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Group 7 Summary of Transcript

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Freshmen Enrollment Focus Groups

Summary of Group 7 Conducted February 27, 2008

Group 7. Thirteen students participated in the seventh focus group, which was defined by low fall state support credits and assignment to the math/science or health Summerstart advising groups. Seven participants are female and six male, four are students of color, and seven transferred credit from high school. One student participated in an FYE, but none participated in FIGs, and none are in the honors program or fall athletics. All took fewer than 15 credits in the fall: two took 12 credits, five took 13, and six took 14. Eleven participants attended Summerstart.

Contents

Introductions	1
Registration Experience	3
Academic Advising	5
Logistics of Registering	9
Academic Interest Area	11
Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities	12
Financial Concerns and Work Schedules	12
Academic and Social Confidence Levels	13
Transfer Credits	15
Academic and Social Adjustment	17
Advice for Incoming Freshmen	18

Introductions

First, let's go around the room and say a little about yourself—Why you chose Western, what major you were interested in when you first started at Western and whether that's different now, and your educational plans for the future (do you plan to stay at Western, and how many years until you graduate?)

The majority chose Western for the following reasons:

- The location (close to home)
- A certain program (Industrial Design, Marine Biology, Chemistry, Japanese)
- The atmosphere
- The size

Students in this group attended Math/Science or Health Summerstart sessions.

Major areas of interest include: Industrial Design, Marine Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Molecular Biology or Physical Anthropology, pre-dentistry (but now undecided),

Geography, pre-med and Psychology, Japanese. Two students plan to complete math and sciences course here (pre-x-ray tech and pre-pharmacy), then transfer. Plans for graduation vary: 2 years (1, had two years of Running Start); four years (4); a little over four years “to accomplish everything” (1); four to five years (2; one doesn’t want to rush, and the other is undecided as to major); and five years (2 undecided majors. One doesn’t want to rush; and the other says it will probably take that long).

I am pretty much an industrial design major in the engineering department. That’s why I came here, because it’s one of the few schools that actually offer it. And it’s in the state of Washington. I probably plan on probably being here just a little over four years to accomplish everything.

I am interested in biology, in marine biology specifically. I came here because I heard that Western has a good biology program, especially marine biology. I am probably going to try and graduate in four years.

I am a computer science major, or will be. I came up here because it was on this side of the mountains and I didn’t want to go to UW. I don’t see myself graduating in four years. I am probably going to go for five. I just don’t want to rush myself to get down in four years.

I originally came to Western in hopes of pursuing marine biology. I have kind of changed my mind over the past two quarters and now I am thinking about a major in sociology or cultural anthropology or something like that. I am planning on staying here for four years and then possibly transferring to somewhere else.

I first come here to Western for chemistry and the atmosphere. I really liked the campus because it wasn’t too big or too small. And my parents live 20 minutes away, so it wasn’t too far from home and I felt really comfortable. Now that I have been opened up to all of the campus, I think I am going to molecular biology or physical anthropology. Those really piqued my interest.

I came here for biology and I am kind of changing my mind a bit. I am on the brink of deciding something else. I’m planning on staying for four years or more.

I came here just for this year to get some courses in math and science for a radiography program in x-ray tech. So I am just doing this year and then I am transferring next year to either Bellingham technical college or to another one.

I came here because it is close to home, but not too close. It is a good distance. I came here and I wanted to be a dentist but now I am kind of changing my mind and don’t know what I want to do. It will take 5 years, probably.

I came to Western in hopes of receiving a major in geography. I am also going to be pursuing a minor in Chinese. I am interested in all things dealing with modern languages. Anthropology of culture also piqued my interest. Generally, I am here to learn and to grow in a community of

learners and wonderful faculty here. I am hoping to graduate in 4 years, but if necessary, I might stay out into my fifth year.

I am a pre-med and psychology major. I picked Western because it was only a couple hours away from home. A perfect distance. And I love the atmosphere here. I am probably graduating in three years because I have already got 2 years of Running Start, so I should be done by 2010.

I came here because of the Japanese program and I am interested in a Japanese language major. I am probably going to graduate in 4 years.

I came here because it was a good distance from home and I am a chemistry major on the pre-pharmacy path. So it takes about two years to finish the prerequisites for pharmacy, so I will only be here two years and then apply for pharmacy school.

I am a freshmen and I am going to be a computer science major. Probably graduate in about 4 years.

Registration Experience

Please talk about your registration experience and the reasons why you chose to take the types of classes and the number of credits that you chose when you initially registered.

All students in this group took less than 15 credits. Students took a smaller course load for essentially two reasons: 1) to adjust to their first quarter in college (six students); and 2) the credit loads worked out that way because of the classes selected (all thirteen students). Advisors and students considered the types of courses and the workload involved—particularly since students were taking courses in math and the sciences, as well as certain GUR's and prerequisites for the major. Many of these courses are 3-4 credits each; so a course load may add up to less than 15 when three classes are combined—For example, Biol 101 (4), Etec 110 (3), Math 106/107,/ 240 (4), Eng 101 (4), Hist 103/104/112 (4), Phys 101 (4), CSCI 101/102/103/140 (4).

