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# A PROFILE OF THE 1997 WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY GRADUATING CLASS

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

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Information for this research summary was obtained from the Student Tracking System, jointly maintained by the Registrar's Office and the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing (OIAT). The report presents information intended to provide insights into the various characteristics of 1997 Western Washington University graduates (academic year: Fall Quarter, 1996, through Summer quarter, 1997).

Western graduated 2438 students in 1997, the second largest graduating class on record. (Last year's class, 1996, with 2461 graduates is the largest to date.) Change comes slowly to demographics analyzed only once a year, but there were two changes of particular note in the 1997 graduating classes. First, 1997 saw the highest percentage of female graduates since the World War II years: 61% females versus 39% males. Second, the per-

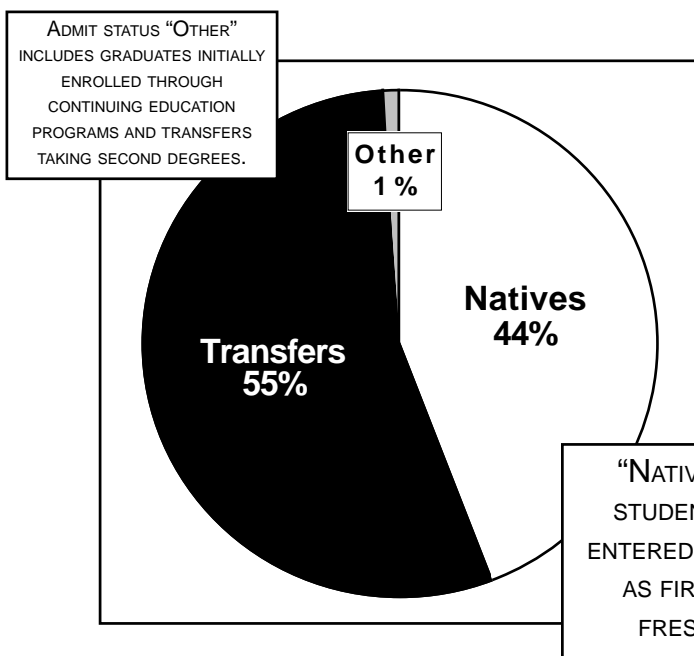
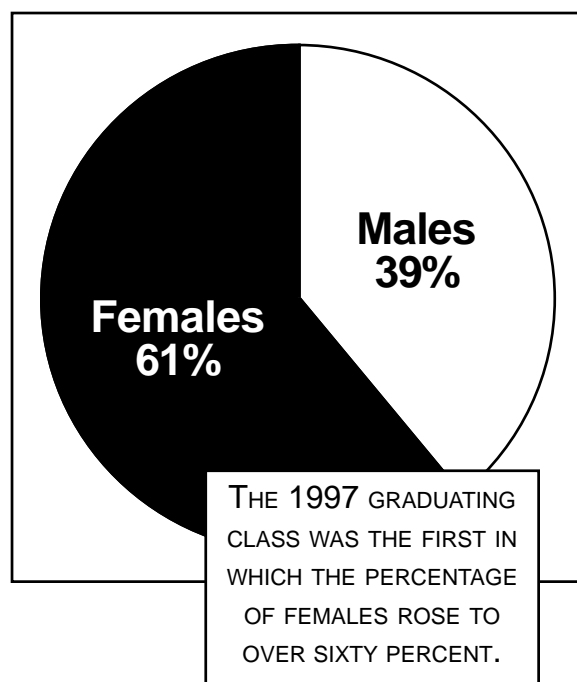
centage of ethnic-minority graduates took a leap from 10.8% in 1996 to 13.6% in 1998, the highest percentage on record.

Another item of interest is that, at 44%, more females earned BS degrees in 1997 than in any year since 1981. Indeed, in the last 17 years the percentage of females earning BS degrees has risen over 40% only one other time, at 42% in 1991. Also, the Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI)—a formula that measures degree attainment efficiency via credits earned—fell in 1997 to 82.9%, compared to 87.9% in 1996.

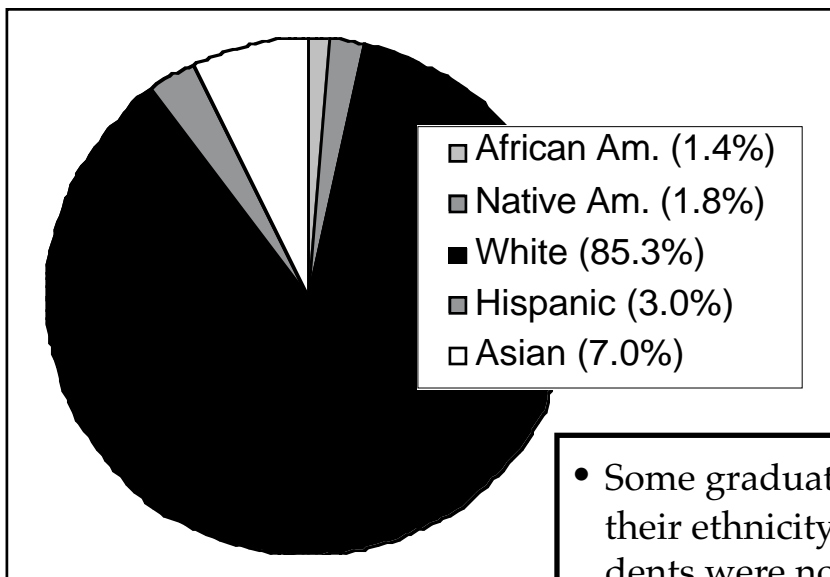
Most other demographics remained relatively similar to the 1996 graduate profile. There was essentially the same percentage of transfers and natives (graduates who had entered Western as first-time freshmen): 55% transfers versus 44% natives. The overall Western grade point average for 1997 graduates was 3.16, compared to 3.15 in 1996 and 3.14 in 1995.



