20.2% (41) | 12.3% (25) | 2.87 | 203 |
| b. the EQUIPMENT available to you for conducting research | 23.6% (48) | 25.1% (51) | 19.7% (40) | 21.7% (44) | 9.9% (20) | 2.69 | 203 |
| c. availability of SHARED RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION AND FACILITIES | 10.9% (20) | 21.2% (39) | 42.9% (79) | 16.8% (31) | 8.2% (15) | 2.90 | 184 |
| d. adequacy of MAINTENANCE [staff support and/or maintenance contracts] for equipment for your research | 14.1% (26) | 14.6% (27) | 34.1% (63) | 20.5% (38) | 16.8% (31) | 3.11 | 185 |
|  view Comments about facilities and their impact on your research [please be specific] | | | | | | | 75 |
| | answered question | | | | | | 207 |
| | skipped question | | | | | | 10 |

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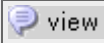
2. II. Time available for your research

| | Supports my research | Supports my research a little | Has no impact on my research | Impedes my research a little | Impedes my research a lot | Rating Average | Response Count |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. your TEACHING LOAD's impact on time available for research | 7.6% (16) | 11.8% (25) | 9.5% (20) | 40.3% (85) | 30.8% (65) | 3.75 | 211 |
| b. your SERVICE LOAD'S [including administrative responsibilities, committees, advising, etc] impact on time available for research | 5.3% (11) | 5.8% (12) | 16.8% (35) | 36.5% (76) | 35.6% (74) | 3.91 | 208 |
| | <i>answered question</i> | | | | | | 211 |
| | <i>skipped question</i> | | | | | | 6 |

| 3. Compliance Activities: | | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Supports my research | Supports my research a little | Has no impact on my research | Impedes my research a little | Impedes my research a lot | Rating Average | Response Count |
| c. the Institutional Review Board [Human Subjects] impact on time available for research | 3.7% (7) | 6.4% (12) | 33.7% (63) | 33.7% (63) | 22.5% (42) | 3.65 | 187 |
| d. the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee's impact on time available for research | 1.2% (2) | 0.0% (0) | 93.3% (152) | 3.7% (6) | 1.8% (3) | 3.05 | 163 |
| e. the Environmental Health and Safety Office's impact on time available for research | 1.8% (3) | 0.0% (0) | 92.6% (151) | 5.5% (9) | 0.0% (0) | 3.02 | 163 |
|  Comments about these and other factors which impact the time available for your research [please be specific] | | | | | | | 64 |
| | answered question | | | | | | 189 |
| | skipped question | | | | | | 28 |


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5. IV. Departmental/College Support for Grants Management

| | Supports my research | Supports my research a little | Has no impact on my research | Impedes my research a little | Impedes my research a lot | Rating Average | Response Count |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. availability/quality of DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT for purchasing, fiscal management, technical support | 13.6% (27) | 26.8% (53) | 14.1% (28) | 27.8% (55) | 17.7% (35) | 3.09 | 198 |
| b. the availability of STRONG GRADUATE STUDENTS when required for your research, including factors of program strength and recruitment resources for these students | 12.4% (25) | 14.4% (29) | 5.0% (10) | 22.3% (45) | 46.0% (93) | 3.75 | 202 |
| c. whether DEPARTMENT POLICIES OR PRACTICES advance or impede your scholarship | 16.4% (32) | 16.9% (33) | 23.6% (46) | 27.2% (53) | 15.9% (31) | 3.09 | 195 |
|  Comments about these and other factors of College/Department support which impact your research [please be specific] | | | | | | | 81 |
| | answered question | | | | | | 207 |
| | skipped question | | | | | | 10 |

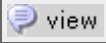
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6. V. Financial support for research.