I ended up with 13 credits. I took math 118, history 112, and English 101. I kind of wanted to take it easy fall quarter to adjust to the new environment. Also, I like to get things done and out of the way that I don't like first. So I took English and history to get those out of the way.

I was going to take a computer science class that was a major prereq. My math 118 course was a prereq to the 141 that I was trying to go into. I got an override for that. I just needed one other class, so I took English 101 because we are required to take that our freshmen year. I was thinking about going for four classes, but I didn't feel like I should be pushed that much first quarter.

I kind of decided to take it easy this past semester, fall quarter. It's a new environment and I know how I work and how I focus and function. I was just like, I need to just take it easy because I have

a lot of other stuff on my plate. I decided to just take 12 credits. I didn't really have an advisor at SummerStart. I just looked at the GURs and went along with that.

I basically just took 12 credits first quarter because I have a habit to bite off more than I can chew. So I decided I would take it easy first quarter. I took a computer programming class because the computer programming department lead said that I needed it. So I took that one and I took Greek literature and a math class because I figured it's good to do my GURs.

I ended up taking 14 credits the first quarter because I didn't want to stress myself out too much and I needed to get used to the college workload and everything and how to study. So I took chemistry 121 just to get it out of the way because you pretty much need it for any science class that you need to take. I took math 240, which is stats and then abnormal psychology because it was part of my major. I didn't really plan on having 14 credits; that is just how it ended up.

Pretty much I took a really small course load because back in high school I wouldn't do well with having too much work, especially if it was any type of class work or homework of any sort that I didn't really want to take. I only really excelled in the classes that I knew would help me in the future. So that is kind of what I was trying to do. Also, my first quarter, I ended up only doing well in my engineering class, which was the only class that was going towards my industrial design major. For GURs, I didn't do too well with those just because it was hard for me to concentrate on something that I don't really want.

I didn't necessarily plan it based on the credit load. When I went to the Summer Start thing, they gave us yellow sheets of paper for the biology interest people. Based on your math test things that you took at the beginning of summer if you wanted to, the math placement test, it showed you what you should maybe do for your first quarter. My advisor suggested that I take accelerated Pre-calculus and then 7 to 10 credits of GURs slash electives. So I just took the accelerated pre-calculus and just chose two other classes that I wanted to take that were GUR and electives. It came out to 14.

I took this credit load (14 credits) because it was kind of recommended by my advisor. I also got that recommendation sheet for biology majors. It kind of had said what math class you tested into and these are the types of courses you should take. I took chemistry 121 because that was what was recommended. I also took accelerated pre-calculus and then there was an elective class so my advisor suggested that I should take whatever interests me. So I took a study of religion class.

I took 13 credits. The one that I really wanted to get out of the way was Chemistry 123. I took the AP test in high school, so I had the prerequisites for that class, 121 and 122 out of the way. So I wanted to see if I liked the class and felt comfortable doing college level chemistry and wanted to keep pursuing chemistry. So that was 5 credits. I was really confident in physics in high school, so I wanted to try to get acclimated to that in a college atmosphere also, so that is why I took physics 101. That was 4 credits. I sort of took a leap of faith in anthropology. I wasn't sure if I would like it and it was kind of testing the waters, but I ended up really liking it, so I might want

to pursue that instead of chemistry. I didn't want to take math alongside because I thought that chemistry and physics were pretty calculatory-heavy classes. Also if I was using that much of my homework time doing hidden calculations and laboratory write-ups. I didn't want to take an English class so I wouldn't make good essays or something. I really wanted to devote ample time to an English class.

I took 14 credits, two classes that were prerequisites and one that was advised. That came up to 14 credits and the one lady that was in our room or computer lab said not to take anymore. She was just like the average is 12 to 15 for first quarter freshmen.

I started out with 14 and I signed up for English 101, stats 240 and chem. 121. That was kind of a lot of work, so I ended up dropping chem. I just didn't feel like I was getting enough time. I ended up doing better eventually. My advisor recommended that I shouldn't do more than that because my load was pretty heavy, which was a good decision because I already felt overloaded by those. I was constantly reading for English, constantly doing homework for stats, and I had no time to study for chem.

I ended up taking 3 full-time GUR classes and one Huxley class on the recommendation of David Brunner in the Disability Center. I worked with him to create a schedule that would cater well to how I work and to have a balance of classes that were some reading and some mathematics but not all, for example, reading or all mathematics or science. So I had an economics class, a history class and a mathematics class, which worked out for me very well. Plus the Huxley class because I am going to go into Huxley in a couple of years. I had 14 credits that that all added up to. It worked out very nicely.

I ended up taking 14 credits. I wanted to take more but I could not fit anymore classes that I wanted to take into the schedule that I ended up with. I started out with Japanese 104 because I knew I wanted to major in Japanese. I ended up with looking for other classes to fulfill GURs and when I couldn't fit anymore in, I stopped at 14.