- There were 2438 graduates in 1997 (fall quarter, 1996, through summer quarter, 1997), down from 2461 in 1996.
- Most graduates began attending classes in a fall quarter (81.5%).
- The youngest graduate was 17 years old; the oldest was 72 years old.
- Most graduates were between the ages of 22 to 24 years old (59.3%); fewer were between 25-29 years old (24.8%), 30-39 years old (8.5%), and 40 years old or older (7.4%).

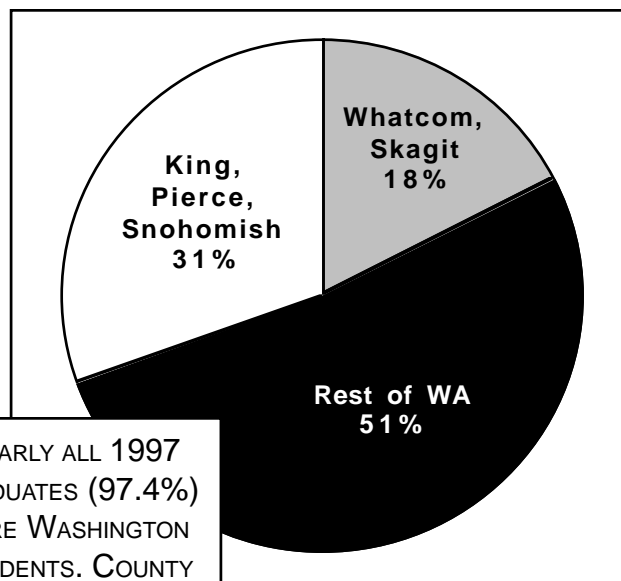


- 186 graduates listed their parents as Western alumni (7.6%).
- 84 graduates were veterans (3.4%).
- 67 graduates listed a disability—learning, hearing, ambulatory, and other (2.7%).



- Some graduates chose not to list their ethnicity (4.4%). These students were not included when figuring ethnicity findings for this report.
- There were 26 graduates from foreign countries.

**ETHNIC-MINORITIES MADE UP 13.6% OF THE 1997 GRADUATING CLASS (INCLUDING 0.4% LISTING THEIR ETHNICITY AS "OTHER"). THE PERCENT OF ETHNIC-MINORITIES IN THE 1996 GRADUATING CLASS WAS 10.8%.**



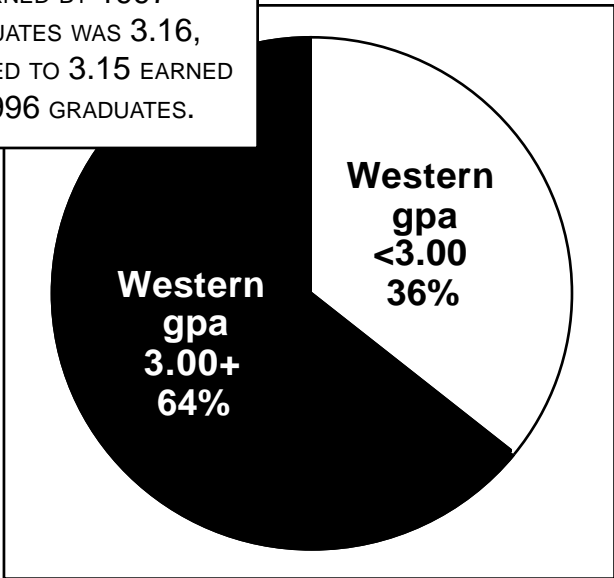
**NEARLY ALL 1997 GRADUATES (97.4%) WERE WASHINGTON RESIDENTS. COUNTY BREAKDOWNS ARE AS SHOWN.**

- When noting the high school grade point average (hsgpa) of Western graduates, it should be kept in mind that most cases are for native students (80.5%). The same is true for pre-college test scores like the SAT (79.2%). Transfer students with AA degrees do not need to include either their hsgpa's or pre-college test scores when applying for admission.
- The average hsgpa for 1997 Western graduates was 3.35; the average SAT-composite score was 1078. The average Admissions Index (a formula that combines hsgpa and pre-college test scores) was 58.5.

