DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 101 807 JC 750 162

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TITLE A Study of Some Pertinent Characteristics of Transfer

Students from Washington State Community-Junior Colleges to Washington State University Who Were

Above the Median Age for That Population.

NOTE 27p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.95 PLUS POSTAGE

DESCRIPTORS *College Students; Educational Objectives;

*Enrollment Trends; Financial Support; Grade Point Average: Higher Education; Junior Colleges; Junior College Students: *State Universities; *Student

Characteristics: *Transfer Students

IDENTIFIERS *Washington: Washington State University

ABSTRACT

Of 909 former Washington community-junior college students above the age of 22 enrolled at Washington State University (WSU) during the spring semester of 1972-73, 215 (23 percent) were randomly selected as the sample population for a study of the following: (1) basic student information; (2) previous institutions attended/hours transferred to WSU; (3) academic major and achievement; (4) place of residence; and (5) financial aid recipiency. An evaluation of records held by the Registrar, Admissions Officer, and the Vice President for Student Affairs at WSU indicated that 81.4 percent of the sample were male; 21.4 percent were married; 60 percent transferred with less than 60 credit hours (average=51); an average of 1.4 institutions had been attended prior to arriving at WSU; only 15.3 percent sought degrees of careers which were not of a practical nature; the average GPA was 2.7 at the time of transfer and 2.5 after one semester at WSU; 23.8 percent of the unmarried students lived in campus residence halls and 4.6 percent lived in fraternities or sororities; and 23.3 percent received financial assistance. Because transfer students will provide a predictable source of student enrollment increase in these days of otherwise stable enrollments, universities should do more to provide for their needs. (DC)



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A STUDY OF SOME PERTINENT CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSFER STUDENTS FROM WASHINGTON STATE COMMUNITY-JUNIOR COLLEGES TO WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY WHO WERE ABOVE THE MEDIAN AGE FOR THAT POPULATION

by Robert F. Fahrer



CONTENTS

PURPOSE	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	3
METHOD .	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	5
RESULTS	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	6
DISCUSSI	ON	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	13
CONCLUST:	ONG	٠,	a nei	ו מ	RF.	CON	/MI	e Ni	DA	rt <i>(</i>)NS	:						_					_		_	_	Page	19



TABLES

TABLE	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	٠	•	•	•	•	•	Page	4
TABLE	II	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	7
TABLE	III	1	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	٠	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	7
TABLE	ıv	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	10
TABLE	v	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	12
TABLE	VI	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Page	12



In 1967 Dr. C. Gilbert Wrenn stated that "Transfers are freshmen in every sense of the word except for two more years of general maturity and some additional academic content gathered elsewhere."

The dilemma of the community-junior college transfer student can be gleaned from the above statement by Wrenn and from other selected writings. Most commentaries on the subject of transfer students point to what Knoell and Medsker observed almost a decade ago:

In many four year institutions transfer students are being overlooked in planning orientation programs. in offering counseling services to new students, in inviting their participation in social and extracurricular activities.²

Sandeen and Goodale, collecting data on transfer students (community-junior college, four year public and four year private institutions) for the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, believe that

Implications of a large and growing number of transfer students who have different kinds of needs than new freshmen are considerable for the dean and his staff. . . . Too often the transfer students are "thrown together" with the new freshmen on programs where they feel uncomfortable and unwelcome.

The above statements seemingly represent both ends of a continuum. Dr. Wrenn's inference is that few meaningful differences exist between new freshmen and new transfer students. On the other hand, the two other studies cited stress urgent needs of transfer



students that are far different from those felt by the new freshmen.

In the fall of 1969, one of every three students enrolled for the first time began in two-year institutions, according to Wilson. 4
He further declares that 50% of those who enter higher education during the 1970s will enroll in the community-junior colleges.

Sandeen and Goodale also report interesting and significant statistics concerning transfer students. Of the total number of students transferring in the fall of 1970, 177,214 or 55% transferred from community-junior colleges -- nearly three times the number transferring from public four-year institutions, which was second with 27% transferring.