Academic advising

How did the academic advising you received at Summer Start or from the advising center affect the number of credits you registered for? Were you encouraged to enroll in 15 or more credits? What were you told about this? What was your reaction to the advice?

Six of thirteen students were advised to take no more than 15 credits their first quarter, considering the workload that would be involved—particularly in math/science courses; and also considering the workload students believe they can handle

I was advised to do a maximum of 15 my first quarter. They said just don't go over 15.

Dependent on who you know you are from how you did in high school and the kind of workload

you can handle. I just thought that was kind of what I was thinking in my own head. So it didn't really do anything bad or good for me. It didn't seem like I got a whole lot of other advice, mostly because my advising session really wasn't engineering oriented or anything. Everyone else in the advising sessions was like math or science related, so I didn't get too much help. I was at 14 and I dropped a class to 12.

I wasn't told to take more than 15. I think that they told me to take 15 or less, which is what I did and I guess I just took it to heart. It was probably based on the workload and you know yourself and what other people have done before.

I was kind of told the same thing by an advisor. They told me not to take more than 15 credits because they said that it would be a lot. That's basically what happened to me. I probably shouldn't anyways because I was going to be working, so that's why I took the advice for less credit because I had a lot of things to do.

Same thing with me. I didn't get any specific advisement but they told the attitude for the whole group is to not take more than 15. So that's what we did.

Mine was kind of the same. They just said not to take more than 15. The lady who looked at my classes said that I had enough although it was only three classes and I had a lot of breaks in between. I said that I had a lot of space and she said that it was because I was going to have to do a lot of work. She said that it was the workload, not the amount of time of the actual class period that mattered. I decided to stay with that and then I got a job to fill in.

One advisor told the health group to take no more than 15 credits in order to keep up their GPAs for graduate school.

My advisor advised me, well the entire group, not to take more than 15 because they wanted us to keep our GPAs up so that it would be easier for us to get into graduate school. Because it was a health group.

Five students were told that 15 credits is about average. However students took less than 15. (One had a science and math; another took 3 classes to ease into it.)

I think that my advisor said that 15 is about average. So when I was working with my advisor trying to figure out what classes I wanted to take. After we figured out that I was taking chemistry and math, when I added one more class it would be 14 credits and he said that was a good workload since I had a science and a math.

They told me to take around 15. The 14ish range was good, but if you could add one more class or handle another class, they said go for it. Other than that, stay around 15.

I really didn't get that much advice. They pretty much said that 15 was average and that was pretty much all I really got out of it. They didn't ever check my schedule or anything like that.

My advisor didn't specifically say. I think that she told the whole session that 15 credits was about average, but that was it. I just decided to take 3 classes just to ease myself into it and it worked for me.

I had the same thing here. My advisor told the session that 15 was what you should aim for, so we did. She just said that was the average for what people usually took. It's a good number.

One student was told that freshmen typically take fewer than 15 credits their first quarter, then compensate later.

My advisor didn't specifically tell me how many credits to take. Whether or not to go with 15 or more credits. But Mr. Brunnemer, who I worked with to create my schedule, he said that most freshmen in their first quarter do actually take fewer than 15 credits and then they compensate later, maybe with a couple of extra classes. So my reaction was pretty much what everyone's reaction was here so far has been. I said alright and I just went along with what he said and I went with the classes that he recommended. And the workload. I was happy with what he helped me create and I was happy with what I finalized.

One student was advised to take three or four classes.

I didn't really receive much advice. I remember asking about how many credits should I take and I was just told about three or four classes. So that actually didn't help me a lot. I just kind of messed around with the schedule and thought these classes are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. This class was Tuesday and Thursday. And I kind of thought about it more on a schedule during the work week rather than credits. I figured that would work really well for me. I was very happy with my schedule.

Did you try to register for more than 15 credits and the advisor said to take less than that?

Only one student tried to register for more than 15 credits and was advised against it.

I was taking math, psychology, and biology and I think I was trying to take a chemistry class too to get it over with. That's when she said no, don't do it.

What do you think about this—that if you took 15 credits a quarter you can graduate in four years? Are you concerned about this at all?

Students in this group are generally not concerned about taking 15 credits a quarter in order to graduate in four years.

Not really. Because I am basically paying all of my college anyways, but I figured that I might as well try not to get burned out every quarter by taking around 15. I am not really aiming to graduate in 4 years. I have already decided that.

I agree. I think my personal ideals are that I would rather be a little less than pushing myself. If I pass them all, do well, and feel really confident and good about what I did. Rather than push and strive and barely skate by with low grades, but I did a lot. That doesn't really feel like accomplishment. I feel better getting good marks on less classes.

Personally for me, it's like 15 credits is a good steady pace. If I had to take 15 and have a part time job, that would be a really full schedule. I would be busy for pretty much all of the time.

Well I am not really thinking about the credits but like he said, I am paying for it too. I have financial aid. So I am just trying to get the prereqs.

