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A Profile of the 1998 Western Washington University Graduating Class

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A PROFILE OF THE 1998 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 1998 Western Washington University graduates (academic year: Fall Quarter, 1997, through Summer quarter, 1998).

Western graduated 2433 students in 1998, compared to 2438 in 1997. (The class of 1996, with 2461 graduates, is the largest to date.) The 1998 class was comprised of 14.0% ethnic-minorities, the highest percentage to date, compared to 13.6% in 1997 and 10.8% in 1996. Females made up 58% of 1998 graduates, compared to 61% in 1997. Transfers made up 51% of 1998 graduates, compared to 55% in 1997.

The percentage of female graduates earning BS degrees fell from a recent high of 44% in 1997 to 39% in 1998. (Last year's figure was the highest since 1981. In the last 17 years the percentage of females earning BS degrees has risen over 40% only one other time, at 42% in 1991.)

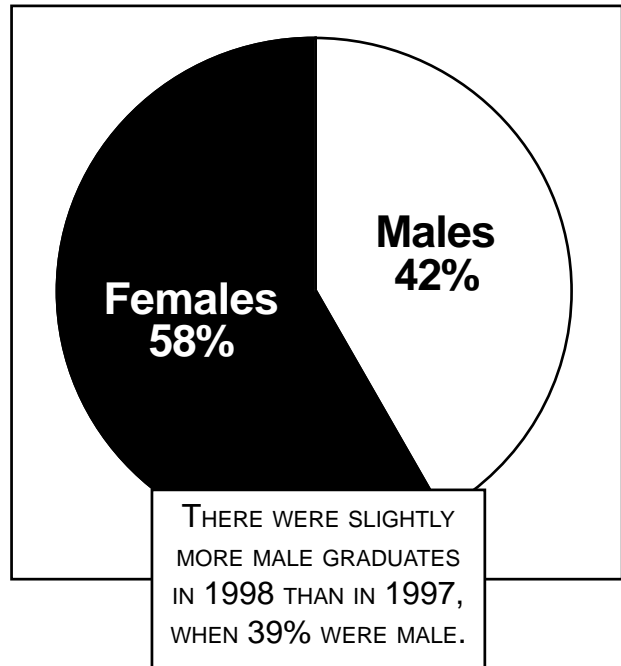
The Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI)—a formula that measures degree attainment efficiency via credits earned—fell to 81.6% in 1998, compared to 82.9% in 1997 and 87.9% in 1996.

1998 Graduates were less likely to have dropped a course (37% compared to 38% in 1997, 43% in 1996, and 47% in 1995), or to have repeated a course (11% compared to 28% in 1997, and 14% in both 1996 and 1995).

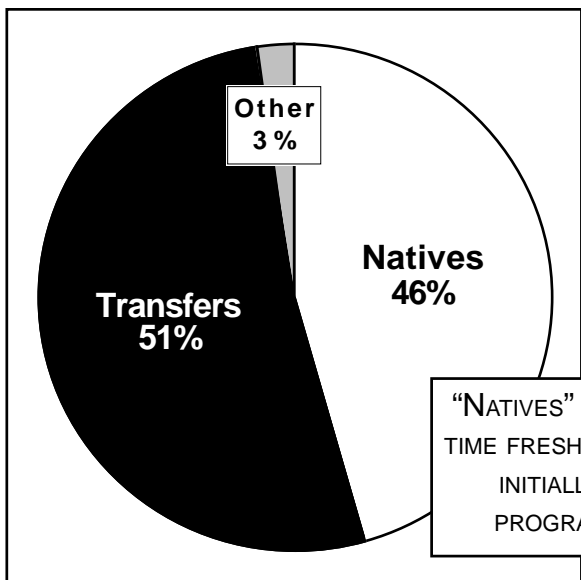
The overall Western grade point average for 1998 graduates was 3.15, compared to 3.16 in 1997, 3.15 in 1996, and 3.14 in 1995.



