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WELS Baseline Survey of Students Entering as Transfers in the Fall, 2008

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WESTERN EDUCATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY (WELS)
BASELINE SURVEY OF STUDENTS ENTERING AS TRANSFERS
IN THE FALL, 2008
REPORT 2009-04

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March, 2009

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Baseline Survey of Entering Transfers**

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WESTERN EDUCATIONAL LONGITUDINAL STUDY (WELS) BASELINE SURVEY OF TRANSFERS ENTERING IN THE FALL, 2008

WELS BACKGROUND

The Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) is a series of internal longitudinal surveys of all in-coming first-year and transfer students administered every two to three years. This study involves an initial assessment of students prior to entering Western and then a series of follow-ups at different points in their academic careers. The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) To assess student needs based on their self-reported characteristics, perceptions and concerns; (2) To provide data that can be used to better assess academic and co-curricular programs by providing baseline entry data that can be used as statistical controls in analyses to offset the inability to conduct randomized studies; and (3) To maintain an ongoing record of student knowledge acquisition, ability levels, and other general education outcomes to address concerns of accountability and accreditation.

The WELS is conducted by the Office of Survey Research (OSR) and uses a mixture of on-line and telephone survey methodologies. Since the data collected in these studies includes identifying information, these data can and are linked with data in student records, thus expanding their usefulness. Although WELS data cannot, like other national studies, be used for comparisons to other institutions, the surveys have more flexibility in content to allow them to be tailored to Western's needs.

WELS 2003 COHORT

The first WELS was administered in the summer, 2003, and included only in-coming freshmen (no transfers)¹. The baseline survey was developed as a result of meetings with various stakeholders across campus (the Provost's Office, student services, deans, the faculty senate, ATUS, etc.) as well as focus groups with students and a search for potentially useful items used on various national surveys. This baseline included 1580 out of 2225 incoming first year non-transfer students (a response rate of 71%). This cohort was then followed up at the end of their first quarter (fall, 2003: 42% response rate), the end of their first year (spring, 2004: 55% response rate), and the end of their second year (spring 2005: 70% response rate), and at the end of their third year (spring, 2006: 50% response rate). Each follow-up survey is designed to address pressing concerns about student needs, programming, and accountability and accreditation standards pertinent to the students' year in college. (For example, the first quarter follow-up of the 2003 cohort was focused on how well students make the adjustment to college; and the first and second year follow-ups focused on GURs; and the third year follow-up focused on majors.) Please see below for a list of reports on this cohort.

WELS 2005 COHORTS

A second series of WELS baseline surveys was initiated in the summer, 2005, and again included all incoming freshmen, and also a separate baseline survey was developed for transfer students. The baseline for the 2005 survey of freshmen included 1691 out of 2386 incoming students (a response rate of 71%). The baseline for the 2005 survey of transfers included 875 out of 1029 entering transfer students (a response rate of 85%). Please see below for the list of reports on the 2005 cohorts.

WELS 2007 COHORT

The third WELS baseline survey was initiated in the summer, 2007, and also included all in-coming freshmen, with or without college credit from high school, a total of 2392 students. There were 1484 online responses, and 302 phone responses, a total of 1786 (a 75% response rate). Survey topics included

¹Current definitions of the term "freshmen" include nowadays a small percentage of students who do not fit the traditional profile of a freshman. These include high school students who have earned Running Start and Advanced Placement (AP) credits. Technically, these students are entering college for the first-time, but may have earned as many as 90 college credits.

Summerstart, confidence in handling college transition logistics (Web4U, catalog, Degree Planning Guide, etc.), motivation and expectations, academic and social engagement and challenges while in high school, a current assessment of academic skills and competencies, academic priorities and study strategies, and issues related to health, wellness, and alcohol use. Please see below for the title of this report.

CURRENT SURVEY

This report presents findings from the fall, 2008, baseline survey of entering transfers, a total of 973 students. There were 483 online responses and 297 phone responses, for an 81% response rate. Survey topics included transfers students' previous education, attendance at Transitions (summer program for transfers), academic confidence, expectations as they enter Western, majors and minors, and personal backgrounds.

PREVIOUS WELS SURVEYS (NOTE: to download, go to: www.wvu.edu/socad/osr/wels.shtml)

To find out more about previous surveys of the 2003 freshmen WELS cohort, see the following reports:

- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study* (Report No. 2003-02).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study: Fall 2003 Freshmen Transition Survey*. Focus: A Research Summary, 8, (4), 1-8.
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study: Spring, 2004, Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003* (Report No. 2004-01).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Spring, 2005, Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003* (Report No. 2006-01).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Spring, 2006, Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003* (Report No. 2008-01).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Spring, 2007, Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003* (Report No. 2008-04).

