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A Profile of the 1996 Western Washington University Graduating Class

Prepared by Gary McKinney, Joseph E. Trimble, Richard Frye, and Jacquie M. Andrieu-Parker

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Information for this report was obtained from the Student Tracking System, jointly maintained by the Registrar's Office and the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing. The report presents information intended to provide insight into the various characteristics of 1996 Western Washington University graduates (academic year: Fall Quarter, 1995, through Summer quarter, 1996).

Western graduated 2461 students in 1996, its largest graduating class on record, though demographically the class remained relatively unchanged from other recent classes. There was essentially the same ratio of males and females-42% males vs. 58% females-as well as transfers and natives (students who entered Western as first-time freshmen)-54% transfers vs. 44% natives-as there has been in recent years. The overall average Western gpa was nearly identical to last year's (3.15 in 1996 vs. 3.14 in 1995), though in the last three years the average gpa has been higher by at

least a full half-point than any average gpa on record going back to 1981.

The 1996 graduating class profile introduces a relatively new time-to-degree measure, the Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI). The GEI measures degree attainment efficiency with a formula that considers the number of overall credits earned, the number of credits needed for matriculation in a given major, and the number of transfer credits earned. The measure does not factor in chronological time needed for a degree. The thinking behind the GEI is that if at the time of graduation a student has earned only the number of credits necessary for a degree and no more, their efficiency is 100%; in other words, they took up no more class space than they had to, whether it took them three years to earn their degree, or thirty.

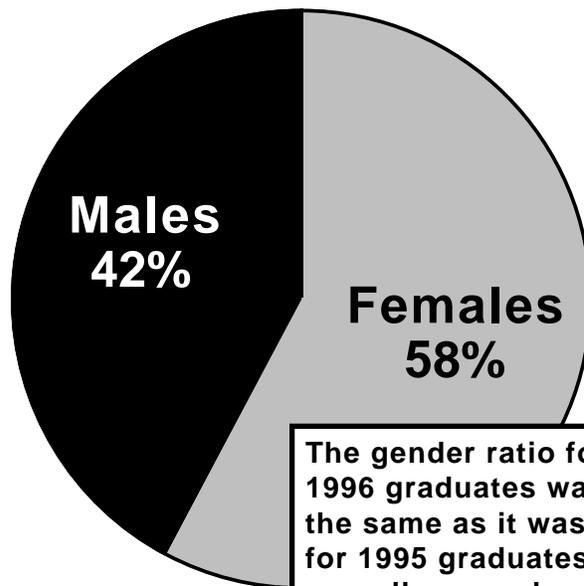
Last year's increase into double digits of ethnic-minority students earning degrees remained in double digits, though the increase over the 1995 percentage was small (10.8% in 1996 vs. 10.1%).



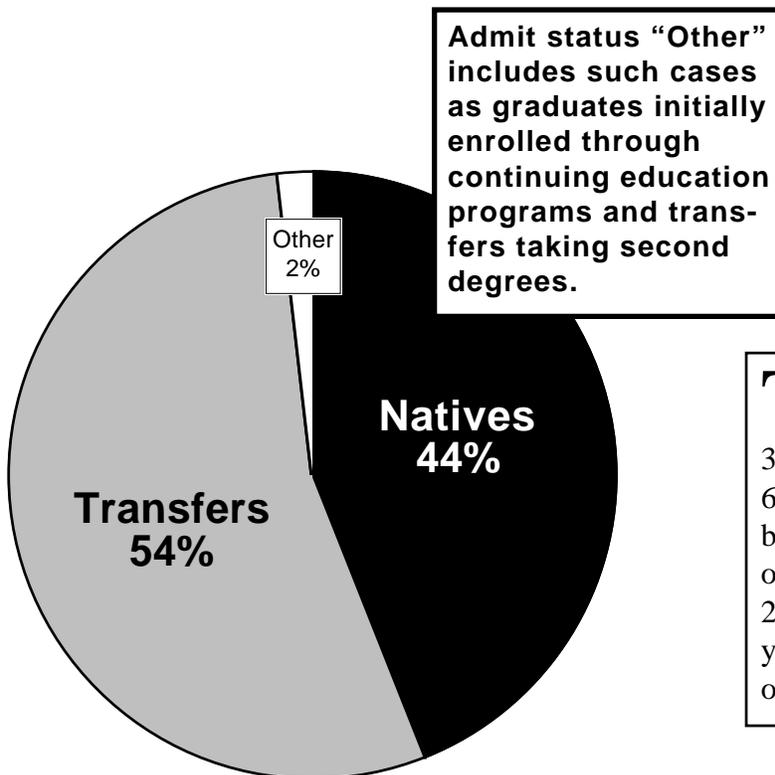
WESTERN
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



Western had 2461 graduates in 1996 (fall quarter, 1995, through summer quarter, 1996), up from 2251 in 1995, making it Western's largest graduating class to date. A majority of Western's 1996 graduates (81.8%) began attending classes in a fall quarter, most during the fall quarters of 1991 and 1992. Yet less than half (49.3%) matriculated in the spring. Matriculation was spread rather evenly across the other three graduation ceremonies: fall (19.5%), winter (19.5%), and summer (11.8%).