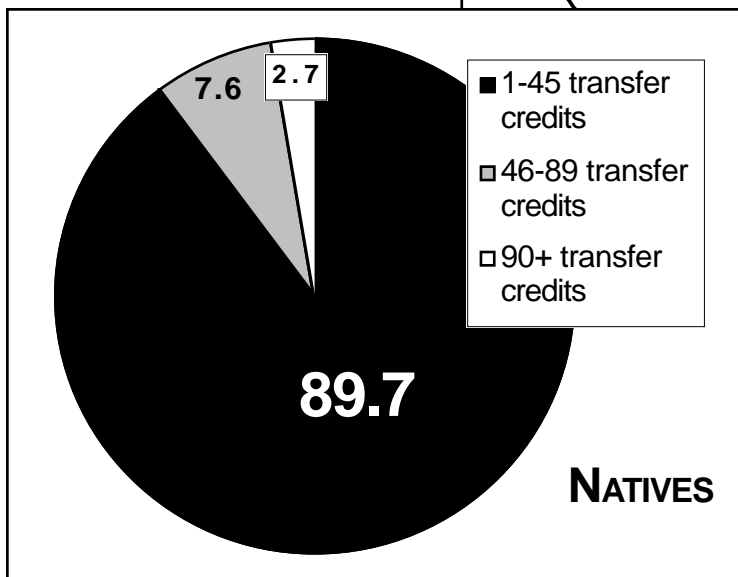
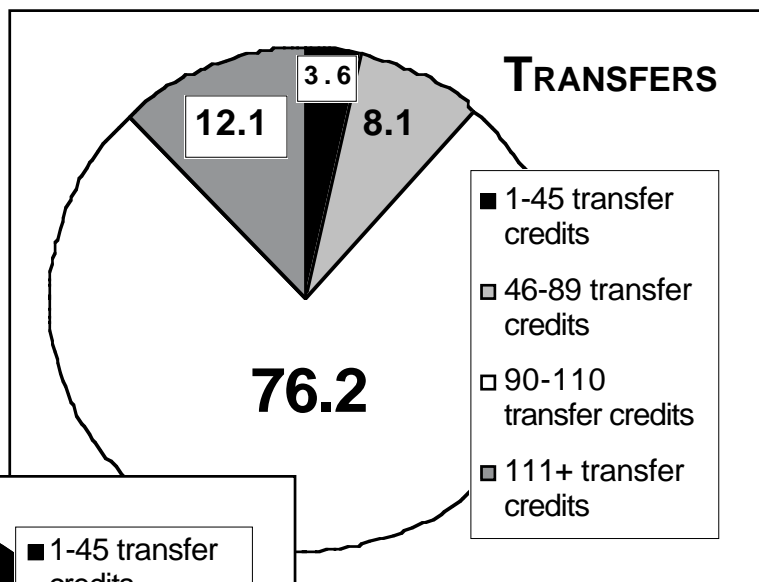
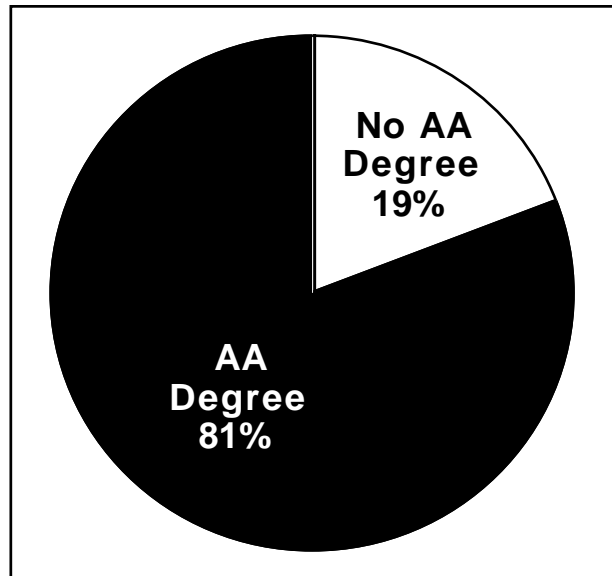
HONORS WERE EARNED BY 9.9% OF WESTERN'S 1997 GRADUATES: 139 EARNED CUM LAUDE; 102 EARNED MAGNA CUM LAUDE

- The average hsgpa for females was 3.48, and for males 3.35.
- The average hsgpa for natives was 3.48; for transfers including hsgpa in their files, the average was 3.24.
- The average transfer gpa was 3.13. The transfer gpa for females was 3.20, and for males was 3.04.