| | Supports my research | Supports my research a little | Has no impact on my research | Impedes my research a little | Impedes my research a lot | Rating Average | Response Count |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| a. Adequacy of STARTUP PACKAGES [including salary] for recruiting strong new faculty | 4.8% (9) | 15.4% (29) | 28.2% (53) | 26.1% (49) | 25.5% (48) | 3.52 | 188 |
| b. Adequacy of INTERNAL SEED MONEY [small grants programs, departmental research funds] for pilot work | 5.6% (11) | 17.2% (34) | 17.7% (35) | 27.3% (54) | 32.3% (64) | 3.64 | 198 |
| c. Adequacy of support for TRAINING AND NETWORKING [such as conference presentation and workshop attendance] | 6.6% (13) | 16.7% (33) | 21.2% (42) | 25.8% (51) | 29.8% (59) | 3.56 | 198 |
|  view Comments about these and other factors which impact financial support needed for scholarship [please be specific] | | | | | | | 76 |
| | answered question | | | | | | 202 |
| | skipped question | | | | | | 15 |

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7. VI. Collaboration and mentoring

| | Supports my research | Supports my research a little | Has no impact on my research | Impedes my research a little | Impedes my research a lot | Rating Average | Response Count |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| a. Ease of locating COLLABORATORS AND MENTORS | 17.0% (34) | 25.0% (50) | 25.0% (50) | 22.0% (44) | 11.0% (22) | 2.85 | 200 |
| b. Ease of working with and developing/approving JOINT PROPOSALS | 12.2% (23) | 19.1% (36) | 38.8% (73) | 21.3% (40) | 8.5% (16) | 2.95 | 188 |
|  Comments about these and other factors which impact working with collaborators and mentors [please be specific] | | | | | | | 47 |
| | answered question | | | | | | 200 |
| | skipped question | | | | | | 17 |

Summaries of Comments

Members of the Task Force summarized comments received from faculty. The style in which each member summarized the comments differs a bit, ranging from extensive citation of representative comments to more general summaries of other sections, but we believe that they capture the essence of faculty comments.

Facilities

The comments reflected significant problems with adequacy of research space, some problems with equitable assignment of that, and problems with equipment acquisition, maintenance arrangements, sharing arrangements. Several faculty commented on the necessity to do research off-campus, in some cases depriving Mason of research funds. Representative comments:

- Lack of staff support for maintaining computing equipment is a HUGE impediment for research. I am forced to maintain any equipment I use for research myself.
- Budgets continuously limit equipment purchases; space limits keep individuals from group collaboration and meeting opportunities.
- Because there is such limited space for students to work, it is more difficult to collaborate with them. They do most of their work off-campus, because of the lack of office space here.
- Shared research instrumentation facility is very disorganized and poorly managed. Too many pieces of instrumentation not used by faculty - only by facility manager.
- We are sometimes "penny wise, pound foolish" in the sense that we do not spend the extra dollars for some infrastructure costs, at the risk of having the researcher spend their own time doing routine maintenance on computers or printers, thus reducing the scientist's productivity and ability to focus on their research.
- I am an assistant professor. My fellow junior colleagues and I were all promised separate space for our research and graduate students in our start-up packages. After we arrived on campus, we were told that the department was moving to a shared space model. Our individual space was removed, and we were asked to design a blueprint for a shared research space within a three week period without being able to consult with an architect. Not surprisingly, there are some design problems with the space that we are now forced to live with. Additionally, the shared space is not sufficient to house our graduate students. Regarding equipment, two of the junior faculty have yet to receive materials promised in our start up packages (even 2-3 years after being at GMU). This has forced me to change my plans for research (shifting from observational research to survey research).
- I can't even run SPSS on my computer b/c the tech people cannot get it to install properly.
- I do not have any support for the computers in my lab. It is up to me and my students to maintain all the workstations (running Linux and Mac O/S) in my office and lab. If I had a Windows machine, I'd have more support, but running Windows is simply not an option. While I can do system administration work myself, it takes time away from my research. Much of my research is computationally intensive. I would benefit from shared resources such as a high-performance computing cluster. - I currently don't have access to such resources.
- My modest space needs are met, but I have equipment that requires maintenance, and have avoided getting more equipment because of increased maintenance burden and no institutional support.
- University should have a 3-year upgrade policy for computers, so that faculty have the most up-to-date hardware available. - Also, university should obtain site licenses for software such as STATA and MPlus, not just SPSS.
- Last week a team of site visitors were here last week from the American Psychological Association's Council of Accreditation to review the clinical psychology doctoral program. One of their major concerns, which will go into their report, is a woefully inadequate space available clinical faculty and doctoral students for research.
- The space required for my sponsored research is not adequate. Despite having brought in nearly \$1 million a year in external funding (NIH, DARPA, Army) for each of the 4 years I have been at Mason, little or no extra space has been provided to me. This year I received a 5 year, \$2.6 million grant from NIH, which starting Sept. 2007. When I received the priority score in February this year and knew it would be funded, I immediately contacted Dee Holisky of CHSS to ask for the extra space (2 testing rooms for older adults, needed to be contiguous with my current lab space, and for 2 MRI workstations and genetic analysis equipment). 8 months later, I am still waiting for any response, despite repeated requests. Meanwhile, Mason is getting indirects on the