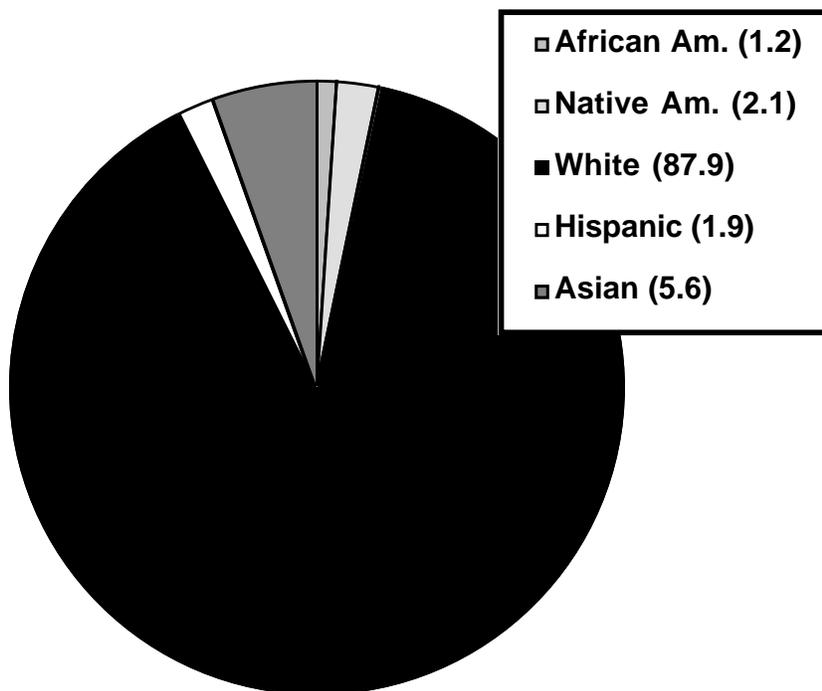


The gender ratio for 1996 graduates was the same as it was for 1995 graduates, as well as nearly identical to the gender ratio for the freshmen classes of 1991 and 1992.



Admit status "Other" includes such cases as graduates initially enrolled through continuing education programs and transfers taking second degrees.

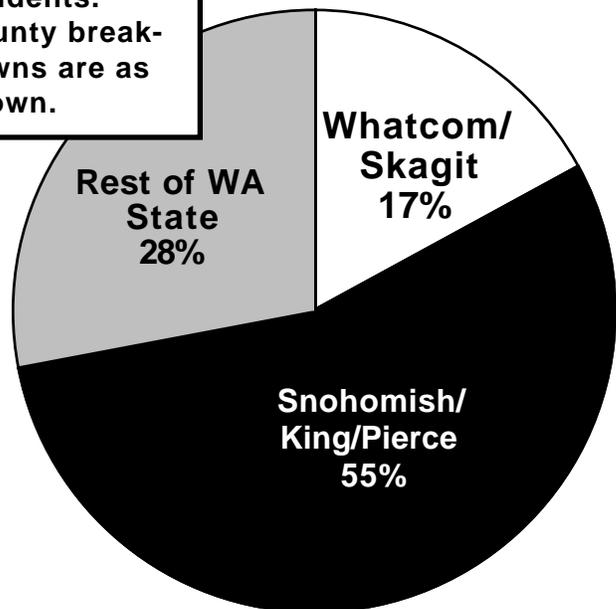
The youngest 1996 graduate was 20 years old (there were 3); the oldest 1996 graduate was 69 years old. Most graduates were between the ages of 22 to 24 years old (59.0%). Fewer were between 25-29 years old (24.0%), 30-39 years old (10.4%), and 40 years old or older (6.0%).



Some graduates chose not to list their ethnicity (4.6%). These students were not included when figuring ethnicity findings for this report. There were 30 graduates from foreign countries.

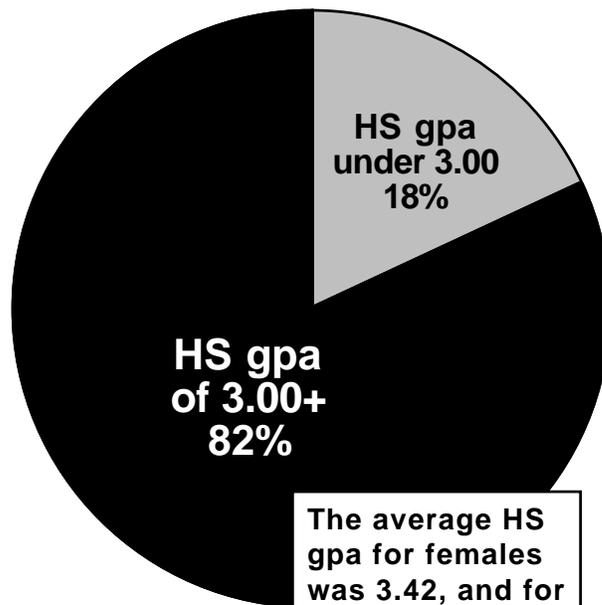
There were 207 graduates (8.4%) who listed a parent as a Western alumni. There were 89 graduates indicating veterans status (3.6%), as well as 47 graduates (1.9%) listing various disabilities, including learning, ambulatory, visual, hearing, and miscellaneous.

