COS Faculty Meeting
Minutes
February 17, 2021, 3-4pm

To find recording information, search email for message sent on 2/17/21 with
subject "COS Faculty Meeting Follow-up - Links and meeting recording - February 2021"

1. Call to order

   1.1. 3:01pm

2. Approval of minutes from January 2021

   2.1. Motion to approve: Suzanne Slayden did the motion; Gerald Weatherspoon seconded

   2.2. Minutes approved by Zoom Reactions and video responses

3. Dean's Updates, Dr. Fernando Miralles-Wilhelm

   3.1. With spring semester fully rolling, our enrollment this spring looks good compared to Spring 2020 – net positive with some growth. In fall 2020 to fall 2019, we had 2.5% positive growth. So, on the year we have grown our enrollment and will grow our budget.

      3.1.1. Waiting anxiously for settled budget numbers to start some expenditure authority

      3.1.2. We have been frozen since his arrival; starting to turn the corner with vaccinations and things. We're not going back to normal yet; there is no normal. We will go into a situation that will stabilize, and we can move forward with our plans.

      3.1.3. You probably heard through the grapevine about plans for fall 2021, which are still unfolding. The general guideline we are being given is a 75% target and what that means (on campus). It is still a fairly flexible concept – 75% of our classes should have some component of person-to-person. It's not feasible however to go fully 75% in person, and Fernando does not feel that is a likely scenario. Wanted to make sure people interpreted that number as a flexible and aspirational number.

         3.1.3.1.   Fernando's own guideline for the college is safety first for faculty, staff and students.

         3.1.3.2.   Less concerned about fall if the fall looked similar to the spring, and does not expect that to impact our enrollment.

         3.1.3.3.   Will be touch and go through fall, but he wanted to share what the University is thinking. There is no directive or fixed guidance.

   3.2. In the more immediate term, many of you are engaging with the self-study for each department as part of our strategic planning. I encourage you to participate.

Different departments are engaging in different ways. There is some progress there, and wants to see them done by the end of the semester. Hopefully in the fall we will have an external review of these study plans as a phoase 2.

3.3. On the subject of being able to get some expenditure authority and invest, he wants to make sure we know it is a priority at the top of his mind is to contribute to solving the compensation issues across the college - across disciplines, equity, diversity, and individuals. Want to open a very participatory process in the college to start addressing this big issue.

    3.3.1.   He understands the University is also addressing this from the top. We welcome all resources that we can do address this issue, but he wants to let us know that this is coming and he will be engaging with us on that.

3.4. Questions? None. To close: I've been Dean for 8 months and it feels like 8 years. The majority of you I haven't met in person. This is the only way he has done this job, so it's becoming too familiar at this point, and he is looking forward when he can be there in person. It's very important to him for us to stay healthy and take care of ourselves. The university has done a remarkable job of staying on top of research and enrollment. He is proud of what we have done in these 8 months. He gives us the credit, and acknowledges that your work is showing the strength of our college and our contributions to our University. He is proud to be our Dean.

3.5. David Walnut question: relates to compensation : great to have a plan, that we haven't had before. How would you view, so often retention raises come up, in the past those "just happen" and are not part of any long-term plan. What is your view on retention raises? A: My grandfather used to say he kept his pants on using belts AND suspenders. There is a retention case to be made and needs to be worked out with the upper-admin; not concerned about those and are few and far between on an ad-hoc basis. There is a gap between faculty compensation is the larger issue and take a much more concerted effort. Relative amounts of retention is small compared to the big elephant in the room – the under-market compensation. Belts AND suspenders.

3.6. Time Leslie: Rumor from Richmond: 3.5% across-the-board raise in the governor's budget in the coming year.

4. **ARIE task force update, Gerald Weatherspoon (Appendix A)**

4.1. Slide - overview of how things are structured is shown in where we are in the composition and membership w/r/t to COS. The executive committee and 6 primary sub-committees. The only one we don't have anyone on in COS is the training and development.

4.2. ARIE task force will be Feb 23rd at 2-3:30pm. All subcommittees will report out on their top recommendations. It is a "we" effort. We provide feedback. It is not top-down. You MUST register for this town hall event. See your email (sent ~8pm 2/16) to attend! https://www.eventbrite.com/e/arie-townhall-tickets-137798084781?internal_ref=login

4.3. Visit the Anti-Racism Task Force website: https://arie.gmu.edu on the President's side of things with useful information, documents, membership...

4.4. Task force has two co-chairs. Done a yoeman's job corralling all the faculty, staff and students and keep on track – Wendi Manuel-Scott and Shonita...

4.5. Show vision and mission statement, and tenets – one of the tenets is to make GMU an exemplar university nationwide when they think about ARIE. They want Mason to stand out nationally in this regard.

4.6. In particular, we are "taking a hard look at the current state of diversity and inclusivity efforts at the University". How can we incorporate topics or courses that address social injustices and anti-racism efforts that are needed -> move the needle in the right direction. There will be some webinars around truth, healing and reconciliation. There will be healing circles for people to attend that will not be judgmental for people to share things and move on.

4.7. Research Teaching and Service are the three things we pay attention to the most, want buy in, and for everyone to have an idea of what is going on. When it comes to multi-million dollar grant proposals over the past few cycles, GMU did not have concrete programmatic thrusts in place whereby minoritized groups in terms of faculty training, and GRAs/GTAs, ... we didn't have the right tools in place. NSF-ADVANCE, HHMI – the feedback was in our face and brutally honest. We were assessed how we didn't measure up compared to other Universities.

4.8. Something we need to pay attention as the research committee is doing a deep dive – how many students from ethnic background are funded for GRA, GTAs, etc. We may report students one way, and they may self identify another. If there's an audit, that's an issue. There are some people where the data reported to societies don't match what we have. In chemistry for example, some of our non-resident alien PhD male students were categorized as African American, but then we actually have 0 students that are students of color. They are misclassified on grants, and this needs to be fixed to have this information at our fingertips.

　4.8.1. We will need to develop an inclusive excellence plan – address faculty hiring and retention, undergrad retention, grad retention, and staff hiring to advance diversity. The staff cannot be overlooked.

　4.8.2. Faculty staff and students assigned to COS DEI to put together our college's development plan (slides of names).

　4.8.3. Take home message: ARIE task force – report and recommendations; COS-DEI – inclusive excellence plan -> department level fold in with recent APR reports to develop 5 year strategic inclusive excellence plans.

4.9. Q: How did you find out which students were misclassified – A: There are some African PhD students in chemistry, and he had assumed they were classified as African American and count on "our head" as COS African American students, but when you go to IRR's website, they do not appear there. The two reports DON'T match, and we need to pay attention to that.

4.10.   Dan Sklarew: Q: ESP is not represented in the COS DEI. A: I took the names from his emails, please send names if I missed any.