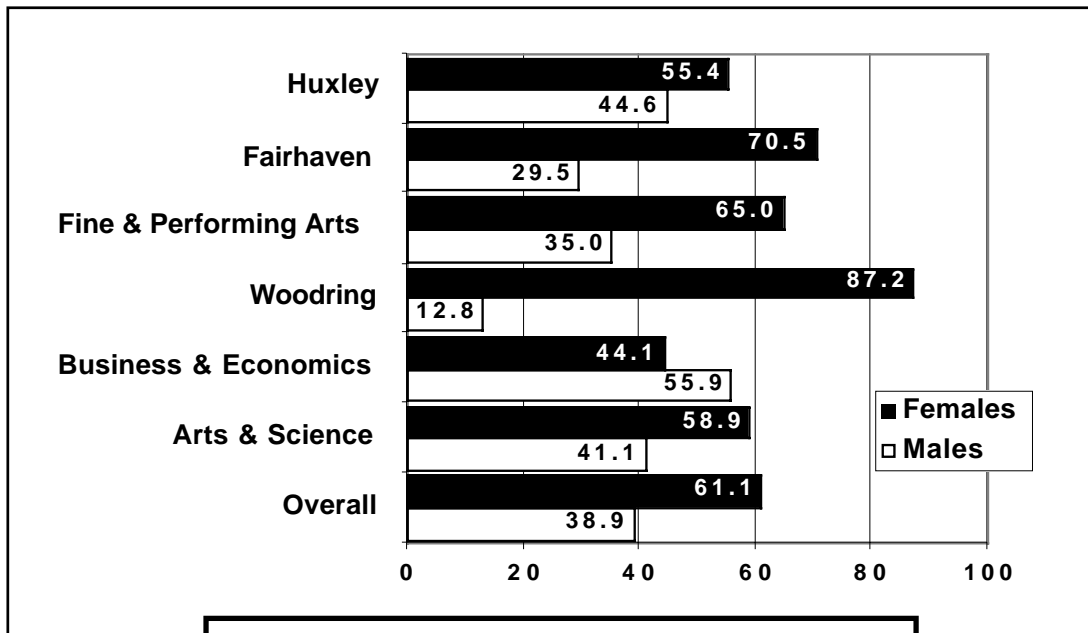
THE AVERAGE WESTERN GPA EARNED BY 1997 GRADUATES WAS 3.16, COMPARED TO 3.15 EARNED BY 1996 GRADUATES.



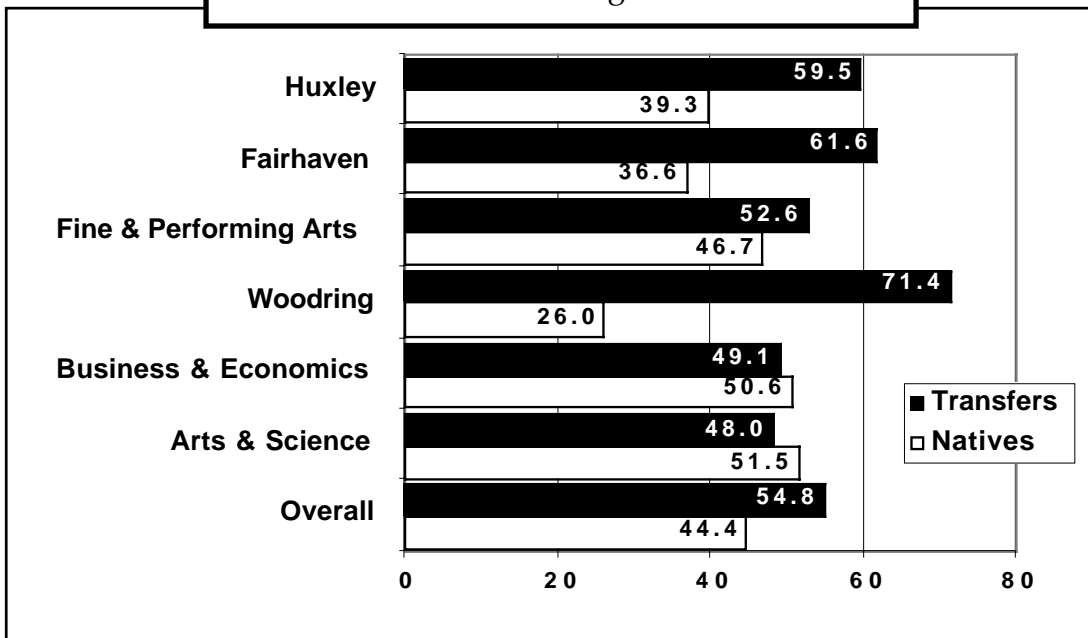
**NEARLY HALF (45.1%) OF GRADUATES WHO ENTERED WESTERN AS FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN (NATIVES) EARNED CREDITS TOWARDS GRADUATION FROM SCHOOLS OTHER THAN WESTERN. IN OTHER WORDS, ONLY 54.9% OF NATIVE GRADUATES ACTUALLY EARNED ALL THEIR ACADEMIC CREDITS AT WESTERN.**

