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A Profile of the 1995 Western Washington University Graduating Class

Prepared by Gary McKinney, Joseph E. Trimble, and Jacquie M. Andrieu-Parker

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Information for this report was obtained from the Student Tracking System, jointly maintained by the Registrar's Office and the Office of Institutional Assessment and Testing. The report presents information intended to provide insight into the various characteristics of 1995 Western Washington University graduates (academic year: Fall Quarter, 1994, through Summer quarter, 1995).

Western graduated 2251 students in 1995, its largest graduating class on record. Other than its size, however, there was little demographic difference between the class of 1995 and other recent classes. There was essentially the same ratio of males and females, as well as transfers and natives (students who entered Western as first-time freshmen) as

there has been in recent years. The overall average Western gpa was nearly identical to last year's (3.14 in 1995 vs. 3.15 in 1994), though in the last two years the average gpa has been higher by at least at least a full half-point than any average gpa

on record going back to 1981. The average number of quarters a native student attended Western was 14.4; the average number of quarters a transfer students attended Western was 9.1. Both these figures were nearly identical to those found in 1994.

THE MOST DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE 1995 GRADUATING CLASS AND OTHER RECENT CLASSES WAS THAT 10.1% OF 1995 GRADUATES WERE ETHNIC-MINORITIES, THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE ON RECORD.

However slight, there were a few changes to note: a) the percentage of students repeating courses fell again, from 14.3% in 1994 to 13.9% in 1995; b) the percentage of students aged 21 to 24 years fell again, from 61.1% in 1994 to 59.3% in 1995; and c) the number of graduates who had participated in varsity athletics fell from 120 in 1994 to 94 in 1995.



WESTERN
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

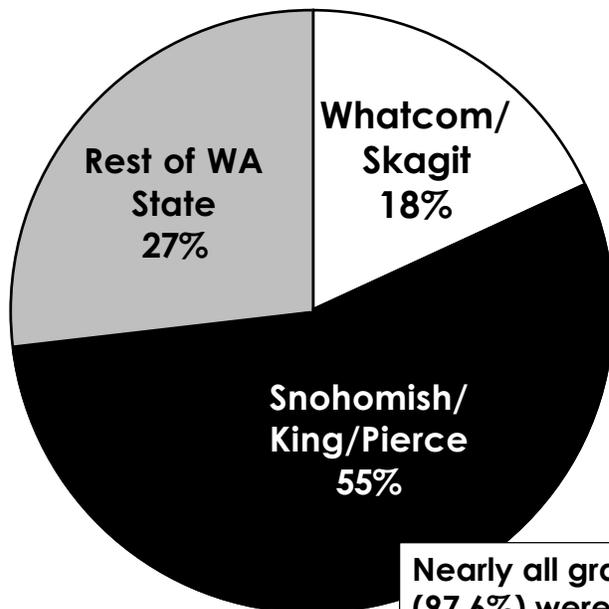
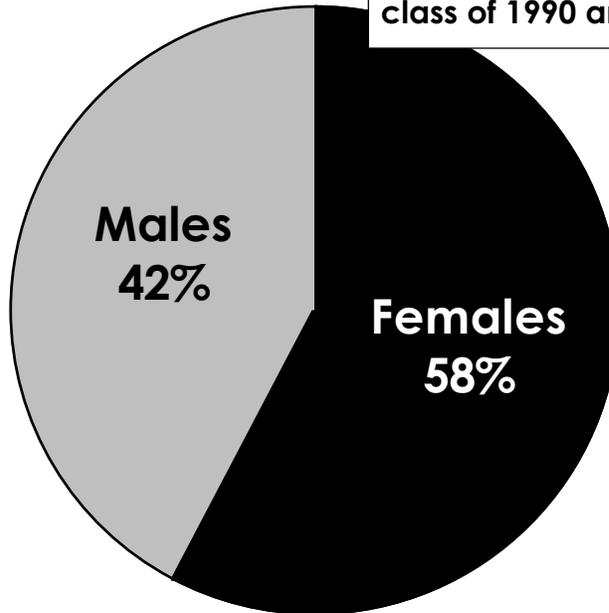
Student Information

Stats

Charts

Western had 2251 graduates in 1995, up from 2100 in 1994. A majority (81.9%) began attending classes traditionally--during a fall quarter (most often the fall quarters of 1990 and 1991). Yet less than half (48.1%) graduated traditionally--during a spring quarter. Instead, students graduated in quarters other than spring, including winter (19.9%), fall (18.4%), and summer (13.7%). There were 25 graduates from foreign countries.