An example of what might well be a growing occurence around the country in four-year institutions is the "branchfer" versus "transfer" source of students for the University of Connecticut. 6 "Branchfers" are those students who have come from one of the five lower division branches of the University to the main campus. Burke indicates their input to the University has stabilized, while that institution has now turned to transfer students for its principal source of expansion. Other institutions may be experiencing this same dilemma, that of depending upon certain distinct types of input which are now stabilizing, and having to depend heavily upon one type of student for generating growth.

From the above statistics, professionals in higher education would not be remiss in predicting a gradual increase in the numbers of community-junior college transfer students matriculating at four-



year institutions into the forseeable future.

Growth of Washington state community-junior college new transfer students (hereafter referred to as 'transfer students') to Washington State University is seen in TABLE I. Statistics speak only to intra-Washington transfer student activities to Washington State University, but reveal what could be the evolution of an important trend. Of the last eight years, only 1967 registered a decrease in Washington state new transfer students. Declines in matriculation of new freshmen, on the other hand, were evidenced in 1968, 1971, 1972, and 1973. The proportion of new transfer students to new freshmen increased during every new school year of the last eight except 1967. In 1972 and 1973 new transfer students were in excess of 25% of the new freshmen population. A conclusion reached from statistics in TABLE I is that, given declining enrollment of new freshmen and stabilizing University population generally, the new transfer students will provide a predictable source of student increase.

PURPOSE

The special interest of this study is to describe characteristics of a special category of transfer student: the Washington state transfer student to Washington State University who was above the median age for Washington state transfer students at the end of academic year 1972-73. The main reasons for selecting this population as a target for study are (1) the paucity of knowledge concerning this aspect of transfer students, and (2) continued exhortation by higher education



TABLE I

SELECTED NEW STUDENT MATRICULATION AT WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY*

PROPORTION NEW TRANSFER STUDENTS TO TOTAL ENROLLMENT	3.968	3.65%	4.05%	4.29%	4.33%	4.718	5.07%	5.11%
WASH. STATE UNIV.	10,662	11,334	12,002	13,150	14,500	14,481	14,529	14,781
PROPORTION NEW TRANSFER STUDENTS TO NEW FRESHMEN	17.28%	15.67%	18.48%	18.72%	19.86%	24.00%	26.63%	27.69.
NEW FRESHMEN AT WASH. STATE UNIV.	2448	2641	2635	3018	3171	2845	2746	2726
WASH. STATE NEW TRANSFER STUDENTS TO WASH STATE UNIV.	423	77.7	287	565	930	683	736	755
YEAR	1966	1961	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973

*Data collected from Washington State University Admissions Office



8

professionals to continue institutional research which might be applied at the local level. Specifically, the author was interested in studying the following characteristics of this population:

Age
Sex
Marital Status
Previous Institutions Attended
Academic Major
Hours Transferred to WSU
GPA for Credit Hours Transferred to WSU
GPA after 1st Semester at WSU
Residence
Financial Aid Recipients

METHOD

Permission was granted this author by the Registrar, Admissions Officer, and the Vice President for Student Affairs to access their files for this study.

During the spring semester of the 1972-73 academic year, 2,233 students transferring from community-junior colleges in Washington and in other states were enrolled at Washington State University. Of this number, 1,819 students transferred from Washington state community-junior colleges. This latter figure represented the basis for the study, in that the median age and median student were calculated from it. The median student was number 909 in the chronological listing of Washington state transfer students and the median age was 22 (Year of Birth 1951). Of the 909 transfer students above the median age, 215 or 23% were randomly selected as the sample population for the study.



RESULTS

The data presented will be arranged in five sections: Basic Student Information; Previous Institutions Attended/Hours Transferred to WSU; Academic Major and Achievement; Place of Residence; and Financial Aid Recipients. Tables will be presented along with the results, and will carry raw statistics and basic comparative percentages.

