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Pamela Jull

Western Washington University

Gary (Gary Russell) McKinney

Western Washington University

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FIVE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP OF THE CLASS OF 1993: ADVANCED EDUCATION

Prepared by Pamela Jull, Ph.D., and Gary R. McKinney

INTRODUCTION

In 1998, Western Washington University marked its 100-year anniversary. In recognition of the event, the President and Provost requested an assessment of the university's progress. The so-called "Centennial Project" included a survey of the centennial graduating class, as well as the subjects of this report, the class of 1993. Combined with data gathered from regular alumni surveys, 1993 graduates' educational pursuits since attending Western are described one- and five-years out.

PARTICIPATION, COMPLETION AND PLANS FOR ADVANCED EDUCATION

The five-year follow-up of the class of 1993 showed that 20% of respondents have finished more schooling beyond their undergraduate degrees, with another 10% currently enrolled in school. As shown in Figure 1, another 26% plan to enroll sometime in the future, and 43% have not enrolled and don't plan to in the future.

As shown in Table 1, among those who are pursuing or have pursued additional schooling, 35% continued at one of the five Washington State universities, 25% continued at other four-year in-state colleges or universities, and 31% continued at schools out of state. Table 1 also shows that 19% have returned to Western to continue their advanced education. For all continuers, 78% were studying in a field that was the same as (43%) or related to (35%) the major they pursued at Western, as shown in Figure 2.

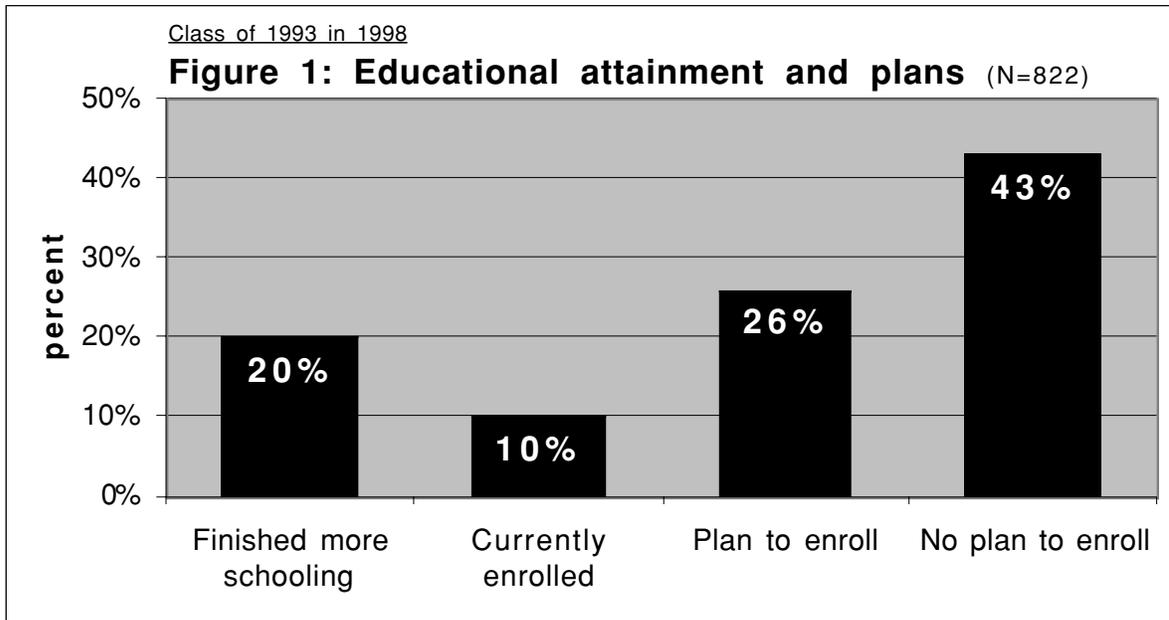
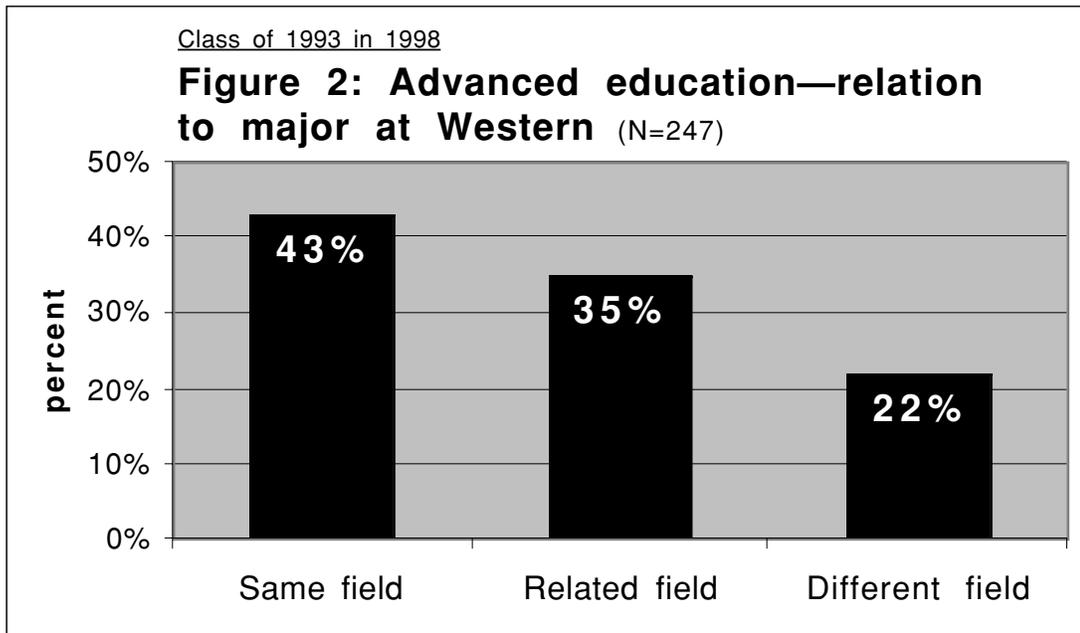