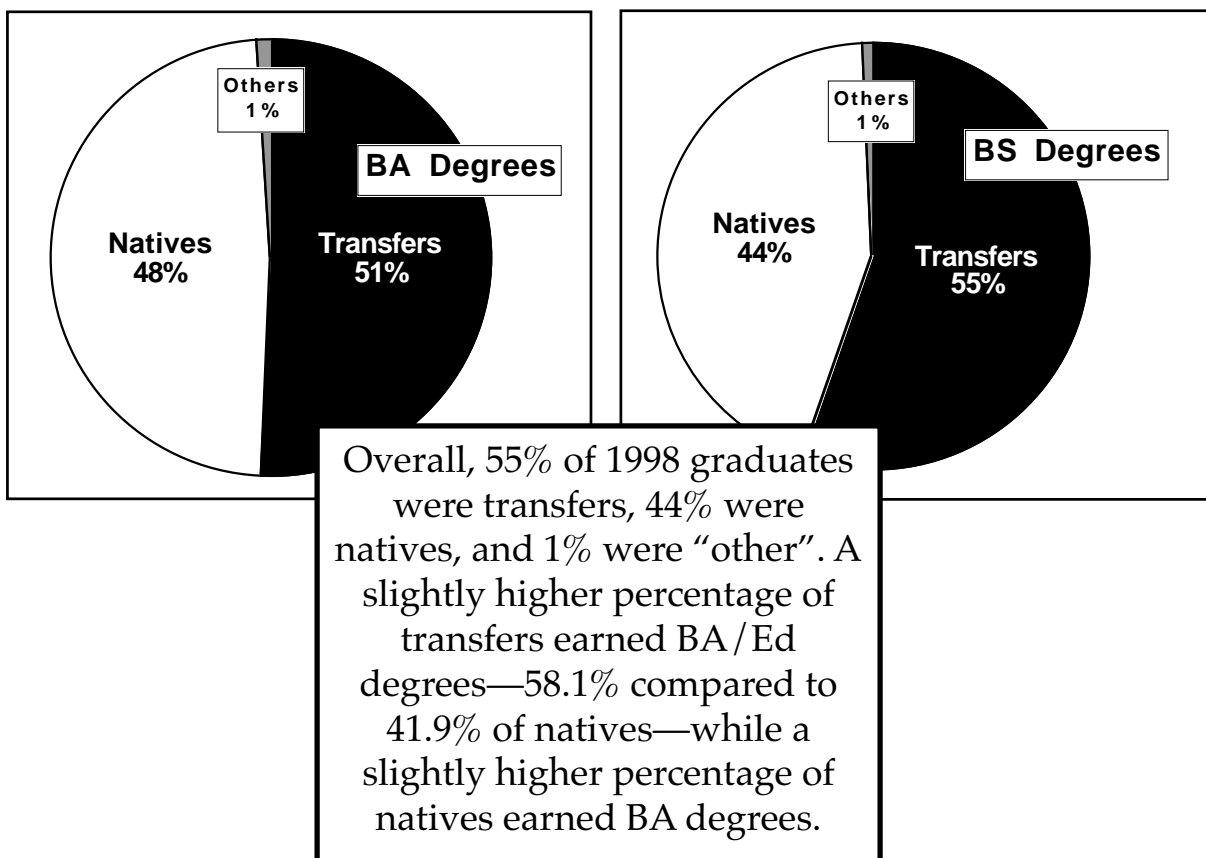
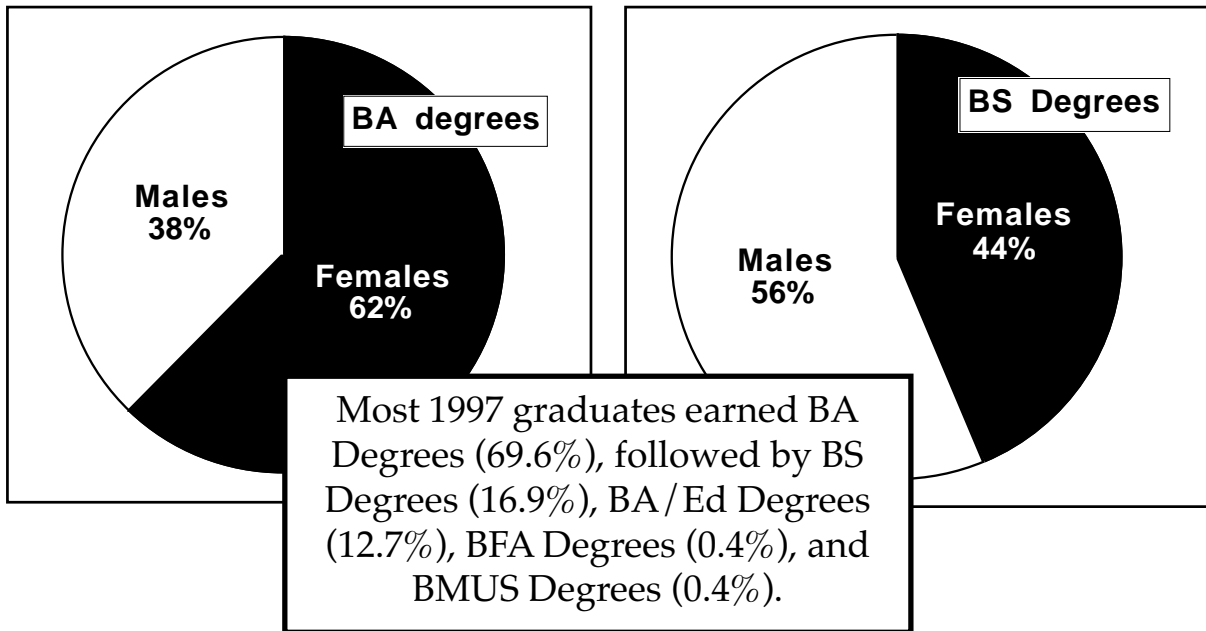


**Average number of credits transferred by age:**  
 21-22 = 28.8 credits  
 23-24 = 38.4 credits  
 25-29 = 76.6 credits  
 30-39 = 95.3 credits  
 40+ = 99.6 credits



