



7-1-2001

# Seniors Assess their Experience at Western Washington University: Senior Survey (CSS) Results from 2000

Gary (Gary Russell) McKinney  
*Western Washington University*

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## Recommended Citation

McKinney, Gary (Gary Russell), "Seniors Assess their Experience at Western Washington University: Senior Survey (CSS) Results from 2000" (2001). *Office of Survey Research*. 440.  
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Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing • Western Washington University

Volume 6, Issue 5

July, 2001

# SENIORS ASSESS THEIR EXPERIENCE AT WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY: SENIOR SURVEY (CSS) RESULTS FROM 2000

Prepared by Gary R. McKinney

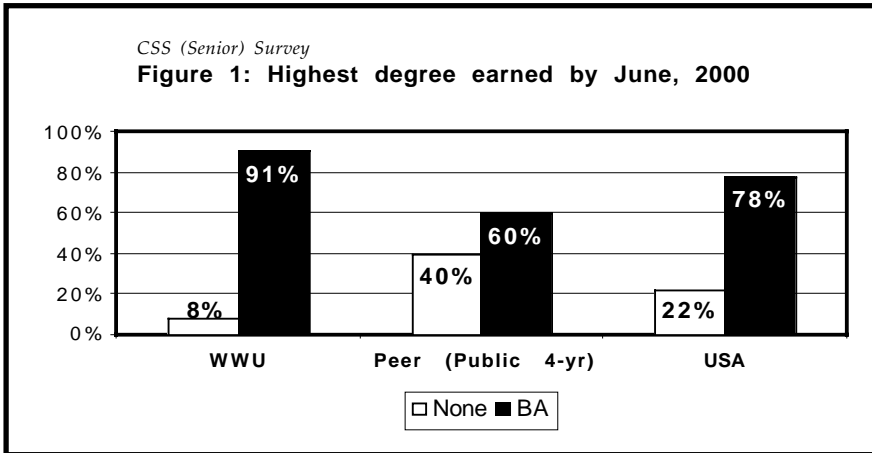
## INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings from the 2000 Senior Survey, administered during each of the four academic quarters: beginning winter, 2000, and concluding fall, 2000. Every Western senior who applied for graduation in 2000 was mailed a College Student Survey (CSS), developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) of the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles. Altogether, 970 usable survey forms were returned, for an approximate return rate of 40%.

The CSS was designed to serve as a follow-up to the Student Information Form—the first-year, in-coming student questionnaire also developed by HERI—or to stand alone as a separate instrument. Both the senior and freshmen surveys profile student characteristics, attitudes, values, educational achievement, and goals.

In 2000, overall, 145 institutions and 38,964 respondents participated in the CSS. In this report two comparisons are made: 1) within the category assigned to Western by HERI: public, 4-year institutions of higher education not granting Ph.D.'s, (peers); and 2) overall findings (USA). In 2000, the public 4-year category had ten participants. (Please note other demographic differences between Western and its "peers" on the next page.)

The 2000 administration marks the second year that Western researchers have attempted to survey all graduating seniors. Previously, the CSS was administered in the spring only, and only to Western seniors who had previously completed a Freshmen Survey. The reason for the change is to be able at some point to report findings to smaller units, at least to the college level, if not departmental, depending on size. In the last two years, nearly 2,000 survey forms have been received.

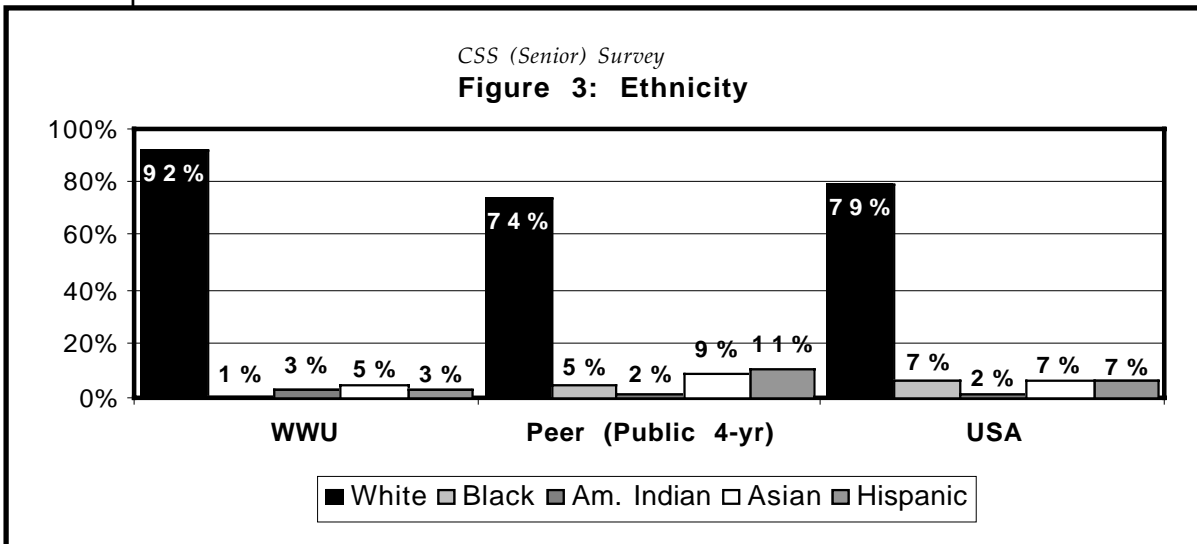
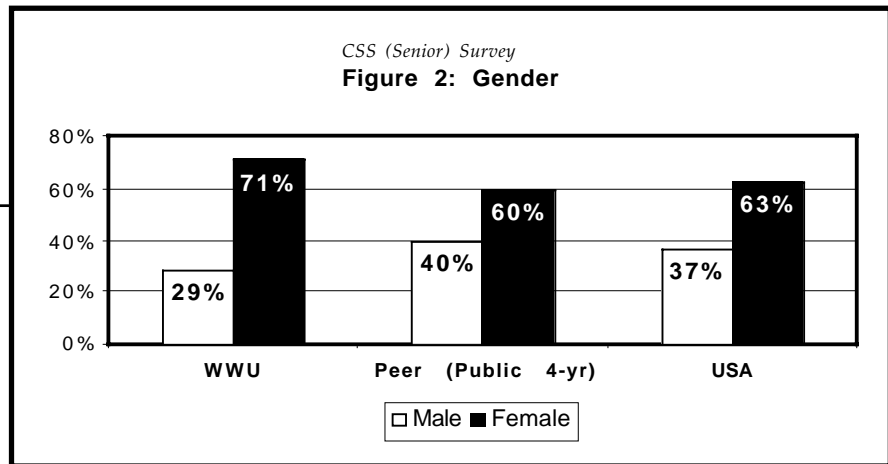