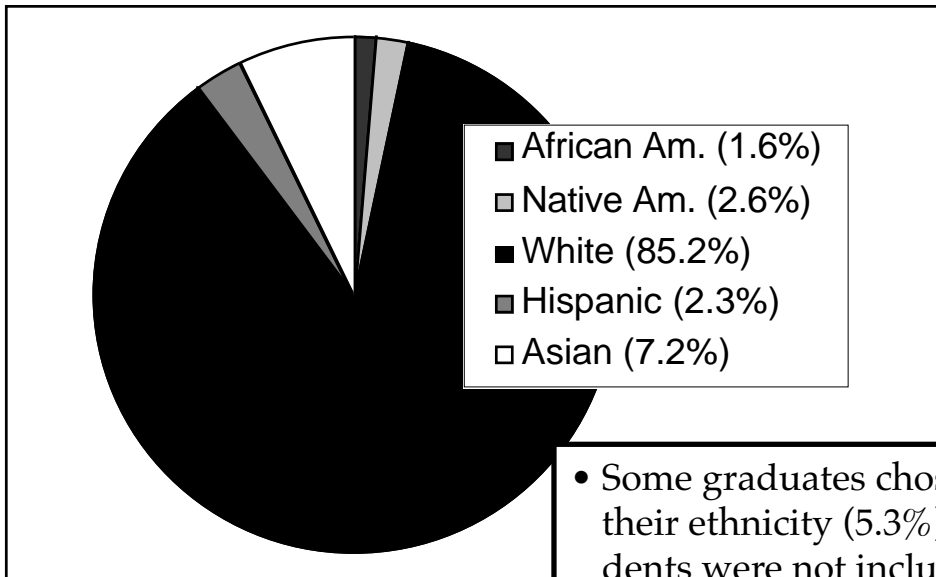
- There were 2433 graduates in 1998 (fall quarter, 1997, through summer quarter, 1998), down from 2438 in 1997.
- Most graduates began attending classes in a fall quarter (81.3%).
- The youngest graduate was 20 years old; the oldest was 67 years old.
- Most graduates were between the ages of 21 to 24 years old (62.8%); fewer were between 25-29 years old (23.8%), 30-39 years old (7.9%), and 40 years old or older (5.5%).



- 165 graduates listed their parents as Western alumni (6.8%).
- 81 graduates were veterans (3.3%).
- 83 graduates listed a disability—learning, hearing, ambulatory, and other (3.4%).

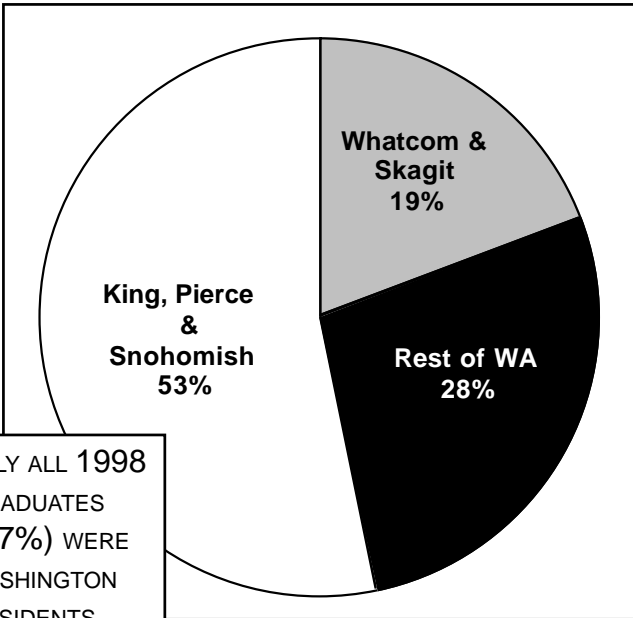


“NATIVES” ARE STUDENTS WHO ENTERED WESTERN AS FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN. ADMIT STATUS “OTHER” INCLUDES GRADUATES INITIALLY ENROLLED THROUGH CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND TRANSFERS TAKING SECOND DEGREES.



- Some graduates chose not to list their ethnicity (5.3%). These students were not included when figuring ethnicity findings for this report.
- There were 20 graduates from foreign countries.

ETHNIC-MINORITIES MADE UP 14.0% OF THE 1998 GRADUATING CLASS (INCLUDING 0.3% LISTING THEIR ETHNICITY AS "OTHER"). THE PERCENT OF ETHNIC-MINORITIES IN THE 1997 GRADUATING CLASS WAS 13.6%.



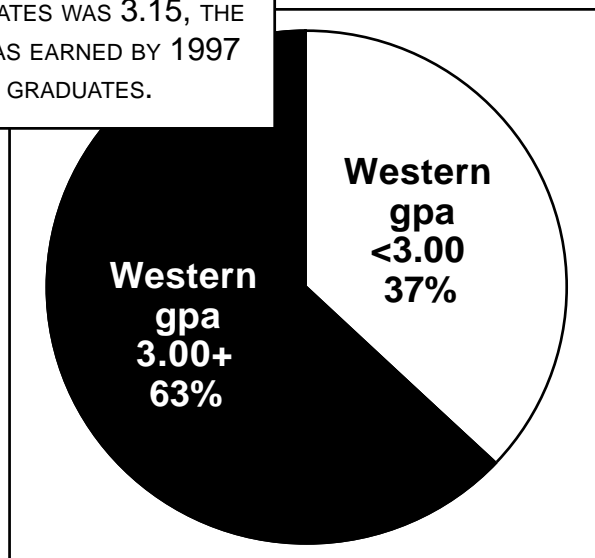
NEARLY ALL 1998 GRADUATES (94.7%) WERE WASHINGTON COUNTY RESIDENTS. COUNTY BREAKDOWNS ARE AS SHOWN.