Basic Student Information (TABLE II). The 215 transfer student were divided and studied according to Year of Birth (YOB). The oldest transfer student at Washington State University was born in 1920. However, the random sample began at YOB 1933 and, because very few students were included in the sample population between 1933-44, the author determined that this would serve as a distinct 'year group.'

Of the 215 transfer students in the sample, 175 or 81.4% were male. The total number and breakdown by YOB is of interest because of its skewed nature and, predictably, its slight decrease of the male population as movement toward the later YOB is made.

The number of married students also shows a predictable decline with a decrease in age. From a high of 58% married in YOB 1933-44, a decrease to 'zero' married was recorded in YOB 1951. Cne third, or 33.7% of the total transfer student sample in YOB categories 1933-48 were married. In all, 46 or 21.4% of the total sample were married.

Previous Institutions Attended/ Hours Transferred to WSU (TABLE III).

The first of these categories yielded the interesting information that all 215 students had attended 1.4 institutions (both two-year and four-year) before arriving at Washington State University. YOB 1933-44



TABLE II

BASTC STUDENT INFORMATION

YEAR OF BIRTH	# Wash. State Transfer Students To Wash. State Univ.	# IN SAMPLE	MALE	% male To sample	MARRIED	% MARRIED TO SAMPLE
1933-44	95	19	17	89	11	58
1945	38	8	8	100	1	13
1946	83	22	22	100	7	32
1947	92	16	13	81	6	37
1948	121	36	32	89	9	25
1949	131	34	26	76	5	14
1950	249	62	44	71	7	11
1951	100	18	13	72	0	0
Totals	909	215	175	81.4	46	21.4

TABLE III

PREVIOUS INSTITUTIONS ATTENDED/ HOURS TRANSFERRED TO WASH. STATE UNIV.

	PREVIOUS II	NSTITUTIONS NDED	AVERAGE HOURS
YEAR OF BIRTH	COMMUNITY COLLEGES	FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY	TRANSFERRED TO WASH. STATE UNIV.
1933-44	25	9	4.5
1945	10	2	75
1946	24	4	51
1947	19	4	51
1948	42	10	48
1949	36	6	46
1950	72	12	49
1951	18	0	46
Totals	246	47	51
	•	AA	

transfer students had attended 1.8 institutions each, while those in the YOB 1951 category had each attended 1.0 institutions before arriving at Washington State University. Several students had previously attended three community-junior colleges, while one student had attended a community college and four different four-year institutions. The majority of students who had attended more than one institution before arriving at Washington State University attended one or two community-junior colleges and one four-year institution.

One hundred twenty nine, or 60%, of the total sample transferred with fewer than 60 credit hours. Each student in the total sample transferred an average of 51 credit hours to Washington State University. Only YOB 1945 exceeded the number of credit hours usually required by a community-junior college to receive an Associate Arts degree. YOB categories 1946 and 1947 transferred 51 hours per student while the remaining categories transferred less than 50 per student. Students in YOB 1951 transferred an average of 46 credit hours to Washington State University; 10 of the 18 transfer students in that YOB transferred fewer than 60 credit hours.

Academic Major and Achievement (TABLE IV). The major interest while studying transfer students' academic major was to determine to what extent the students chose specific, practical careers toward which their academic efforts would be focussed. Only 33, or 15.3% of the total sample seemed to be seeking degrees or careers which were not of a practical nature. Academic majors declared by these 33 trans-

fer students are shown below:

Fine Arts
Psychology
Sociology
Anthropology
Music
General Math
English
History

General Studies (Humanities Option)
General Studies (Biological Sciences Option)
General Studies (Social Sciences Option)
General Studies (Physical Sciences Option)
Curriculum Advisory Program (for those who had not selected an Academic Major)

Examples of the much more common type of academic major are listed below:

Police Science
Business Administration
Range Management
Civil Engineering
Mechanical Engineering
Forestry
Agricultural Education

Computer Science

Building Theory and Practice Economics Architecture Social Work/Education Animal Nutrition Nursing Communications

No student with a non-practical academic major had declared a professional education minor through the College of Education. YOB 1945 transfer students had the highest percentage, 38, of academic majors which might be listed in the first category.