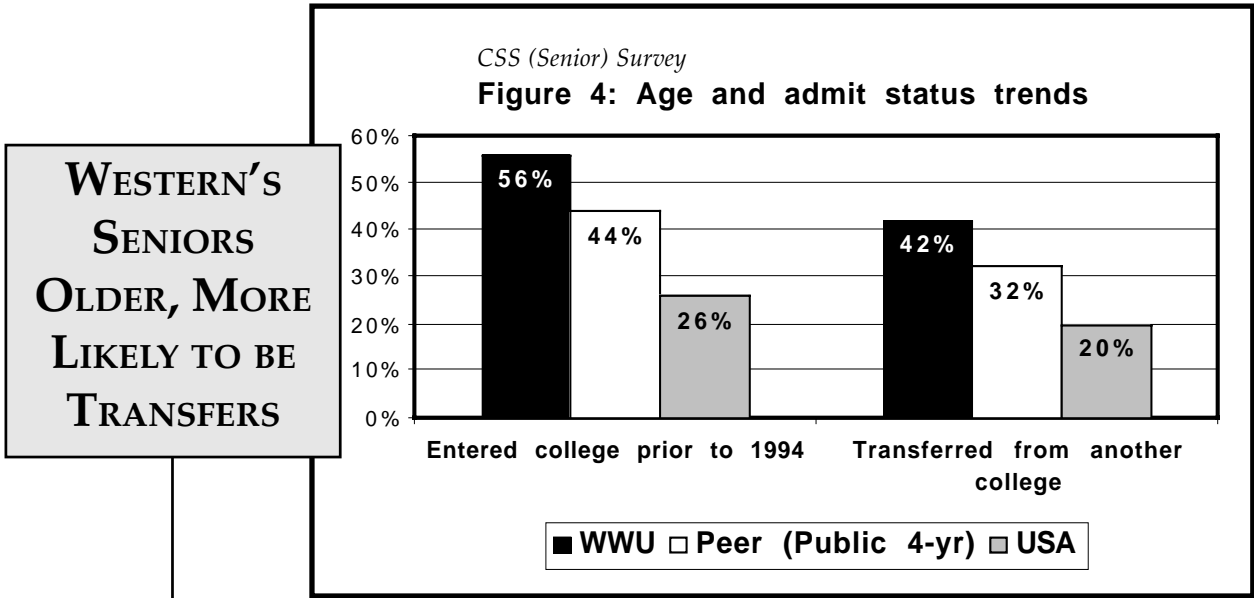
WHY ISN'T  
 WESTERN'S FIGURE  
 100%?

Western administered the CSS each quarter to students who had applied for graduation; thus Winter graduates had not received their degrees by the June, 2000, date mentioned in the survey form—nor, technically, had Spring graduates.

WESTERN'S  
 SENIORS  
 DEMOGRAPHICALLY  
 DIFFERENT  
 FROM  
 NATIONAL  
 COHORTS OF  
 2000 CSS  
 RESPONDENTS

OVER 90% OF SCHOOLS PARTICIPATING IN THE CSS WERE PRIVATE, EITHER PROTESTANT, CATHOLIC, OR NON-SECTARIAN.





