

Research Update

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Profile of the Entering Class of 2008

The entering undergraduate class of Fall 2008 consisted of 4,485 students, including 1,699 first-time freshmen, and 2,729 new transfers. First-time freshmen enrollment increased 9% and new transfer enrollment increased 4% when compared with Fall 2007. Consistent with previous years, new transfers outnumbered first-time freshmen by almost 3 to 2 (i.e., 60% of the entering class were transfers and 40% were new freshmen).

As indicated in Figure 1, most first-time freshmen for Fall 2008 entered directly from high school (68%). Other first-time freshmen transferred fewer than 30 college credits to PSU (29%) or obtained a GED (3%) before enrolling at PSU.

Approximately 74% of first-time freshmen who reported a high school of origin came from an Oregon high school. This percentage is similar to previous years (e.g., 75% for Fall 2007). Of the students coming from an Oregon high school, 74% attended high school in the tri-county area with the highest attendance at Westview, Clackamas, Southridge, David Douglas, and Aloha high schools. It is not unusual for a university to draw heavily from students in its home state. Nationally, 81% of freshmen who graduated from high school in 2004 attended a college in their home state.

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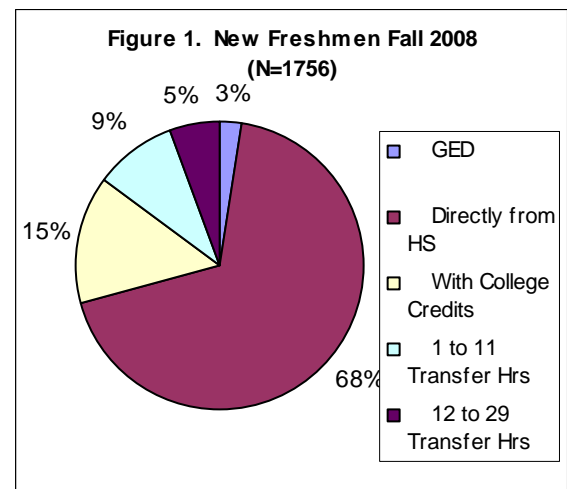
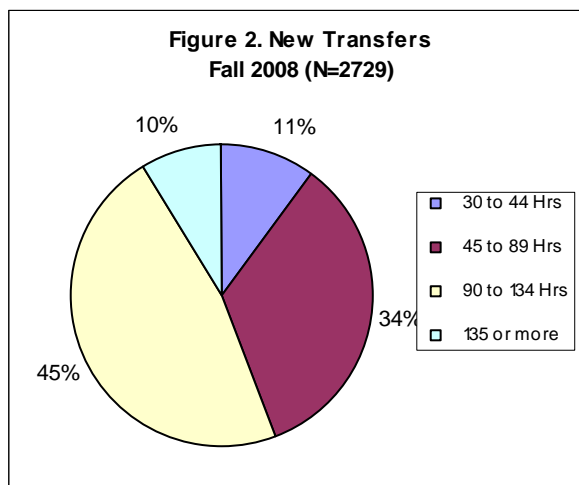


Figure 2 shows that the largest group of new transfers enters Portland State at the junior level (i.e., 45% transferred 90 to 134 credit hours). About one third (34%) enter at the sophomore level (i.e., transferring 45 to 89 credits). These proportions were similar to those in Fall 2007 (45% and 34%, respectively). The majority of transfers come from community colleges (60%) with 42% of those coming from Portland Community College. The number of students transferring from Portland Community College increased 11% over last year. In addition, 21% of transfers come from another university, with 45% of those coming from an OUS university. The largest group (52%) of the OUS transfers come from University of Oregon.



Most (90%) first-time freshmen attended PSU on a full-time basis during Fall 2008, which is an increase over Fall 2007 (82%). More than two-thirds (73%) of new transfer students attended full-time during Fall 2008, an increase from 69% in 2007.

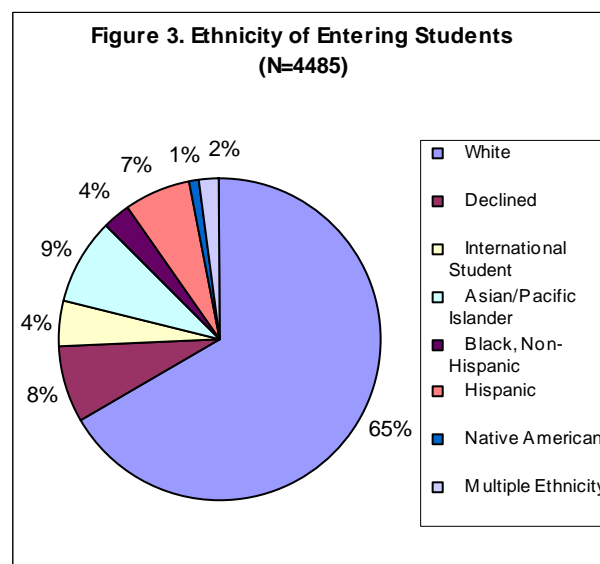
A majority of new students were Oregon residents (76%). More new transfers than new freshmen were Oregon residents (79% and 72%, respectively). The proportion of nonresident first-time freshmen students increased from Fall 2007 (4%) while the proportion of non-resident transfer students remained the same. Of the 24% of new students who are non-residents, 18% are international students. While students come from a wide range of countries, most come from Saudi Arabia, China and Japan (28%, 20%, and 14%, respectively).