Did other students or family members influence your decision about how many credits to enroll in? Who? How? Why?

Friends and family advised four students to take it easy their first quarter in order to adjust.

When I first got here, I have friends who were sophomores and I was talking to them and they were saying it was my first quarter and that I should take things slow. They were also giving me the advice also that the advisors were giving. They liked doing that and easing into it, and they knew how much exactly they could handle. The second quarter and the rest of their freshmen year they did the same thing. Kind of like dipping into it and then going all of the way in. they kind of helped me sometimes more than the advisors did in the fact that they talked a lot more in detail about certain classes and everything.

I got advice from my family. I have three siblings and they have all almost graduated college already. They said take it easy first quarter, get into the swing of things and then I can compensate later by having a bigger class load.

My older sister is here right now. She is a senior this year. She just told me that it is a lot different from high school, and it's a lot different from community college. It's a lot harder than you might expect it to be, so just take it easy the first quarter and learn how to study and balance your time and your workload.

I have an older sibling that is a year older than I am. Her first quarter last year she had a whole bunch of trouble and she had to withdraw from a class because it was just way too much work and she took too many classes. I took that influence from here and knew that I didn't want to do that, I don't want to be stressed out all the time my first quarter. I kind of got that from her. Also, one of my upper classmen here told me that you don't want to take more two classes where you have to write essays because that is too much work. That was kind of the advice that I got.

Logistics of Registering

Since Western has courses with different numbers of credits attached to them, did this affect your ability to register for 15 or more credits?

Four of the 13 students in this group had 3-4 credit classes that involved the same amount of time and effort required for a 5 credit class.

My engineering classes, like Etech 110 and 111, they are only 3 credits but you go to class for like 6 hours a week. Plus all of the computer cad work you have to do in addition to that. That's one class that I didn't expect to take up as much time as I predicted. Really it was a 3 credit class that took up the space of a 5 credit class. It could feel like a 5 credit class but it wasn't worth that.

I took 3, four credit classes this quarter. Each one with a lab. It is way more work than the 5 credit class I took last quarter. It's just way too much work because you get a lab and a project in each one of these classes every single week. It feels like I live in the computer lab. I did end up having to drop one because I was spending 3 times the amount of class time in the lab during the quarter. I would do 14 hour days just behind the computer. It's not really a good system I don't think. The credits don't seem very equivalent of the work.

I did a 4 credit stats class (Math 240) which was kind of ridiculous because there was a lot of homework and extra time outside of class. It stopped me from taking 15 credits, I only had 14 instead. My chemistry class and my biology class this quarter is only 4 credits and we have 6 or 7 hours of class because of our 3 hour labs. I just think that is a little ridiculous.

Yeah, I took that too and I agree. There were these projects and they took up a lot of time. They didn't explain how to do them properly.

Three students agree that English 101 should be worth 5 credits, not 4 credits.

I feel like my two classes that were only worth 4 credits should have been worth 5 because I had a lot of homework. I know that I am taking a class right now that you are only in class for 4 hours and the 5th hour counts for the homework. I think that the match of 5 credits for classes with a lot of homework. I could have had 15 easily if it wasn't for the fact that they were 4 credits. English 101 was a lot of busy work that you have to do. It should definitely be 5 credits.

Just as a brief mention, I took a separate English class outside of Western during my senior year of high school, English 131. It was in conjunction with the University of Washington, college in the high school. A semester of English 131 was worth 5 credits and that is one credit more than the English 101 here. That's a suggestion to also having that English class here count as 5 credits would be beneficial to many students.

Yeah, I agree with her. It seemed like every week we were doing an essay or revising an essay from last week and type another essay. It was a lot of busy work. Plus, with my computer science classes where we had a lab every week. Its 3 credits for class time plus a lab. On top of writing essays, I felt like I was taking 18 credits.

As many of you will remember, the Summerstart registration process can be fast and furious and many times students can't get the classes that they really wanted to take. Did this affect you in terms of how many credits you ended up registering for?

Eleven of thirteen students in this group attended Summerstart. One student felt rushed and left her schedule at 14 credits because she couldn't fit in another class.

At the registration thing, there was the fact that it was hard for me to fit more classes into the schedule that I had already made. But I also felt kind of rushed because I was in a big group with a lot of people and I was there with my family, so I didn't want to keep them waiting. I could have spent more time looking for a class, but I just eventually gave up and said okay, 14 is fine.

Another student was able to schedule classes during a later Summerstart session, while students in the earlier sessions had trouble getting into the same classes (which were reserved for the later sessions).

Well I went on one of the last or the last days of summer start and I got in classes that a friend of mine who went in the beginning couldn't get into. She said that they told her that they leave spaces in the class for all of the summer start students. So I kind of got benefit for going later. I heard people had problems getting in to classes even though there was still space to fill. They didn't tell our group that you could still look and add or drop classes after that day.

Did you consider taking 1 to 2 credit classes in order to reach 15 credits, which advisors say is the average?