Nearly all 1996 graduates (97.1%) were Washington residents. County breakdowns are as shown.



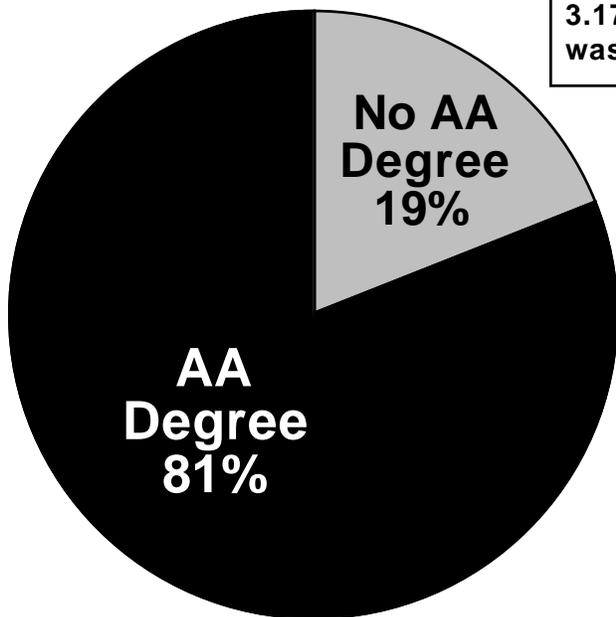


When noting the high school grade point averages (HS gpa's) of Western graduates, it should be kept in mind that most cases are for native students (82.1%). The same is true for pre-college test scores like the SAT (83.2%). Transfer students with AA degrees do not need to include either their pre-college tests scores or their HS gpa's in their admissions packages. The average HS gpa for 1995 Western graduates was 3.35. The average SAT-composite score was 1080. The average Admissions Index (a formula that combines HS gpa and pre-college tests scores) was 56.

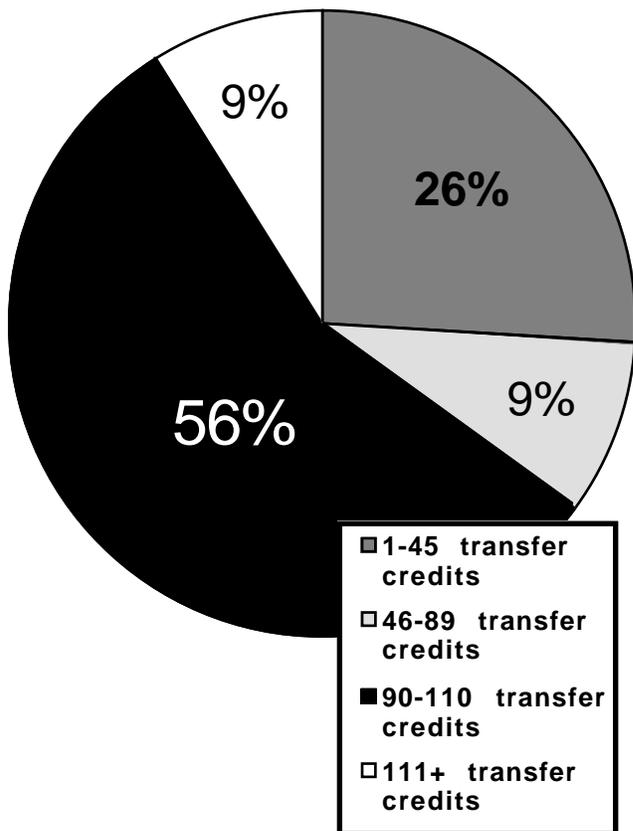


The average HS gpa for females was 3.42, and for males 3.25. For graduates with transfer admit status who included HS gpa in their files, the average was 3.16. For graduates with native admit status, the average HS gpa was 3.39.

The average transfer gpa overall was 3.11. The transfer gpa for females was 3.17, and for males was 3.03.