4.11.   Jessica Rosenberg: several additional grad students are helping with the COS DEI graduate committee.

4.12.   Dan Taggart: Individuals can update their own race information in PatriotWeb: https://patriotweb.gmu.edu/ --> Personal Information --> Ethnicity and Race Change Information

4.13.   Tim Leslie: You can also update your preferred name, which is then reflected in blackboard

5. Executive Council report regarding support for COS courses, Jennifer Salerno (Appendix B)

5.1. Gateway and/or high-enrollment courses that could benefit from support

5.2. Task slide: identify courses that are gateway that could benefit from interventions, and may also have low teaching evaluations.

5.3. Sent out survey identifying courses of interest – top 2-3 things you want students to know or be able to do; if you had no resource constraints, how would you assess those things? What resources would be most helpful in implementing those.

5.4. Respondents – 30 across all departments. Range of courses identified.

5.5. Slide on enrollment of these courses. How do we identify "high enrollment". Did a cut at 100 enrollment, given a lot of courses submitted were below 100.

5.6. Top things listed for learning: 75% specific objectives, <25%: academic integrity, interdisciplinary/real world applications, scientific writing, career prep.

5.7. Assessment: follow-up exams, assistance (LA, one on one, oral, test taking specialist) was top response; Exams second top response; others in slide presented – presentations, case studies, more one-on-one, ethics, diagnostic exams, alternative assessment, but hard to replace multiple choice in large classes without support

5.8. Last question was insightful: biggest need: support = GTA/LA/TA, student teaching assistance. Also, resources (increase funding, provide learning materials) and training (faculty instruction). Tech was also mentioned.

5.9. Rationale and ideas for support:

    5.9.1.   GTA and LA support mentioned by over half of respondents. Drop in tutoring centers subject specific; dedicated teaching assistances assigned to larger classes. Salaried TAs for larger courses (>100).

    5.9.2.   Resources: software licenses

    5.9.3.   Training: learning and evaluation modules; course design.

    5.9.4.   Tech support: growing need as we shift more online; funding for term faculty needs; more stable LMS (learning management system); tools – doccams,

tablets, stylus, digital whiteboards; e.g. demonstrating a lab technique from home.

 5.10. Rebecca: Stearns center training: https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/programs/trainings/

 5.11. Rebecca: Dale sent out technology support survey at start of the semester. Is that resolved or still ongoing? I will follow-up with her.

  5.11.1. Kathleen: Dale sent out an email a few wks ago to at least some of us who wanted tablets & we each got to select what we wanted, & they are being shipped I think

6. Presentation from Spectrum, student group from Physics & Astronomy (Appendix C)

 6.1. Natasha, Kathryn, Carly, Jenna co-founders

 6.2. Initiative in Physics and Astronomy department

 6.3. Feb 2020 – 6 underrepresented and female and non-binary identifying students with shared experiences of discrimination and microaggressions gathered to discuss past injustices, leading to form a Department Code of Conduct

 6.4. Mission: dedicated to fostering a diverse, inclusive and science-minded community.

 6.5. Goals: in every department of COS; spectrum sister club.

  6.5.1. Hope to host CUWiP in 2023.

  6.5.2. Start an annual mentor and mentee retreat

  6.5.3. One day conference to recruit HS students into stem.

 6.6. Current programs: Professional development lunch talks (NoVA and Miami Dad Honors college students invited); Mentoring program

 6.7. Incident report form for anonymous student reporting; goes directly to HR to determine path forward

  6.7.1. Code of professional conduct approved by department faculty May 2020

  6.7.2. Faculty mentoring committee with 6 trusted faculty and staff in Phys and Astro Dept

   6.7.2.1. Support spectrum initiatives

   6.7.2.2. Survey on virtual teaching and learning inspired COS-wide survey

  6.7.3. Website: https://gmuspectrum.squarespace.com email: spectrum.mason@gmail.com

 6.8. Dean says; This is wonderful.

 6.9. Bill Kennedy, Dan: can we get bylaw update: yes

 6.10. Tracy Mason: I'll reach out separately to write a story about your efforts and progress for the college website and beyond if you are open to it...

7. Discussion of change to TOEFL minimum score for graduate student applicants, Igor Mazin (Appendix D)

   7.1. Many of our faculty have experienced situations where prospective talented students go to other comparable schools because they have more generous English proficiency requirements.

   7.2. We lack a bit of flexibility here in COS

   7.3. Slide of collected data on example of TEOFL score requirements we have compared to different schools in the college; new exam score called Duolingo test is 4-5x less expensive than TOEFL test. Many schools are accepting them.

   7.4. The score of 88 is too stringent; a prospective student said it "sounds too difficult"

   7.5. Per US News ranking, GMU is tied in ranking with 7 other public and private schools in the US; all of which require the iBTscore no less than 80. Also, similar regional Universities such as VCU and Virginia Tech require a minimual TOEFL score of 80 and not 88.

   7.6. At Mason, we reject 50% more candidates based solely on their TOEFL score than competing Universities. We are hurting our international student recruiting with this.

   7.7. Other Universities across the country run their own classes in English for students with 80-88 scores with provisional acceptance based upon these classes. Mason sends students to an outside organization for these classes at outrageous fees.

   7.8. We can distinguish between students accepted with GTAs vs those who are funded through research grants and other means where the TOEFL score of 80 would be adequate.

   7.9. We are proposing to establish a COS wide TOEFL score minimum of 80 to put us on the same footing as VSE, and the Duolingo score from 120 to 100 to offer more flexibility to admit more international students that would not qualify otherwise.

   7.10.   Graduate students are the backbone of our research, and we would lose them otherwise.

   7.11.   Suzanne Slayden: We can appeal to Grad Council, which is probably what VSE did. That was part of the Faculty Senate change.

   7.12.   Tim Leslie: It looks like INTO also has 80 as their minimum for direct admit: https://www.intostudy.com/en/universities/george-mason-university/programs You can have a 70 TOEFL to start a graduate pathway with INTO Mason

   7.13.   Maria: I think this is a good idea to lower it to 80, provided we can support them and provide training once they arrive.

   7.14.   Jennifer B-G: Donna Fox and Melissa Hayes should be made aware if not already.

8. New Business

   8.1. Rebecca Jones:

8.1.1.   Faculty Compensation Tool update from Rebecca: a number of significant concerns raised about the tool. These concerns have been communicated with our Dean, the faculty senate chair and faculty senate.