Three students say that it was hard to fit 1-2 credit classes into their schedules because classes conflicted or the times were awkward.

I did for this quarter but I found it really hard and couldn't find one to fit. All the one or two credit classes are either 8 am or coinciding with the classes that I was already taking. But I didn't think about it at all during summer start. I only thought about it this quarter.

I agree. I just think that they are at awkward times. Or they are just really limited. I really wanted to take pickleball and they closed that because there was only one and it was at 8 in the morning. They should offer more at better times.

Yeah, I kind of have a similar experience. I thought it wasn't so much credit load but trying to find classes that don't conflict with each other. I would find an interesting class but it wouldn't

fit time wise. Fall quarter I really take this kayaking class but it was always in weird times, so I couldn't fit it in.

Two students were able to take 1-credit classes to bump up their credit loads.

I was able to take a 1 credit class during the fall quarter and a 1 credit class during the winter quarter without a problem. But that was because of special arrangements made through Huxley. I am a Huxley distinguished scholar, so I am able to enroll in these one credit classes. Both of them were environmental science related. That one credit class could bump me up to 15 where I would have otherwise only had access to 14. First quarter I ended up having 14 instead of 13.

I took a beginning volleyball my first quarter mostly because I was just trying to make sure that I had credits because I couldn't get into anything. I ended up taking but it was an 8 o'clock volleyball class. I got my days started well on those days that I had volleyball, but it was kind of difficult in that sense. It would have been better if it was later in the day. Also this winter quarter I am taking an intermediate handball class, which I accidentally got confused and got into. That's also at an odd time, it's at 4 o'clock. So my day is not quite over when all of my other classes are over and then at 4 o'clock to 5, I have a handball class. It's kind of fun too for one credit, only two hours a week.

Academic Interest Area

Do you think that the academic area you were interested in pursuing affected your decision to take the credit load that you took Fall quarter? How? In what ways?

For two students, registration was oriented around getting into graduate school. They had certain courses to take, and they were concerned about GPA.

I feel like my Summerstart experience with the whole registering was really oriented around getting into graduate school. Medical graduate school because everyone in there wanted to be a doctor of some sort. They had us form our schedules around it, so I really do feel like my credit load was affected that way. I took Chem. 121, Math 240, and English 101. They were all serious classes and I didn't take anything for fun.

I definitely think that mine affected my credit load just because I wanted to take a lighter one so that I can keep my grades up so that I can get into graduate school when I am done with this. Also, my chemistry labs and my other science labs they get in the way of having any one or two credit classes because they are at such weird times and you have to plan them around each other, which made times even weirder. It's really hard to find any classes that will fill up your schedule.

One student was blocked from Art classes because she is not a declared major.

There are a few certain classes that I would have preferred to take versus taking GURs right away so that I would be taking classes I know that I would succeed in. I wanted to take some Art classes and something else engineering related but the only way that I could take those art classes was if I had already declared my major, which I am trying to now, or I would have to wait until phase two of registration. But by then it is jammed packed and the professors already have a waiting list of people that want to get in. That's the hard thing about classes, even an entry level art class you have to declare your major already to take them. So I had a difficult registration.

Another student was advised to keep the credit load low because of the workload involved. He was taking Math and Chemistry.

I think that it did for sure. When I signed up for those two classes immediately, he was like make sure you don't take too many classes because this is going to be taking up a lot of time. It was Chemistry 121 and Math 118. Then I signed up for the Study of Religion. I think that probably it comes into an effect when you are signing up for classes too. I am taking quite a few more credits this quarter than I was last quarter, but I feel like my load is not necessarily lighter, but just different. I am not taking any math classes and I am only taking one science class. I don't spend the time on the homework that I had to have in everyday like I did last quarter. Now it's just that I have reading assignments that I need to stay on top of.

Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

When you were registering for classes, how many of you were interested in participating in extracurricular activities your first quarter?

Clubs — 1

Sports — 5

Did these types of interests affect your decision about how many credits to take your first quarter?

Students in this group did not think about credit load and extra-curricular activities while registering for Fall classes

Financial Concerns and Work Schedules

Did financial concerns enter into your thinking in any way when you were thinking about how many credits were enough or best for you your first quarter? In what ways?

Work schedules were not an issue for this group. Four students are receiving financial aid and must take a minimum of 12 credits in order to continue receiving it.

For financial aid you had to have 12, so I just wanted to make sure I was above that because I am paying for it. If I was below, I wouldn't be able to stay in.

Even to stay in the dorms you have to have 12.

No you only have to have 10. It's 10. When I dropped my chem. class I was worried about it and went to talk to the RD and it's for the whole year I guess too.

Our RD said 12.

Academic and Social Confidence Levels

To what extent would you say that you took fewer than 15 credits because you were not extremely confident about your ability to do well your first quarter?

Four students did not feel extremely confident with their ability; and they chose to take fewer credits because they did not want to become overwhelmed with the workload.