The average transfer student grade point average (GPA) for the total sample was 2.689. This GPA was computed for courses accepted by Washington State University. After one semester at Washington State University, the average GPA for the total sample was 2.478, making each transfer student's average loss 0.211. Losses within YOB categories were varied. Greatest losses were incurred in YOB 1945 (0.456) and YOB 1950 (0.469), while smallest in YOB 1933-34 (0.030). A small gain was registered in YOB 1951 (0.026). Seventy one per cent of the stu-



TABLE IV

ACADEMIC MAJORS AND ACHIEVEMENT

% wash . State univ. ist sem. Lower	Z 1	62	719	63	53	57	. 71	777	57.2
EACH STUDENT AVE. 1.0SS	0.030	0.456	0.252	0.153	0.131	0.227	0.469	+ 0.026*	0.211
AVE. 1ST SEM. WASH. STATE. UNIV. GPA	2.586	2.361	2.291	2.479	2.585	5.469	2.263	2.791	2.478
AVE. TRANS- FER GPA	2.616	2,817	2.543	2.632	2.716	2.696	2.732	2.765	2.689
NON-PRACTICAL	4	~	~	Q	4	m	टा	ત્ય	33
ACADEMIC MAJOR PRACTICAL NON-PRA	15	<i>r</i> v	19	#	32	31	90	16	182
YEAR OF BIRTH	1933-44	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	Totals

*YOB 1951 GPA Increased



dents in YOB 1950 received lower GPAs after their first semester at Washington State University, while categories YOB 1933-44 and YOB 1951 registered the fewest number of GPA losses: 42% and 44% respectively. In all except the two latter categories at least 50% received lower GPAs after their first semester at Washington State University.

Place of Residence (TABLE V). Those transfer students who were considered eligible, i.e. unmarried, made up this sample population in each YOB category to determine the number who resided in university—owned residence halls. Thirty nine, or 23.8% of those eligible, lived in the residence halls. YOB 1948 had 9 of 26 eligible, or 34.6%, living in residence halls. YOB 1933-44 had the fewest number eligible, 42.1%, and only had one student, or 12.5% of those eligible, in residence halls. No increase in the number of eligible students living in residence halls was evidenced with a decrease in age, but a increase in the number eligible was noticeable with a decrease in age.

'Off campus" students were those transfer students who did not live in university residence halls. This category included all those living in fraternities and sororities, university-owned married housing, and in the general community of Pullman. Only ten, or 4.6%, students in the whole sample lived in fraternities and sororities, with those predictably belonging to categoris. IOB 1949, 1950, 1951.

Financial Aid Recipients (T' 1). Fifty students, or 23.3%, of the total sample, accepted fi and assistance. Half of those who received any financial aid received only one kind of aid; the other half received multiple forms of aid. Except for YOB categories 1933-44



TABLE V
PLACE OF RESIDENCE

YEAR OF BIRTH	# ELIGIBLE (UNMARRIED)	# IN RES HALLS & GRAD CENTER	RESIDENTS AS % OF ELIGIBLES	OFF <u>CAMPUS</u>
1933-44	8	1	12.5	18
1945	7	2	29.0	6
1946	13	2	15.3	18
1947	10	2	20.0	14
1948	26	9	34.6	26
1949	28	9	32.9	24
1950	54	10	18.5	52
1951	18	4	22.2	12
Total	164	39	23.8	170

TABLE VI

FINANCIAL AID RECIPIENTS

YEAR OF BIRTH	# OF FIN. AID RECIP.	% of Sample	TYPE EOG	S OF AID FEE WATV.	GRANT	LEEP	NDSL	SCHOL	<u>ws</u> *
1933-44	6	31.6	1	1		2	3	1	2
1945	1	13.0					1	•	
1946	6	27.3		2	1	1	4	3	2
1947	1	6.0		ı				1	1
1948	12	33.3		3	1	4	5	6	
1949	9	26.5		4		ı	6	4	4
1950	1.2	19.4	3	3		1	7	6	2
1951	3 .	16.7				1	1	1	1
Total	50	23.3	4	14	2	10	27	22	12

