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Group 2 Freshman Enrollment Focus Groups

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Freshmen Enrollment Focus Groups

Executive Summary for Group 2

Conducted January 17, 2008

Group 2. Ten students participated. All ten students in this group took 14 or fewer state support credits in fall quarter, and all scored higher than one standard deviation above the mean verbal SAT score for the freshmen class. One student took 12 credits in the fall, three took 13 credits, and six took 14 credits. Their interests were distributed among the colleges, as represented by Summerstart advising group assignment—Three in environmental studies, health, or math and science, three in humanities or Fairhaven, two in education, one in music or fine and performing arts, and one undecided. Five are female and five male. Four are students of color, seven transferred credits, one participated in an FIG and one in an FYE, three are honors students, eight attended Summerstart, and none are athletes.

Introductions (p1-3)

The majority chose Western for the following reasons:

- A certain program
- The location (close to home)
- The size (not so big)
- The environment (bay view, trees, close to mountain)
- Nice campus; great town
- A variety of things to do here
- Friends or family attend (or have attended) Western

The majority came to Western with a major in mind. For some this has remained the same, while others have changed their minds. Current major interests include Creative Writing, Science Education, Engineering, Linguistics, Liberal arts (2), Business Management (2). One student is undecided as she has several interests. One student's major was not understandable on the tape. Projected graduations vary from two years (because of transfer credits) to four and a half years (due to the program, or if it's necessary).

Registration Experience (p3-6)

Students in this group took less than 15 credits Fall Quarter. They chose certain courses because they fulfilled GURS, or because they could be applied toward their major, or because they looked interesting. Students chose the number of credits they did for a variety of reasons. Four students say it was because they wanted to get established here and not be too overwhelmed (p3). One student was advised to keep his credit load low ("like 15"), "because they are incoming freshmen in the Honors program." He originally registered for 15 credits, but dropped mountain biking because it conflicted with lab (p5). One student was advised during Summerstart to take 15-16 credits, but her four classes totaled 14 credits (p5). Another student was advised against taking Accounting 240 in the first quarter, so he switched from Acct 240 to Hist 104. He ended up with 14 (p5-6). This student originally registered for 15 credits (three Honors courses and a fun class as recommended by the advisor); but badminton was canceled so the

credit load dropped down to 14 (p6). Two students ended up with 14 credits because classes were full (p6).

Academic Advising (p 6-8)

(This topic was covered by most students in the Registration Experience section above.) Students received different advice from advisors—take above 12 or 13; take between 13 and 16; take 15 credits each quarter to graduate in 4 years; make sure it is a course load you can handle (p7). Two students were influenced by their mom's to take certain classes (p7). Friends also gave advice: Take fun classes, and don't take morning classes (p7-8). Parents have left decision-making to three students (p8). One student enjoyed his first quarter more than his friends who took 17-18 credit loads (8).

Logistics of Registering (p8-10)

We asked students whether courses with different numbers of credits attached to them affected students' ability to register for 15 or more credits. Two students were shooting for 15 credits, but because of the credits attached to the courses they signed up for, the credit load turned out to be lower. They say it would be easier if they could take three courses, 5 credits each (p8-9). One student was just looking for interesting classes, and another says it's nice to know how much work the class will be based on credit hours (p9). Four students said classes were filled when they tried to register, and they didn't get the classes they wanted (p9-10). Two students mentioned that it is very difficult for out-of-state students to register (they were not able to attend Summerstart, p10).

Academic Interest Area (p10-11)

Four students talked about requirements for the major, which affected the number of credits they took Fall Quarter (p10). One student did not feel pressured to take a lot of credits because he is exploring (p11).

Co-curricular and Extra-curricular Activities (p11)

Seven students participated in clubs, four in intramurals, and one in recreational activities outside of school. The majority say these types of interests did not affect their scheduling because they didn't sign up for clubs, etc until after registration. However one student was interested in a lot of clubs so she purposely signed up for a 13 credit load (p11).

Financial Concerns and Work Schedules (p12-13)

One student is concerned about finances because she has to pay for most of her own tuition. Students with financial aid and scholarships must register for a minimum of

12 credits, and they must maintain a 2.5 gpa in order to keep their scholarships. Five in this group have scholarships (p12). Five students worked part-time Fall quarter. Work schedules did affect fall quarter credit loads for two students (p12-13).

Academic and Social Confidence Levels (p13-14)

None of the students in this group felt “extremely confident” coming into Western. Six felt “somewhat confident”. They took a lighter credit load because they didn’t know what college would be like and they wanted to ease into it (p13). This student didn’t want to take a lighter load because she wanted to push herself (p13). Some students took fewer than 15 credits so they could get comfortable with the social climate at Western (even if that wasn’t their original intention) (p14).

Transfer Credits (p14)

Six students came to Western with AP credits, and two came in with Running Start credits. Most did not feel concerned about meeting certain credit loads, because they had so many credits coming in (p14).

Academic and Social Adjustment (p15)

The majority say they did well academically Fall quarter (only three people say they did not.) With a lighter credit load, students had time to study and to adjust, and they had social time (p15). Two students are happy they took fewer than 15 credits fall quarter, because they had a much better time than their roommates, academically and socially (15).

Advice for Incoming Freshmen (p16-17)

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

- Don’t be pressured to take 15 or more credits. Do what you’re comfortable with. Take a lower credit load first quarter—to adjust to college, have fun, build a social life, and have time to study
- Take classes you’re really interested in and shuffle your schedule if needed
- Set up your schedule so you don’t have early morning classes
- Take advantage of Summerstart in order to get the classes you want (p16-17)

