

BRIEF: Profiles of Graduating Seniors: Differences Between Those Who Entered as Freshmen and Those Who Entered as Transfers

The Office of Institutional Analysis surveys graduating seniors every semester via an on-line survey linked to MyUB and the Senior Celebration home page. Analyses presented here compare the experiences of graduating seniors who first entered the university as freshmen to those who first entered as transfers. The data are taken from the responses of students graduating at the end of the Spring 2007 semester.

Survey Response and Representation

Of the 2,617 students who, as of July 5, 2007, either received degrees or remained candidates for Spring degree conferral, 914 completed the survey (34.9%)¹. Respondents, as compared to the full pool of graduates, are more likely to be female (57.2% vs. 48.4%) and to graduate with higher grades (3.23 vs. 3.12) but are less likely to be under-represented minorities (8.9% vs. 9.7%). Thus, data were weighted according to these three variables to better approximate the responses of all graduates.

Demographic and Educational Characteristics of Graduates

Over two thirds of the graduates entered UB as freshmen (69.1%), and have completed, on average, 133 credit hours. Those who entered as transfers (30.9%) have completed, on average, 76 credit hours at UB. These percentages of graduates entering as freshmen and transfers mirror the percentages seen among entering undergraduate students 4, 5, and 6 years earlier. Table 1 shows the comparisons of the two groups in terms of demographic and educational characteristics. Statistical tests reveal that the two groups differ on several key characteristics. Those who entered as freshmen are younger when they graduate. Those who entered as transfers are more likely to be from Western New York and less likely to be from Eastern New York and the Metropolitan New York City area. In terms of major, both groups are equally likely to complete degrees in the College of Arts and Sciences, while those who entered as freshmen are more likely to complete degrees in the areas of Architecture and Planning, Engineering, Public Health, and combined degree programs. Those who enter as transfers are more likely to complete degrees in Management and the health sciences (Medicine, Nursing, and Pharmacy).

Of those students who entered as freshmen, 76.0% are graduating within 4 years. Most who entered UB as transfer students (73.8%) are graduating within 3 years². From the survey data, we can not determine how many semesters these transfer students were enrolled. However, 61.8% of them (as compared to 34.2% of those entering as freshmen) report needing more than 8 semesters to finish their baccalaureate degree programs, a statistically significant difference. For both groups, changing major is the most frequently cited reason for needing more time. The need to repeat courses is also a barrier for those entering as freshmen (45.7%). For those who entered as transfers, additional barriers are related to the transfer of credit, family obligations, and employment (38.9%, 35.5%, and 30.8%, respectively).