grant but the lack of space is impeding my research on the project. I have since also received another \$370K grant from the Army, which is putting additional pressure on my space. There should be some priority given to space requests for faculty with funded grants--otherwise how can the funded project be conducted?

Infrastructure at this university to do the simplest of things (except computer related things) is totally inadequate. - Science involves more than computers - a lot more. More investment in non-computer related infrastructure is essential

- There is a huge disparity in the allocation of space by the dean, skewed disproportionately to 'favored' programs. This is disheartening and counterproductive.

- I have no dedicated research space nor equipment. Therefore, writing grants is difficult because the question is always where will the work be done?

- The animal facilities are aging, and the increasing requirements of the IACUC eat into the meager space available for actually conducting research. The complete lack of consultation in developing the Krasnow animal facility means that it is wholly inadequate for the type of research I do.

- There are serious problems with access to equipment in shared resources. Especially in the biological sciences. They seem to operate in a less than collegial way. There is also a lack of computer infrastructure in terms of computer rooms for servers and the existence of high end super computing resources. There is an extreme shortage of laboratory space.

- We are one of many groups that use Macintosh OSX and need more ITU support for the Mac community. We should not have to rely on our own resources when others can simply call ITU to help out.

- My laboratory is off campus and supported by a different organization, so I do almost no research on campus.

- I have no lab at present, yet a major research program and many research students. I have extensive equipment needs, but all such equipment has been gained through external funds

- I am a new professor with an endowed chair in economics. I have been at GMU since August. When I was hired, the Chair of the Economics Department and Dean of the School of Social Sciences promised me an office, plus an adjacent office for my research assistants, and space in which I and another faculty member could establish a research institute. When I arrived, the Chair and Dean told me that space was limited, and that they could not find space for the research institute. - They also did not provide me with an office for 2 months. They found an office for me only after I threatened to resign.

- The computing support is pathetic and the dean seems to refuse to listen or understand. As long as his little PC works, he thinks we should all be happy.

- Our department does not even have enough space for faculty offices, let alone space for us to conduct research studies.

a. The lab facilities available to me are too small, too antiquated, and were never appropriate for my particular laboratory needs. When assigning me lab space, I was never consulted regarding what I did or didn't need. I felt the attitude conveyed was that I was lucky to have any space at all. b. The equipment I have obtained externally is fine, but GMU is notoriously stingy in providing adequate funding from internal sources. Also, I never received all of the start-up funds promised to me; in fact, some of these monies were taken from me. c. What shared research instrumentation and facilities? d. What maintenance? I have to do any maintenance. My department doesn't have any support staff.

Compliance activities.

Comments in this section that were pertinent to the questions [some faculty talked about service and teaching loads here] primarily addressed the IRB, and were overwhelmingly negative. Comments included the following:

- the HSRB has placed unbelievable restrictions on basic research activity - for example, in one recent HSRB application, a student was not permitted to conduct the interviews for the study - this limited the student's ability to learn how to conduct an interview! These types of restrictions are completely unnecessary

- I have had an experience with the IRB being overzealous, in my opinion, leading me to stop collecting data in the middle of a project. This was a project that was in process before I came to GMU and had been approved by another IRB.