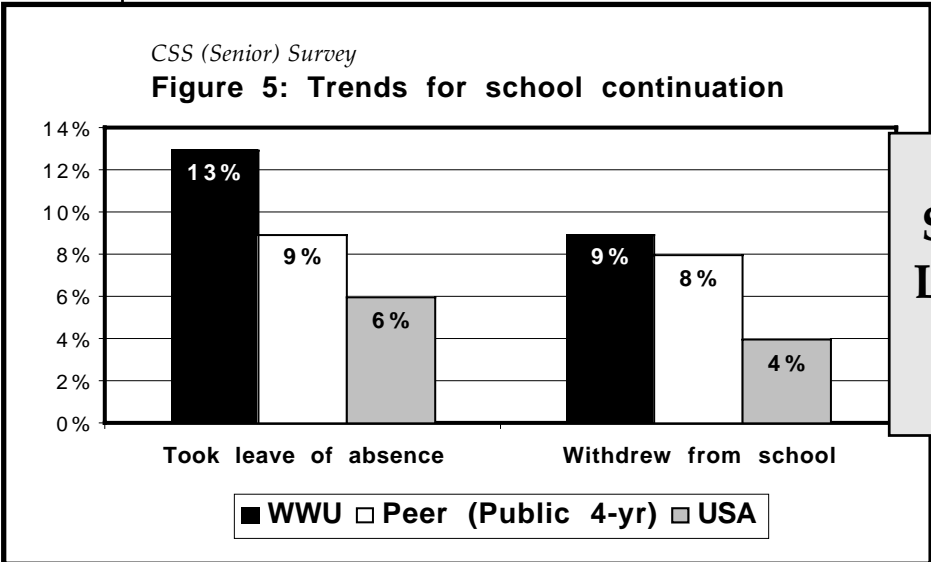
**WESTERN'S SENIORS OLDER, MORE LIKELY TO BE TRANSFERS**

Western CSS respondents were more likely to anticipate performing volunteer service in the next six months: 22% WWU vs. 12% peers and 15% USA.

As soon-to-be graduates, Western CSS respondents were more likely to anticipate they would be traveling, hostelng, or backpacking within the next 6 months: 24% WWU vs. 12% peers and 11% USA.

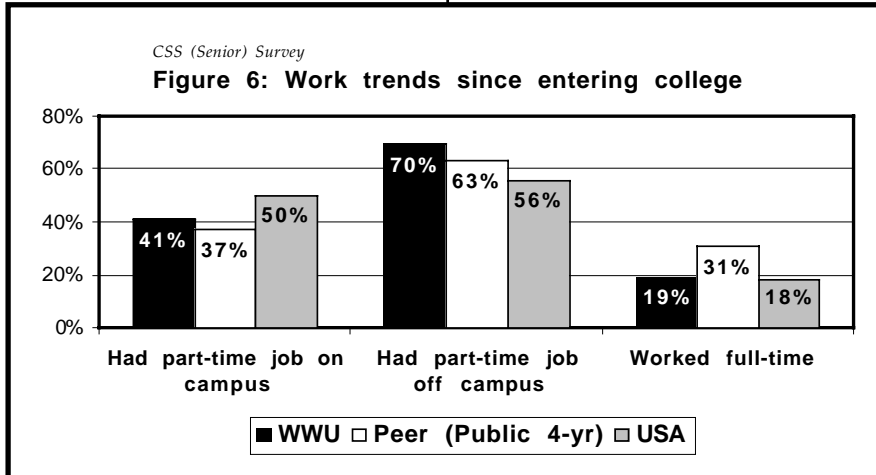
As soon-to-be graduates—rather than simply seniors—Western CSS respondents were more likely to be going to work full-time within the next 6 months: 73% WWU vs. 53% peers and 59% USA.

Whether at Western or national schools, few CSS participants appeared aimless: only about two percent indicated they had no plans for the next six months.



**WESTERN'S SENIORS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE TAKEN SOME TIME OFF**

## WESTERN SENIORS WORKED THEIR WAY THROUGH COLLEGE



### WORK PATTERNS SET EARLY

Even as freshmen, Western students planned on working their way through college. Since 1976, 55% of incoming Western freshmen planned on working, compared to 39% of incoming freshmen nationally.

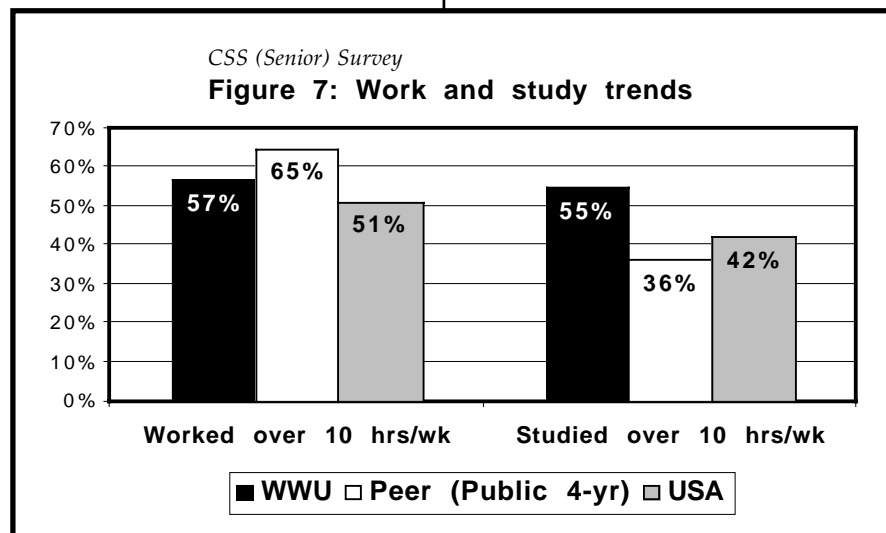
*Busy Western seniors also found time to perform volunteer service (67%).*

