Profile of the Entering Class of 2010

The entering undergraduate class of Fall 2010 consisted of 4,259 students, with 1,432 first-time freshmen and 2,827 new transfers. Overall enrollment of new students decreased by 8% compared to fall 2009. First-time freshmen enrollment decreased by 14%, while transfer student enrollment decreased by 8%, compared to the previous fall. New transfer students continue to make up the greatest proportion of the entering class. Between 2006 and 2010, new transfer students consistently outnumbered first-time freshmen and are presently outnumbering them nearly two to one. During this period, the percentage of first-time freshmen ranged from 34% to 40%, with first-time freshmen comprising 34% of the entering class of 2010 (see Figure 1).

Ongoing recruitment efforts, targeting first-time freshmen that enter directly from high school, are evidenced by an upward trend. Most first-time freshmen continue to enter directly from high school (85% in Fall 2010), a notable increase from 2009 (79%). This has remained consistent over the 5 year period between 2006 and 2010, with a mean of 82% of first-time freshmen entering directly from high school.

Approximately 89% of first-time freshmen who reported a high school of origin came from an Oregon high school. This percentage is similar to previous years and up slightly from last year (88% for Fall 2009). Of the students coming from an Oregon high school, 74% attended high school in the Tri-county area with the highest percentage coming from Clackamas, Century, Aloha, Cleveland and Reynolds 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 2006 attended a college in their home state (The Chronicle of Higher Education. Volume LVI, Number 1. August 28, 2009).
Academic Background: First-time Freshmen

For first-time freshmen, high school grade point average (GPA) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores are indicators of academic preparedness. As reflected in Figure 2, the average composite SAT score for first-time freshmen was 1038, down from a mean composite SAT score of 1042 for 2009. The disparity between men and women’s average SAT scores diminished considerably, from that of 2009, resulting from a sharp 16 point decline in men’s scores and only a moderate increase (7 points) in women’s scores.

The high school GPA requirement for entering freshmen increased from 2.5 to 3.0 in Fall 2004 making 2010 the seventh year in which new freshmen at PSU were admitted under higher GPA requirements. In addition, 2010 saw the roll out of a plan to more stringently adhere to admission standards. The mean high school GPA for 2010 first-time freshmen was 3.34, up by .09 from the mean high school GPA of freshmen entering in 2009 (3.25).

Exceptions to the GPA standard were extended to fewer students than in previous years. As in the past, a matrix of high school GPA and test scores (SAT or ACT) was used to determine admission eligibility for students not meeting the minimum high school GPA requirement, but a smaller portion of students not meeting the matrix standards were admitted with additional case-specific requirements. In addition, all first-time freshmen students were required to attend a new student orientation before registering for classes. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the jump in first-time freshmen mean GPA scores is likely a result of the stricter admissions process implemented in fall 2010. As reflected in Figure 3, women continue to enter PSU with an average GPA that is higher than their male peers.

Student Levels and Full-time Status

Figure 4 illustrates a steady decrease in the number of students entering as first-time freshmen over the last four years, and an increase in the number entering at the sophomore and junior transfer levels. The number of students entering as freshmen and senior transfers has remained relatively consistent from 2006 through 2010.

The largest group of new transfer students continues to enter Portland State at the junior level (30% of all entering students transferred 90 to 134 credit hours). About one quarter
consistently enter at the sophomore level (transferring 45 to 89 credits). These proportions did not change from Fall 2009 to Fall 2010.

The majority of transfers come from community colleges (67%), with 52% of all community college transfers coming from Portland Community College, similar to last year. In addition, 18% of all transfers come from another university, with half of those coming from an OUS university. The largest group of the OUS transfers (37%) came from Oregon State University, and the second largest group of OUS transfers (30%) came from the University of Oregon.

The percentage of first-time freshmen who enroll full-time has increased by 9 percentage points from 2006 to 2010, despite a slight decrease from 2009 to 2010. Figure 5 reflects PSU’s efforts to attract more traditional students, as evidenced by the percentages of entering students enrolled on a full-time basis since 2006. Most (90%) first-time freshmen attended PSU on a full-time basis during Fall 2010, which reflected a slight decrease over Fall 2009 (93%).