The gender ratio for graduates was nearly identical to the gender ratio of the freshmen class of 1990 and 1991.



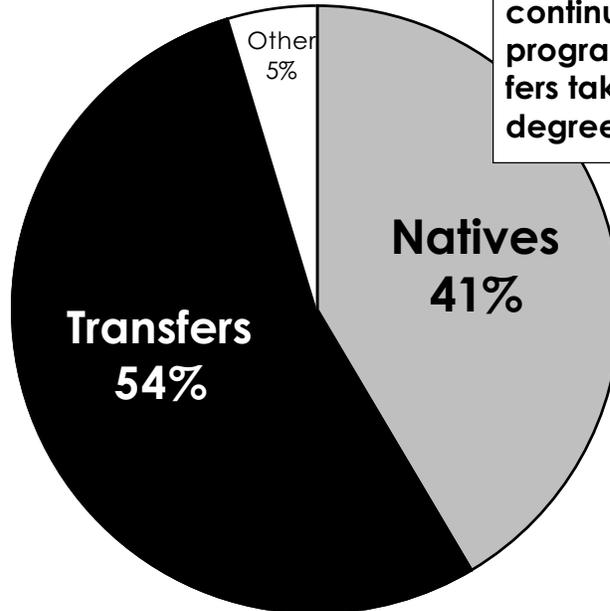
Nearly all graduates (97.6%) were Washington residents. County breakdowns are as shown.

Student Information

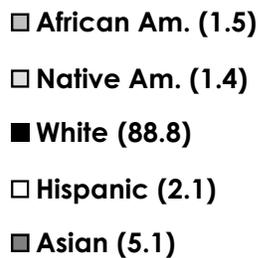
Stats

Charts

The youngest 1995 graduate was 19; the oldest was 59. Most graduates were between the ages of 21 to 24 (59.3%). Fewer were between 25-29 years old (24.1%), 30-39 years old (9.9%), and 40+ years old (6.7%). There were 190 graduates (8.4%) who listed a parent as a Western alumni. There were 76 veterans graduating, as well as 62 graduates listing disabilities.



Admit status "Other" includes such cases as graduates initially enrolled through continuing education programs and transfers taking second degrees.



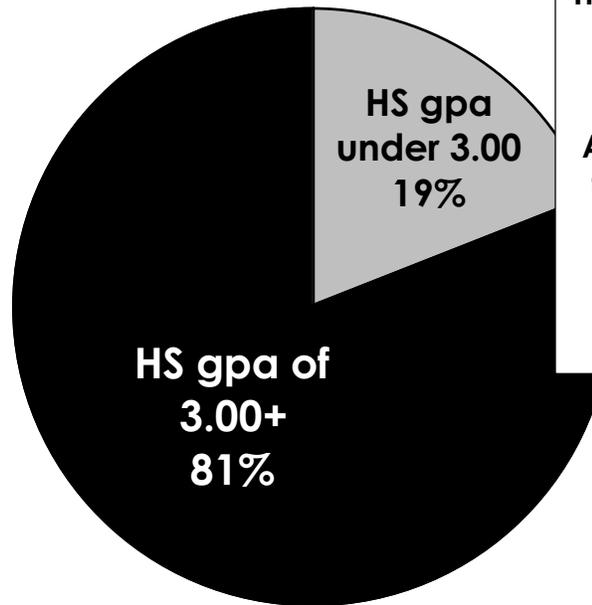
Some graduates chose not to list their ethnicity (3.8%).