I think it is more of the same as I have been saying. I was not trying to get myself overwhelmed.

Mine was the same. I wasn't very confident that I would do well if I was to take a big class load, but it was kind of counter productive because the classes that I chose weren't classes that I really enjoyed. So this quarter I think that I will do a lot better even though I have 16 credits because they are all classes that I like.

I also took that into consideration. I have a tendency to become overwhelmed if I have too many things and too many obligations to fulfill in the classes and everything. So that is why I thought that three would be a good number and four would be kind of pushing it, which would have been 16 or 17 credits. I figured that was too much to start off with. Maybe later, but not now.

I also that I would rather be safe than sorry. I would have hated to drop a class, much less fail a class. I would rather put more effort into fewer classes that I did really well in.

One student felt extremely confident about her ability to do well in classes she wanted and would enjoy; however she wasn't so sure that she could do well in classes that were required and she would not enjoy.

I felt extremely confident in that if I picked the right classes, I would be extremely confident. As soon as I got into the engineering class that I wanted to be in, I was like this will probably be a piece of cake, just because I know that I really want to do this, so I am going to try my hardest. But then the classes that I wasn't so sure about, I know that if I don't stick with this and if I get behind, then I won't do well. And that's what I did in the fall for my classes and I had to drop one of them. It's a big thing of having the GURs and the classes that you sort of take because you know that you have to take and get done with, but yet you don't enjoy them so they are too hard for you.

Three people felt “indifferent” about how well they would do with studying and handling their workload.

I just felt indifferent. I just didn't really know what to expect so I didn't expect myself to do amazing but I didn't expect myself to do bad. I was kind of being open minded.

Yeah. That's how I feel (all talking at once)

Yeah, it was more of my experience. I dealt with it when it came but didn't worry about it before it actually started or hit me in college. I was just kind of like go in there and see what this takes and see if this is hard or not. I didn't put any credit to it at first.

Three students took fewer credits because they wanted to make sure that they got comfortable with the social climate at Western.

I feel like that was kind of important to me. I just wanted to get all aspects of Western in my freshmen first quarter. Social is a very large part of the experience.

Right.

Ditto.

Also in general fall quarter versus winter quarter is a bigger party quarter just because of new students coming in and old students coming back. Sophomores that I sort of knew were saying if you are a partier you might want to control your partying and take it down a notch on credit load.

Nine of the thirteen students in this group admit they are not happy with their Fall quarter grades. For one thing, teaching styles are different and students were unsure about expectations.

For me it was a teacher. I took math, psychology and biology and I had taken all of those during high school too. I thought that they would be more challenging, but the math ended up being really easy. But then my teacher wanted us to do our tests in the way that he taught it, and I was used to doing the way that I had learned it before since it was kind of a review, so I got graded down for not doing it the way he wanted us to. That was really frustrating so I just stopped going to class. I would do the stuff on the test that I knew how to do and just get graded off because I didn't show up and not do it the way that he wanted me to. Biology ended up being that I couldn't understand half of what she was saying half of the time. It was kind of frustrating and I tried really hard, so I really only got a bad grade in math class. I admit that it was my fault for not going.

I feel like I did really well in my English class. I am an English person, it runs in my family, so I was fine with my grade in English. But my stats and chem. classes gave me a lot of trouble. I took stats in high school and it was centered around your calculator. When I came here and my stats teacher did everything different. I kept on wanting to do it my way and that really threw me off. My chemistry teacher, the reason I dropped it was because I felt like he was going too fast and he expected us all to know exactly what he was talking about. We had a background, which I felt like I didn't have a strong enough background. It was more than I thought it would be.

I felt like I got a bad grade in one of my classes just because it was such a different teaching style than I was used to. It was a big lecture history class. Basically we were going through the TA for everything and never talked to the professor. I wasn't used to that, so it wasn't clear what was really expected of us in the class.

I had the same thing. It could have helped being more warned about bigger classes and having huge lectures. I took econ 101 and that was in Fraser 4 and it was full.

Nine students also agree that they didn't really know how to study and they didn't have good study habits.

I definitely didn't have the whole studying thing down. I had taken more challenging classes in high school, so I felt somewhat prepared and I thought that I was kind of ready for it. In my religion class I always had reading and I would do that. In my math class, math 118, I had homework everyday, so I would do that. But then chemistry, we never had homework. We had one homework assignment and then a test. I did the homework assignment and I didn't really read. I went to lecture and when it came to the tests, I didn't know what to do because I hadn't been doing the supplemental homework because he didn't really recommend it. This quarter, now that I am taking biology, my teacher said straight off, you need to read before every lecture. And I really thought that that advice would have been useful last quarter. I guess that I should have figured it out, but it took me a long time to finally figure that out—how to study for tests.

GPA wise, I believe that I probably could have done better. I got two Cs and an A. I was hoping to get higher than that, so I was kind of disappointed. I took it for granted though. One of them was a math class, which I am bad at math. I was like, okay, I can deal with that. The other one was computer science, which I was just absolutely lost in the whole quarter. Passing that didn't seem so bad. I definitely want to bring that up.