### GOOD HABITS LEARNED EARLY

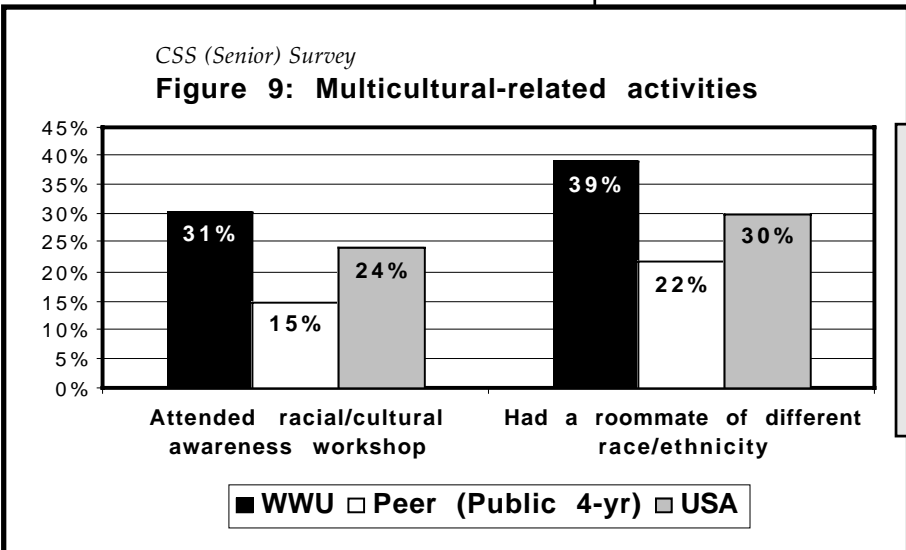
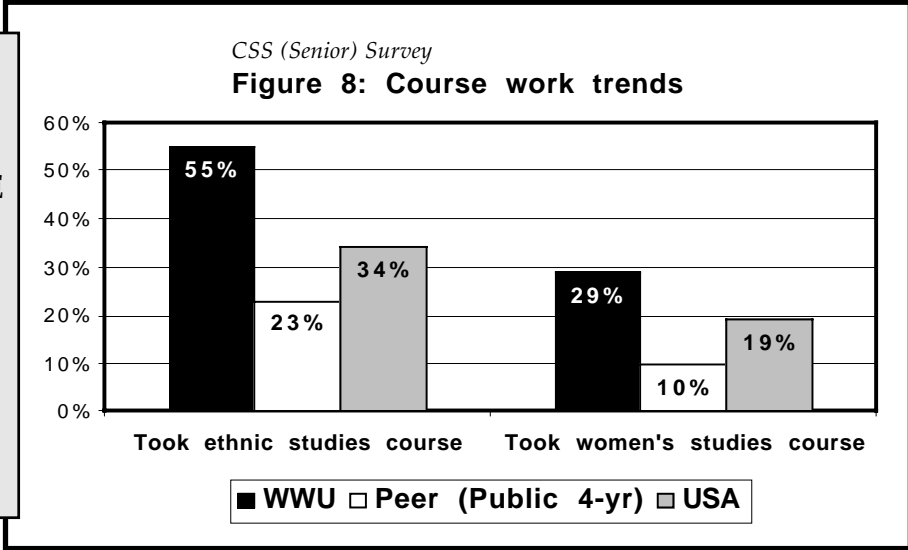
For incoming freshmen nationally, the percentage that study 6+ hrs/wk or more has decreased.

For Western incoming freshmen, the percentage is not only consistently higher, it has remained consistent. For instance, in both 1989 and 1999, 48% reported studying 6+ hrs/wk.

## IN THE PAST YEAR, WESTERN SENIORS BALANCED WORK AND ACADEMICS



**WESTERN SENIORS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE TAKEN ETHNIC AND/OR WOMEN'S STUDIES COURSES**



**WESTERN SENIORS' MULTICULTURAL EXPERIENCES WERE DIFFERENT**

SURVEY RESPONDENT AGREES THAT "RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IS NO LONGER A PROBLEM IN AMERICA":