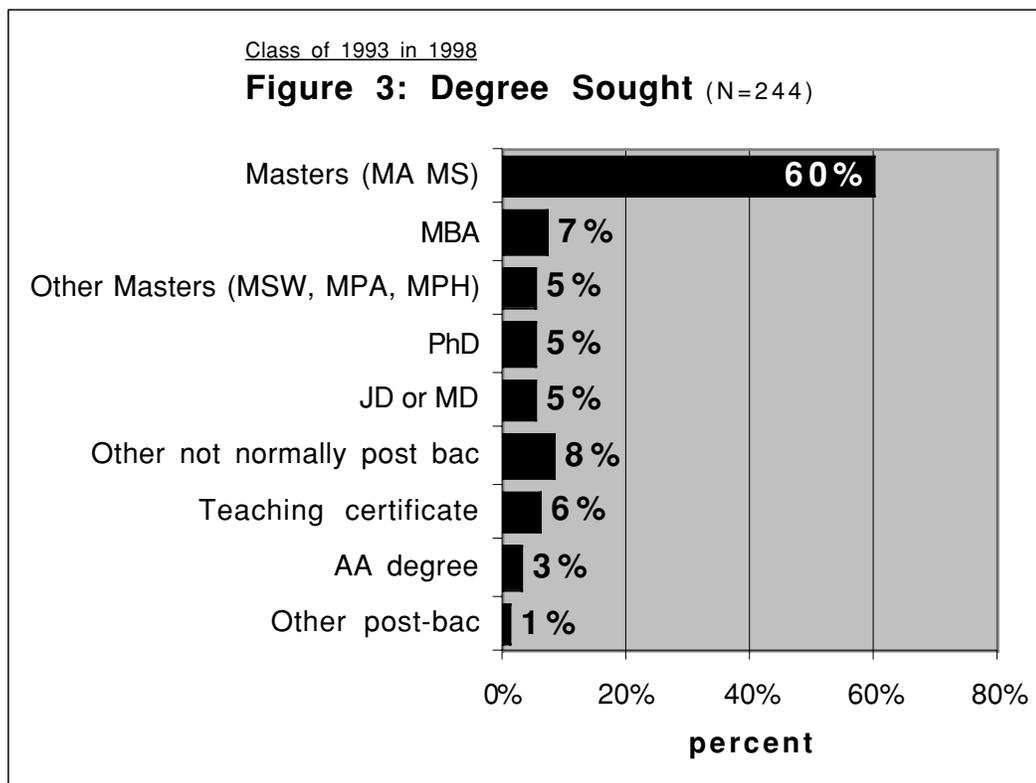
Table 1: Where Western alumni of 1993 have continued their education