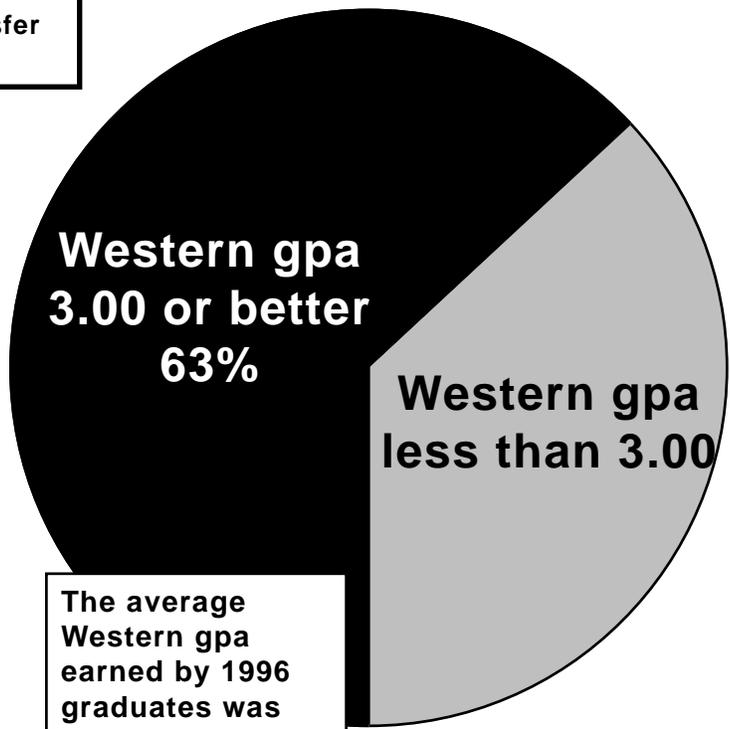


For graduates with transfer credits, those aged 23-24 transferred, on average, 62 credits; aged 25-29 transferred 86 credits; aged 30-39 transferred 95 credits; and aged 40 and older 101 credits.

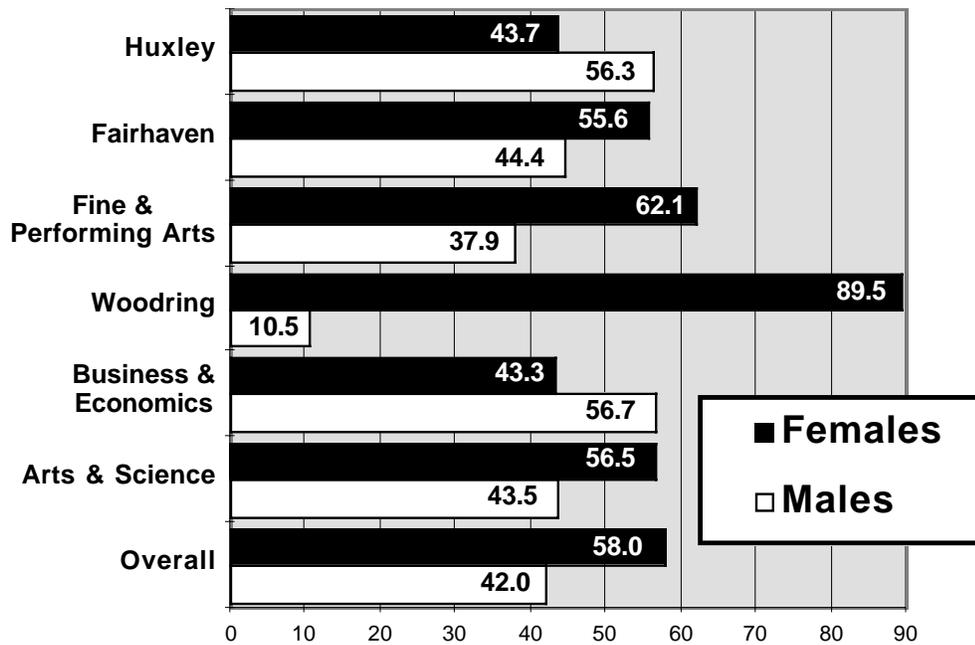


Nearly half (47.5%) of first-time, incoming freshmen (natives) earned credits towards graduation from schools other than Western. In other words, the chances were only about 50/50 that a first-time, incoming freshmen would actually earn all their academic credits at Western.

The average Western gpa earned by males was 3.06; the average Western gpa earned by females was 3.22. **Honors were earned by 8.5% of Western's 1996 graduates:** 115 earned Cum Laude; 95 earned Magna Cum Laude. Most (86.2%) but not all grads were required to pass the Junior Writing Exam (JWE)--prior to the fall of 1991 students only had to *take* the JWE. Yet 96.5% passed the essay section and 97.4% passed the objective section.