- 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 (81.7%). The same is true for pre-college test scores like the SAT (79.6%). 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 1998 Western graduates was 3.48; the average SAT-composite score was 1089. The average Admissions Index (a formula that combines hsgpa and pre-college test scores) was 60.6.

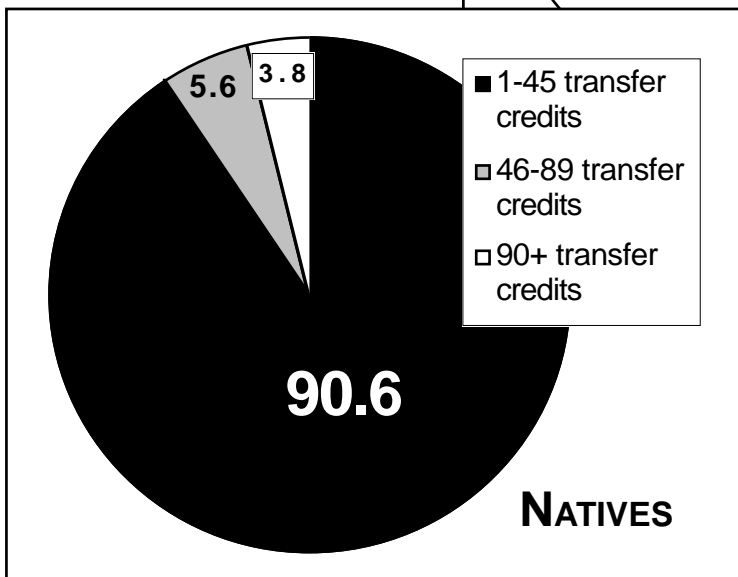
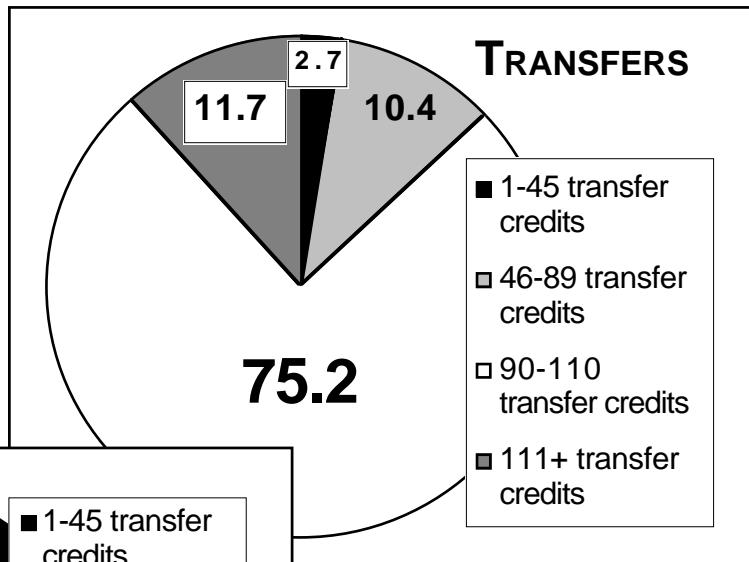
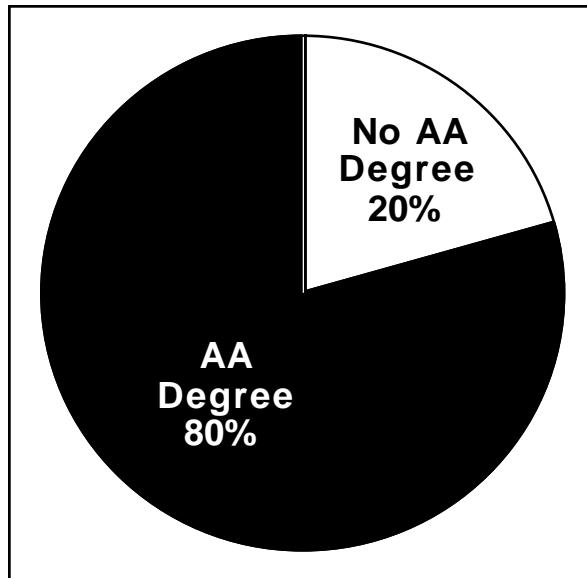
HONORS WERE
EARNED BY 10.5% OF
WESTERN'S 1998
GRADUATES: 151
EARNED CUM LAUDE;
104 EARNED MAGNA
CUM LAUDE

- The average hsgpa for females was 3.54, and for males 3.39.
- The average hsgpa for natives was 3.51 (n = 1100); for transfers including hsgpa in their files (n = 232), the average was 3.33.
- The average transfer gpa was 3.18. The transfer gpa for females was 3.25, and for males was 3.08.