Age and Gender

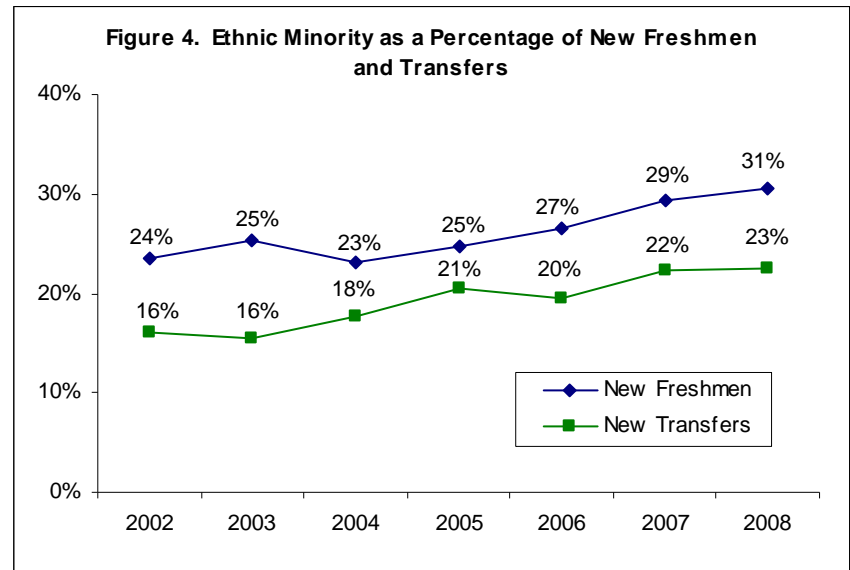
The average age of first-time freshmen entering PSU during Fall 2008 was 18.9 years; however, the median age was 18, which indicates that half of the freshmen class was 18 years of age or younger. Currently at its lowest point, the average age of new freshman has been slowly decreasing since Fall 2002 (19.4 years). The class included students ranging in age from 14 to 60 years of age. Transfer students represented an older group, with an average age of 25.1 years. Women represented 53% of incoming freshmen and 54% of incoming transfers. Enrollment of women at Portland State is similar to the national enrollment of women in institutions of higher education (57%)*.

Ethnic Diversity

Approximately 26% of students in the entering class were members of racial/ethnic minority groups. (See Figure 3.) This is a similar proportion to Fall 2007. The largest minority group among entering students was Asian/Pacific Islander (9%). Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and persons of multiple ethnic backgrounds together constituted 14% of the entering class. Another 4% were international students. This mirrors the composition of public four-year institutions nationally, whose student bodies are approximately 27% racial/ethnic minority, and is higher than the average for other four-year public institutions in Oregon, whose student bodies are approximately 15% racial/ethnic minorities*.



For both new freshmen and transfer students, the proportion representing ethnic minorities has increased gradually over the past five years. (See Figure 4.) This year there were no notable changes in the distribution of ethnic groups among entering students.



Academic Background and Major: First-time Freshmen

For first-time freshmen, high school grade point average (GPA) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are indicators of academic preparedness. The mean high school GPA for 2008 first-time freshmen was 3.25, the same as the mean high school GPA of freshmen entering in 2007. The average composite SAT score for 2008 first-time freshmen was 1,040, down from 1,045 in Fall 2007. Fall 2008 is the fifth year in which new freshmen at PSU were admitted under stricter GPA requirements. An in-depth study of the effects of the new GPA policy on the characteristics of the entering freshmen will be reported in a future issue of *Research Update*.

Consistent with previous years, the most popular majors for new PSU freshmen include Psychology, Biology, Marketing and English. Graphic Design became one of the most popular majors Fall 2008, while there was a drop in Architecture. This is similar to the national trend which includes Business, Arts & Humanities, Professional degrees, Education Studies and Social Sciences among the top five most popular majors.

Summary

First-time freshmen and transfer students entering PSU during Fall 2008 are similar to new students admitted in recent years. PSU continues to serve students predominantly from Oregon. The proportion of students representing racial/ethnic minorities has increased gradually over the last five years, while the average age and gender representation has remained consistent. The proportion of new freshmen and transfer students who attended PSU full-time increased over Fall 2007.