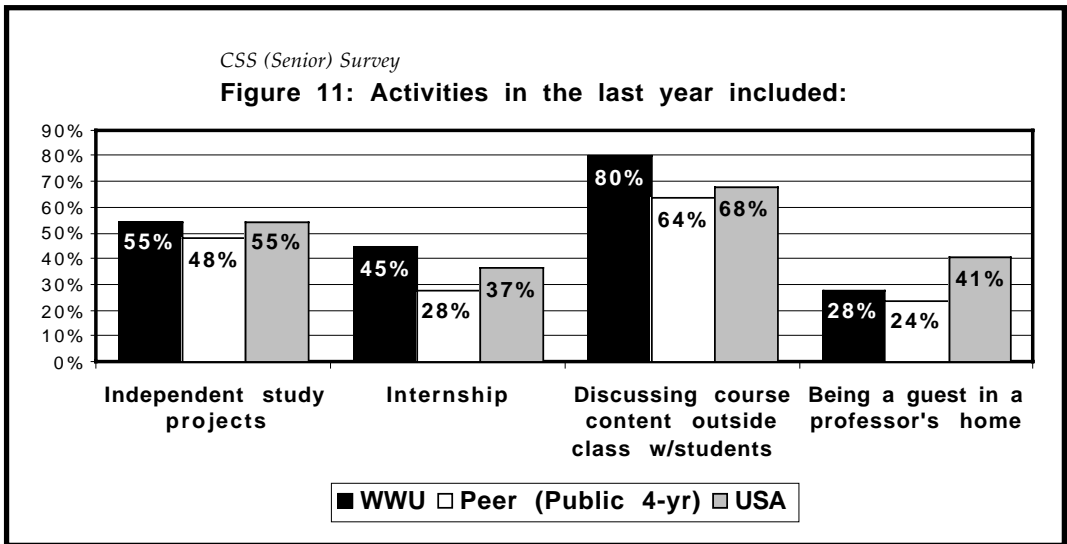
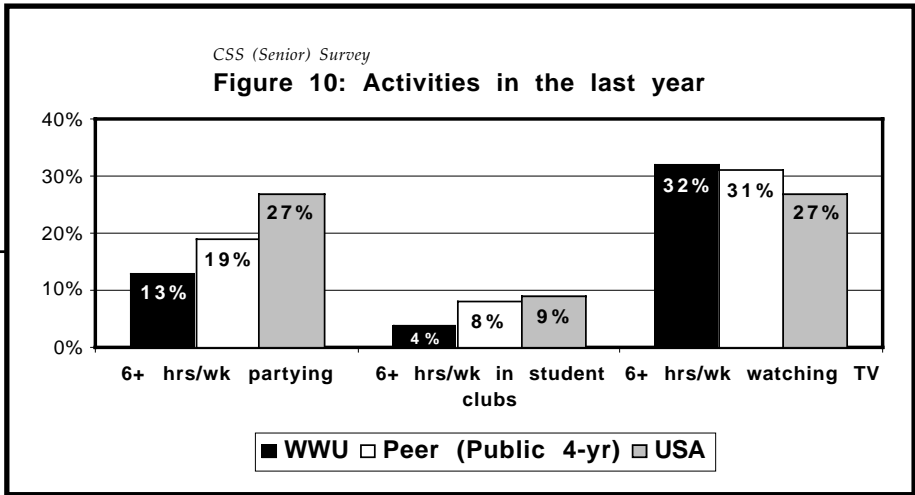
**WWU = 8%**  
**PEERS = 16%**  
**USA = 14%**

**WESTERN SENIORS HOLD DIFFERENT OPINIONS REGARDING RACIAL ISSUES**

SURVEY RESPONDENT AGREES THAT "AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN COLLEGE ADMISSIONS SHOULD BE ABOLISHED":

**WWU = 42%**  
**PEERS = 47%**  
**USA = 49%**

**WESTERN SENIORS PARTIED LESS, WATCHED TV ABOUT THE SAME**



**OTHER WESTERN SENIOR ACTIVITIES**

WESTERN SENIORS SPENT LESS TIME TALKING WITH FACULTY OUTSIDE CLASS THAN DID PEERS OR CSS RESPONDENTS OVERALL (3 OR MORE HOURS PER WEEK)