8.1.1.1.   These are important issues to the whole University.

8.2. Tracy Mason:

8.2.1.   ScienceConnect ; Thurs., 2/25 from 1-3 p.m. EST'
8.2.1.1.   www.science.gmu.edu/scienceconnect
8.2.1.2.   Important to strengthen our science community and build connections
8.2.1.2.1.   Dean's update
8.2.1.2.2.   Research panel
8.2.1.2.3.   Department breakouts
8.2.1.2.4.   District Trivia game
8.2.1.3.   Register asap/form teams by next Monday
8.2.1.4.   Share ppt with students during classes.
8.2.1.5.   https://gmu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1AddvJX3L4hvtIi

9. Adjournment

9.1. Due to late time, Chair adjourned meeting at 4:10pm

10. Post-meeting items:

10.1.   Discussion of taking TOEFL proposal to grad council

10.2.   Dale: bought items based upon survey, 50-60 respondents.

10.2.1. Rebecca: Ask faculty if there is still a need? Prudent way forward

10.2.2. If there is still need, please reach out to Dale Pokorski

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GLRW --- 17 February 2021

Via Zoom

COS Faculty Meeting
---ARIE Task Force

COS – DEI…
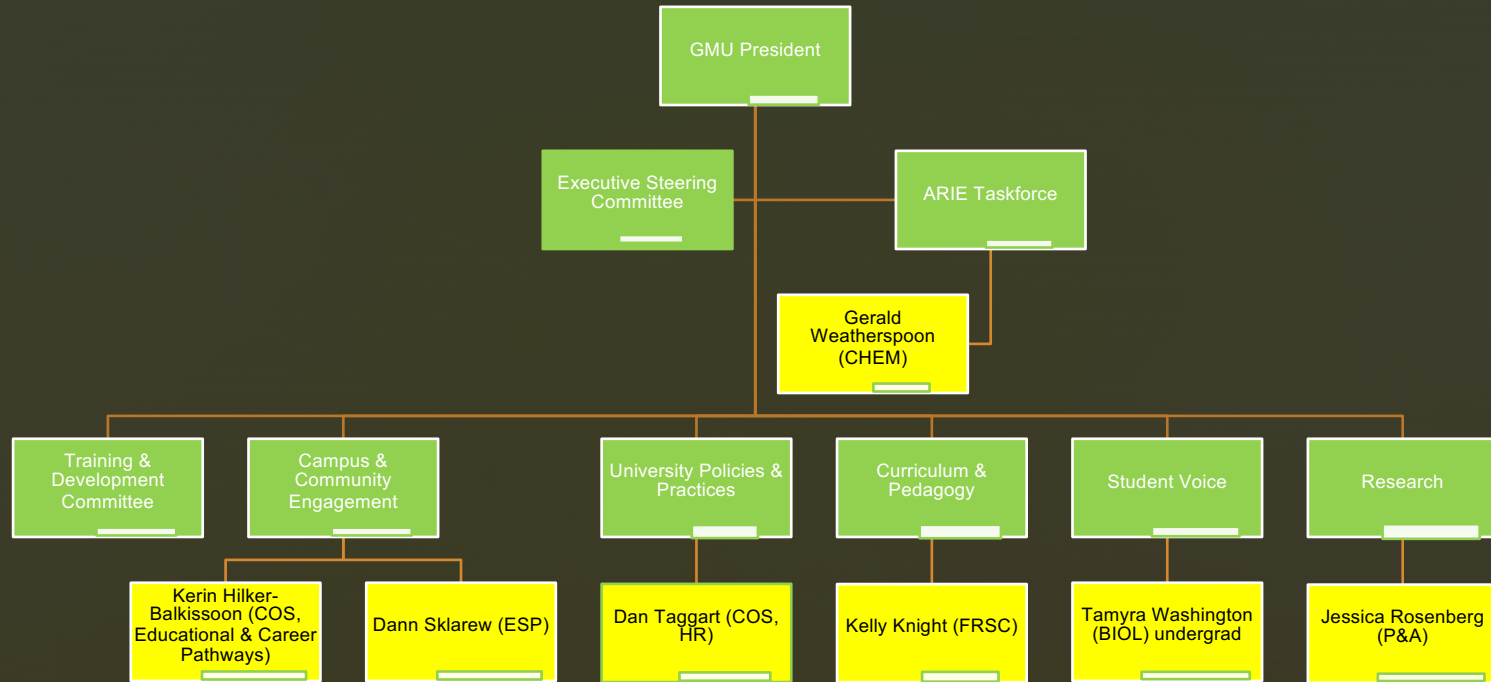
IMPORTANT DATE --- ARIE Task Force Town Hall

February 23rd: 2:00pm – 3:30pm

OC All currently enrolled students (including Mason Korea), faculty, staff, and con <GMU-USA-MK-L@LISTSERV.GMU.EDU>
on behalf of Office of Communications <gmucomm@GMU.EDU>
Tue 2/16/2021 8:08 PM
To: GMU-USA-MK-L@LISTSERV.GMU.EDU

Dear Patriots,

I am pleased to announce that registration is open for the Anti-Racism Inclusive Excellence Task Force town hall. Please register here for the event, which will be held Tuesday, Feb. 23 from 2-3:30 p.m.

The draft recommendations from the task force will be available later this week at the task force website, arie.gmu.edu. Please watch your inbox for a message on Friday that points directly to the recommendations and provides a link for your feedback.

On behalf of President Gregory Washington and the task force members, I look forward to your feedback and to your participation on Feb. 23.

Sincerely,

Dietra Y. Trent, Ph.D.
Interim Vice President for Compliance, Diversity and Ethics, & Special Advisor to the President

arie.gmu.edu

Task Force Members

Task Force Documents

Task Force Members

Task Force News

Read Task Force Documentation →

Read News Stories About Our Efforts →

Read About the Task Force →

Members of the Task Force on Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence consider their work to be of the highest importance.

Task Force Chairs

Wendi Manuel-Scott, Associate Professor, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Manuel-Scott, a historian by training, conducts research and teaching focus on how the past – New World slave systems, Jim Crow-era segregation, corporeal systems of incarceration, patriarchal cultures, and anti-Black racism - shape our modern understanding of freedom and liberatory movements for justice. She is guided by her interest in Black resistance and agency hopes her work makes the unseen "seen" and the silenced "heard."

Shernita Parker, Assistant Vice President for Human Resources

She provides leadership for the Talent Acquisition, Organizational Development and Learning, Employee Relations, and Faculty/Staff Engagement teams working to support faculty and staff throughout the complete employee life-cycle and experience. Her work is focused on furthering "human possibilities" and committed to facilitating individual development and thriving as a critical component of organizational well-being and success.

The ARIE initiative will be led and conducted by a task force appointed by the president. The work of the task force will be broken into six committees, where much of the work will be done. The task force will be governed by an executive steering committee, also appointed by the president.

Vision: George Mason University will become a national exemplar of anti-racism and inclusive excellence.

Mission

- Develop and implement effective systems, practices and traditions that eradicate racism and bigotry at Mason.
- Prevent racist practices from regenerating through the establishment.
- Establish Mason as a community, commonwealth, regional, and national resource for the advancement of anti-racism, reconciliation, and healing.

Tenets:

- Mason will be deliberate in establishing an inclusive environment in which all members of the campus community are welcomed and supported; experience a sense of belonging; and differing perspectives are valued and encouraged.
- Mason is committed to equal opportunity across the board, and will aggressively challenge and respond to bias, discrimination, and harassment.
- Anti-racism and inclusive excellence will be foundational in every program, process, policy, and procedure at Mason.

Roles and responsibilities, as well as com'te charges spelled out.

Mason is home to Virginia's largest and most diverse student body, and we rank among the most diverse universities in the nation.

That distinction wasn't built overnight. It comes from our culture of seeing things as they are, accepting challenges, and figuring out how to get the work done.