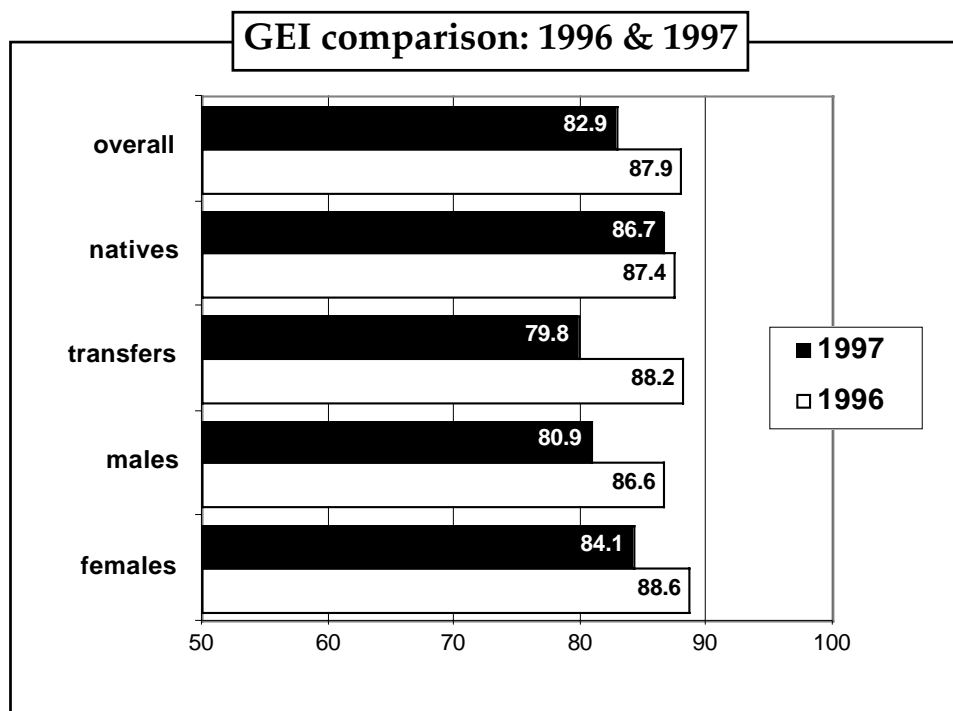
Arts & Sciences graduated the most students (56.8%), followed by Business & Economics (13.3%), Woodring (12.6%) Huxley (7.0%), Fine & Performing Arts (5.7%), and Fairhaven (4.7%). Compared to 1996, there were slight decreases in the percentage of graduates at Arts & Sciences (down 2.4%) and Huxley (down 0.1%), and slight increases (1% or less) at the other colleges.

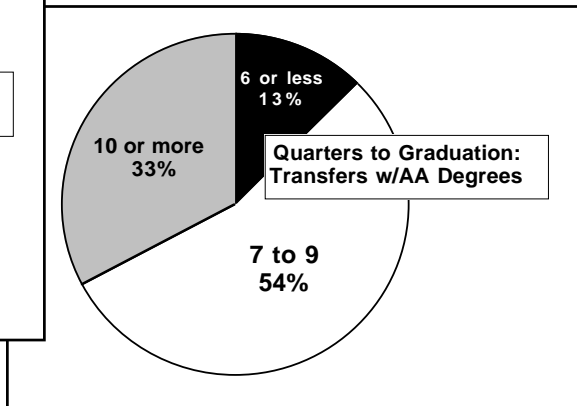
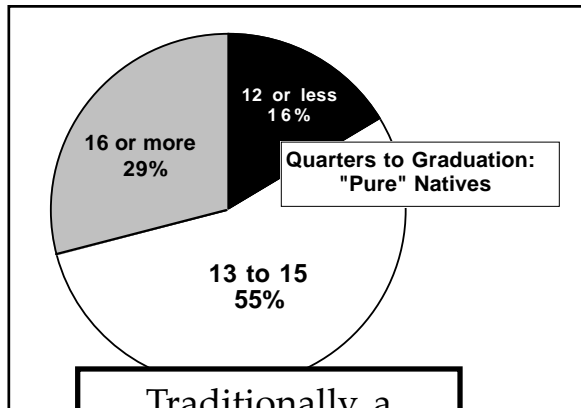






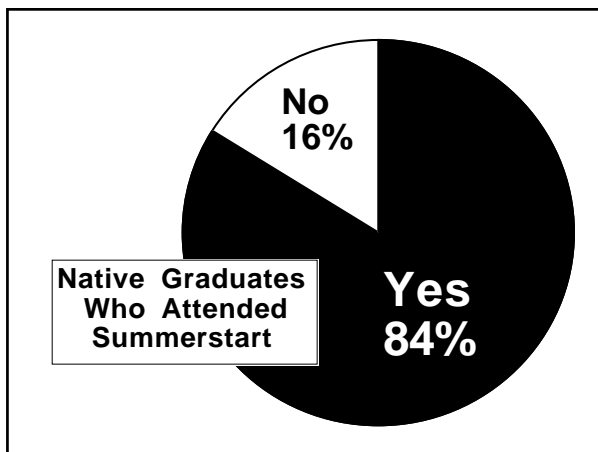
- Previous graduate reports have highlighted issues of time-to-degree efficiency. Included in this year's report are familiar measures, plus the Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI), introduced last year. The GEI does not track linear time to graduation, but rather student credit efficiency. The GEI formula utilizes transfer credits (if any), the number of credits earned, and the number of credits needed to earn the degree—180 being the usual, though some degrees 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 1997 graduates was 82.9%. For natives the GEI was 86.7%, and for transfers 79.8%. For females the GEI was 84.1%, and for males 80.9%. (See the figure below for 1997/1996 GEI comparisons.) Additionally, the GEI for females earning BA degrees was 84.6%, and for males was 81.3%; the GEI for females earning BS degrees was 76.1%, and for males was 79.2%.