Table 1: Demographic and Educational Characteristics of UB Graduates, June 2007

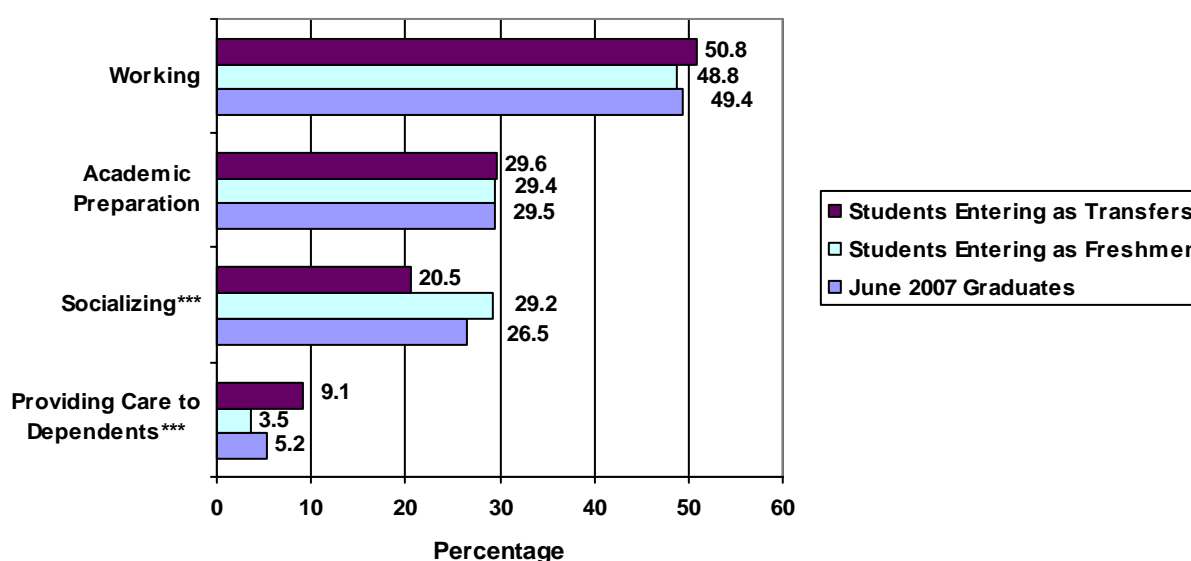
	All Respondents (N=914)	Those Who Entered as Freshmen (N=632)	Those Who Entered as Transfers (N=282)
Demographic Variables			
Age (Mean) ***	23	21	25
Female (%)	48.4	48.6	47.9
Geographic Region of Origin			
Western New York (%) **	45.4	40.0	57.3
Central New York (%)	23.9	24.6	22.4
Eastern New York (%) ***	7.3	7.9	5.9
Metropolitan New York Area (%) ***	20.8	24.8	11.6
Out of State (%)	2.7	2.6	2.7
Race/Ethnicity			
White (%) **	65.8	68.0	60.9
African American (%) ***	7.3	7.5	6.8
Asian/Pacific Islander (%) ***	8.0	8.6	6.8
Hispanic or Puerto Rican (%) ***	4.1	4.4	3.5
Native American (%) ***	0.5	0.3	1.0
Other/Unknown (%) ***	14.3	11.3	21.1
U.S. Citizens (%) ***	88.5	91.0	83.0
Entering Characteristics			
High School Average (mean)	---	91	---
SAT – Math (mean)	---	580	---
SAT – Verbal (mean)	---	550	---
Entering Cumulative QPA	---	---	3.12
UB Status			
Credit Hours Completed at UB (mean) ***	115	133	75
Cumulative UB QPA (mean)	3.17	3.18	3.16
Educational Opportunity Program (%) ***	3.5	4.4	1.4
Honors Student (%) ***	25.5	36.7	0.4
School/College of Primary Major			
Architecture and Planning (%) ***	2.8	3.5	1.2
Arts and Sciences (%)	55.8	55.7	56.7
Engineering and Applied Sciences (%) ***	16.0	17.1	13.7
Management (%) ***	15.2	14.5	16.7
Medicine and Biomedical Sciences (%) ***	4.6	4.2	5.6
Nursing (%) ***	2.1	1.3	4.0
Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (%) ***	0.3	0.0	0.8
Public Health (%) ***	2.4	2.9	1.4
Combined Degree Programs/Other (%) ***	0.8	0.9	0.6
Years to Graduation			
Graduated within 2 years (%) ***	10.9	0.4	34.4
Graduated within 3 years (%) ***	25.6	2.9	76.4
Graduated within 4 years (%) ***	81.4	77.2	91.0
Graduated within 5 years (%)	94.7	94.8	94.4
Graduated within 6 years (%)	97.0	97.6	95.9

Note: *** Indicates a statistically significant difference between those who entered UB as freshmen and those who entered as transfers.

Time Allocation During the Last Year of Enrollment

Activities which occupied students more than 16 hours per week during their last year at UB are shown in Figure 1. Many students spent more hours working each week than they spent on academic activities. Over three-quarters of the students worked in their last year (78.4%), with 20.5% holding jobs both on- and off-campus. In addition, nearly half (49.4%) worked 16 or more hours per week. In contrast, only 29.5% report spending 16 or more hours per week on academic preparation. For these two activities, there are no time allocation differences between those who entered as freshmen and those who entered as transfers. However, students who entered UB as freshmen are more likely to report socializing 16 or more hours per week (29.2% vs. 20.5%). In contrast, those who entered as transfers are more likely to report providing care to dependents 16 or more per week (9.1% vs. 3.5%).

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Spending 16 or More Hours Per Week in Various Activities.



Note: *** Indicates a statistically significant difference between those who entered UB as freshmen and those who entered as transfers.

Student Engagement at UB

Table 2 shows participation rates for a variety of activities thought to be indicators of student engagement. There are significant differences for nine of the academic activities. Those who enrolled as freshmen were more likely to engage in academic activities outside of regular class work, such as completing an independent study, serving as a subject in a research project, tutoring another student, being a guest in a faculty member's home, and working on a research project with a faculty member outside of class. In contrast, students who entered UB as transfer students were more likely to engage in academic activities often associated with good study habits. For example, transfers are less likely to report coming late to class, failing to complete homework on time, missing class due to employment, and skipping class.

Regardless of entry status, students were equally likely to have socialized with someone from another racial/ethnic group. However, those who entered as freshmen were much more likely to engage in non-academic activities, such as attending campus activities and events, participating in extracurricular activities or student organizations, and participating in community service or volunteering, suggesting they are more engaged in non-academic aspects of the institution than are those who entered as transfers.