THE AVERAGE WESTERN GPA
EARNED BY 1998
GRADUATES WAS 3.15, THE
SAME AS EARNED BY 1997
GRADUATES.



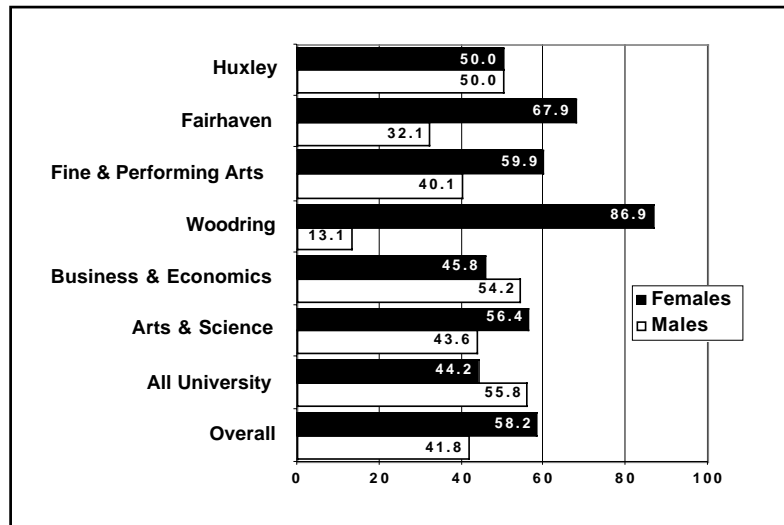
HALF (50.0%) OF GRADUATES WHO ENTERED WESTERN AS FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN (NATIVES) EARNED CREDITS TOWARDS GRADUATION FROM SCHOOLS OTHER THAN WESTERN. IN OTHER WORDS, ONLY HALF OF NATIVE GRADUATES ACTUALLY EARNED ALL THEIR ACADEMIC CREDITS AT WESTERN.



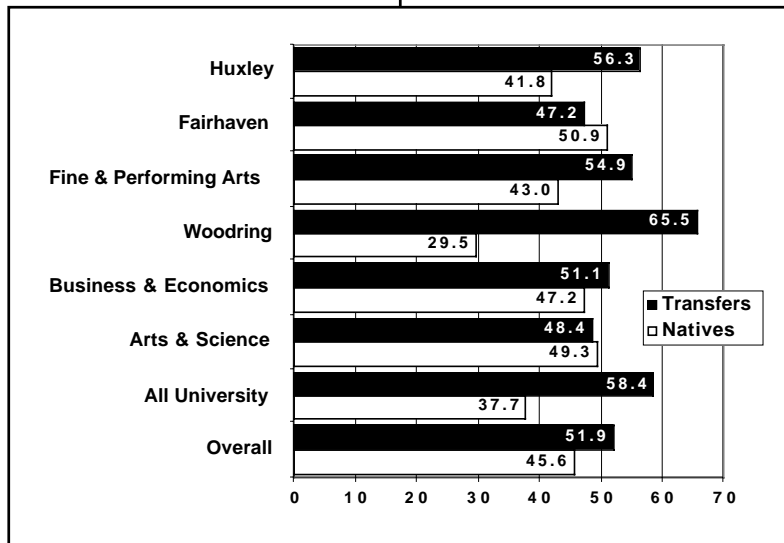
Average number of credits transferred by age:
 21-22 = 45 credits
 23-24 = 59 credits
 25-29 = 86 credits
 30-39 = 94 credits
 40+ = 97 credits

Arts & Sciences graduated the most students (54.1%), followed by Business & Economics (14.7%), Woodring (11.3%) Huxley (6.5%), Fine & Performing Arts (5.8%), and Fairhaven (4.4%). New to Western was the All-University degree (3.2%), earned by students in the General Studies major, a cross-disciplinary program. Compared to 1997, there were slight decreases in the percentage of graduates at Arts & Sciences (down 2.7%) and Woodring (down 1.3%), and a slight increase in the Business & Economics (up 1.6%). Changes at other colleges were under 1%.