To find out more about previous surveys of the 2005 freshmen and transfer WELS cohorts see the following reports:

- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Fall, 2005, Baseline Survey of In-coming Transfers* (Report No. 2006-02).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Fall, 2005, Baseline Survey of In-coming Freshmen* (Report No. 2006-03).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Freshmen in Transition: Fall Quarter, 2005, In-coming Freshmen Surveyed at the End of Fall Quarter, 2005* (Report 2006-04).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Transfers in Transition: Fall Quarter, 2005, In-coming Transfers Surveyed at the End of Fall Quarter, 2005* (Report 2006-05).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Spring, 2006, Follow-up Survey of Students Who Had Entered as Transfers in the Fall, 2005* (Report 2008-02).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Spring, 2006, Follow-up Survey of Students Who Had Entered as Freshmen in the Fall, 2005* (Report 2008-03).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Spring, 2007, Follow-up Survey of Students Who Had Entered as Transfers in the Fall, 2005* (Report 2008-05).
- *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Spring, 2007, Follow-up Survey of Students Who Had Entered as Freshmen in the Fall, 2005* (Report 2008-06).

To find out more about previous surveys of the 2007 freshmen WELS cohorts see the following report:

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey of Freshmen Entering in the Fall, 2007 (Report 2008-07).

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Previous Education						
To start with, we'd like to know how it is you came to this point in your education. Did you attend a community college, a four year college or both? (N=789)						
	Community college	71%				
	Four-year college	16%				
	Both	12%				
The following is a list of reasons why people chose to attend community college. (N=659)						
		Not a reason	Minor reason	Major reason		
	The college was closer to home	22%	30%	48%		
	Finish the requirements for AA degree	21%	24%	55%		
	Prepare for your major	33%	34%	33%		
	Less expensive to start at that school	11%	18%	70%		
	Couldn't get into 4-year school	81%	13%	7%		
	Wanted to improve your GPA	66%	22%	12%		
	Other reasons included: continued after Running Start, unsure of direction, personal reasons, sports, smaller classes, quality of education, transition to 4-year school, proximity to home / family, didn't graduate from high school, easier / more convenient scheduling, continue career / job while in school.					
When was your last quarter or semester at your previous college? (N=787)						
	Spring quarter / semester	66%				
	Summer quarter / semester	20%				
	Fall quarter / semester	5%				
	Winter quarter	9%				

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Previous Education (cont.)						
In what year did you complete your last quarter or semester at your previous college? (N=789)						
		Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	
2008		6%	61%	18%	1%	
2007		3%	3%	1%	3%	
2006		-	2%	-	1%	
2005		-	1%	-	-	
2004 or earlier		-	-	-	-	
Other: responses include "1998," and "I don't recall."		-	-	-	-	
While attending your previous college, did you develop any close, mentoring relationships with faculty? If so, how many? (N=789)						
Don't know		4%				
None		48%				
One		15%				
Two		16%				
Three		8%				
Four or more		8%				

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Previous Education (cont.)						
The following is a list of things you might have done <i>during your last year</i> at your previous college. How often you did each thing, if at all? (N=790)						
		Never	Once	2-3 times	4-5 times	>5 times
	Talked to a professor outside of class.	6%	6%	25%	16%	47%
	Personally contributed to a classroom discussion.	1%	1%	11%	11%	75%
	Volunteered on or off campus outside of coursework.	40%	15%	21%	4%	20%
	Changed your plans for your major field.	50%	29%	17%	1%	3%
	Sought out a job for credit rather than pay, such as an internship.	87%	8%	4%	0%	1%
	Did community service work as part of a course.	68%	15%	10%	3%	5%
	Participated in a club or activity.	43%	16%	18%	5%	17%
	Wrote a substantial scientific or other research paper of 5 pages or more.	25%	20%	33%	9%	13%
	Wrote any other type of substantial paper of 5 pages or more.	20%	16%	31%	11%	21%
	Used tutoring services for help.	52%	10%	15%	6%	17%
	Sought help from a disability resources service.	94%	2%	2%	1%	2%
	Sought help from a counselor for something personal.	81%	7%	7%	2%	4%
About how many credits per quarter or semester did you usually complete while attending your previous college? (N=790. Some respondents gave answers in both categories.)						
		N	Mean	Standard Deviation		
	Quarter	660	14.6	2.5		
	Semester	129	16.3	8.1		