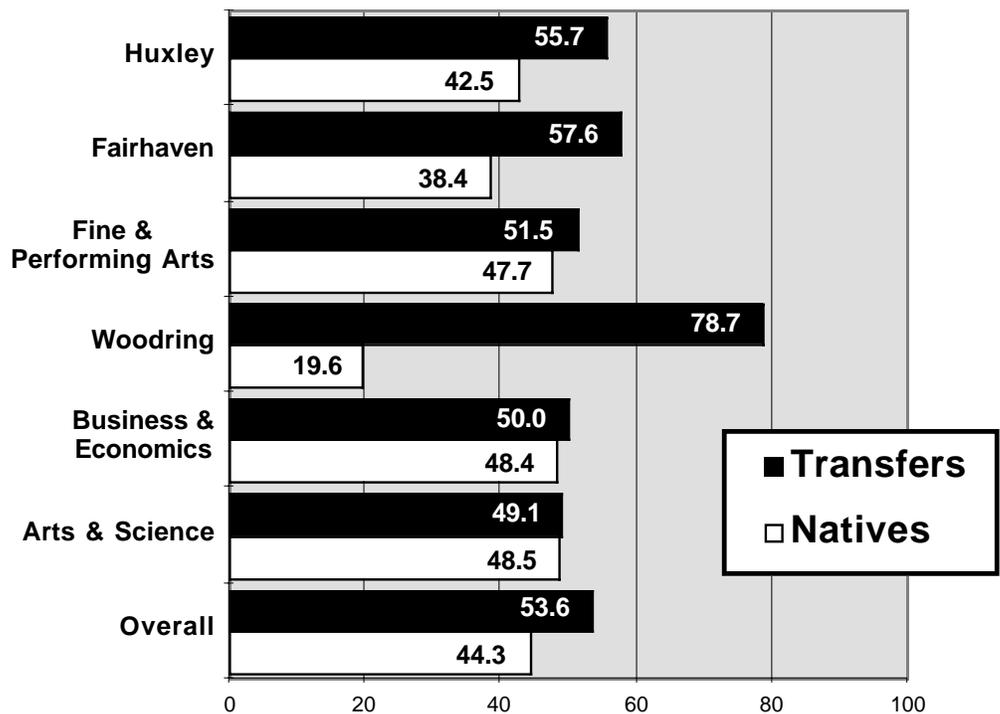


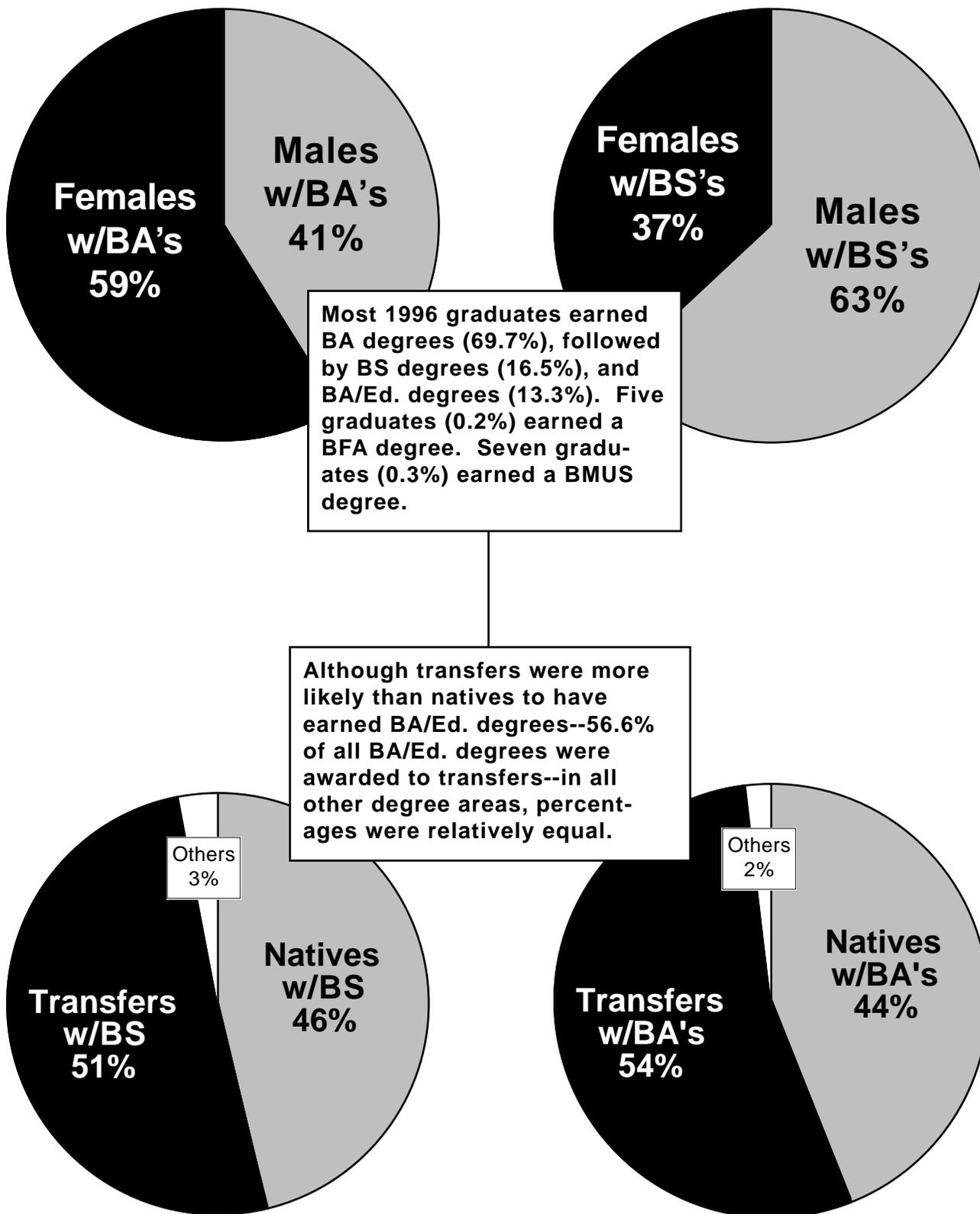
The average Western gpa earned by 1996 graduates was 3.15, compared to 3.14 earned by 1995 graduates.