Academic Preparation

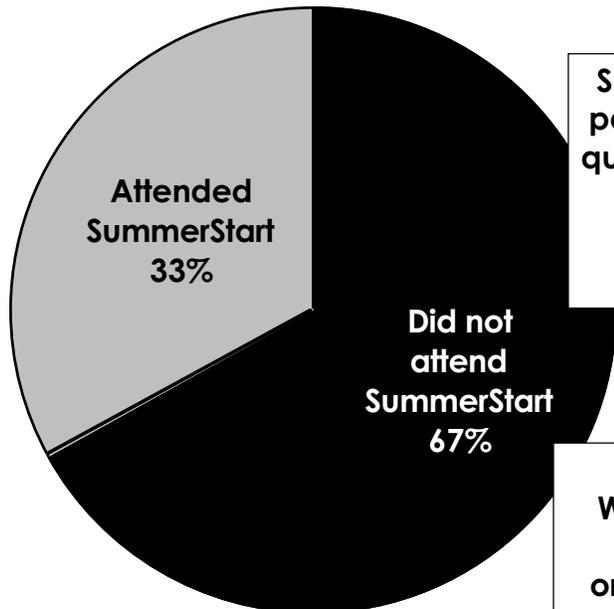
Stats

Charts

When noting the high school (HS) grade point averages (gpa's) of graduates, it should be kept in mind that most cases are for native students (76.4%). Transfer students with AA degrees do not need to include either their pre-college test scores or their HS gpa's in their admissions packages. The average high school gpa for 1995 grads was 3.34; the median SAT-Composite score was 1080.



The average HS gpa for females was 3.39, and for males 3.27. The median Academic Index (a formula combining SAT and HS gpa used statewide for admissions placement) was 57.



Summerstart participants averaged 14.6 quarters to graduate. Non-participants averaged 15.5 quarters.

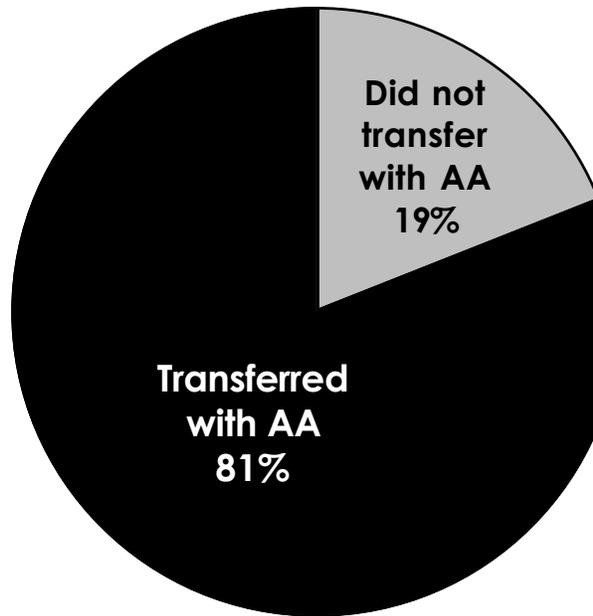
SummerStart is Western's traditional freshmen summer orientation program. Transitions, a summer orientation for transfers, was inaugurated in July of 1994.

Transfer Characteristics

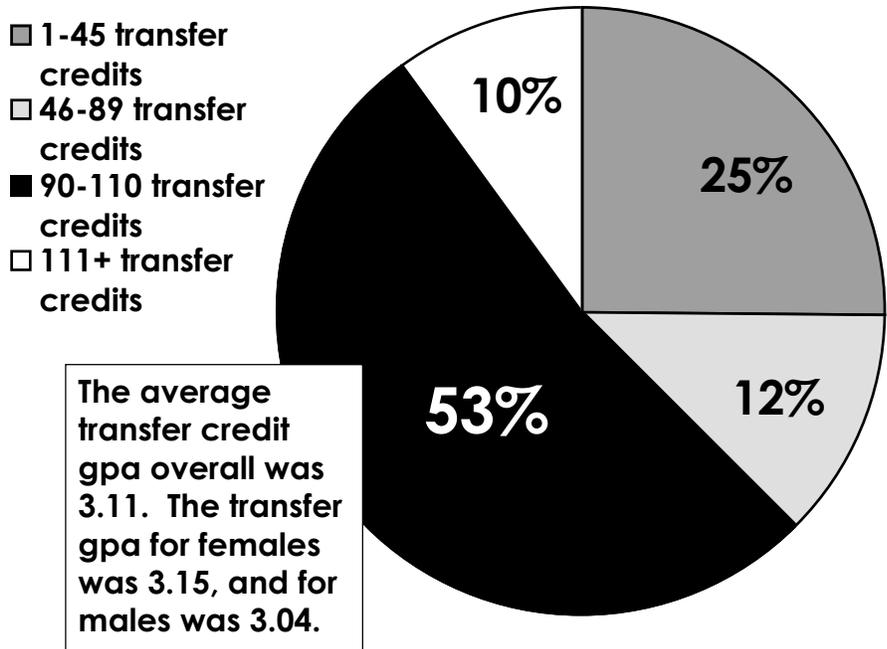
Stats

Charts

Over three-quarters of all 1995 graduates had transfer credits (76.0%), indicating that 53.4% of all native graduates had taken at least one course at an institution other than Western. In other words, the chances were about 50/50 that a first-time, incoming native student would actually earn all their academic credits at Western.