^{*}College Work Study Program

and 1951, a general trend toward increased financial assistance seems to be indicated. Most frequently-disseminated aid to students were the following in order of use: National Direct Student Loan (NDSL), Scholarships, Fee Waivers, Work Study, and Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP).

DISCUSSION

Basic Student Information. Predictably, the number of female transfer students enrolled decreased as the age of transfer students increased. For YOB categories 1949, 1950, 1951, approximately 25% were female. An 80% male population in a total sample of this nature might not be unexpected. Males in this age category could well have greater financial security or sense of security. Our general society may find it easier to condone males leaving an employed status to return to school than to condone the same action by females.

The 46 students (21.4%) of the total sample who were married exceeds by 6% those reported married in the Sandeen and Goodale study. 7

Almost 2½ times the Sandeen and Goodale percentage (33.7% compared with 14%) were reported married in the YOB categories 1933-48. These latter statistics may not be abnormally high for the age group in question (ages 25-40). But needs of married students in these categories may be special in terms of married student housing, both on and off campus; employment for spouse; day care centers and schools for children. The assumption is probably made that these students are older, more mature, and therefore better able to care for themselves. Yet because



of the unique setting of Washington State University in a relatively rural and small-town environment, special attention might be given to determining adequacy of activities which might involve the spouse in the student's environment.

Previous Institutions Attended/Hours Transferred to WSU. This section presents the 'platform' from which students might emerge into the four-year institution environment. Because the transfer students generally had attended more than one other institution prior to entering Washington State University, an assumption might be made that their breadth of experience in a wider academic environment would enable those students to function more efficiently. Some transfer students may have attended any of the previous institutions only as a 'part-time' student, however. These figures may also indicate a 'transient-ness' or even a lack of decisiveness about where these transfer students are headed. More research in determining the cause of multi-transfers for transfer students at Washington State University is indicated.

Knoell and Medsker indicate that the number of credit hours transferred to the four-year institution is a critical determinant of success at the latter. Their study indicated that attrition among students with sophomore rank was 45% (1/3 of which was a result of academic dismissal), while 26% of those who transferred with junior class standing failed to graduate. Thirty five per cent of the sophomores graduated "on time," while 48% of the junior-standing students graduated "on time."

Based on Knoell and Medsker's findings, this aspect of the trans-



fer student's matriculation should be brought under closer scrutiny at Washington State University. Well over half (129 transfer students, or 60% of the total sample) entered below junior-class standing. The average number of credit hours transferred for all 215 transfer students was 51. A possible reason for what seems to be a glaring problem might be lack of applicability or outdatedness of courses taken several years ago in a community-junior college. This reasoning might be unproductive in explaining away the problem, however, for the average number of transfer hours for those 18 students in YOB 1951 (age 22) was 46, second-lowest for all categories. Special attention by Admissions personnel and periodic follow-up of these transfer students might be considered, both with the hope that undue attrition can be prevented and to determine why so many transfer students are entering with so few credit hours intact.

Academic Majors and Achievement. That the transfer students chose academic majors where chances of employment were greatest and practicality evidenced is consistent with findings by Knoell and Medsker. Fine Arts and Liberal Arts seem to be generally ignored. This finding is not surprising given the age group of the sample and type of institution previously attended.

Given the general sub-junior class standing by the sample population in this study, findings relating the GPA average loss of 0.211/student after one semester at Washington State University are significant and deserve further comment. Knoell and Medsker received data from Washington State University and placed this data in the Type 3 category



titled 'Other state colleges and universities.' 10 It is with GPA data in this category that a brief comparison of data on GPAs in this study will be made. In the Knoell and Medsker study, GPA information was reported on the mean GPAs earned in community-junior colleges and after two years in a four-year institution. It must be kept in mind that the GPAs reported in this study were those following completion of one semester of academic classwork.