- The IRB has been an impediment to my work. Requiring amendments for even the slightest wording change to documents is excessive.

- The amount of time that IRB takes up is very, very substantial-- not just for me, but especially for the numbers of students I have to guide through the process. I already teach fieldwork ethics according to my discipline. I do not need the "training" I receive from IRB.

- HSRB does not and, seemingly, has no intention to see itself or act as a resource to facilitate research.

- IRB's guidelines with regard to Oral History are arbitrary and not consistent with the best practices advised by the American Historical Association
- IRB is the anti-research component of our university.
- the HSRB process impedes my research progress in some way every single day.
- The Human Subjects Review boards puts all of my social research effectively back by a semester.
- The IRB (Human Subjects) greatly impedes my research as it does not seem to understand, despite exceptionally strenuous efforts at various institutional levels, the nature of the scholarship of teaching and learning. At the moment, faculty are placed in the position, when innovating in their teaching, of having to provide the IRB with exceptionally detailed descriptions of the results of those innovations prior to the innovations' actually taking place, and also predict exactly what elements of students' work one will need to analyze prior to the beginning of the innovations.
- IRB is officious, obstreperous, and truly represent an obstacle to research.
- The IRB has vastly exceeded its mandate, claiming control over such things as blog posts and oral histories. Its members need to be brought back to reality and start (a) using common sense and (b) following the practices established by the federal government.
- Institutional Review appears to have a mission to hamper research rather than support it,
- The Human Subjects Review Board imposes requirements that impede and inhibits research without contributing to ethics.
- The Institutional Review Board (Human Subjects) is simply terrible. I had heard horror-stories about it even before I joined Mason, and these stories turned out not to be exaggerations at all. THIS MAY BE ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS AFFECTING FACULTY RESEARCH AT MASON

The IACUC, which handles fewer applications, had fewer comments directed at it, but, like the IRB, those comments were quite negative:

- The grossly increased time required for IACUC paperwork has resulted in absolutely no increase in animal welfare.
- The IACUC and IRB seem to want the faculty to NOT run any research. They won't provide us (me) with the right forms. Last year it took me 6 months to get one IACUC protocol approved. That potentially made me fail in 3 grant submissions, for lack of preliminary work.

Overall, the Office of Research Subjects Compliance received very negative comments from faculty. The procedures of that office are seen as hindering research without regard to the university mission, as delaying research for months for minor procedural reasons, as imposing large paperwork requirements in excess of Federal requirements, and as doing little to facilitate faculty compliance with requirements.

In contrast to the IRB and IACUC, the Safety office received only few and mild comments.

University support systems.

Faculty perceptions of university support systems were quite variable. Overall, there were poor perceptions of grant management software and fiscal practices. On the other hand, some faculty found department support systems to be adequate, while others did not. Some sample comments:

Fiscal practices and software:

- EXPENDITURES ARE OFTEN NOT LISTED IN APPROPRIATE CATEGORIES, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE BUDGETS. CHARGES ARE NOT POSTED IN A TIMELY MANNER AND, E.G. TUITION CHARGES DO NOT HIT UNTIL AFTER THE ADD/DROP PERIOD, BUT DO NOT SHOW UP AS A COMMITMENT IN THE MEANTIME.
- I find Banner to be a ridiculously complicated and inefficient software system.
- Banner has been a disaster.
- the banner system is absolutely horrendous. I cannot tell where charges to my accounts come from, making it impossible for me to manage budgets.
- These do not so much impede the research per se as impede my ability to manage grants, and that in turn distracts my time from research a lot.
- There were several 'horror stories' too long to include here.