The college of matriculation for most 1996 graduates was Arts & Sciences (59.2%), followed by Business & Economics (12.8%), Woodring (11.6%), Huxley (7.1%), Fine and Performing Arts (5.4%), and Fairhaven (4.0%).

Compared to 1995, in 1996 slight increases were seen in the percentages of graduates from Woodring (up 1.5%), and Arts & Sciences (up 1.1%). Slight decreases were seen at Huxley (down 1.2%), Business & Economics (down 0.6%), Fine & Performing Arts (down 0.5%), and Fairhaven (down 0.3%).



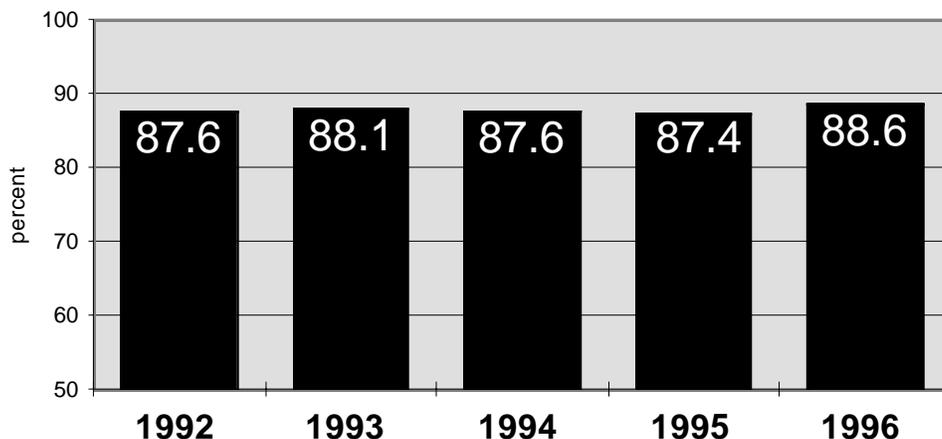




Previous graduate reports have highlighted issues of time-to-degree efficiency. Included in this year's report are familiar measures, plus a new one, the Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI), a formula that does not measure linear time to graduation, but instead tracks student credit efficiency. The GEI formula utilizes transfer credits (if any), the number of credits a student has earned, and the number of credits needed to earn a degree—180 being the usual standard, though some degrees, notably in Education, require more. Using the GEI formula, a student who earns no more than the necessary number of credits for graduation has achieved 100% efficiency. (A copy of this formula can be requested from the OIAT.)

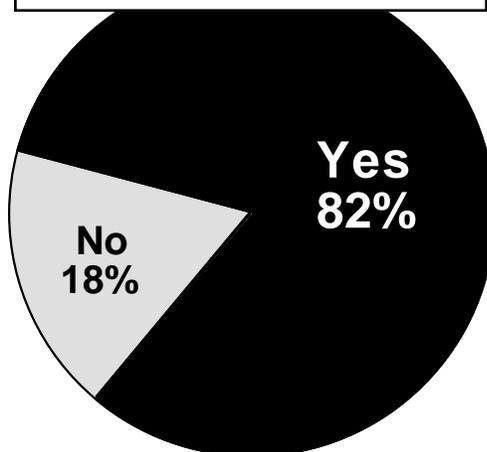
The overall GEI for 1996 graduates was 87.9%. For 1996 natives the GEI was 87.4%, for transfers, 88.2%. For males the GEI was 86.6%, for females 88.6%.

Average Overall GEI for Graduating Classes 1992-1996



Native Graduates Attending *SummerStart*

SummerStart is the freshman summer orientation program began in 1986. Most native graduates attend *SummerStart*.



Transitions is the summer orientation program for transfer students, begun in 1994. Most 1996 graduates with transfer status started at Western before *Transitions* was instituted.

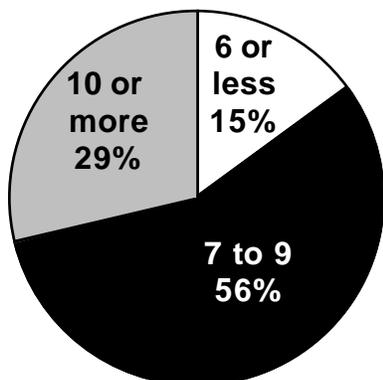


Has *SummerStart* participation affected graduation efficiency? It is difficult to say with certainty. A great many factors influence a student's academic career; singling out one effect is extremely difficult. For such large numbers of students even when there is statistical significance, variance analysis results are almost routinely low. Nevertheless, findings do indicate that the influence of *SummerStart* on efficiency (as measured by the GEI and the average number of quarters attended) is a relatively positive one.