We have a great foundation in place, but we know we can do more.

Our Anti-Racism and Inclusive Excellence Task Force, created by President Gregory Washington, is taking a hard look at the current state of diversity and inclusivity efforts at the university. It will find answers to such questions as:

- What systems, practices, or traditions of racial bias exist at Mason? How can we eradicate them?
- How can we build intentional systems and standards of anti-racism to prevent racial injustices from returning?
- What can we do to become a local, regional, and national beacon to advance anti-racism, reconciliation, and healing?

The work we do will create a strategy to incorporate change across Mason, in such areas as:

- Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Campus and Community Engagement
- University Policies and Practices
- Research
- Training and Development

We're holding ourselves accountable because we know it's not enough to set goals—we're determined to meet the challenge today and in the future.

U.S. Rep. John Lewis, the late congressman from Georgia who played a key role in the civil rights movement, talks with Mason Professor Wendi Manuel-Scott on Mason's Fairfax Campus.

We're ready to act. We hope you'll join us.

Research & Teaching

Service

Bullet #3--- "*When they see us; how they see us*"

Inclusive Excellence: Exemplar university

1. Grant proposals & Funding- GMU recently rejected for multi-million dollar awards, interdisciplinary; no track record and established programs in place specifically designed to recruit and graduate URMs as GRAs instead of GTA positions; no bridge training program to prepare URMs for careers in academia; HHMI is an example (Jessica Rosenberg); tenure track faculty makeup needs to be corrected in a variety of ways, etc.

2. Minoritized faculty and students included (graduate & undergraduate)—

3. Research---Data & analytics show that numbers have been fudged in the past w.r.t. ethnic makeup of student body and faculty body; example---*how we report the student may not match with how the student self identifies……audit ….. problem*

4. Teaching---volumes of research show benefits of a truly diversified cohort of instructional faculty at all levels ……..(curriculum and pedagogy)

9

Bullet #3--- "*When they see us; how they see us*"—concrete example

Each college required to develop an

Inclusive Excellence Plan

COS Key Players…in addition to those on the ARIE Task Force
Lillian Virgil-CDO, Staff
Stephanie Flores
Audrey Kelaher
Ute Shaw
Chantee' Christian – Consultant

The basic plan for inclusive excellence must address the following areas of strategic priority:

1. Faculty Hiring and Retention-

2. Undergraduate Student Retention, Success and Degree Attainment—

3. Graduate Student Recruitment, Retention and Degree Attainment---

4. Staff hiring (recruiting, hiring and retention) to advance diversity*.*

Faculty, Staff, & Student Representatives – COS DEI Assignments

- **Faculty Hiring & Retention-**---Xiaoyan Tan, Georgia Williams, Chaowei Yang

- **UG Student Retention, Success & Degree Attainment**—Kerin Hilker-Balkissoon, Maction Komwa, Rebecca Ericson, Chris Durac

- **Grad Student Recruitment, Retention & Degree Attainment**— Jessica Rosenberg, Joanna Jauchen, Sam Cooke, Lee Solomon, Silvia Auffret (Grad Student)

- **Staff Hiring to Advance Diversity-**--Nita Arguelles, Frannie Dove, Faith Gaille

THM = Take Home Message

ARIE Task Force……..report and recommendations

COS – DEI……… Inclusive Excellence Plan

Departmental Level……..fold in, along with recent APR reports to develop 5-year Strategic Plan and departmental level (more specific) Inclusive Excellence Plan

Gateway and/or High-Enrollment Courses that Could Benefit from Support

Presentation by the Executive Council to COS Faculty
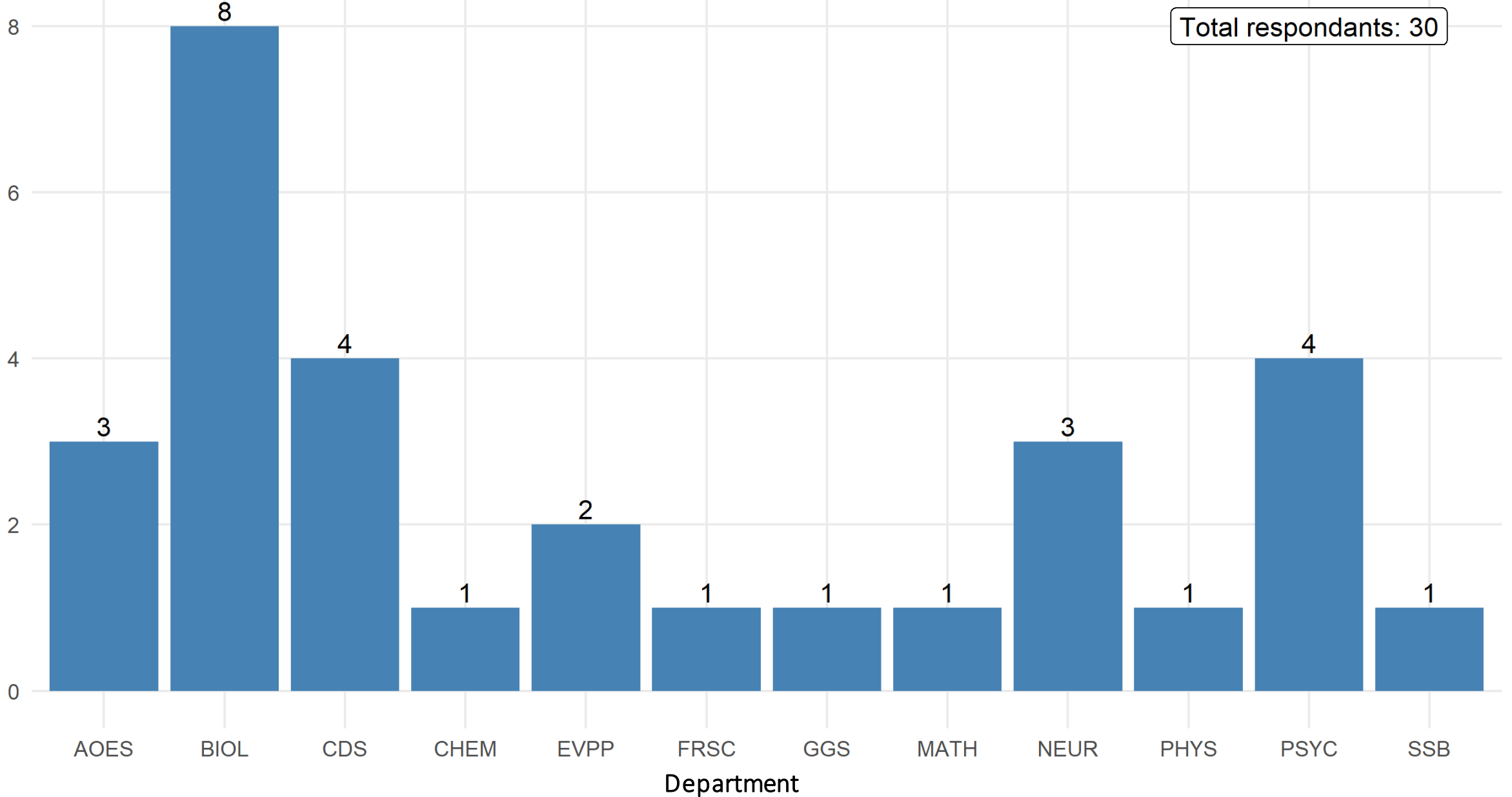
Tuesday, February 17th
3-4 PM

Task

- Identify courses in each COS department are gateway and/or high-enrollment (and may have low teaching evaluations) that could benefit from interventions this year?

