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A Comparative Analysis of the Academic Performance of Native and Transfer Students

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Report 1991-07: A Comparative Analysis of the Academic Performance of Native and Transfer Students

This study utilized the records of two samples of Western upper-division students (those with 90 credits and above) to evaluate the relationships of academic performance to students' admission status (native or transfer) and other selected student characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and age. The first sample measured academic performance in terms of overall Western gpa (cumulative). The second sample looked at grades earned in 300- and 400-level courses only (upper-division gpa). This report was prepared as a follow-up to an earlier study that used a much more limited sample.

Females were found to have consistently higher gpa's than males, regardless of the sample or the type of gpa used in the analysis (cumulative or upper-division). Older students generally outperformed younger students, although the relationship between age and academic performance was mediated by a student's admission status. Students of a given age but with different admission statuses or of the same admission status but of different ages in many cases did not have equivalent gpa's. In general, among younger students natives outperformed transfer from two-year institutions. No such difference was found among older students.

This study also found differences in both the cumulative gpa and the upper-division gpa earned by different ethnic groups. Caucasians had a higher average cumulative gpa than Blacks and a higher upper-division gpa than both Blacks and Asians. In addition, American Indian students had a higher average upper-division gpa than Black students.

A student's gpa when s/he enters Western (high school gpa for natives and transfer gpa for transfers) was the best predictor of how well a student would do academically once at Western. WPCT subtest scores also aided in the prediction of both cumulative and upper-division gpa's

for both native and transfer students. However, the relative importance of these subtests was different for students of different admission statuses. Prediction of natives students' academic performance was most enhanced by the WPCT-Verbal subtest score, whereas prediction of transfer students' academic performance was more improved by the knowledge of his or her WPCT-Quantitative subtest score.

After conducting several separate analyses of the differences and similarities of Western's native and transfer students, it can be concluded that when comparing students of different admissions statuses, regardless of age, there is effectively no difference in the academic performance of Western's native and transfer students.