OVERALL

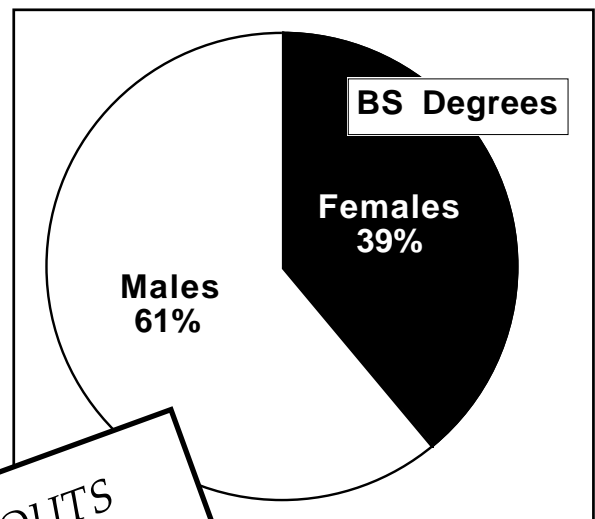
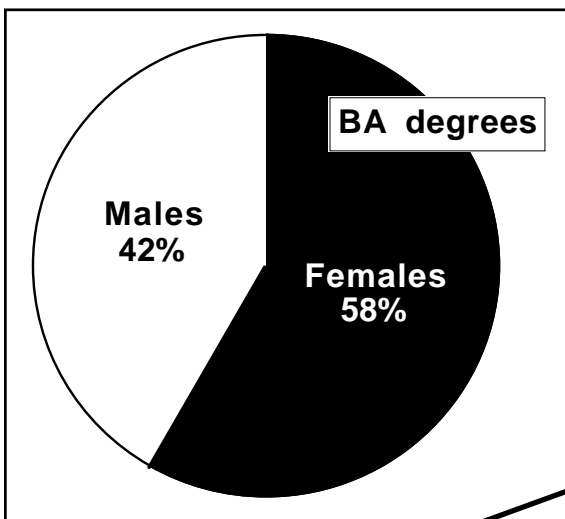


BREAKOUTS

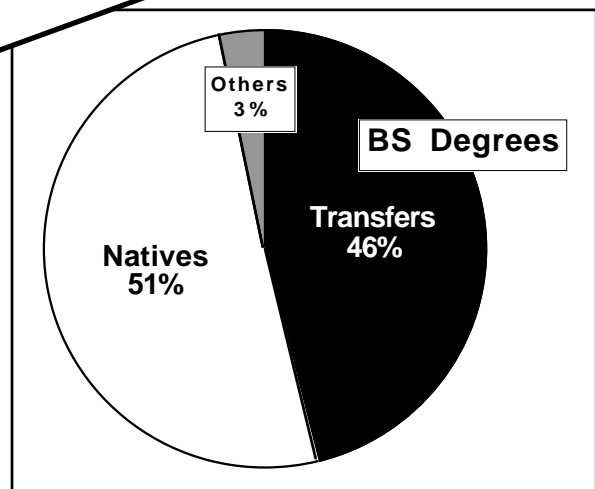
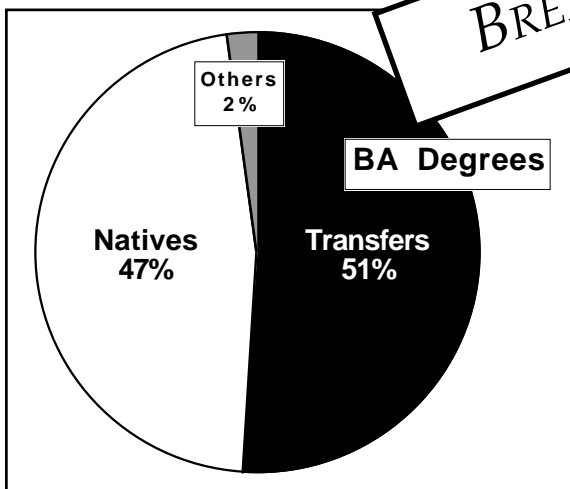


Most 1998 graduates earned BA Degrees (69.0%), followed by BS Degrees (16.3%), BA/Ed Degrees (13.8%), BFA Degrees (0.2%), and BMUS Degrees (0.8%). Overall, 51% of 1998 graduates were transfers, 46% were natives, and 3% were 'other'. A higher percentage of transfers earned BA/Ed degrees—63.9% compared to 33.4% of natives—while a slightly higher percentage of natives earned BS degrees—50.5% compared to 46.2% of transfers.