Schools attended	Percent
Univeristy of Wasington	9%
Washington State University	5%
Western Washington University	19%
Central Washington University	1%
Eastern Washington University	2%
In-state community college	4%
In-state four-year college or university	25%
Out of state PhD granting	12%
Out of state other college or university	19%
School other than college or university	5%
Total	100%

N=249

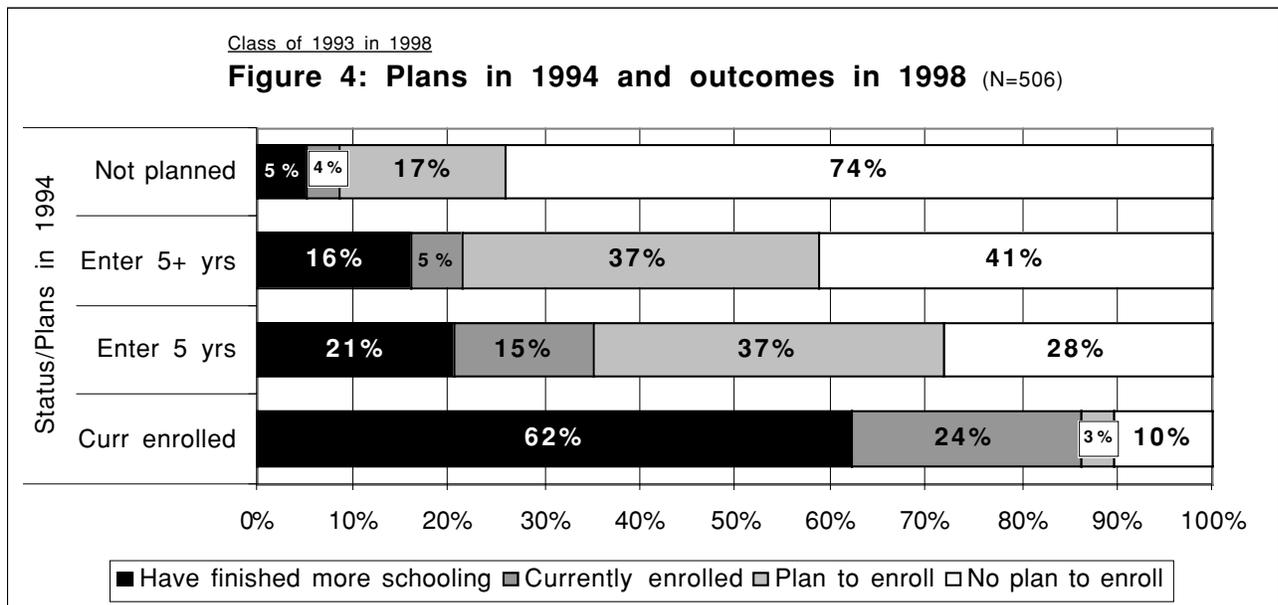


As shown in Figure 3, a Masters was the most common type of advanced degree sought, with 60% of respondents listing an MA or MS. An advanced degree in education, which draws students from many majors, was the most frequent area of study listed (N=71). Other popular fields included psychology (N=20), Business (N=17) and Law (N=11).



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EARLY PLANS AND LATER OUTCOMES

The longitudinal nature of these data give us the unusual opportunity to examine students' plans one year after graduation with what they actually did four years later. The 1994 one-year follow-up showed that 53% of graduates in 1993 expected to enter school at some time, and 7% were already enrolled. Of those who were currently enrolled in advanced education during 1994, 62% reported having finished more schooling, 24% were currently enrolled and 3% had plans to enroll again in 1998, as shown in Figure 4. Another 10% appear to have not finished the program they were enrolled in during 1994 and to have no plans to return to school in the future.