For graduates with transfer credits, those aged 23-24 transferred, on average, 86 credits, while those aged 30 to 39 transferred 96 credits, and those aged 40 and older transferred 98 credits.



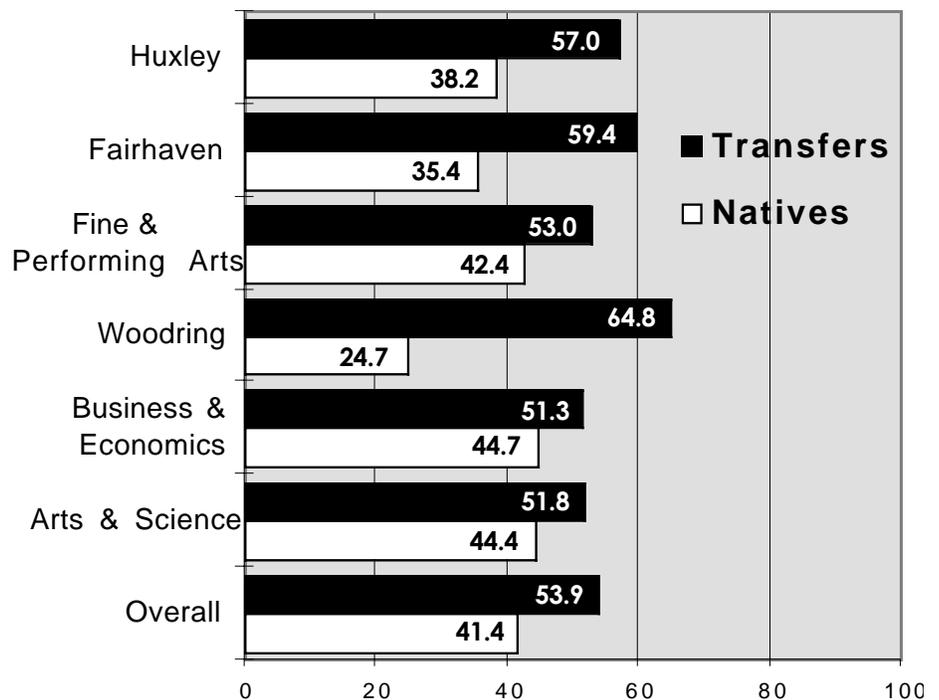
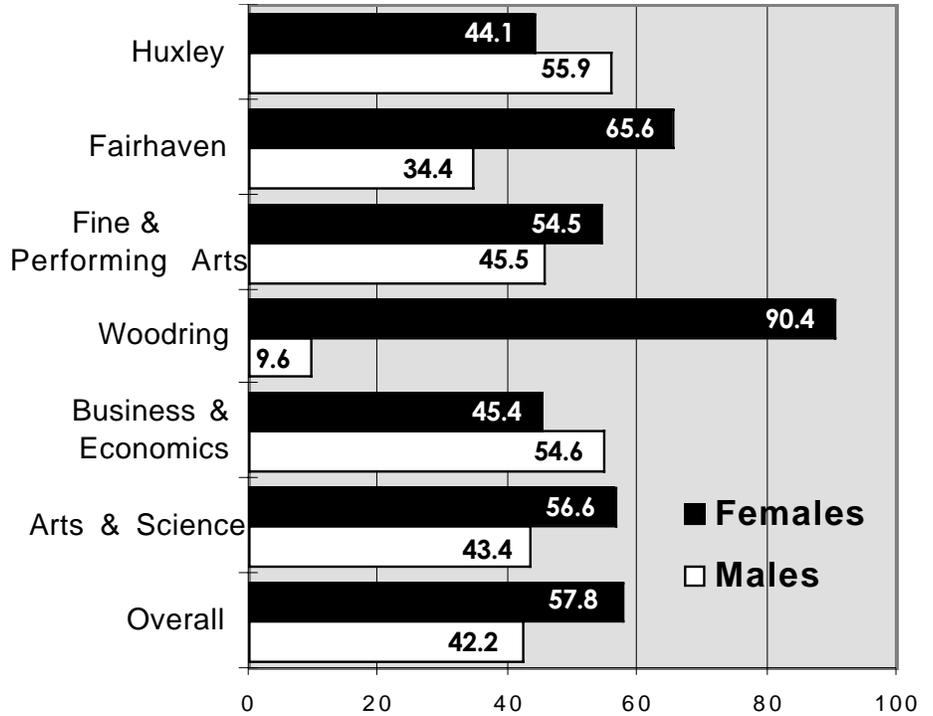
The average transfer credit gpa overall was 3.11. The transfer gpa for females was 3.15, and for males was 3.04.