Transfer credits

Some of you brought in credits from either AP courses or community college coursework. Did having these credits affect your decision to take 15 or more credits? How?

Nine students brought in AP or running start credits. Three students say that having the extra credits gives them a cushion, so they don't feel pressured to take 15 or more credits.

It gave me a sense of a cushion. I didn't feel pressure to take 15.

Since I have these 10 credits, I only have to take 170 credits to graduate, so some quarters during the next four years I can take less than 15.

The same for me. I had a cushion (28 credits) and I didn't feel the pressure to take 15 because I knew I could survive taking less and still graduate in 3 years.

Having extra credits did not affect credit load for three students. Instead they thought about the prerequisites they brought in so they could take certain courses at Western.

I came in with 10, 5 each that covered chem. 121 and 122. So I felt really pressured to take chem. 123 right off the bat. That indirectly influenced my decision to not take a math class because I took a physics class, and taking a physics and a chem. at the same time is pretty heavy. So I didn't want to take a math. In a round-about way that influenced my decision, but not so much as a cushion really, but more like a workload.

I had some credits when I came in. I didn't really think so much of the credit portion but it got me into the class. That was more what I was concerned about.

I had 94 credits because I got my AA. It didn't really affect how many I took, but it affected what I took. I didn't have any GURs to start on, so I went straight into my major classes. I guess it kind of affected it just because I wanted to take a smaller workload just because these are the classes that matter, at least a little bit more. So just to keep my GPA up, I guess.

Did any of you take AP or Running Start courses thinking that you could graduate earlier if you got a jumpstart?

Two students are thinking about how they can graduate earlier because they took AP or Running Start courses.

I think it did for me this quarter, when I found out how many credits I had. I figure that if I keep on keeping a higher workload, I could graduate earlier and go to graduate school earlier.

It definitely did for me. I didn't need all four years anymore and I didn't have to get the general requirements done. I still have to take 3 years because I didn't really know what I wanted to do while I was taking my community college credits, so I wasn't taking the right classes. I definitely thought that I was going to graduate early and I didn't have to take all of the general classes that are not applicable to my major.

For another student, it's about having certain classes taken care of rather than graduating early.

For me it was more like a, oh, I won't have to take certain classes if I take the AP class now. Rather than graduating early.

Academic and Social Adjustment

Now we would like to find out how you think your credit load affected the experience you had at Western during your first quarter. Do you think that taking fewer than 15 credits affected your ability to do well in your classes this past quarter?

Four students say the ability to do well is more about the types of classes and the workload involved, not credit load.

I think it depends on what classes you are taking, not the credit load. For me, my classes involved a lot of work. If you gave me three classes that were easier, than I would have definitely been fine. But I was taking pretty hard classes.

I didn't think that taking fewer than 15 really had much to do with it. It was more like which classes were lab classes. I think that those were more the concern because those things take up a lot of time. Versus other ones, even if they are more credits, it seems like you can devote less time to it. It wasn't so much a concern, taking less credits. I don't think that it affected it as much. It's more the type of classes you take.

I feel that way more this quarter because I have four, 4 credit classes. I feel like in one or two of them were going to be easier, but both of them are definitely a lot harder than I was expecting. They were talking about computer science 101 classes. I am in that right now and I don't understand any of it. In the description of it, I thought it was going to be about the general idea of how computers work and Microsoft word. But it's all way different, so I am focusing all of my attention on that class, which I thought was going to be my easier class. I am falling behind in my other ones because it takes up so much time.

I think it also depends on what your strong points are. I know people that are taking a ton of math and science classes, but that is what they are good at. That works for them. I find it easier for me to be taking more liberal studies classes and that's easier for me.

This student is happy with her decision to take fewer than 15 credits (she is happy with what she received for grades).

I believe that my decision to take fewer than 15 credits certainly helped me a lot. I ended up being pretty happy with what I received for grades during that quarter. I think that 3 is good for me. I will definitely try to stick right around 15 for the rest of the year, and maybe more after that.

Advice for Incoming Freshmen

What advice would you give to new students coming in next fall with respect to how many credits they should try to register for? Why? What would you tell them about strategies they should use to make sure that they have a good course schedule?

In sum, students in this group would advise incoming freshmen as follows:

- Take 12-15 credits; paying particular attention to the type of class (course content) and the workload involved (balance essay writing vs. math/science with lab time).
- Take it slow the first quarter in order to adjust to the new environment
- Balance out required classes with classes that look fun and interesting.

Students say to take 12-15 credits in general. However, rather than looking at the number of credits for each class, it is more important to look at course content and the workload involved. The balance of classes should be considered (required classes vs. classes for enjoyment; and math/science with labs vs. History and English which require a lot of reading and essay writing).

I don't know about credit load. I think that it is about more what type of class. If it is an English class with a lot of essay writing or a heavy math or science with a lot of computational and laboratory time. You just need to think about it in that way.