Among the graduates who, in 1994, reported they planned to enroll in advanced education within the next five years, 36% had enrolled in or completed a program by 1998. Some were on an accelerated schedule: 21% of those who reported in 1994 that they planned to enroll in advanced education more than five years later had nonetheless enrolled or completed a program by 1998. Among the graduates who, in 1994, had no plans to enroll in advanced education, 9% had completed a program or were currently enrolled in 1998.

As Figure 4 shows, the relationship between plans and outcomes in terms of further education is quite strong. Among respondents who, in 1994, had no plans continue their education, 74%, still had no plans in 1998. Among those already enrolled or with plans to enroll in 1994, only 26% shifted to not planning to enroll by 1998. The relationship between plans and outcomes was statistically significant and the effect was somewhat large (chisquare=198.59, $p < .001$; Gamma=.64)

Graduates of all different ages, ethnic origins, and both sexes continued on to additional schooling at equal rates. Students with degrees from the business college were the least likely to plan or pursue further education (55% have no plan compared to about 40% among other colleges). Fairhaven graduates were the most likely to pursue or plan to pursue further education (only 27% have no plan).

JOB QUALITY AND ADVANCED EDUCATION

Findings suggest that five years after graduation those who have completed more schooling do not differ significantly, in many ways, from those who have not. They have had about the same number of jobs and the same number of employers; they have worked equivalent hours and earned equivalent salaries (both self-reported earnings and earnings reported by Washington State's Employment Security Department).

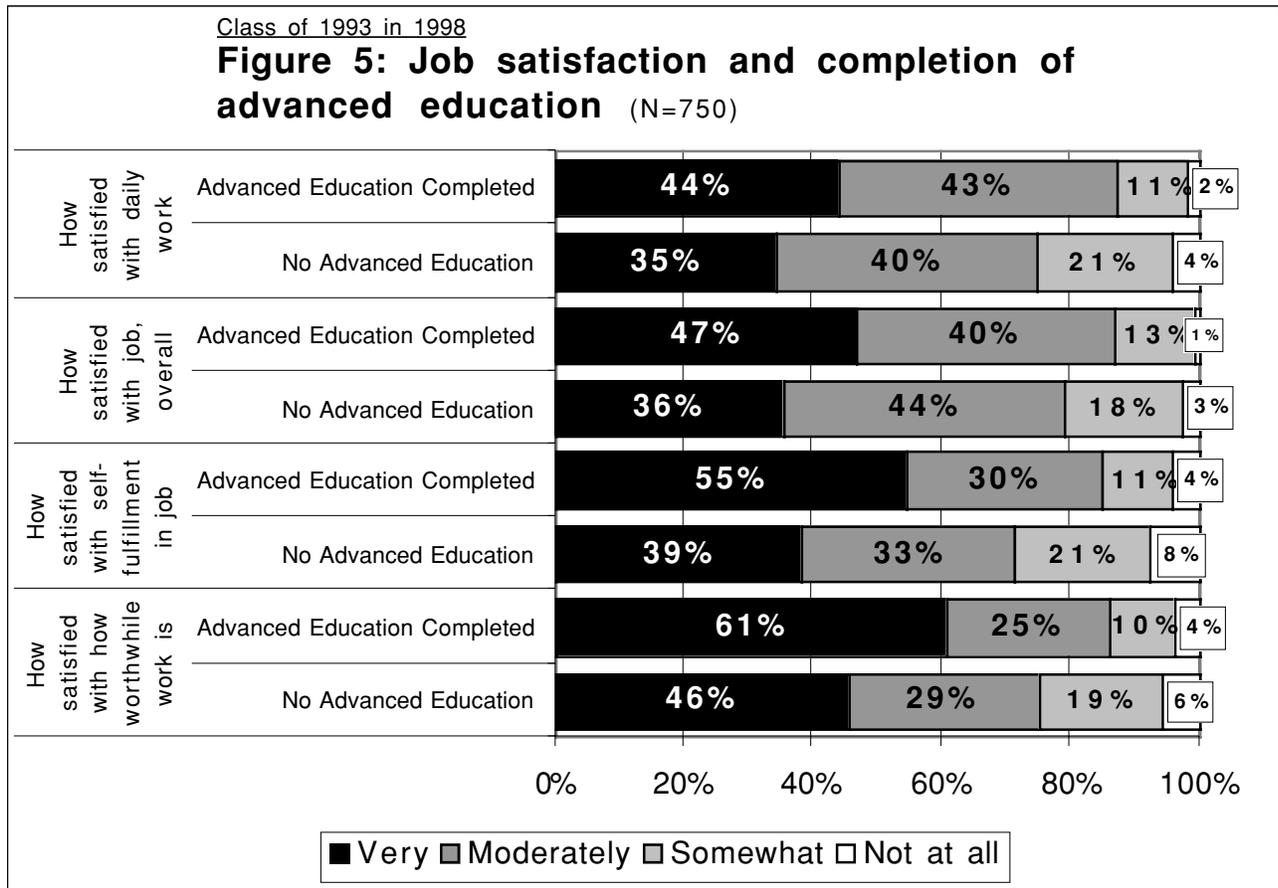
Continuers were, however, more likely to have held different types of jobs. Those who have gone on to further education have had significantly more jobs *in or related to* their major field (average 2.5 vs. 2.0) and have had more jobs that *require a four-year degree* (average 2.3 vs. 1.9), or require a degree in their major (average 1.7 vs. 1.3). They have also earned fewer promotions (average 1.4 vs. 1.7), perhaps due to the additional time they've spent away from work, or from starting in non-entry level positions.