College of Graduation

Stats

Charts

The college of matriculation for most 1995 graduates was Arts & Sciences (58.1%), followed by Business & Economics (13.4%), Woodring (10.1%), Huxley (8.3%), Fine & Performing Arts (5.9%), and Fairhaven (4.3%). Compared to 1994, figures for Huxley College are up (from 6.2%), while figures for the College of Business & Economics are down (from 15.3%). Other figures are about the same as in 1994.



Credits and Quarters

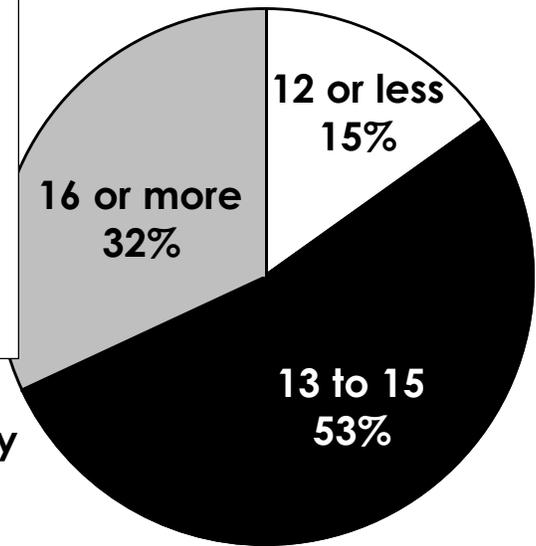
Stats

Charts

Though reporting the average number of college credits earned by graduates is popular (203), a more accurate statistic is the median, or most frequent number of credits earned (194). The most number of credits earned by a 1995 graduate was 328. Overall, the typical native attended Western for a little less than five years, while the typical transfer attended Western for about three years.

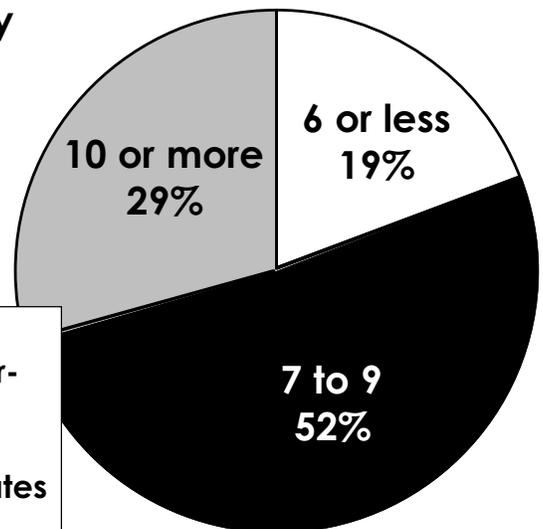
Natives without transfer credits are also called "pure" natives. For the entire population of native students the average number of quarters attended Western was 14.4.

Quarters at WWU by Natives without transfer credits



Quarters at WWU by Transfers with AA degrees

The average number of quarters attended Western by all transfer graduates was 9.1.