- For each of these courses, speak with the department chair and/or other faculty stakeholders to answer the following questions.
  - What are the top 2-3 things you most want students who leave your course (or move into the profession) to be able to know/do?
  - If you had no resource constraints, how would you like to assess that learning?
  - What kind of resource(s) would be most helpful to you in implementing it?
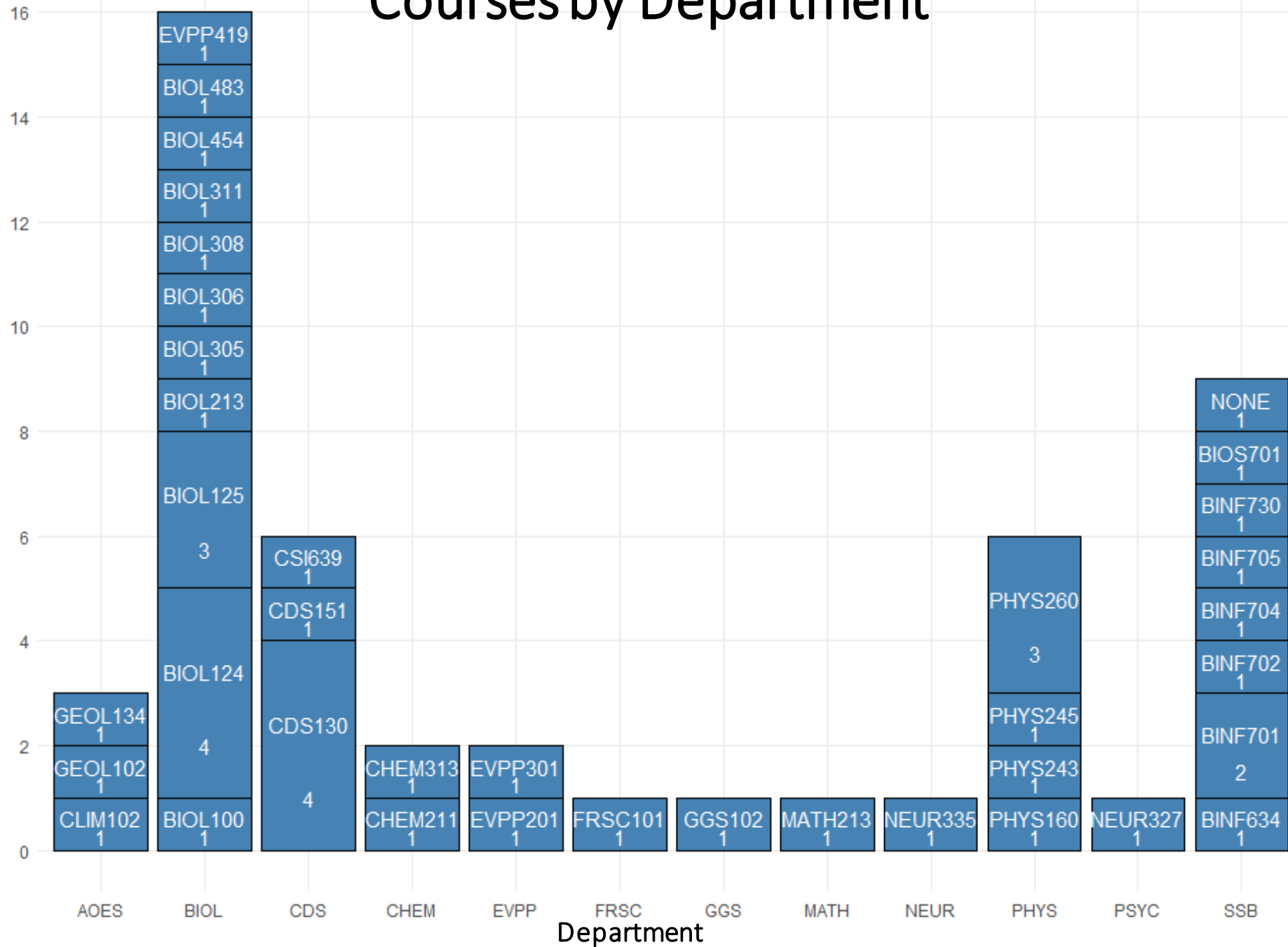
Survey Questions

1. Within your Department, please identify each course number, associated name, and typical enrollment size for courses that you teach that might fall into the category of gateway and/or high-enrollment, and which you feel would benefit from additional support.

2. For each course listed above, what are the top 2-3 things that you most want exiting students to know or be able to do?