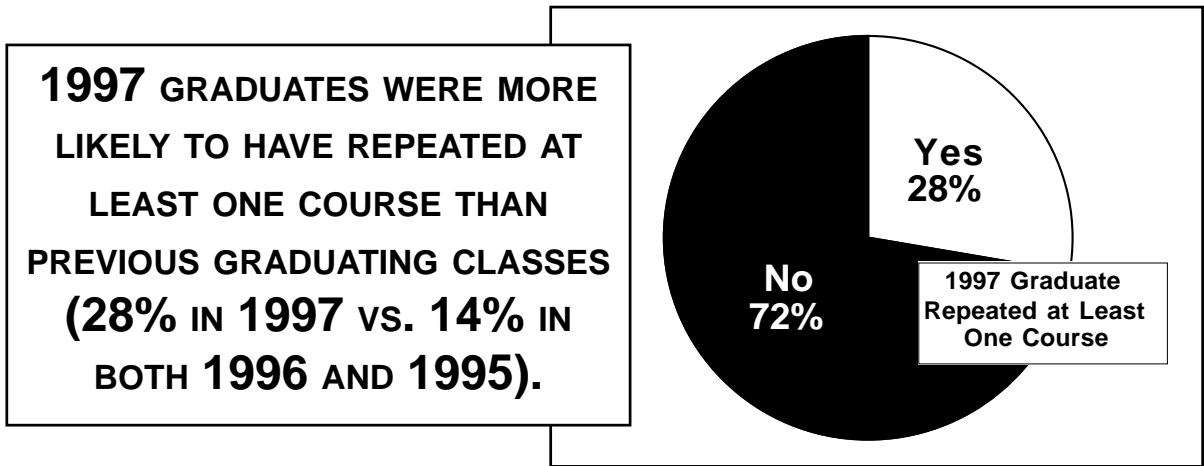
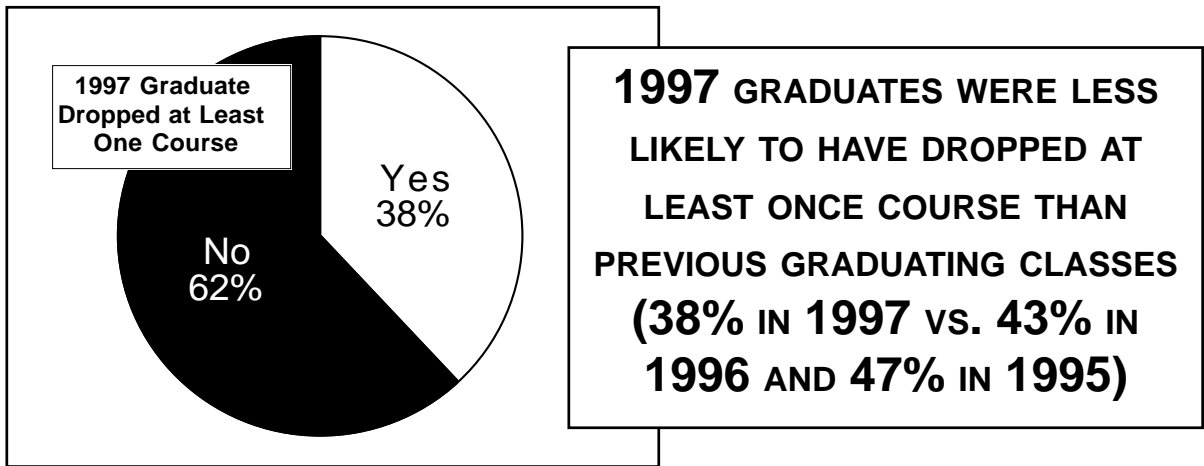
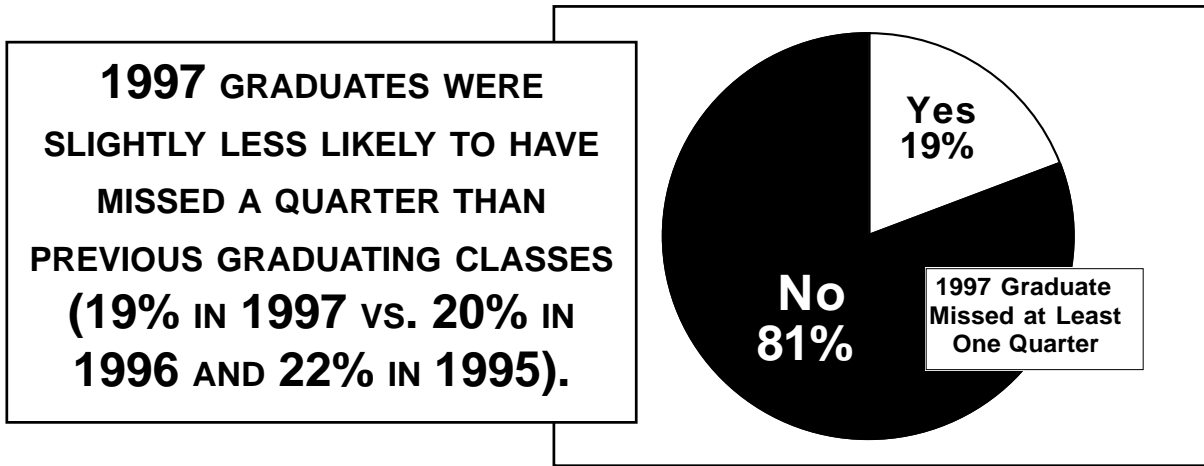