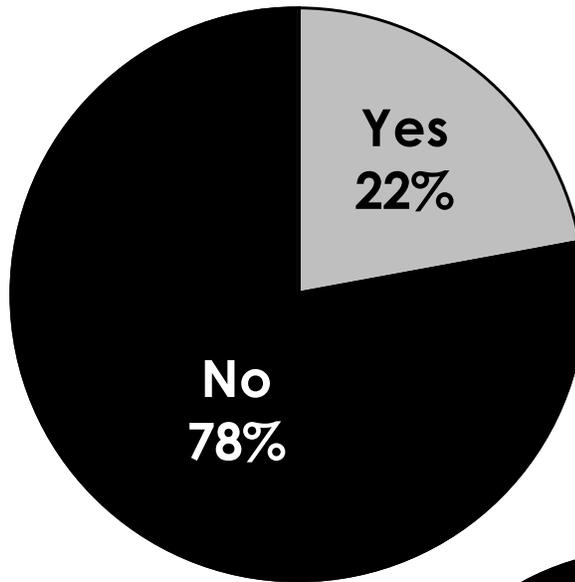


Time to Degree Issues

Stats

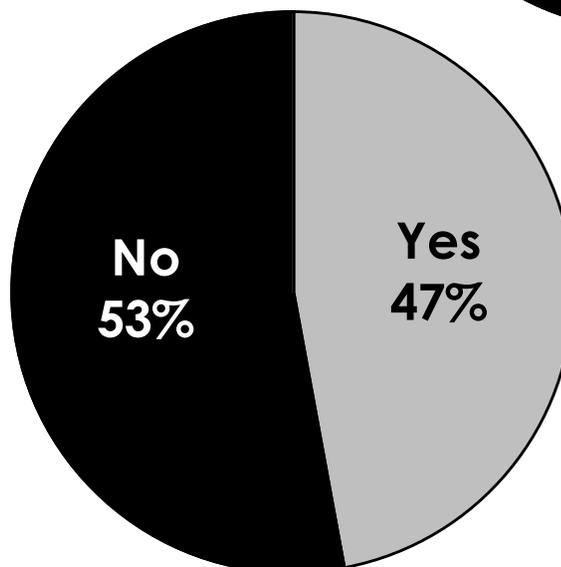
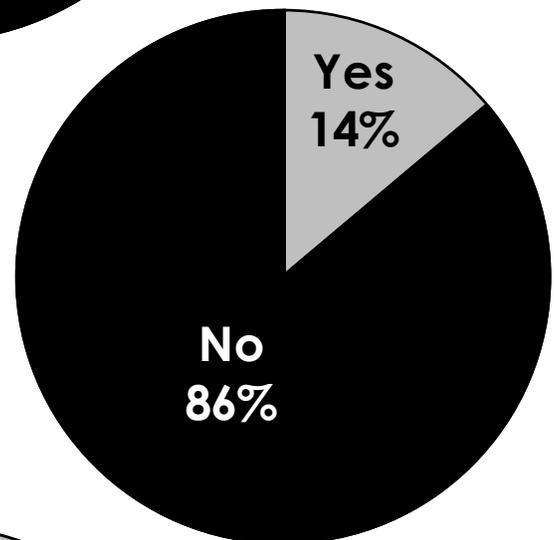
Charts

The median number of quarters missed by 1995 graduates was two. The most number of quarters missed was 32. The median number of courses repeated by 1995 graduates was one. The most number of courses repeated was five. The median number of courses dropped by 1995 graduates was one. The most number of courses dropped was seven.



Missed a quarter or more

Repeated at least one course



Dropped at least one course

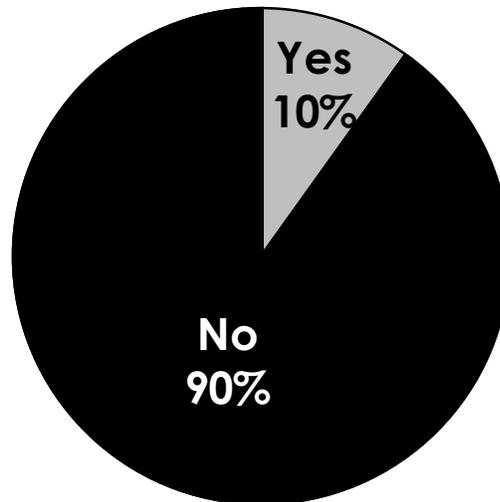
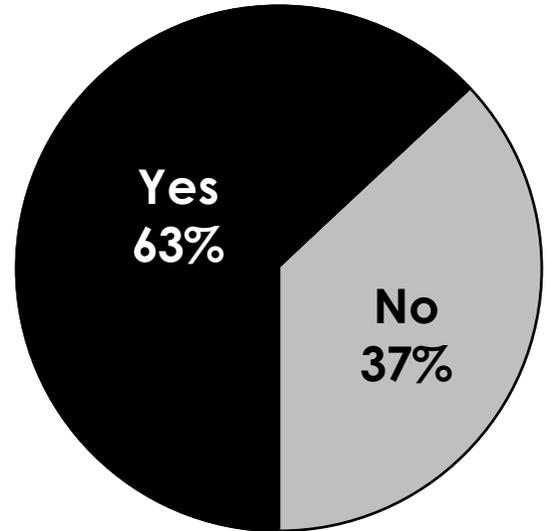
Academic Performance