Credit load depends on the major. I think the advising session should know. In being in any of the engineering majors you have to take Etech 110 and 111. It would have helped to know that those classes take the same amount of time as a 5 credit class, just because the class hours do not include homework. It still have helped a lot of my classmates in that class to know that...Make sure and try best as possible to get in classes that you know that you will enjoy and that you will want to go to; unless it is a class that you have to take and have no option. I find that it is difficult, especially with the class that I had to drop. The reason I dropped it was because the class was too boring and I stopped going to it. That's probably the biggest thing that I would focus on.

I agree with choosing classes that you will enjoy going to, because that was what I did. I took the one class that they told me to and then I found two other classes that I thought that I would like to go to every day. It worked out really well for me. I would probably suggest, depending on whatever classes you take, try to get enough of them to equal around 14 or 15, I guess would be good when you are starting, just because it doesn't equate with too much unless they surprise you with a 3 credit class that takes 6 hours.

I would say kind of like what she said, research your classes. Personally I would tell the person to take classes that they know that they need and not just I want to do this because it is a GUR and getting it out of the way. You might find out that you didn't need it and could have taken something else instead. Also, know what you are getting into before. I think that you should look

at the credits if you are worried about money or staying in the dorms, but look more at the content of the class than how many credits it is worth. Because we have all said that we have experience high credit classes that are easier than low credit.

Do your research on your classes. There are some classes that will surprise you here. The whole credit load thing gives you a false sense of security where you think that you are going to coast through that quarter, but then you will be up until 2:30 every night doing stuff for those classes.

I really think that you really need to know what you like. If you really like chemistry or biology, you should take chemistry and biology. Maybe you shouldn't take 2 lab classes that are 4 or 5 credits at the same time. Maybe you should space those out between quarters. Test the waters too. Take a class that you don't really think that you would like to take -- Ancient Greek literature or myths or folklores. Maybe you will like that.

I would also say to take about 12 to 15 credits. Later you can add more to fill in the gaps. Also, for classes, I think that there should be a balance. For example David Brunner helped me to get some good classes where I wouldn't be slaying away at homework for all three of them. I think that is what everybody should do. Try and have your advisor help them with that too. And maybe look at the course descriptions to get the general feel for the classes. Go to the classes on the first day and if they seem like they might have too much content in it, then you can consider dropping it at that point.

Students also say it's important to take it slow the first quarter in order to adjust to the new environment.

I pretty much agree with everybody else. I think that you should probably take 12 to 15 or not necessarily look at the credits but look at the amount of classes and the amount of work that it will take. Definitely take stuff that you are interested in or you need and that you will go to class for. Once you start skipping classes it is really difficult to catch up. Afterwards these classes almost seem easy, but in my experience you shouldn't psych yourself out and think that they are going to be a walk in the park because it could be a lot harder than you expected. So just take it slow first quarter.

I just think that people shouldn't be too ambitious because it is a new environment. So you should really think about what you are taking and if you are really going to be able to handle it because you don't really know your setting yet. Take it slow. Credit load wise, 12 to 15.

I think that it kind of depends on what major you are going for because they will have different requirements for that major and what classes that you need to get done. I guess 15 is about good. But it varies. I think that the recommendation sheet for the different majors was really helpful. Even though it ended up being difficult for me it kind of made me realize right away that this isn't what I am interested in. I think having your advisor help you through it, because my advisor was there with me and helping me decide what classes to take. Having someone help you is really

important. If you have the opportunity, take a diverse amount of classes so that they aren't all math or all writing classes. Also, make sure for a personal note that you study and over-prepare for the beginning, because you can always bring it down later.

I would definitely say do your research on your classes. Know exactly what you are getting into as far as homework goes and workload. Pay attention to the credit that you are taking. If you want that amount, then you will go at a certain pace. Just know how you study. Be able to know yourself and how you are going to be able to function around those classes.

I suggest taking several, broad ranged of different types of classes. Maybe take English and Math and a lab type thing to just get an idea of what those things are like. I found that a lot of things that I thought were something were not quite that. I was surprised. I thought computer science would be sort of in this area and it actually ended up being something completely different. On the other hand I also found a Greek lit class that I was kind of skeptical about at first, and then I ended up really liking it. So just taking different type of classes to get an idea to what it is actually like. I think that high school classes and college classes are quite different and you might be expecting something but a lot of times it will be something completely different. So just take broad range of classes to get an idea. As for credit load, find out what makes it work. Try 15 if you can so then you don't feel like you are getting too far behind on your first quarter, but it might not end up that way.

Make sure to research the classes, and balance out required classes with classes that look fun and interesting, so you will enjoy going to class.

Like everyone has been saying. 15 is a good number to aim for, just to keep yourself on track. Make sure that you balance out what looks fun and what you need for your major or whatever else you are interested. Take stuff that you will go to class for.

I think that is important to keep between 12 and 15. Don't get too far behind but don't try to be too ambitious. Choose classes that you think that you will like and research the classes.