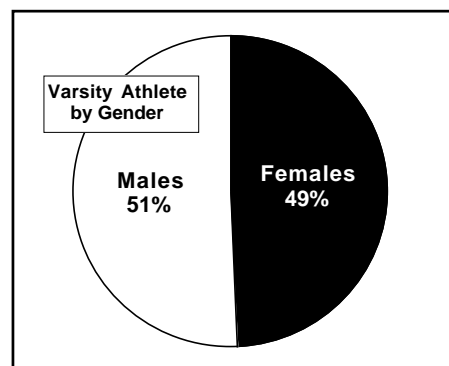
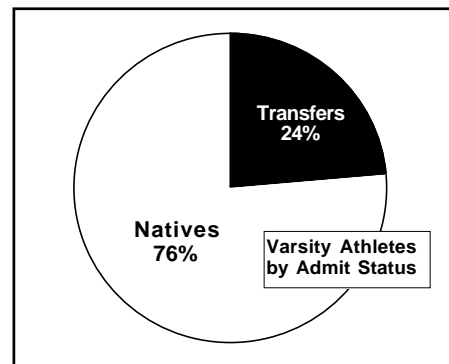
Traditionally, a transfer with an AA degree might be expected to graduate within six quarters, while a "pure" native (a native graduate who earned Western credits only, no outside credits) might be expected to graduate within twelve quarters.

- Participation in orientation programs has had a positive effect on time-to-degree efficiency.
- SummerStart is the freshman orientation program, first offered in 1986.
- Transitions is the summer orientation program for transfers, first offered in 1994.
- While participation in the Transitions program is increasing, it is still a new program; only one 1997 transfer graduate reported having attended.





- There were 136 graduates from the class of 1997 who had participated in varsity athletics (class of 1996 = 141; class of 1995 = 94).
- Graduating varsity athletes were predominately White (90.4%), followed by Hispanic (3.7%), Asian (3.7%), African-American (1.5%) and "other" (0.7%).
- Graduating varsity athletes earned degrees in 33 of Western's 45 department, including 16.2% in Physical Education, 8.1% in Environmental Studies, 7.4% in Sociology, 6.6% in FMDS, and 5.9% in Anthropology.
- 5.1% of graduating varsity athletes earned honors, compared to 9.9% of graduates earning honors overall.



**VARSITY ATHLETES OVERALL EARNED A 3.05 WESTERN GPA. MALE ATHLETES EARNED A 2.95 WESTERN GPA, AND FEMALES A 3.15. NATIVE ATHLETES EARNED A 3.08 WESTERN GPA, AND TRANSFERS A 2.95.**

**1997 Varsity Athlete Graduates**

Sport	N	%
Track	29	21.3%
Crew	25	18.4%
Football	21	15.4%
Cross-count	16	11.8%
Golf	9	6.6%
Soccer	9	6.6%
Tennis	8	5.9%
Fast Pitch	8	5.9%
Basketball	6	4.4%
Volleyball	5	3.7%
	136	100.0%

**PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

- Analyses by statistical correlation indicated that the variable with the strongest positive correlation with Western gpa was the Admissions Index ( $r = .525$ ;  $p = .000$ ). The Admissions Index (AI) is a mathematical formula that combines high school gpa and pre-college test scores (for example, the SAT and ACT) into one synthesized figure. The AI is utilized statewide and has a scale of 0-100. The average AI for 1997 Western graduates was 58.5, up from 55.6 in 1996. 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 success criterion.
- Transfer gpa was also included in the correlation analyses, as high school gpa and the AI are rarely a part of transfer graduates' records. Though not as strong a predictor as the AI, transfer gpa indicated a modest to strong correlation with Western gpa ( $r = .483$ ;  $p = .000$ ).
- Regression analysis was also performed on the data. This statistic helps to indicate which of a number of variables can predict what the score of a dependent variable (in this case, Western gpa). This test was performed on "pure native" only, those students who had entered Western as freshmen and not taken any transfer credits. Statistically, this cohort offered the most coherent analysis, for the following reasons: a) all their credits were taken at Western, and b) high school gpa, pre-college test scores, and the AI were included in their records. For "pure natives" high school gpa proved the strongest predictor of Western gpa ( $R^2 = .377$ ). In other words, 37.7% of the variance in Western gpa could be explained by the high school gpa of the "pure native" cohort.
- In summary, if a variable was needed that might help predict how well an in-coming freshman might perform at Western, using Western gpa as that criterion for success, high school gpa and the Admissions Index would be currently be the best. For transfer graduates, transfer gpa might serve as a decent alternative.



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