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Previous Education (cont.)						
About how many hours per week did you usually spend studying while attending your previous college? (N=790)						
		N	Mean	Standard Deviation		
		778	14.1	9.7		
Did you have any interdisciplinary-learning experiences at your previous college(s), where two or more academic fields were integrated in a class or school-related activity (such as a learning community, linked courses, interdisciplinary course, internship, or service learning experience)? (N=790)					Yes	No
					33%	67%
If you had an interdisciplinary-learning experience as described above, how many of each type did you have? (N=261)						
		None	One	Two	Three or more	
	Learning community(ies) where two or more courses from different disciplines were taught together	79%	11%	6%	4%	
	Link(s) where two or more courses from different disciplines were linked but not taught together	81%	9%	6%	3%	
	Single course(s) taught as interdisciplinary studies	83%	10%	3%	3%	
	Co-curricular or other non-course experience(s) that requires integrating two or more areas of study, such as an internship or service learning	85%	10%	2%	2%	

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Attending Western					
How many colleges did you apply to for admission this year? (N=790)					
	1	2	3	4	more than 4
	72%	18%	6%	2%	2%
For those who applied to more than one college: (N=219. "Don't know" responses excluded)					
				Yes	No
Was Western your first choice among those you applied to? (N=201)				77%	23%
Were you accepted into more than one college or university? (N=211)				86%	14%
Was Western your first choice among those you were accepted to? (N=169)				90%	10%
Did you attend "Transitions", Western's orientation for Transfer students? (N=779. "Don't know" responses excluded)				Yes	No
				58%	41%
For those who attended Transitions: What did you gain from attending the Transitions program? (N=423. Open-ended question. Analysis of comments available upon request.)					
For those who did <i>not</i> attend Transitions: reasons for not attending. (N=323)					
Scheduling: bad time.			44%		
Already know what I need to know; don't need an orientation.			18%		
Transportation: can't get there.			17%		
Work conflict: can't get away.			29%		
Don't see any value or benefit in going.			11%		
Didn't know about it.			15%		
Other:			33%		
Going to make-up session.			12%		
Out of town.			10%		
Family obligation/emergency.			1%		
Confusion/misled it.			2%		

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Attending Western (cont.)					
For each of the following statements, indicate if you strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree or strongly agree. (N=790)					
	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I have the study skills I need to be a successful student.	0%	2%	4%	26%	68%
I feel I will be a part of the university community.	1%	4%	12%	36%	48%
I expect to have important, new friendships with other Western students.	1%	2%	11%	26%	61%
Concern for my family will interfere with my academic work.	41%	25%	19%	11%	3%
For each of the following items, indicate if you are: <i>not at all, a little, somewhat, very, or extremely</i> comfortable with your ability in that area. (N=790)					
	Not at all comfortable	A little comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable	Extremely comfortable
Using computers for your academic work	0%	2%	7%	29%	62%
Planning, implementing and organizing research	1%	5%	30%	41%	24%
Using library resources for research	2%	7%	29%	40%	22%
Citing references for research papers, for example, creating a bibliography	2%	7%	26%	37%	29%
Understanding how to avoid plagiarism in your writing	1%	1%	13%	38%	48%

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Attending Western (cont.)						
How difficult, if at all, do you expect each item to be for you this year? (N=790)						
		Not at all difficult	A little difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
Managing your time effectively		21%	37%	33%	8%	2%
Managing your coursework		24%	40%	29%	6%	1%
Participating in discussion groups in your courses		49%	26%	17%	5%	3%
Preparing for and presenting your work in front of a class		28%	30%	25%	11%	6%
Sharing with other students in a discussion group		56%	25%	13%	4%	2%
Completing coursework and reading on time		45%	33%	16%	4%	1%
Writing papers as part of your coursework		43%	35%	16%	5%	1%
Balancing your coursework with personal activities		24%	38%	29%	7%	2%
Balancing your coursework with family or community obligations		37%	34%	21%	6%	2%
Balancing your coursework with a job		26%	29%	28%	11%	5%

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
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Attending Western (cont.)						
And how difficult, if at all, do you expect each of the following personal experiences to be for you this fall? (N=789)						
	Not at all difficult	A little difficult	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult	
Managing your finances	25%	32%	29%	10%	4%	
Managing your physical and emotional health	40%	33%	21%	6%	1%	
Getting the emotional support you need to do well in school	56%	24%	14%	4%	1%	
Managing stress	24%	35%	28%	10%	3%	
Getting enough sleep	20%	31%	28%	16%	5%	
Handling the use of alcohol and drugs	82%	11%	5%	1%	1%	
Fitting in with others at Western	56%	26%	14%	3%	2%	
Meeting your family's expectations	62%	19%	11%	5%	2%	
Getting the financial support you need	31%	28%	24%	11%	6%	
Managing living arrangements	59%	23%	11%	3%	2%	
Finding people you get along with, making friends	54%	24%	15%	5%	2%	
Being able to maintain your spiritual or religious values	80%	12%	5%	2%	1%	