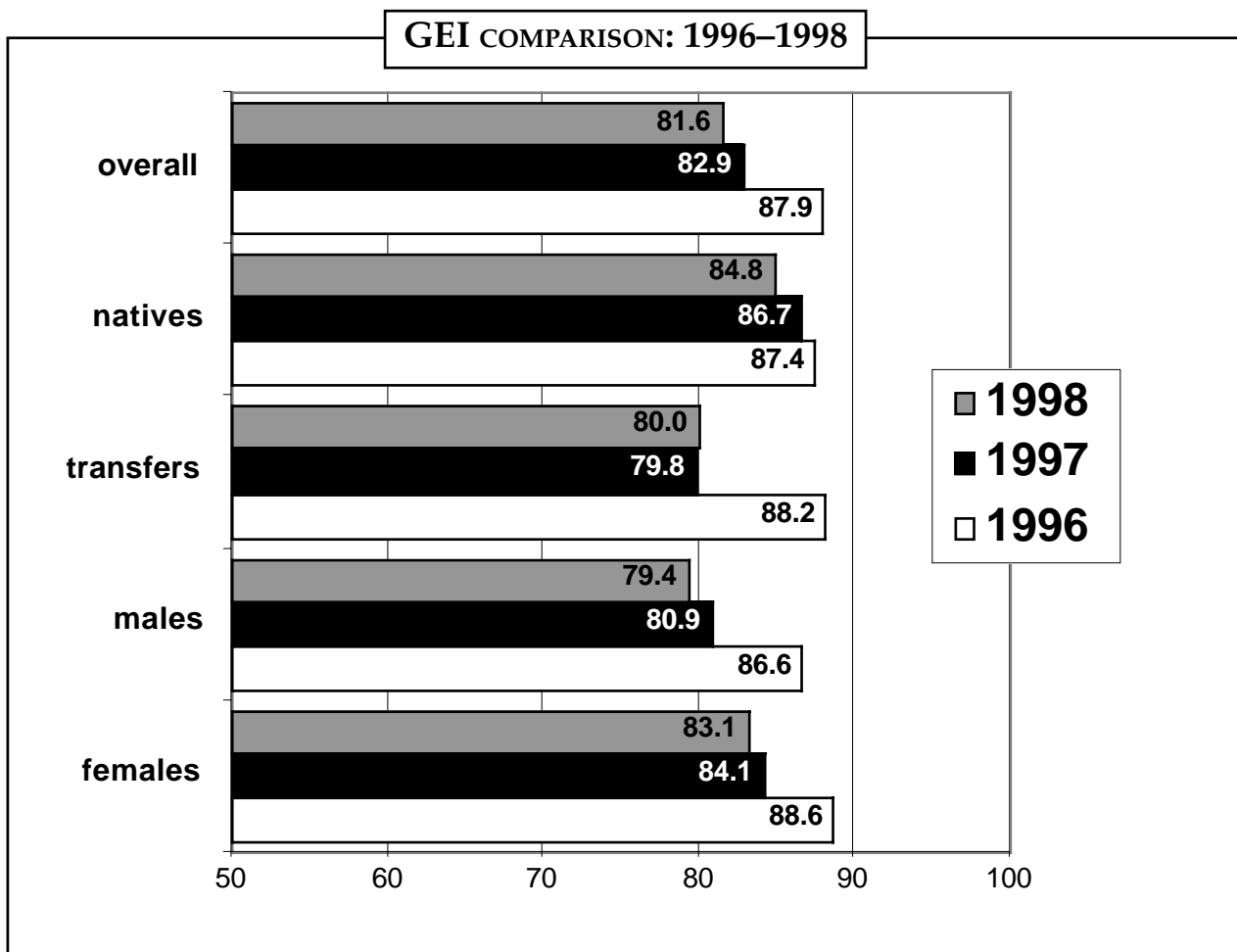
OVERALL

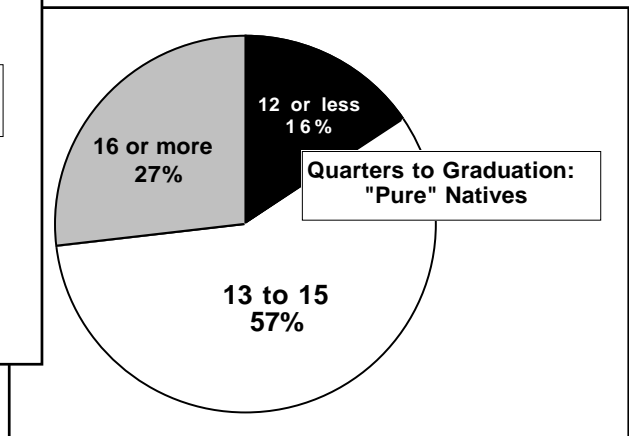
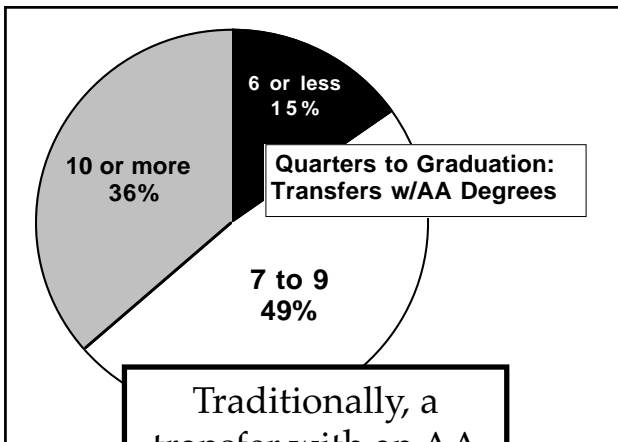