SummerStart Participation: Effect on Two Measures of Time-to-degree Efficiency

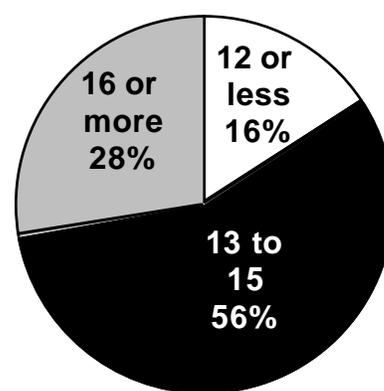
		Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI)			Number of Quarters		
year graduated	year entered	<i>SummerStart</i>		statistically significant	<i>SummerStart</i>		statistically significant
		yes	no		yes	no	
1991	1986-87	88.9	80.1	yes (.000)	13.7	15.5	yes (.000)
1992	1987-88	86.8	80.5	yes (.000)	14.2	15.0	yes (.000)
1993	1988-89	85.6	81.7	yes (.000)	14.4	14.9	yes (.019)
1994	1989-90	85.6	81.4	yes (.000)	14.4	14.9	yes (.033)
1995	1990-91	85.8	83.4	yes (.000)	14.5	14.6	no (.483)
1996	1990-91	85.6	90.8	no (.152)	13.9	14.4	no (.148)

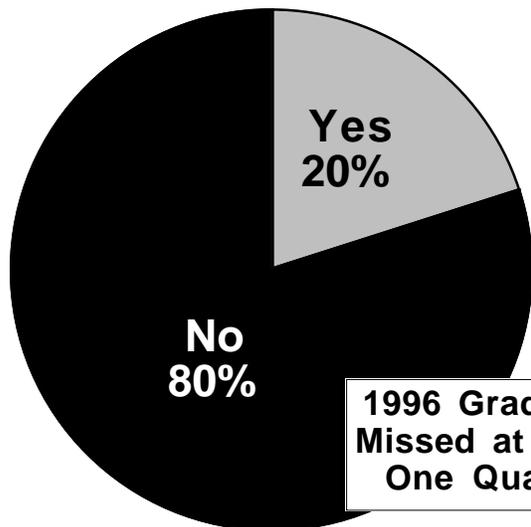
Quarters to Graduation: Transfers w/AA Degrees



Traditionally, a transfer with an AA degree might be expected to graduate within six quarters, while a "pure" native (a graduate who earned Western credits only, no outside credits--from community colleges, for instance) might be expected to graduate within twelve quarters.

Quarters to Graduation: "Pure" Natives

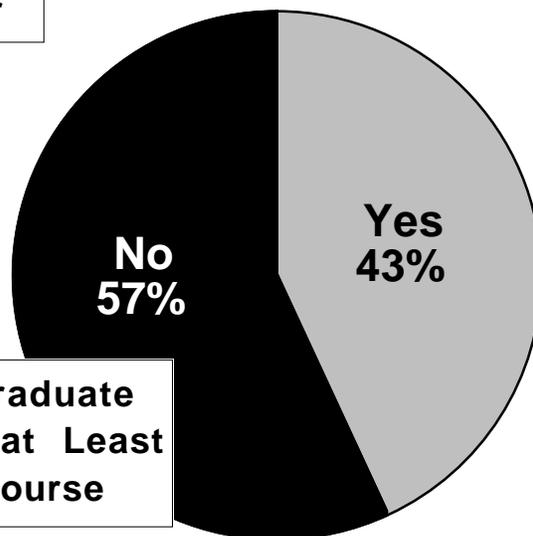




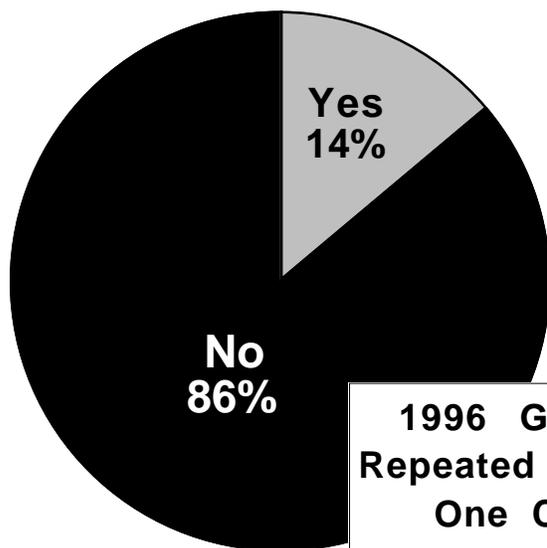
1996 Graduate Missed at Least One Quarter

At 20%, 1996 graduates were slightly less likely to have missed a quarter than were 1995 graduates (22%).

At 43%, 1996 graduates were less likely to have dropped at least one course than 1995 graduates (47%).