Nearly three-fourths (72%) of new transfer students attended full-time during Fall 2010, a decrease from 75% in 2009. During the same period new transfer students enrolling full-time increased by 5 percentage points. Increased tuition rates and changes in the tuition structure during the last 5 years do not appear to be related to the number of hours for which students enroll, however, the 10% increase since 2006 for first-time full-time freshmen indicates that the type of students who are choosing to enroll may be trending towards more traditional students.

**Residency**

A majority of new students in 2010 were Oregon residents (78%), reflecting a one percentage point decrease from 2009. Effective Fall term of 2006, PSU implemented a new part-time fee policy, which assessed non-resident fees for all admitted non-resident students regardless of carrying load. Following this change, the mean percentage of students who were Oregon residents from 2007 to 2010 was 78%.

More new transfers than new freshmen were Oregon residents: 81% and 75%, respectively. The proportion of non-resident first-time freshmen students for 2010 (24%) decreased by two percentage points from 2009, while the percentage of non-resident transfer students decreased by one percent.

The implementation of PSU’s Internationalization Initiative in 2002 has contributed to an overall increase in the percentage of first-time freshmen international students among the entering class.

The number of international freshmen students entering PSU has increased from 33 in 2002 to a mean of 70 from 2006 to 2010. International students come from a wide range of countries. In 2010, similar to 2009, most international freshmen came from Saudi Arabia (29%), China (16%) and Kuwait (13%).
Age and Gender

The average age of first-time freshmen entering PSU during Fall 2010 was 19 years; however, the median age was 18, indicating that half of the freshmen class was 18 years of age or younger. As reflected in Figure 7, the average age of entering freshmen has remained relatively consistent, reflecting a mean age of 18.9 years from 2006 to 2010. The 2010 class included students ranging in age from 16 to 54 years of age.

Transfer students represented an older group. The average age of entering transfer students has increased gradually each year since 2006 when the average age was 25.0, to 2010 when the average age was 25.5 years.


Ethnic Diversity

Approximately 26% of students in the entering class were members of racial/ethnic minority groups, which represents a five percentage point increase from 2009. As illustrated in Figure 8, the proportion of ethnic minority students remained relatively steady for the 4-year period from 2006 through 2009, but increased between 2009 and 2010. First-time freshmen continue to make up a larger percentage of the ethnic minority population. The largest minority group among entering students is Hispanic (8.4%), representing a three percentage point increase over 2010. Asian/Pacific Islanders (8.3%) make up the second largest minority group. African Americans, Native Americans, and persons of multiple ethnic backgrounds together constituted 9% of the entering class. The percentage of entering students declining to respond decreased from 12% in 2009 to 4% in 2010.

The increase in overall ethnic diversity, and decrease in the decline to respond categories, may be attributed, in part, to a change in how the data are collected. PSU now uses the U.S. Census reporting standards when gathering race and ethnicity data, which enables survey respondents to select Hispanic as an ethnicity choice independent of race, and also includes a multiple-ethnicity category. This data collection approach may explain the increase in the incoming student Hispanic population that is reported here, and could have contributed to an increased response rate by presenting respondents with more applicable choices. PSU’s incoming class is more diverse in comparison to the other four-year
public institutions in Oregon, whose overall student bodies are made up of approximately 15% racial/ethnic minorities (The Chronicle of Higher Education. Race and Ethnicity of Student5s, by Institution, September 19, 2010).

Summary

First-time freshmen and transfer students entering PSU during Fall 2010 are similar in many ways to new students admitted in recent years. The majority of first-time freshmen continue to enter directly from high school. PSU continues to draw a large percentage of students from Oregon, primarily the Portland metropolitan area. The entering class of 2010 included slightly fewer traditional college students than 2009, but still demonstrates a 10% increase in first-time full-time enrollment between 2004 and 2010. Students transferring into PSU at the junior level continue to constitute the largest portion of the entering class.

Recent trends indicate an increase in the entering first-time freshman high school GPA, which may be attributed in part to PSU’s more stringent adherence to a 3.0 minimum GPA standard in 2010. The slight decrease in entering freshman composite SAT scores could also be a reflection of a shift toward admitting any student with a high school GPA of 3.0 or higher, regardless of test scores. Figures show an increase in overall ethnic diversity, particularly among the Hispanic students. The shift in ethnic minority data may be due in part to a data collection process that better captures the Hispanic population by parsing out Hispanic ethnicity from other race categories, encouraging more respondents to answer rather than selecting the decline to answer option.

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