BREAKOUTS



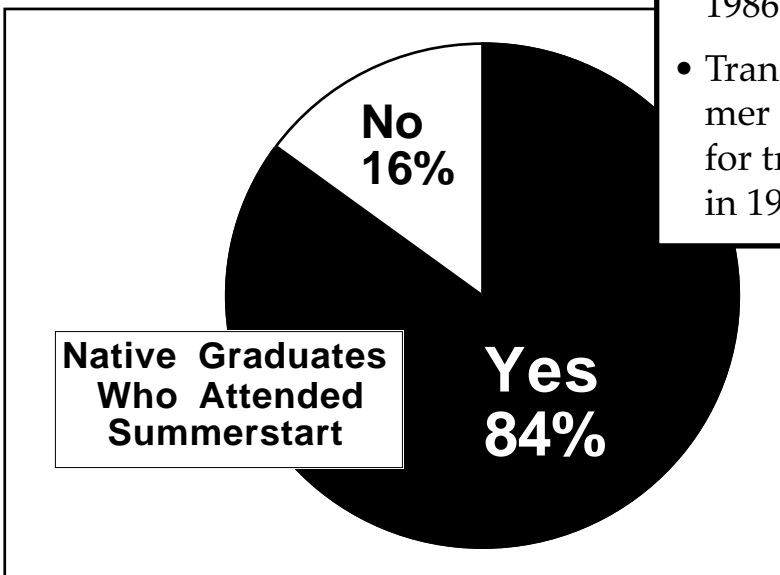
- Previous graduate reports have highlighted issues of time-to-degree efficiency. Included in this year's report are familiar measures, plus the Graduation Efficiency Index (GEI), introduced last year. The GEI does not track linear time to graduation, but rather student credit efficiency. The GEI formula 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 1998 graduates was 81.6%. For natives the GEI was 84.8%, and for transfers 80.0%. For females the GEI was 83.1%, and for males 79.4%. (See the figure below for 1996-98 GEI comparisons.)



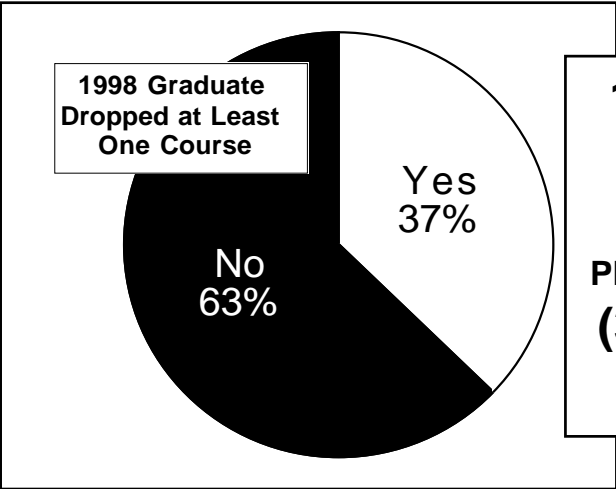
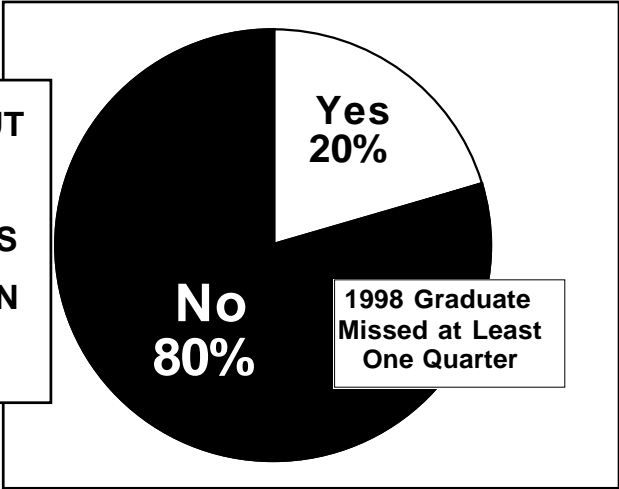


Traditionally, a transfer with an AA degree might be expected to graduate within six quarters, while a "pure" native (a native graduate who earned Western credits only, no outside credits) might be expected to graduate within twelve quarters.

- Studies have indicated that 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.