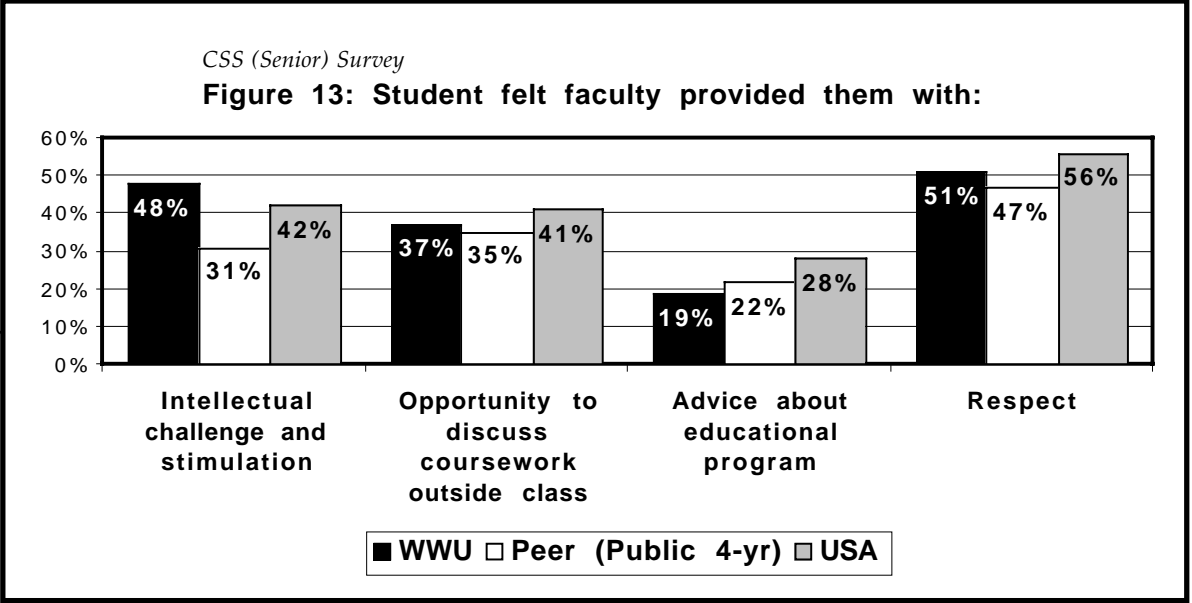
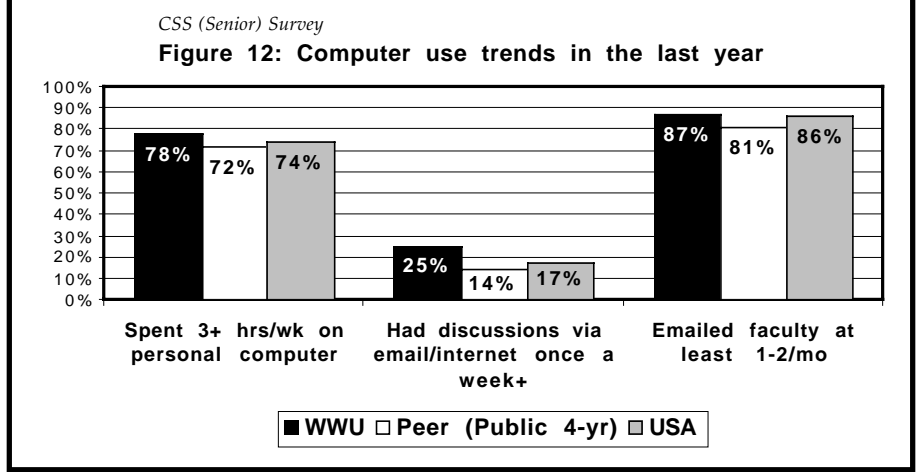
**WWU = 8%**  
**Peers = 10%**  
**USA = 14%**

WESTERN SENIORS WERE LESS LIKELY TO BE SATISFIED WITH LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES THAN WERE PEERS OR CSS RESPONDENTS OVERALL

**WWU = 44%**  
**Peers = 50%**  
**USA = 64%**

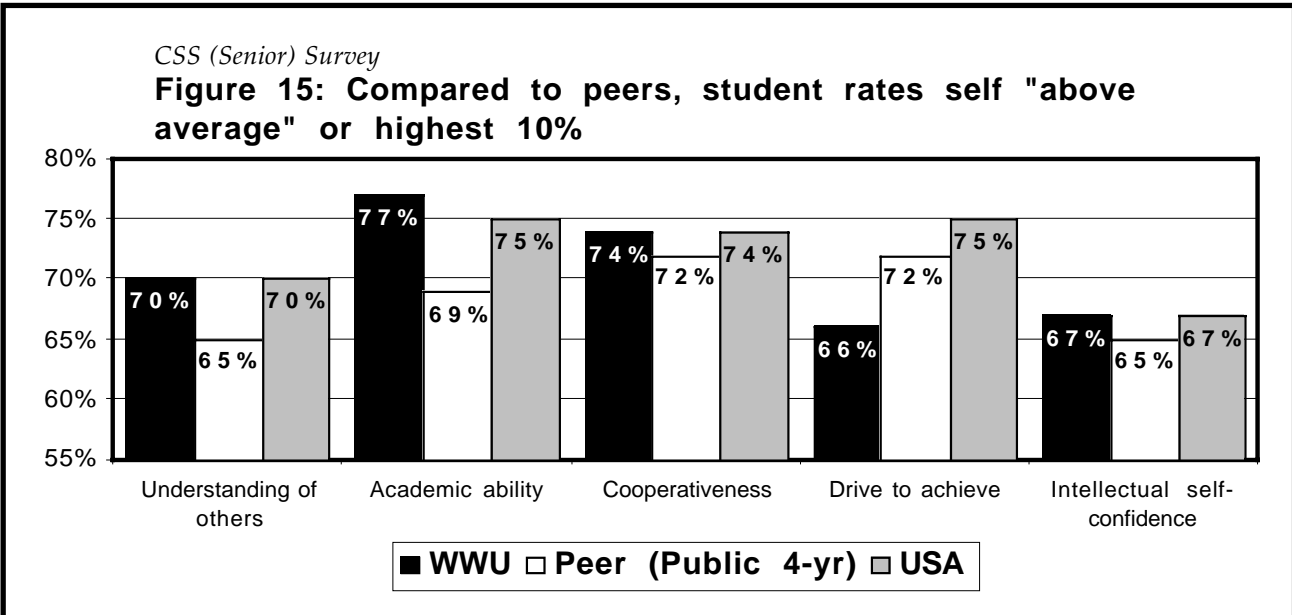
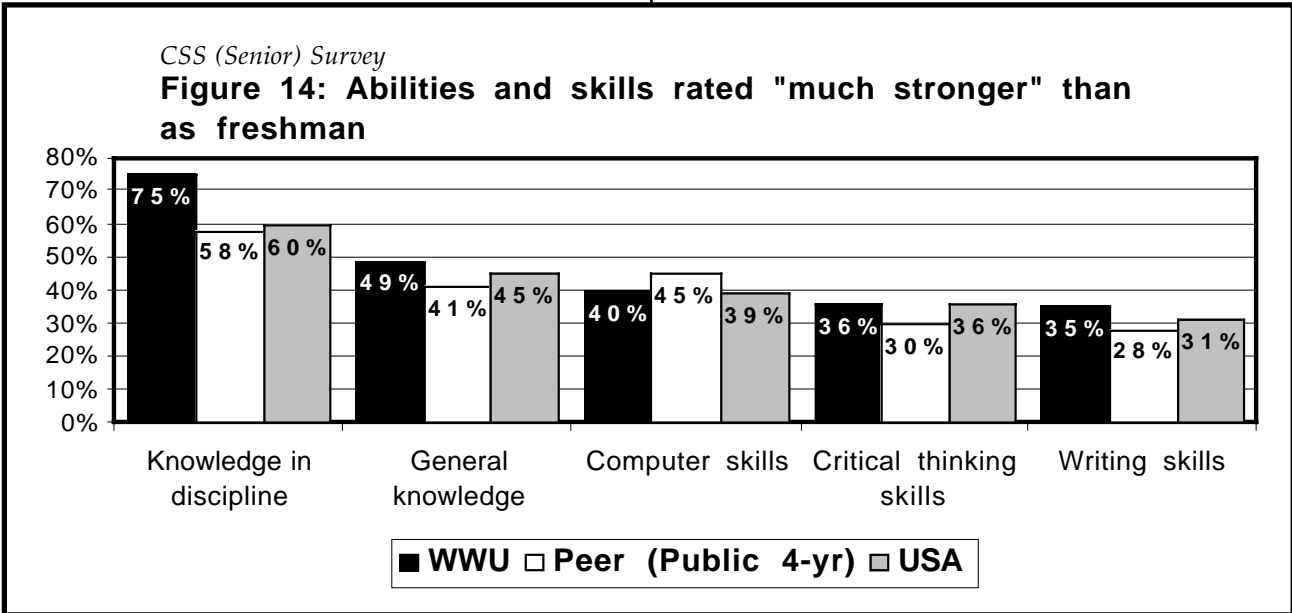
<p><b>MOST SURVEY</b> PARTICIPANTS USED THE INTERNET FOR RESEARCH OR HOMEWORK (AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK IN THE PAST YEAR)</p> <hr/> <p><b>WWU = 82%</b> <b>Peers = 78%</b> <b>USA = 79%</b></p>	<p><b>WESTERN SENIORS AND COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY</b></p>	<p><b>WESTERN SURVEY</b> RESPONDENTS WERE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE RECEIVED COURSE ASSIGNMENTS VIA THE INTERNET</p> <hr/> <p><b>WWU = 74%</b> <b>Peers = 66%</b> <b>USA = 67%</b></p>
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**SENIORS RESPECTED, CHALLENGED BY FACULTY**