Many comments had elements interwoven, such as the following:

- travel, HSRB, and grant administration offices seem to serve as gatekeepers who do not want faculty to conduct research
- Have found it very difficult/time consuming to order grant related supplies.
- Our school has a wonderful support structure, but it is one person who is wonderful. If that person goes, then we are in big trouble. Some redundancy in training of staff is key to avoiding a disaster
- Hiring of an international postdoc was a nightmare. HR had no idea how to classify a postdoc and insisted that I form a search committee to evaluate candidates. Each member of this search committee was to receive training before the search process could begin. After much debate, HR finally agreed that this wasn't necessary for hiring a postdoc. I wonder, has this become standard practice for them now?
- I have never had less support and more difficulty in my career as a researcher. This is my fourth university home and given the problems here, it is unlikely to be my last.
- units in central administration do not possess a philosophy conducive to research. Too often, procedural requirements, tasks, and steps are mistakenly presented as a research process. Too often, historical practices are mistakenly presented as policy as no written policy can ever be produced. Reacting to the latter reality, I trust that university research administration will simply produce a 'policy' without discussion, consultation, contest, or thought.
- This university lacks a full research culture.
- The purchasing system, i.e., eVA, is a major impediment to my research. The paperwork required for even minor purchases is a huge hassle. I have had to spend extra time driving to stores to make in-person purchases to avoid some of this excessive paperwork. While I see why the university might need to have *someone* do this paperwork, making the faculty do it seems utterly ridiculous.
- Purchasing cost us tens of thousands of dollars (actually over \$100,000) in not processing items, submitted by their deadline, before the end of the fiscal year
- The fact that the school of management is run and governed by contract faculty that neither do research nor know research severely undermined the incentives and environment of tenure-track and tenured faculty to conduct quality research.
- I'm continually shocked by how long and how much paperwork it takes to make the simplest purchases - I order something through my department, then it goes through the college, then purchasing, then I have to deal with hundreds of emails asking if I've actually received an item and if it's cleared for payment. I can't spend all my day responding to appr requests for every little item that my lab and students purchase.
- The support groups/agencies need to view themselves as providing support and not as gatekeepers to stop something.
- Budget management is horrible. My secretary who is in charge of fiscal issues is incapable of using banner effectively. When I call OSP to get help, they are usually very helpful but point out I should take a seminar (which is unrealistic given my own time constraints). Having a credit card associated to my grant required several meetings and a lot of record keeping, so I eventually gave up my card and front all the money associated with purchases for my grant, hoping for reimbursement.
- It's hard to hire personnel. OSP has gone downhill in the last couple of years; I have to check on all of their work and redo much of it. The banner system is absolutely HORRIBLE!!! It's almost impossible to get any useful information out of it. I have no way to find out how much money I have. Twice I've not been able to spend out a grant because no one was able to help me find out how much was left. This is really a 4th rate system. Last year I lost 6 months of an 18 month grant because the legal department insisted on fighting with the company over IP issues. These folks need to get their heads out of their asses and realize what they're here for : to support the faculty!
- Decentralization of services (e.g. purchasing) has not been followed with funding to local units. For example EVA has required us to hire a full time purchasing person just to do our work effectively. Cost savings by decentralization could have been somewhat offset by technology but the technology selected and implemented (e.g. Banner and MESA) has been underfunded and pretty much a disaster.

Overall, it appears that a large number of faculty experience significant problems with a wide range of university and department support services, although the negative experience are not universal.

Departmental/College Support for Grants Management

The main focus of the comments in this section was related to the availability of strong graduate students. 44.7% of respondents concluded that the availability of strong graduate students impeded their research a lot

and 22.8% concluded it impeded their research a little. A lesser number of comments highlighted issues with departmental support for purchasing, fiscal management and technical support.

The common theme regarding graduate students is that there are not enough graduate students with the skills and time necessary to develop and sustain strong research programs. Some of the causes cited:

- Graduate student packages not considered competitive with peer institutions
- Cost of living in DC area contributes to graduate students being able to commit the time necessary (many need to work part or full-time)
- GTA requirements for teaching may be excessive (commented on by several respondents)
- Too many part-time students
- Some students take too many credits when working full-time resulting in over commitments
- No health insurance and stipends low

Some of the results:

- Lack of quality graduate students makes it difficult to complete the work when grants are received
- One person commented he/she only sees their GRA 2 times per semester because of different campus locations
- One person commented the research assistants they have hired have been more of a drain on his/her time and energy than a help
- "At this point I'm hesitant to include requests for GRAs in grant proposals as I'm not sure I'll end up with students who actually want to learn how to do research."
- "Basically, most grad students approach their education at GMU as if it was a glorified Vo-Tech School in which they can buy a degree to enhance their professional positions. The types of theses/dissertations that are done in my department would not pass muster at Research 1 institutions."
- A few commented appreciation for their students' work but most were unimpressed with the quality

Another area of comment was related to departmental support related to purchasing, fiscal management and technical support. There were also some more general comments regarding departmental/college support.