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
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Major						
Do you have a major in mind or are you undecided? (N=790)						
Yes, I have a major in mind		91%				
Undecided		9%				
Have you completed the paperwork to officially declare your major yet? (N=715)				Yes	No	Don't know
				29%	63%	8%
				Yes	No	Don't know
Have you talked with an advisor about declaring your major? (N=709)				45%	52%	3%
Have you sought advising from an advisor in your department of interest about what classes or prerequisites are needed for you to get into the major? (N=705)				57%	41%	2%
Have you worked on a plan of study with an advisor? (N=779)				Yes	No	Don't know
				34%	64%	3%
What has your experience with advising at Western been like so far? (Open-ended question. Analysis of comments available upon request.)						
Do you plan to complete a minor? (N=785)				Yes	No	Don't know
				44%	18%	38%
If so, in which program? (Open-ended question. Analysis of comments available upon request.)						

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
of Transfers Entering in the Fall, 2008

Major (cont.)			
If yes, what major do you have in mind? If undecided, what majors are you considering (first and second choices). (N=785. Sum is more than 100% because undecided respondents could choose a first and second choice.)			
Accounting	5%	History	2%
Anthropology / Archaeology	2%	Human Services	5%
Art	2%	Humanities	1%
Art History	0%	Industrial Design	1%
Biochemistry	1%	Journalism	2%
Biology	5%	Linguistics	1%
Canadian-American Studies	0%	Management	3%
Chemistry	1%	Manufacturing Engineering	0%
Communication	3%	Mathematics	2%
Communication Sciences and Dis	1%	Music	2%
Computer Science	2%	Philosophy	1%
Dance	0%	PE and Health	2%
Decision Sciences	0%	Physics	0%
East Asian Studies	0%	Plastics Engineering	1%
Economics	1%	Political Science	3%
Electronics Engineering Techno	1%	Psychology	7%
Elementary Education	8%	Recreation	2%
English	6%	Secondary Education	2%
Environmental Education	0%	Sociology	2%
Environmental Science	2%	Spanish	2%
Environmental Studies	3%	Special Education	2%
Exercise and Sports Science	1%	Theatre Arts	1%
Fairhaven	1%	Other:	
Finance & Marketing	4%	Education	1%
Financial Economics	1%	Pre-professional	1%
French	0%	Liberal Studies	0%
General Studies	1%	Law & Diversity	1%
Geography	1%	Business	3%
Geology	1%	Art	1%
German	1%	Engineering	0%

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
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Personal Information						
How likely are you to do each of the following? (N=790)						
		Definitely won't	Probably won't	Probably will	Definitely will	Don't Know
	Take a quarter or more other than summer off from college over the next few years?	60%	30%	5%	2%	3%
	Study abroad or participate in student exchange?	25%	30%	22%	9%	14%
	How likely are you to graduate from Western? (N=780)	Definitely won't	Probably won't	Probably will	Definitely will	Don't Know
		0%	0%	18%	81%	1%
How many quarters all together do you expect to be at Western before you finish your Bachelor's Degree? (N=780)						
	3 quarters	1%				
	4 quarters	1%				
	5 quarters	3%				
	6 quarters	30%				
	7 quarters	17%				
	8 quarters	17%				
	9 quarters	19%				
	more than 9 quarters	14%				
What is the highest level of education you plan to attain in the next 10 years? (N=780)						
	Bachelor's degree		28%			
	A second bachelor's degree		2%			
	A certification program		2%			
	A masters degree, Or		43%			
	Any degree beyond a masters such as a PhD, MD or JD		14%			
	Don't know		11%			

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Personal Information (cont.)					
When you attend Western, how many adults (18 or older) will be in your household, besides yourself? (N=762)					
0	14%				
1	31%				
2	26%				
3	19%				
4	7%				
5	2%				
6+	2%				
And how many children under the age of 18? (N=786)					
0	81%				
1	11%				
2	5%				
3+	3%				
<i>For those with children:</i>					
Will those children need to be cared for while you are in school? (N=155)					
Yes			29%		
No: they're old enough to take care of themselves			39%		
No: it's arranged			32%		
How difficult will it be for you to arrange child care? (N=45)					
Not at all		16%			
A little		20%			
Somewhat		38%			
Very		7%			
Extremely		4%			
I'm not responsible for the children's care		11%			
Don't know		4%			

Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) Baseline Survey
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Personal Information (cont.)					
Are you working now? (N=788)		Yes	No		
		58%	42%		
If so, how many hours per week? (N=449)		Mean	St. dev.		
		31	12		
Do you expect to work while attending Western? (N=787)					
Yes		72%			
No		14%			
Don't know		14%			
If so, how many hours per week? (N=565)		Mean	St. dev.		
		18	10		
Is there anything else you'd like to add that Western planners and administrators should know about students in your circumstances? (Open-ended question. Analysis of comments available upon request.)					