

Conclusion and Next Steps

Using the 2012 MAYS survey, Marymount's undergraduate student body is 44% Catholic, 28% other Christian, 14% other religions and 14% not affiliated. Graduate students are less likely to be Catholic (30%) and more likely to be unaffiliated (24%).

Although the data give Marymount a better handle on the overall proportions of students who are Catholic, there are opportunities for improvement on how we collect and analyze data on student religion. First, working with the Registrar, students should be encouraged to complete and correct their religious affiliation on a regular basis. Second, flushing out the MAYS survey religion categories will provide a fuller understanding of both other Christian and non-Christian representation on campus.

Institutional Effectiveness

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Marymount University

**How many
Catholic students
does Marymount
really have?**



**Office of
Institutional Effectiveness**

How many Catholic students does Marymount really have?

The Challenge

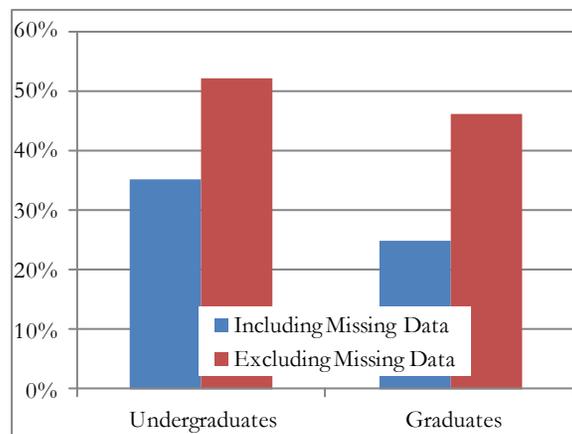
A common question for the Office of Institutional Effectiveness is: How many of our students are Catholic? While a fair question, and seemingly rather straightforward, IE has struggled with coming up with an accurate number or percentage.

At Marymount, we gather information on the student's religious affiliation as they apply for admission. This is a voluntary question, and unfortunately, only about two-thirds of undergraduates and 55% of graduates provide their information, resulting in a large proportion of the student body with missing data.

There are two primary ways to report the data. The first includes missing students in the analysis and the second removes them. With such a large proportion of unreported students, however, the two methods result in very different percentages. Graph 1 illustrates the results of the two methods.

Because of the limitations of each method, both results are somewhat suspicious. Including the missing data, results in an artificially low percentage, because some of the non-reported students are Catholic. At the same, excluding missing data could result in an artificially high percentage if a disproportionate number of non-Catholic applicants do not indicate religious preference as they apply to a Catholic institution. The truth probably lies somewhere between the two methods, but indicating that between 35% and 52% of students are Catholic is a rather unsatisfying answer.

Graph 1: Two flawed methods of determining the percentage of Catholic Students



An Alternate Approach

Starting in 2012, IE introduced a new student survey that evaluates service quality at Marymount. *Marymount at Your Service (MAYS)* is administered to the entire student body and by offering an incentive for participation resulted in 1075 students completing the questionnaire. All but one of the respondents provided information about their religious affiliation, so with its response rate of 31%, the data has a tight margin of error ($\pm 2.5\%$) and provides a much stronger representation of students' religious preferences.

The survey question asked students to indicate their religious affiliation using the options of Catholic, Other Christian, Other Affiliation, and Not affiliated. The results (See Graph 2) indicated that 44% of undergraduates are Catholic, as are 30% of graduate stu-

dents. At the undergraduate level, Catholic students represent the plurality of the student body, however at the graduate level they are second to represent less than those of combined other Christian denominations. While 14% of undergraduates are unaffiliated with a religion, nearly a quarter of graduate students are not.

Graph 2: Marymount Student Body Religious Affiliation by Level