Table 2: Percentage of Students Participating in Engaging Activities

	All Respondents	Those Who Entered as Freshmen	Those Who Entered as Transfers
Academic Activities			
Asked questions in class	94.4	95.1	92.9
Bored in class	90.5	90.9	89.7
Came late to class ***	72.3	77.4	61.0
Completed independent study ***	33.9	36.3	26.3
Contributed to class discussion	95.4	96.2	93.5
Discussed ideas from readings or classes outside of class	93.9	94.6	92.5
Failed to complete homework on time ***	55.6	58.2	49.6
Missed class due to employment ***	40.3	42.9	34.3
Participated in international educational experience	9.7	10.9	7.0
Served as a subject in research project ***	67.5	74.3	52.1
Skipped class ***	85.5	88.1	79.8
Spent significant amounts of time studying and on academic work	88.1	87.2	90.1
Thought critically	98.3	98.9	97.1
Tutored another student ***	62.8	65.7	56.4
Was a guest in a faculty member's home ***	29.5	33.1	21.6
Worked harder than believed possible to meet instructor's expectations	91.0	91.5	90.0
Worked on research project with faculty member outside of class ***	19.9	21.9	15.4
Non-Academic Activities			
Attended Campus Activities and Events ***	89.0	94.0	78.0
Participated in Extracurricular Activities/Student Organizations ***	82.0	88.6	67.1
Performed Community Service or Volunteered ***	77.9	84.7	62.8
Socialized with Someone from Another Racial/Ethnic Group	85.9	86.7	84.0

Note: *** Indicates a statistically significant difference between those who entered UB as freshmen and those who entered as transfers.

Life After UB: Future Plans

Over two-thirds of graduates (69.8% of freshmen, 69.6% of transfers) plan to stay in the state of New York. Of students planning to leave the state, those who entered as freshmen are more likely to plan to stay in the US. Nearly three-quarters of graduates are leaving UB with educational debt, with those who entered as transfer students accumulating the greater debt (see Table 3). Perhaps as a result of this increased debt load, those who entered as transfers are significantly more likely to report plans to enter the work force and less likely to report plans to continue their education. Of all graduates who plan to work following graduation, most (86.8%) intend to work in an area related to their college major, and nearly all (96.1%) plan to work full-time. The median expected starting salary is in the \$30,000-39,999 range.

Table 3: Existing Loan Debt and Future Plans

	All Respondents	Those Who Entered as Freshmen	Those Who Entered as Transfers
Living Location after Graduation			
In New York	69.8	69.8	69.6
In the US outside of New York ***	24.1	25.7	20.6
Outside of the US ***	6.1	4.5	9.7
Educational Loan Debt			
Leaving UB with Educational Debt ***	72.3	70.0	77.7
Median Amount of Debt ***	\$15,000-19,999	\$15,000-19,999	\$20,000-24,999
Post Graduation Plans			
Have Secured or Seeking Employment ***	53.4	50.9	58.9
Continuing Education ***	31.8	33.9	27.3
Median Expected Starting Salary	\$30,000-39,999	\$30,000-39,999	\$30,000-39,999

Note: *** Indicates a statistically significant difference between those who entered UB as freshmen and those who entered as transfers.

Conclusions

Graduates who entered UB as freshmen are quite different from those who entered as transfers. Because of these differences, it is important when describing “typical” graduates to account for status at university entry. Students who enter as freshmen are more likely to be from outside the Western New York area and to be more academically prepared when leaving high school than transfer students (i.e., have higher high school averages and SAT scores). While both groups are equally likely to report spending significant amounts of time working and studying (i.e., at least 16 hours per week), those who entered as freshmen are more likely to report spending 16 or more hours per week socializing. However, they are also more involved in the “extras” important to student engagement: non-classroom academic activities, campus social activities and organizations, and community service, suggesting that those who enter as freshmen are involved in the “full” experience of undergraduate education.

In contrast, those who entered UB as transfers are older when they graduate, and they report significantly greater amounts of educational loan debt. They are more likely to report spending 16 or more hours per week providing care for dependents but report high levels of engagement within academic coursework (e.g., less likely to miss class and more likely to complete assignments). Their survey responses suggest they are most concerned with activities that will lead to successful completion of course requirements.

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¹ Not all students answered every item; thus individual items may have missing data. Frequencies and percentages for individual items are based only on the students who answered the item.

² These percentages should not be interpreted as the percentage of students *within a cohort* who graduate within a specific time frame. For example, on average, 31.9% of freshmen entering within a give year graduate within 4 years; the denominator in this case is the number of entering freshmen. In this brief, we are looking only at those who graduated in Spring 2007, and the denominator is the number of *graduates*. Of those who entered as freshmen *and* graduated in Spring 2007, 76.0% did so within 4 years.