**WESTERN SENIORS REPORT  
IMPROVED SKILLS**



**WESTERN SENIORS RATE THEIR  
SKILLS**

**WESTERN SENIORS  
REPORT MAJOR**

TABLE 1: REPORTED MAJOR

	Males	Females	Total
Biological Science	10%	8%	8%
Business	18%	12%	14%
Education	6%	21%	17%
Engineering	5%	>1%	2%
English	4%	7%	6%
History or Political Science	12%	6%	8%
Humanities	5%	8%	7%
Fine Arts	4%	5%	4%
Mathematics	2%	>1%	1%
Physical Science	8%	2%	4%
Social Science	15%	21%	19%
Other	10%	8%	9%

**WESTERN SENIORS  
REPORT CAREER**

TABLE 1: REPORTED CAREER

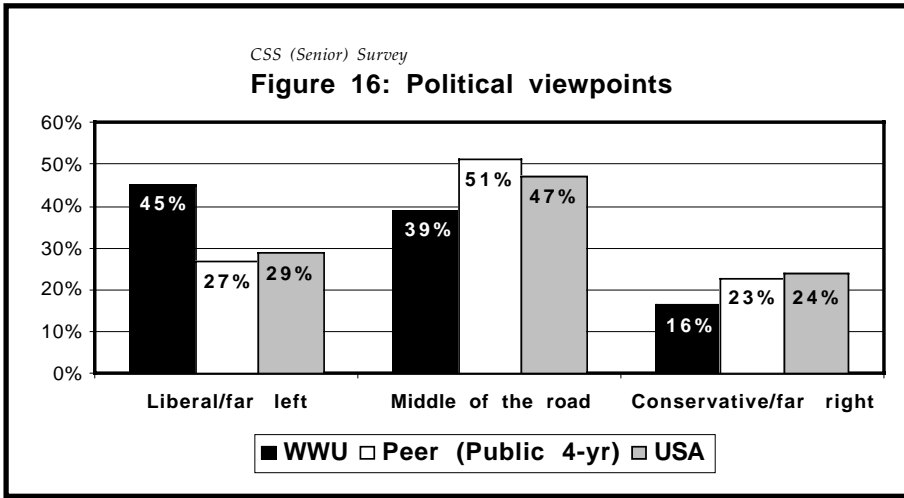
	Males	Females	Total
Artist	7%	7%	7%
Business	19%	13%	14%
Clergy	1%	>1%	1%
College Teacher	3%	3%	3%
Doctor	2%	1%	1%
Education	10%	26%	22%
Engineer	6%	1%	2%
Health professional	2%	3%	3%
Lawyer	5%	2%	3%
Research Scientist	8%	5%	6%
Social or recreation worker	>1%	9%	6%
Other	23%	20%	21%

**WESTERN SENIORS WOULD ENROLL AT WESTERN AGAIN**

TABLE 3: WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ENROLL AT YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL AGAIN?