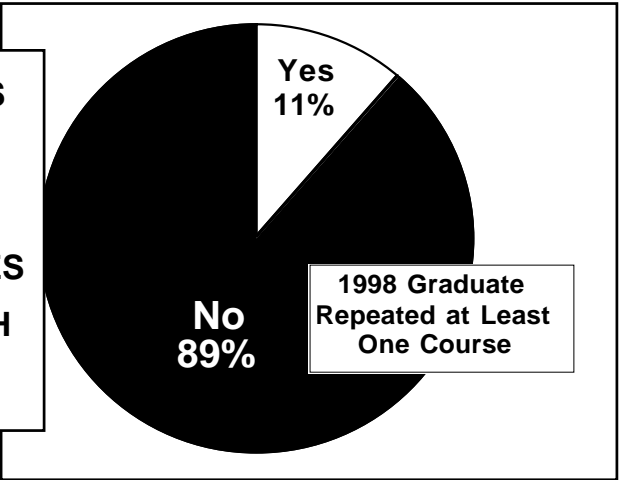


1998 GRADUATES WERE ABOUT AS LIKELY TO HAVE MISSED A QUARTER AS WERE GRADUATES IN PREVIOUS CLASSES (19% IN 1997 AND 20% IN 1996).

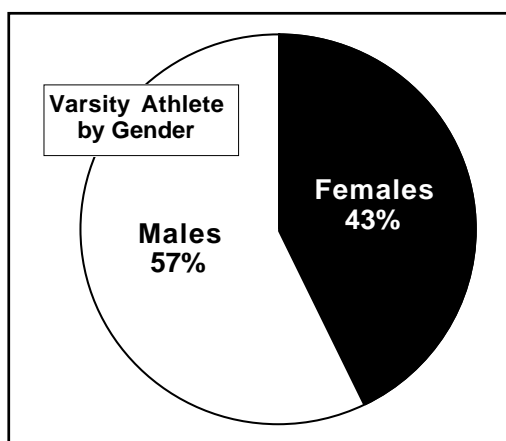
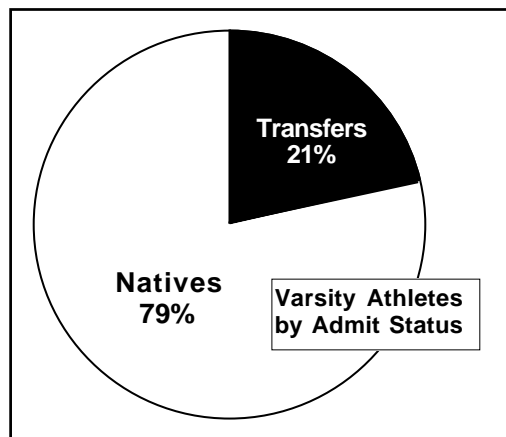


1998 GRADUATES WERE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE DROPPED AT LEAST ONE COURSE THAN PREVIOUS GRADUATING CLASSES (38% IN 1997, 43% IN 1996 AND 47% IN 1995)

1998 GRADUATES WERE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE REPEATED AT LEAST ONE COURSE THAN PREVIOUS GRADUATING CLASSES (28% IN 1997, 14% IN BOTH 1996 AND 1995).



- There were 131 graduates from the class of 1998 who had participated in varsity athletics (class of 1997 = 136; 1996 = 141; 1995 = 94).
- Graduating varsity athletes were predominately White (90.1%), followed by Asian (4.6%), African-American (3.8%) and American-Indian (1.5%).
- Graduating varsity athletes earned degrees in 32 of Western's 45 department, including 14.5% in Physical Education, 8.4% in FMDS, 7.6% in Sociology, 6.1% in Accounting, and 5.3% in Environmental Science.
- 8.4% of graduating varsity athletes earned honors, compared to 10.5% of graduates earning honors overall.



Varsity Athletes Overall earned a 3.06 Western GPA. Male Athletes earned a 2.95 Western GPA, and Females a 3.21. Native Athletes earned a 3.08 Western GPA, and Transfers a 3.00.

1998 Varsity Athlete Graduates

Sport	N	%
Track	43	32.8%
Football	27	20.6%
Crew	19	14.5%
Soccer	11	8.4%
Fast Pitch	7	5.3%
Basketball	7	5.3%
Golf	6	4.6%
Tennis	4	3.1%
Volleyball	4	3.1%
Cross-country	3	2.3%
	131	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 ($r = .555$; $p = .000$). The Admissions Index 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 Admissions Index is utilized statewide and has a scale of 0-100. The average AI for 1998 Western graduates was 60.6, up from 58.5 in 1997 and 55.6 in 1996. The strong positive correlation between the AI and Western gpa indicates that the Admissions Index 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 ($r = .441$; $p = .000$).
- Regression analysis was also performed on the data. This statistic helps to indicate which of a number of variables can predict 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 Admissions Index were included in their records. For "pure natives" the Admissions Index proved the strongest predictor of Western gpa ($R^2 = .351$). In other words, 35.1% of the variance in Western gpa could be explained by the Admissions Index of the "pure native" cohort.
- In summary, if a variable was needed that might help predict how well an incoming freshman might perform at Western, using Western gpa as that criterion for success, the Admissions Index would currently be the best. For transfer graduates, transfer gpa might serve as a decent alternative.



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