- Purchasing paperwork takes a lot of time
- Departmental and support staff are overwhelmed
- High turnover in office staff
- Higher level financial managers needed to assist with grants management
- One respondent commented that he/she makes purchases and does other administrative functions because does not trust departmental staff
- Very little IT support
- Not enough support staff or the quality of support staff being a concern were common messages

Some commented on not having enough discretionary funding for travel to conferences, supplies, etc.

- Some commented on having to pay out of pocket to support travel and deciding not to attend conferences for that reason
- "good citizens are punished by being asked to do more, while the self-centered ones who are slackers when it comes to chipping in with departmental work get by with doing less"
- "Decided lack of support from the Dept Chair and his openly hostile attitude toward research outside his own personal areas of interest has significantly impeded the research of many in my Dept."

Financial Support for Research

The comments in this section centered on the lack of financial support for conferences, pilot work, start-up packages, etc. While many of the comments were critical some did recognize the funds they had received for summer research, startups, etc. were appreciated and put to good use. There also seems to be a disparity between faculty that have been at Mason for an extended period and those that have been hired in recent years. It also would be interesting to understand what percentage of the faculty responding have external funding because this external support was referenced in some of the comments.

Some comments related to start-up packages were:

- Start-up packages have improved in recent years
- One commented was supported very well in first 3 years of being at Mason but now in 5th year at Mason not as well supported through institutional funding
- Salaries may be at national average but difficult given the cost of living
- “One potential candidate for a senior position in our department actually gasped when he received even a very conservative answer to his questions about how much a house would cost in this area.”
- Some comments about good candidates turning down offers because of low pay
- “In ITE I think we pamper the new faculty too much. When I came more than 20 years ago I wasn’t even given a computer to use, whereas today new faculty gets huge teaching reductions, GRA, equipment funds, etc.”
- “Computers should not come out of start-up funds”
- “The one issue about startup packages that has recently become a problem is the provision of adequate lab space for incoming faculty.”

Some of the results related to seed grants:

- “The small seed grants I received from the Provost and Center for Global Studies have made an important difference in permitting me to instigate new research. I only wish there was more.....”
- If seed money is available there is not a widespread understanding of the criteria for receiving it
- “There is no research support package in my college.”
- Some people do not apply for internal funding because “it’s not worth it”

Some comments related to training and networking (mainly conference attendance):

- “No money is given to faculty who has taught at GMU for a long time in order to attend conferences.”
- Many comments about lack of support to attend conferences and some reference having to pay out of pocket to attend
- “While there are some funds available for conference travel for graduate students, I don’t believe these funds are available to faculty.”

Appears that faculty with external funding does not experience the same issues:

- “I have sufficient external support for all my needs, so that the adequacy of support has no impact on my research.”
- “Not nearly enough by research university standards. Need larger endowments and fundraising.”
- One person commented on have a productive study leave but also complained the program was not well advertised
- Need better dissemination of funding opportunities
- “We need more money.”
- “These questions are not as relevant for me as I have been here 22 years and have rather large grant funding.”
- “Generally not any big issues here. Our faculty collaborates and work together to support each other and particularly junior faculty.”

Summary of Section 7. VI. Collaboration and mentoring

Forty-two percent of faculty who answered this question had a positive response. Several faculty mentioned that they feel that there is a culture that supports mentoring and collaboration at Mason. In fact one response mentions that this was a major factor in why this person came to work at Mason. Another stated “I feel that a strength of GMU is that I have found it easy to build collaborations with other scholars. “

Common negative themes expressed in the written comments related to this survey question include:

- Time available for collaborating or mentoring
- Lack of formal university or department mechanisms to support collaboration and mentoring
- A feeling of isolation among some faculty

Time was identified a common theme working against numerous respondents' desire or efforts to collaborate or mentor. Many faculty mentioned the many other things that distract them and focus their efforts in other directions.