3. For each course listed above, if there were no resource constraints, how would you assess those top 2-3 things?

4. For each course listed above, what resources would be most helpful to you in implementing it?
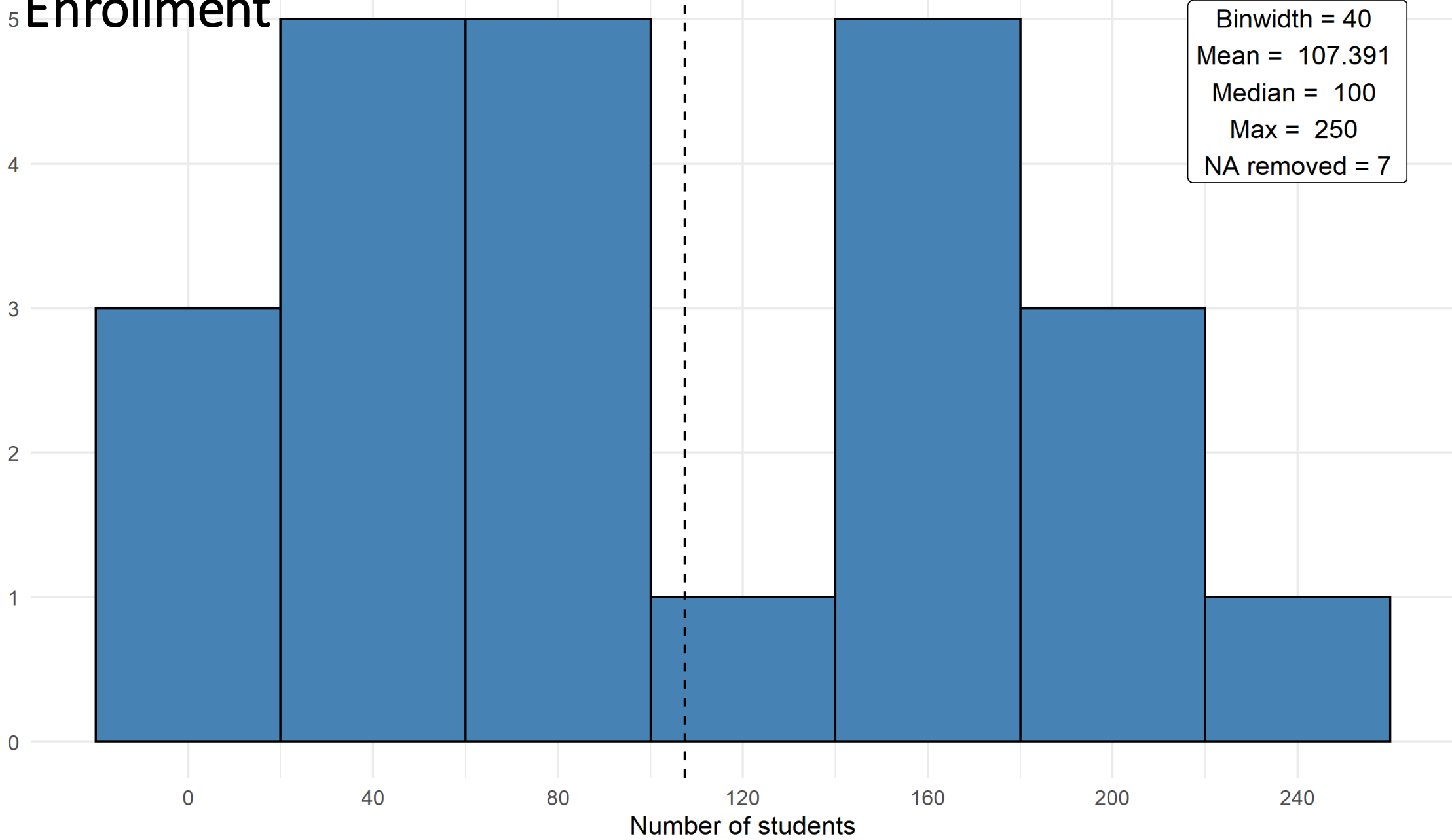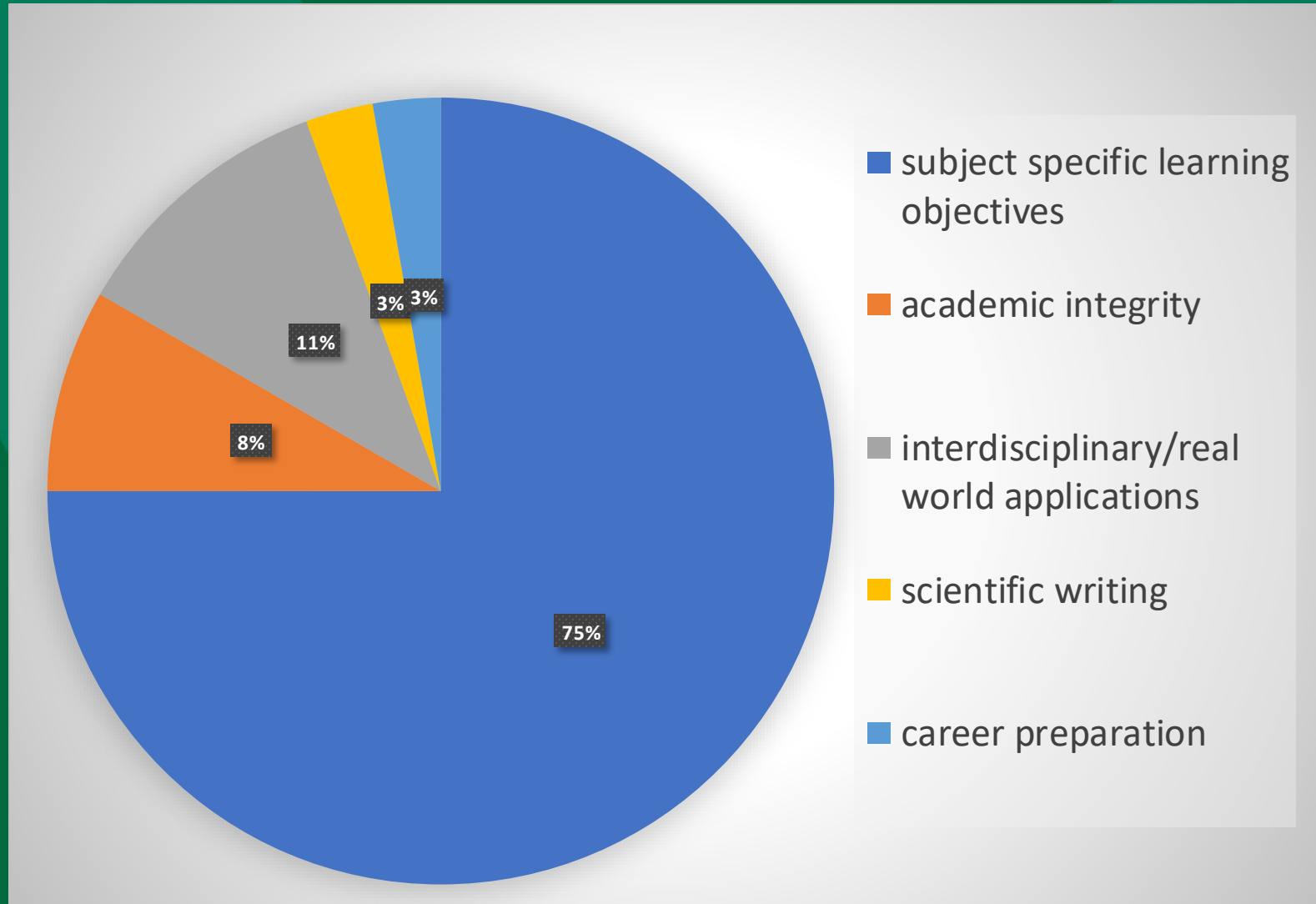
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