Stats

Charts

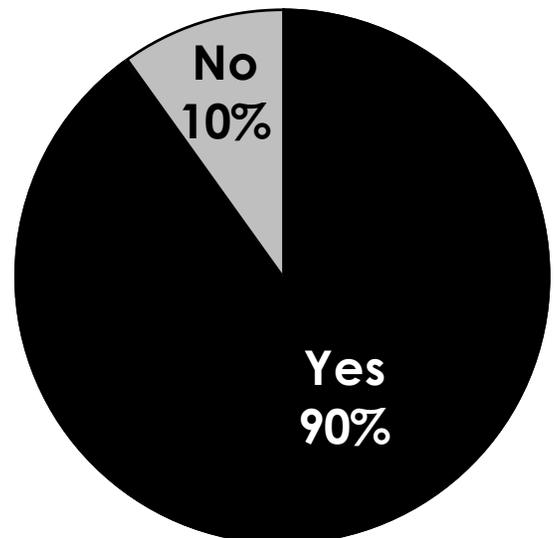
The average Western gpa earned by 1995 graduates was 3.14. The average Western gpa earned by males was 3.03; the average Western gpa earned by females was 3.22. Not yet all graduates are required to pass the Junior Writing Exam (JWE)--only 61.8%. Prior to the fall, 1991, students only had to take the JWE. Yet 95.1% passed the objective section; while 91.1% passed the essay section.

Earned a 3.00 or better Western gpa



Earned Honors

Passed JWE essay

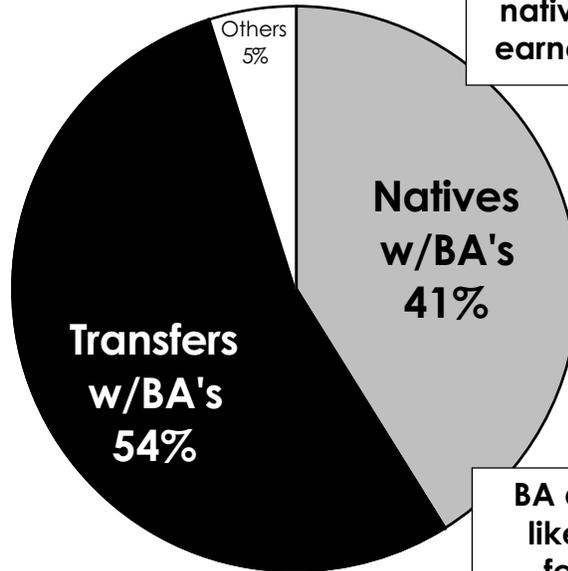


Degrees Conferred

Stats

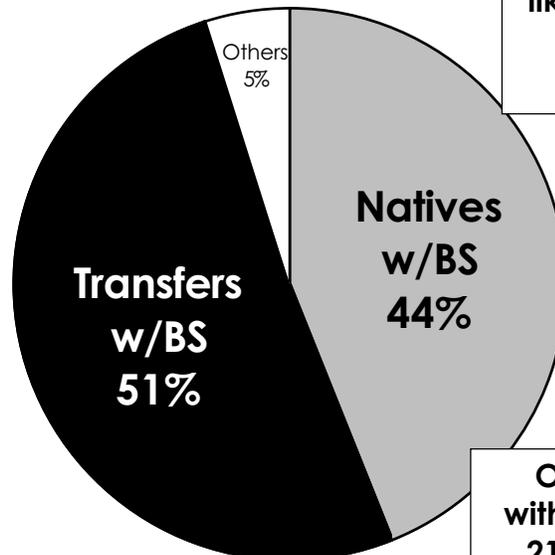
Charts

Most 1995 Western graduates earned BA degrees (68.0%), followed by BS degrees (19.0%), and BA/Ed. degrees (12.5%). A few graduates earned either BFA (0.1%) or B/Mus (0.4%). Although transfers were more likely than natives to have earned BA/Ed. degrees (54.8% of all BA/Ed. degrees were awarded to transfers), in all other degrees areas, percentages were relatively equal.



On average, transfers with BA degrees earned 196 total credits, while natives with BA degrees earned 192 total credits.