Numerous responses described success when reaching out to others within their departments and across the university but that this process was self initiated. It was repeatedly suggested that Mason develop a formal process for fostering inter-department networking so that relationships can be established. One person mentioned that they are interested in collaborating with others doing similar work but admitted they have no idea how to find those researchers or initiate the process.

Reasons mentioned for feeling isolated included working at a different campus than others in their field and a feeling of being in competition with others in their own department. There were also a few respondents who explained that they did not feel that collaborating is beneficial as conflicts can arise related to negotiations and ICR.

MISCELLANEOUS FACTORS WHICH IMPEDE RESEARCH AND FUNDING

In this section there are comments of all types including some praise also. First the comments of praise of the university are given and then comments are categorized like Graduate Student Funding, OSP and others. After that rest of the comments are presented. Many of these categories/comments are appearing in some other sections also. The number of pages of comments in this section is the largest.

- Gorge Mason's general reputation seems to be on the rise, and that is helpful. Also the Washington location is very helpful
- It is amazing how much Mason does with such meager resources. At Mason financial support is insufficient. Many departments do not provide additional financial support for small expenses.
- The availability of Faculty Research and Development Grants through CHSS and the implementation of the new 2-2 teaching load are welcome signs of improvement. More structural improvements and funding are needed.

Graduate Student Funding etc.

- Graduate student funding is a joke. It is less than 50% of what other universities are providing. We need a separate Graduate School with a dean and a budget that can advocate specifically for the graduate students and benefits including health coverage. Very low graduate student support is the biggest hindrance in creating a major research university.
- Admission standards in graduate program should be raised. A 99% admission rate is excessive and personally it is professionally damaging. Students reject noted scholars in the field, professors' research and perspective on the issue of diversity and social justice in the classroom. Low availability of quality research assistants.
- We have excellent graduate students but they spend most of their time off-campus in doing internships because they need money. As a result, they often end up in applied vs academic positions after graduating. Better financial support would allow them to be around more often and would strengthen research culture.
- Our department is overwhelmed with part-time graduate students for whom the time commitment to mentor is too great for the small return they contribute to research.

Office of Sponsored programs

- The OSP should provide a better support in preparing proposal, budgets and budgeting process. OSP persons tell the faculty what can't be done instead of finding ways to do what should be done. The OSP's efficiency in the POST award phase leaves a lot to be desired. Pre-award they provide very little help since I do all the proposal preparation myself, leaving OSP just to confirm the budget and make the photocopies.
- More focus on the weakness of Sponsored Programs would be appropriate in this survey. It is surprisingly weak and unhelpful office.
- Currently OSP is the biggest impediment in getting external funding.
- The biggest obstacle at GMU is the OSP. They are not set up to facilitate the research process.
- The OSP takes so long to process paper work that I will run my grants through external think-tanks rather than the universities facilities.
- The biggest obstacle is OSP. The researcher is expected to not just write the scientific part but every aspect of the grant. There is no availability to assist with grant formatting. All of the responsibility falls to the researcher.

Insufficient University Support and Lack of Resources

- GMU need to do a better job in providing faculty with internal grants and assistance in locating and applying for external grants.
- Non availability of university funding to do pilot studies that could be turned into fundable research proposals. Give credit for research proposal writing.
- University should provide a laptop so that a person is free to work at any place at any time.
- In the summer I am expected to work full time on research and work with the graduate students while I don't get paid for three months during the summer.