1996 Graduate Dropped at Least One Course

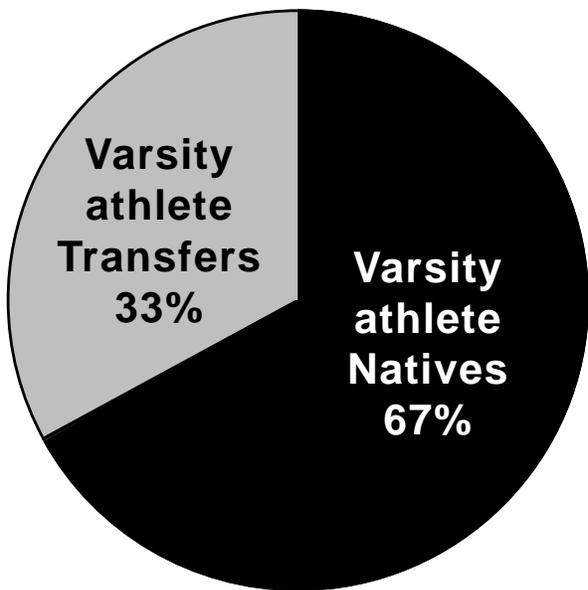


1996 Graduate Repeated at Least One Course

At 14%, 1996 graduates were equally likely to have repeated at least one course as were 1995 graduates (14%).



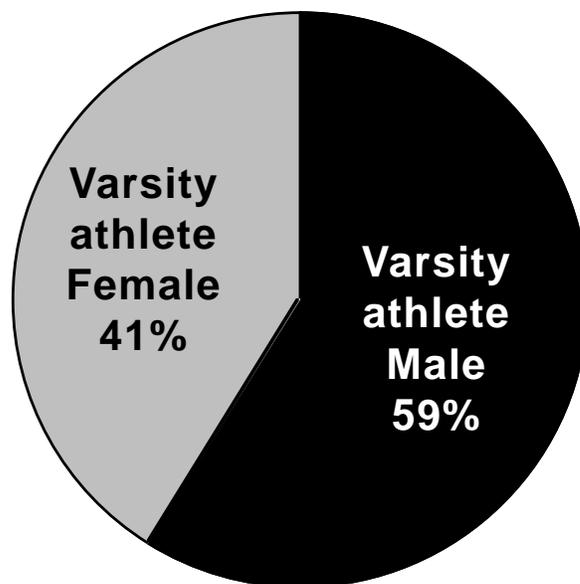
There were 141 graduates from the class of 1996 who had participated in varsity athletics, up from 94 graduates from the class of 1995. Graduating varsity athletes were predominately White (88.6%), followed by African-American (5.7%), Hispanic (2.9%), Asian (2.1%), and Native-American (0.7%).



1996 Varsity Athlete Graduates

Sport	N	%
Football	36	25.5%
Crew	26	18.4%
Track	23	16.3%
Soccer	17	12.1%
Cross-Country	14	9.9%
Tennis/Racket	9	6.4%
Basketball	6	4.3%
Fast Pitch	6	4.3%
Golf	3	2.1%
Volleyball	1	0.7%
Total	141	100.0%

Varsity athlete graduates earned an overall Western gpa of 3.03. Male athletes earned a 2.96 gpa; female athletes earned a 3.13 gpa. Native athletes earned a 3.06 gpa; transfers earned a 2.97 gpa.



Graduating varsity athletes earned degrees in 29 of Western's 45 departments, including 13.5% in Physical Education, 9.2% in Sociology, and 7.1% in both Environment Studies and Psychology. 10% of graduating varsity athletes earned honors, slightly higher than the 8.6% of graduates earning honors overall.

PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Several analyses yielded interesting findings. Analysis by statistical correlation indicated that the variable with the strongest positive correlation with Western gpa was the Academic Index ($r = .591$, $p = .000$). The Academic Index (AI) is a mathematical formula that combines high school gpa and pre-college test scores (for example, the SAT and ACT) into one figure. It is utilized statewide and has a scale of 0-100. The average AI for 1996 Western graduates was 55.6. The strong positive correlation between the AI and Western gpa indicates that the AI is a reliable predictor of academic success at Western, using Western gpa as the criterion of that success.

However, because a relatively few transfers include the AI, high school gpa, or pre-college test scores as part of their records, transfer gpa was also included in the test of statistical correlation. Though not as strong a predictor as the AI, transfer gpa indicated a modest to strong correlation with Western gpa ($r = .440$, $p = .000$).

Multiple regression analyses on selected variables also were performed. This statistic helps to indicate which of a number of variables can predict what the score on a dependent variable (in this case Western gpa) might be. This test was performed on so-called “pure natives,” those students who had entered Western as freshmen and not taken any transfer credits. Statistically, this cohort offered the most in-depth analysis (all their credits were taken at Western, and the Academic Index, high school gpa’s and pre-college test scores were included in their records). For “pure natives,” regression analyses indicated that $R^2 = .326$ for the Academic Index as an independent variable affecting the dependent variable “Western gpa.” In other words, 32.6% of the variance in Western gpa could be explained by knowing the Academic Index of the “pure native” cohort.

If a variable was needed that might help predict how well an in-coming freshman might perform at Western, using Western gpa as the criterion for academic success, the best one available currently would be the Academic Index. In the case of transfer students, for whom the AI is not always available, transfer gpa might serve as a decent alternative.

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