For each course listed above, if there were no resource constraints, how would you assess those top 2-3 things?
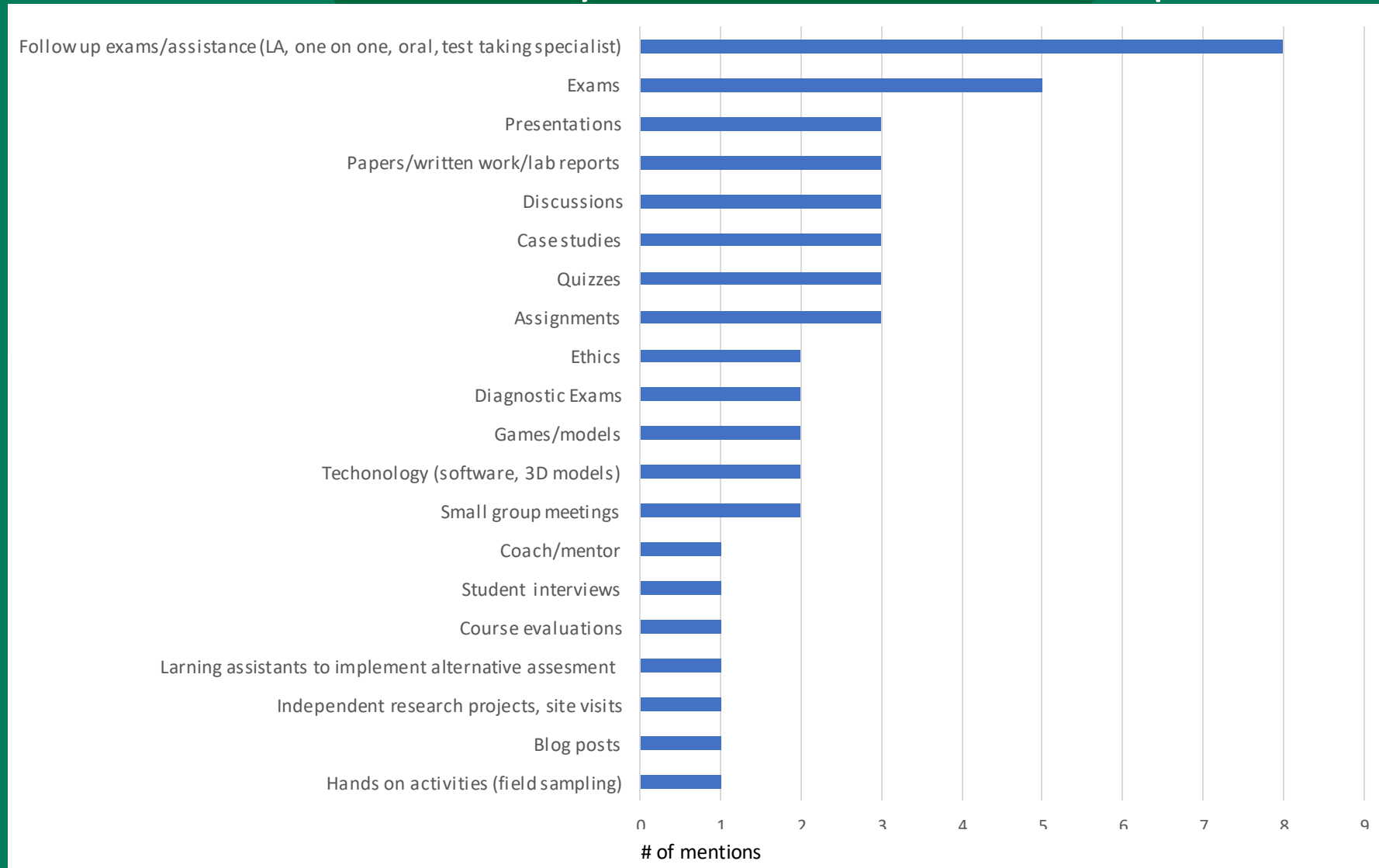
Resources Needed
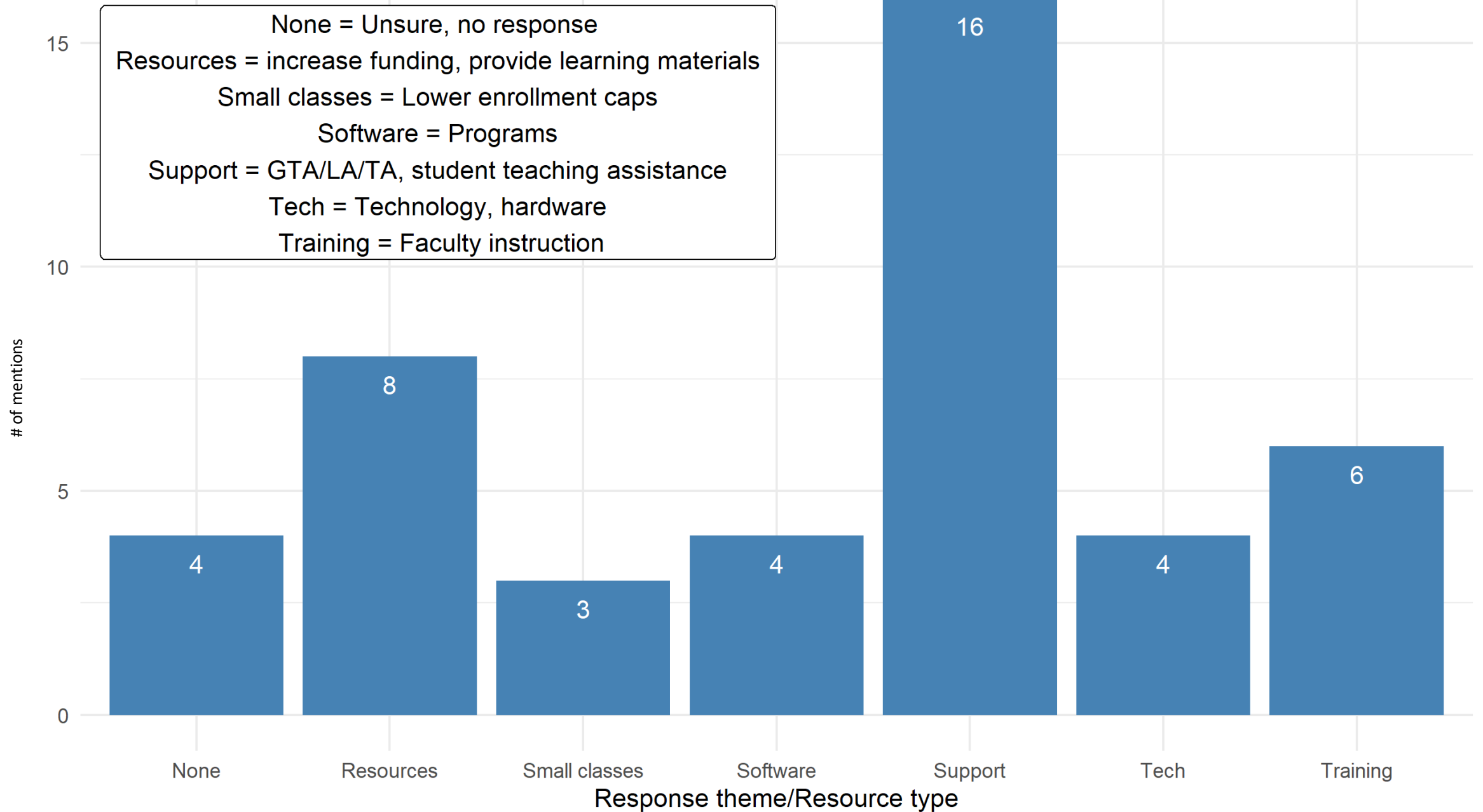
Rationale and Ideas for Support

- GTA and LA support
  - Drop-in Tutoring centers—subject specific; taught by GTA's/LA's
  - One teaching assistant assigned to large classes over 100 students
    - Salaried TAs for larger courses (>100)
  - Additional GTAs/LAs