- Lack of administrative support staff, technical support staff and resources. The graduate student teaches two courses per semester for mediocre graduate stipend. Low stipend for full time graduate student prevents us from recruiting talented and strong students.
- One has to spend extensive time on managing paper work within Mason for grants.
- New faculty is not given starting money to facilitate their research work. The new faculty is increasingly challenged by the cost of living and the housing in the area. Lack of training and guidance in grant writing
- My field involves expensive copyright permissions and these expenses were not considered valid research expenses. The university should have a research budget so that money is available for travel, books, copyright etc.
- The University Library collections in certain areas (in regions languages, history and culture) are rather frustrating, especially as the University attempts to “globalize” and “internationalize”.
- Internal funding-almost nonexistent. Space is a huge issue. Access to library resources is a big problem.
- Support for development of grant proposals like course release or summer funding would help the generation of successful proposals.
- More money for initial research and more free time for working on research proposals. Money is the major issue. The lack of decent research and travel budget for those in the humanities put Mason scholars at huge disadvantage.
- The Fairfax campus has neither the wet chemical labs nor the clean rooms necessary for my research. There is shortage of space available for doing research work.

Other Miscellaneous comments

- Taking a big grant in addition to current service and teaching load is daunting. Create a better system.
- Indirect splits make it difficult to collaborate across units.
- I cannot stress enough the problem with the “mission creep” of the IRB and the failure to provide timely response to researcher.
- In a university of this size, the lack of good **sabbatical program** impedes my scholarship. One cannot plan ahead.
- The **sabbatical program** at this university needs an overhaul. Writing complete proposal for sabbatical does not promote scholarship. A good research record and a one page plan should be sufficient.
- Wider and better publicity of graduate programs. GMU should promote excellence and commitment to research that should be apparent from the first glance at the websites etc. More incentives and internal awards should be provided to research active faculty, especially to junior faculty.
- Difficult to find human subjects to do research.
- Problem with the compliance issue among the current OSP staff and university research administration.
- Additional activities and events, communications, recognition in the form of awards, honors and prizes are needed to further develop research. The top administrators of this fine university work more towards promoting such a culture.
- Larger classes and writing intensive classes both cut into time for research and conference travel. Tendency to load faculty with extra responsibilities with little or no compensation also impacts research especially if we still have to teach in summer to get by.
- The increased work load created by my growing program makes me unable to be a productive scholar.
- “It does not help to hear the Vice President for Research state that “Funded research cost money to the university.” A distortion of the facts and a real blow to morale. Funded research needs an ombudsperson –we don’t have one in OSP nor in the VP for research office. This entire make Mason seem to be a research-

unfriendly environment. Another comment, “A provost who clearly does not understand what it takes to create a research university”.

- We need an online faculty reporting system that holds and integrates all the annual reporting data in a single database that is accessible to the various parts of the administration.
- Research productivity in terms of journal papers and the papers produced by graduate students is not rewarded because I am not tenure track. I also have 12:12 credit load and extensive administration duties.
- The teaching and research expectations for tenured faculty are too high compared to the research expectations.
- Faculty who teach in cohort programs (what is this) at school sites in surrounding counties spend excessive hours in the car driving to these off-site locations. It is very time consuming and leaves one with less time for scholarly work. #60
- Higher teaching load impedes my research. I regularly apply for individual research grants as my work is individual but we are pressured to get group grants. For those of us who do historically based work, the science funding model does not work.
- Too many demands; something has to give in the transition to increase grant funding and research productivity. Service expectations are overwhelming. Different faculty members have different strengths (like some in research and others in teaching or in service) and it should be used for the advantage of the university.
- The “culture” of teaching/commuter school is still lingering in the minds of many of this campus.
- The biggest issue is time. It is difficult to find adequate time to focus on good research when one is teaching writing intensive course or large classes.
- Teaching load inequity across campus is the largest factor at this point. The other factor is the ability to recruit and support doctoral student with a blend of research and teaching; a benefit commonly available in many research universities.
- My last university subscribed to COS funding alert. I could get timely alerts and apply. At GMU I miss that funding alerts.
- The greatest difficulty is not being able to immediately tap into existing project, receive mentorship, and produce scholarly papers...
- I am in a special unit. However, I wish there was more recognition of research and scholarship at Mason, which has a location-if not the quality student base-to become a truly first-tier research university.