BA degrees were more likely to be earned by females (59.1%) than males (40.9%)



BS degrees were more likely to be earned by males (63.0%) than females (37.0%)

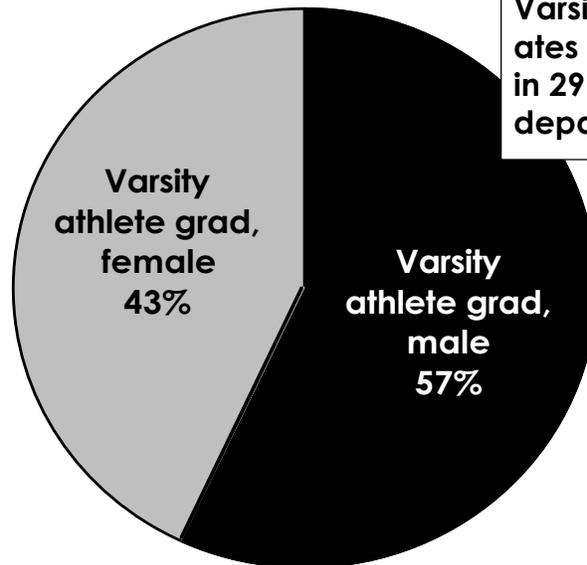
On average, transfers with BS degrees earned 217 total credits, while natives with BS degrees earned 208 total credits

Graduating Athletes

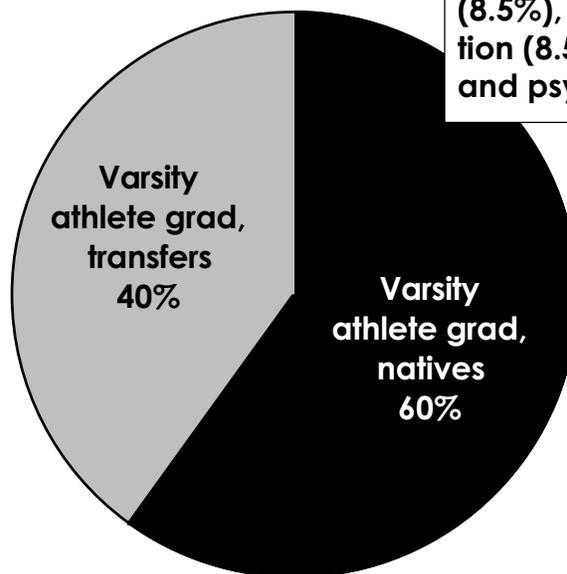
Stats

Charts

There were 94 graduates in 1995 who had participated in varsity athletics. Crew participants comprised the highest percentage of graduates (24.5%), followed by track (18.1%), cross-country (11.7%), football (10.6%), and soccer (9.6%). Student athletes earned a Western gpa of 3.02. Seven graduating varsity athletes earned academic honors.



Varsity athlete graduates earned degrees in 29 of Western's 45 departments.



Popular majors for athletes included recreation (9.6%), English (8.5%), physical education (8.5%), art (7.4%), and psychology (7.4%).

PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Several analyses yielded interesting findings. Analysis by statistical correlation indicated that the variable with the strongest positive correlation with Western gpa was the Academic Index ($r = .591$, $P = .000$). The Academic Index (AI) is a mathematical formula that combines high school gpa and pre-college test scores (for example, the SAT and ACT) into one figure. It is utilized statewide and has a scale of 0-100. The average AI for 1996 Western graduates was 55.6. The strong positive correlation between the AI and Western gpa indicates that the AI is a reliable predictor of academic success at Western, using Western gpa as the criterion of that success.

However, because a relatively few transfers include the AI, high school gpa, or pre-college test scores as part of their records, transfer gpa was also included in the test of statistical correlation. Though not as strong a predictor as the AI, transfer gpa indicated a modest to strong correlation with Western gpa ($r = .440$, $P = .000$).

Multiple regression analyses on selected variables also were performed. This statistic helps to indicate which of a number of variables can predict what the score on a dependent variable (in this case Western gpa) might be. This test was performed on so-called “pure natives,” those students who had entered Western as freshmen and not taken any transfer credits. Statistically, this cohort offered the most in-depth analysis (all their credits were taken at Western, and the Academic Index, high school gpa’s and pre-college test scores were included in their records). For “pure natives,” regression analyses indicated that $R^2 = .326$ for the Academic Index as an independent variable affecting the dependent variable “Western gpa.” In other words, 32.6% of the variance in Western gpa could be explained by knowing the Academic Index of the “pure native” cohort.

If a variable was needed that might help predict how well an in-coming freshman might perform at Western, using Western gpa as the criterion for academic success, the best one available currently would be the Academic Index. In the case of transfer students, for whom the AI is not always available, transfer gpa might serve as a decent alternative.

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Dr. Joseph E. Trimble, Director

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