Graduates who completed post-baccalaureate schooling were more likely to be employed (96% vs. 89%) and less likely to be unemployed or out of the labor force (4% vs. 11%). It may be that those who continue their education are somewhat more career oriented, or that they have better job opportunities than those who did not. Not only were they more likely to have had several jobs related to their major, their *current jobs* were also more likely to be in the same or a related field (77% vs. 67%), and the job was more likely to have required a degree in their major (63% vs. 45%).

JOB SATISFACTION AND ADVANCED EDUCATION

In addition to the type of job they held, continuers also differed from other graduates in their current job satisfaction. As shown in Figure 5, they were more satisfied with the kinds of daily work they did, with how worthwhile their work was, and with the self-fulfillment they received from their job. Their overall job satisfaction was also significantly higher, with 87% reporting they were "very" or "moderately" satisfied compared to 80% of other graduates.

It appears that most of the satisfaction these graduates derive is related to the personal gratification they get from their work rather than the job's tangible rewards. Whether they've completed more education or not, graduates' satisfaction with the amount they earn, their job security, their opportunities for advancement and their benefits packages do not differ.



DOES ADVANCED EDUCATION CHANGE GRADUATES' RATINGS OF WESTERN?

In estimating the degree to which their current job used skills or knowledge gained from attending Western, continuers did not rate their preparation for work differently from others. However, these graduates were more likely than others to report that courses both inside and outside their major were "very" or "moderately" valuable, perhaps because the type of work they do is more likely to be associated with their training at Western.

Furthermore, continuers appeared to be in jobs that required different skills than the jobs of other graduates. They were more likely to be in jobs where it was:

- "Very important" to be able to write well,
- "Very important" to understand relationships between ideas, scientific principals and methods,
- "Important" to understand different philosophies and cultures, and
- "Important" to understand the interaction between society and the environment.

Although these four areas were more "important" for continuers, compared to other graduates there was no difference in their *satisfaction* with Western's contribution to their preparation or growth in these areas. This evidence suggests they are in more complex, specialized jobs than students who have not pursued additional schooling.

Continuers also evaluated Western differently in terms of the value of different aspects of their education. Compared to others they were:

- More disparaging of multiple choice tests,
- More likely to be "very satisfied" with the preparation they received at Western for their current job and
- "Very satisfied" with their preparation for graduate study,

SUMMARY

About 30% of Western's 1993 graduates continued their education within five years of completing their undergraduate degree. Those with advanced education beyond a bachelors had remarkably similar employment patterns when compared to those who have not pursued more education. However, graduates with advanced education were more likely to be in jobs that demand stronger levels of written and critical thinking skills, and to have had more jobs related to their major area of study. They also reported higher levels of job satisfaction and were, for the most part, equally satisfied with the preparation they received at Western compared to those who did not pursue education after Western.



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Western Washington University, 516 High Street MS:9010, Bellingham, WA 98225
Phone: (360) 650-3409; FAX: (360) 650-6893; e-mail: garyr@cc.wvu.edu
Web page: <http://www.wvu.edu/~assess>