- Resources
  - Software licenses

- Training
  - Learning and evaluation modules
  - Course design

- Tech support
  - A growing need as we shift to more online courses
  - Funding for Term faculty tech needs?
  - More stable LMS
  - Tools (doc cams, digital whiteboards, stylus, tablets)
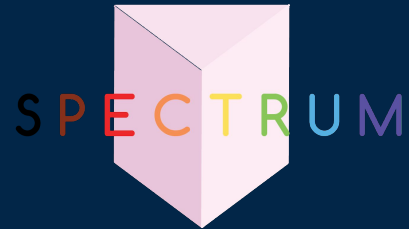
Development of Spectrum

- February 2020
  - 6 underrepresented and female- and nonbinary-identifying students with shared experiences of discrimination and microaggressions gathered to discuss past injustices and form a Code of Professional conduct for the department
- June 2020
  - 3 of the students attended the Access 2020 Assembly and along with the fourth began to brainstorm and plan for Spectrum
- Summer 2020
  - Co-founded Spectrum and began to host events
- October 2020
  - Submitted application to co-host the Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics (CUWiP) with NASA Goddard

About Spectrum

- Mission
  - "We are dedicated to fostering a diverse, inclusive, and scientifically-minded community among the graduate and undergraduate physics and astronomy students at GMU... [We] aim to empower members to build their physics identity through interactive professional development and social bonding activities, and increase retention and parity within the physics department..."
- Goals
  - In every department of COS
    - Spectrum sister club
    - Code of Professional Conduct
  - Host CUWiP in 2023
  - Start an annual mentor and mentee retreat
  - Start annual one-day conference to recruit high school students into STEM

Current Programs

- Professional Development Lunch Talks
  - Every Wednesday at 12:00pm
  - Covers traditional professional development and social justice awareness
  - Anonymous question form available throughout talks and discussion
  - Northern Virginia Community College & Miami Dade Honors College students invited to attend

- Mentoring Program
  - Currently has 11 mentors and 11 mentees (+4 grad mentors)
  - Provides assistance in classwork, department function, and adjusting to an online environment

Current Programs

- Incident Report Form
  - Available on Spectrum website for anonymous student reporting
  - Goes directly to HR to determine a path forward

- Code of Professional Conduct
  - Signed into Physics and Astronomy Department Bylaws in May 2020
  - Explicitly states our role and commitment to ending discrimination in STEM due to gender, race, creed, sexual orientation, etc.

- Faculty Mentoring Committee
  - Comprised of 6 trusted faculty and staff of the Physics and Astronomy Department
  - Support Spectrum initiatives and act as liaisons between faculty and students
  - Ex.// Physics Department Survey on virtual teaching and learning
    - Inspired COS-wide survey

Contact Information

- Website
  - https://gmuspectrum.squarespace.com
  - Contact form available
- Spectrum Email
  - spectrum.mason@gmail.com
  - MasonLive email to come, pending application.
- Personal Emails
  - Kathryn Fernandez, Co-Founder and Physics Education Researcher: kmendez6@gmu.edu
  - Jenna Cann, Graduate Co-Founder: jcann@gmu.edu
  - Natasha Latouf, Undergraduate Co-Founder: nlatouf@gmu.edu
  - Carly Solis, Alumni Co-Founder: csolis2@gmu.edu

Appendix D

The purpose of this proposal is to make a request for changing the TOEFL score requirement from 88 points to 80 points, and correspondingly adjusting the other tests' scores (e.g., adjusting Duolingvo from 120 to 100).

In the GMU catalog and the admission guidelines the relevant sections are as follows[1].

TOEFL iBT Graduate- Testing code 5827

- School of Business Graduate: 93 points, 20 points in each section
- Volgenau School of Engineering Graduate: - 80 or higher, no section minimum
- Schar School of Policy and Government PhD Programs: 100 or higher, 23 points in each section
- All other graduate programs- 88 points, minimum 20 in each section

and the other accepted scores for the graduate programs as in the table below:

	School of Business	School of Engineering	School of Policy and Government	Other
TOEFL iBT	93 (20 each section)	80	100 (23 each section)	88
TOEFL ITP	543 (53 each section)			
IELTS	6.5 (6 each section)			
Pearson	59			
Duolingo	120			
IELA	185 each section	176 overall		

The motion is to add one entry in the list in the catalog:

 "TOEFL iBT: College of Science Graduate – 80 points total, no minimum" and

"Duolingo English Test: College of Science Graduate Graduate – minimum score of 100.

Justification:

Recognizing that graduate students are a backbone of scientific research and ensure broader impact of science, this meeting points out that George Mason University often loses talented graduate school applicants if they fail the stringent English proficiency requirements applied by the College of Science.

In this connection, it is useful to compare the latter with the requirements in similar high learning institutions. Per US News Reports ranking, GMU is tied in ranking with 7 other public and private universities in the US, all of which require the iBT TOEFL score no less than 80. Also, similar regional Universities such as VCU and Virginia Tech require the same minimal score.

Currently GMU requires the iBT TOEFL score of 88 or higher. According to Educational Testing Service (the corporation providing TOEFL testing), 46% of all applicants to non-business graduate programs in the US, had scores of 88 or lower, while only 30% had 80 or lower [2]. In other words, we reject 50% more candidates based solely on their TOEFL score than competing universities. We are a relatively young R1 institution and we want to retain the best students who are willing to come to a university of our level.

In view of this, the Physics & Astronomy Faculty meeting urges the College of Science administration to request the following modification of the University regulations as applied to the graduate admission English proficiency requirements (below we quote the iBT TOEFL scores, implying that other admissible scores [IELTS, Person, etc.] would be adjusted accordingly by ~10%)

(1) Recognizing that the College of Science, by the nature of its research and graduate classes, requires a level similar to that for the Engineering students, and not as high as for other disciplines, the passing score should be no higher than 80.

(2) Recognizing that oral teaching requires considerably higher ("active") languages proficiency then grading or research ("passive proficiency"), a flexible procedure is needed that would allow granting individual exceptions STRICTLY for graduate students who will not be engaged in oral teaching. Such a procedure can sensibly implemented on the level of the Department Chair

(3) Recognizing that completion of the Level 7 Academic English Language program at the INTO George Mason University Center is currently accepted as a substitute for external language testing, we need an option of provisional acceptance of a student into the College of Science graduate program, under condition that they will complete the requested program within their first semester. The additional cost may be covered by research grants, but the tuition schedule should be harmonized with the similar universities participating in the INTO program (currently the INTO George Mason Center charges up to 100% more than other participating schools).

(4) Recognizing that the price tag of the TOEFL iBT exam is very burdensome for low-income applicants (from $170 to $245 depending on the country), and that the new Duolingo test, accepted now by GMU and many other colleges is much more affordable ($49 flat), lower the passing score for College of Science graduates to 100 points, which is a typical passing score in other universities' STEM programs.

REFERENCES

1. https://catalog.gmu.edu/admissions/international-students; https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/apply-now/how-apply/international/english-proficiency-requirements

2. TOEFL iBT®Test and Score Data Summary 2019, https://www.ets.org/toefl/score_data_summary