	WWU	Peers (4-yr public)	USA
Yes	84%	80%	80%
No	13%	16%	16%
Don't Know	3%	4%	4%

*Over three-quarters (78%) of Western's graduating seniors plan on earning a post-graduate degree.*



**WESTERN SENIORS POLITICALLY MORE LIBERAL**

WESTERN SENIORS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE DISCUSSED POLITICS:

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**WWU = 23%**  
**Peers = 12%**  
**USA = 14%**

WESTERN SENIORS MORE LIKELY TO FEEL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOT DOING ENOUGH TO CONTROL POLLUTION

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**WWU = 43%**  
**Peers = 38%**  
**USA = 41%**

WESTERN SENIORS MORE LIKELY TO HAVE VOTED IN A STATE OR NATIONAL ELECTION

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**WWU = 76%**  
**Peers = 52%**  
**USA = 49%**

TABLE 4: STUDENT AGREES STRONGLY OR SOMEWHAT

	WWU	Peers (4-yr public)	USA
Abortion should be legal	75%	61%	59%
Marijuana should be legalized	54%	38%	37%
It is important to have laws prohibiting homosexual relationships	12%	25%	24%
Racial discrimination is no longer a problem in America	8%	16%	14%
Activities of married women are best confined to the home and family	9%	18%	18%

**TABLE 5: ACTIVITIES NOTED AS "VERY SATISFACTORY"  
OR "SATISFACTORY"**

	<b>Western</b>	<b>Peers (Public 4- year)</b>	<b>USA</b>
Courses in major field	88%	84%	86%
Overall college experience	83%	79%	83%
Overall quality of instruction	79%	75%	82%
Computer facilities	72%	71%	64%
Lab facilities and equipment	71%	61%	59%
Social science courses	69%	60%	70%
Amount of contact with faculty	69%	68%	77%
Humanities courses	67%	60%	70%
General Education	62%	65%	77%
Class size	62%	73%	82%
Ability to find faculty or staff member	61%	63%	74%
Campus health services	54%	60%	50%
Science and mathematics courses	52%	62%	62%
Recreational facilities	52%	61%	61%
Financial aid services	51%	56%	53%
Student housing	48%	43%	51%
Tutorial or other academic assistance	43%	46%	54%
Sense of community on campus	42%	44%	56%
Quality of computer training/assistance	40%	50%	45%
Academic advising	38%	51%	57%
Career counseling and advising	38%	46%	50%

### AFTERWORD AND SUMMARY

When reviewing these findings, it is important to keep in mind who the survey participants were: Western students who had applied for graduation in 2000, beginning in the winter quarter, 2000, and ending in the fall quarter, 2000—in other words, not the usual fall-to-summer academic year, but the actual year, 2000. This differs from many research cohorts. Graduation rates, for instance, are based on fall-to-fall cohorts, thus encompassing months in two different years. Furthermore, the female-to-male ratio of survey respondents was more predominately female than the actual ratio of graduates (71% female/29% male survey respondents vs. 59% female/41% male graduates).

Western's survey respondents differed also from the national cohort. Western's cohort was slightly older, were more likely to be transfers, and were more likely to list their ethnicity as "White". Partially, these differences were due to how Western began administering the CSS in 1999. In prior years, it was more common among schools using the CSS to administer the survey to seniors, whether they were on the verge or graduating or not. Indeed, Western used this methodology, too. (In fact, prior to 1999 Western only administered the CSS to seniors who had previously taken the in-coming freshman survey, so transfers were nonexistent in the cohorts.) There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the previous methodology, except that the numbers of completed forms received was small. Using the larger numbers that a year-long survey administration will garner, Western researchers hope eventually to report at least to the college level. Currently, administrations in 1999 and 2000 have received close to 2,000 completed CSS surveys.

Also important to note was the small number of participating schools within Western's classification: public 4-year colleges. (For research purposes, HERI makes a distinction between colleges—no Ph.D.'s granted—and universities.) There were only ten public 4-year colleges out of 145 participants; in fact, 90% of participating schools were private colleges and universities, most of those with Catholic or protestant church affiliations.

To summarize the findings, Western's 2000 CSS survey participants have at least one strong common connection: they are all succeeders, our best students, the ones who "made it." Therefore, it comes as no surprise that they came to Western with good study habits, and studied hard while they were here. They did not party as often as their national peers, and were more likely to have worked outside jobs. These students generally felt respected and challenged by their professors, and were adept at the new computer technologies. Although certain services (notably academic advising) and certain conditions (the sense of community on campus) were rated lower by Western seniors than their peers nationally, most Western seniors (84%) said that if they had it to do over again, they would still choose to enroll at Western.



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