For the category in which Washington State University GPAs were included in the Knoell and Medsker study, transfer students with sophomore standing lost 0.34 of a point from their community-junior college cumulative GPA; sub-junior students gained 0.08 of a point; and students classified as juniors lost 0.28 of a point. For all transfer students in all categories in Knoell and Medsker's study, those classified as sophomores lost 0.48 of a point; sub-juniors 0.38 of a point; and those with junior standing lost 0.27 of a point.

The low GPA loss for transfer students in this author's study stands up quite well when compared with GPA statistics in the category in which Washington State University was placed in the Knoell and Medsker study. Although transfer students in this author's study did not do as well as sub-juniors in the category referred to in the previous sentence, the same transfer students' average GPA loss bettered Knoell and Medsker's total sample loss for sub-juniors by 0.17 of a point.

A second observation is that the Knoell and Medsker cumulative GPA



statistics in the four-year institution were recorded after two years of transfer. A follow-up study of those transfer students included in this study's sample after two years at Washington State University may well indicate that older transfer students would do as well as or better than the sub-junior performance (increased GPA over cumulative community-junior college GPA by 0.08 of a point) in Washington State University's category in Knoell and Medsker's study.

Place of Residence. That most older transfer students should live off campus is not surprising (170, or 81.9%). Some were married, and most probably have been used to a great degree of independence for some years. Washington State University is housing students in the Graduate Center, married student housing, and university residence halls.

In these days of stabilizing enrollments with concommitant concern about keeping university-owned residence halls a 'solvent operation,' transfer students included in this study -- indeed, transfer students of all types -- might well provide an as yet untapped source of residents. An example of a program designed to benefit both transfer students and the university was the "Transfer Center" concept at Florida State University. McLean reported that this new resident concept was a product of increasing transfer student enrollment at Florida State University. Centrally located on campus, Cawthon Hall was used to serve as a focal point for all transfer students, as well as a residence for some of the many enrolling at Florida State University.



There are other ways residence halls and their residents can become involved. Sandeen and Goodale report that one midwestern university conducts its orientation program in concert with residence hall student governments. A special weekend held for community-junior college prospective transfer students includes free room and board in a residence hall. The prospective student has a chance to talk with members of the student government and other hall residents in addition to participating in other aspects of the orientation program.

This aspect of the overall transfer student subject is fertile yet totally untapped at Washington State University. More research and program development is indicated.

Financial Aid Recipients. Because of the increasing costs of living, including rising costs of education, this aspect of the subject of transfer students is especially critical. Many students transferring from community-junior colleges are less well off financially than those entering a four-year institution as a freshman. If an egalitarian approach to higher education is assumed, more financial assistance to transfer students will have to be available. Goodale and Sandeen report that among transfer students who dropped out of school voluntarily after transfer, financial problems ranked first among the various factors associated with withdrawal. 13

Not collected in this author's study were data concerning employment and other forms of aid, such as the G.I. Bill. The employment data would have been significant, since some transfer students have



indicated that they feel that employment while studying at a four-year institution would seriously interfere with their studies. A Sandeen and Goodale report that, of the transfer students in their study, about twice as many students worked while attending community-junior colleges as in their first year after transfer.

Only about one fifth, or 23.3%, of the transfer students in this author's sample population received assistance through the Washington State University Financial Aids office. Students, however, may be receiving other forms of assistance elsewhere.

New ways of addressing the financial problems expressed by transfer students can and must be found. It might be possible to earmark a certain proportion of aid to the total community-junior college transfer student population. Some institutions have searched for scholar-ship donors who were willing to earmark their scholarships for transfer students. 15

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The above-the-median-age transfer students attending Washington
State University from Washington state community-junior colleges offer
no critical cause for concern at this time. Although the average number
of credit hours transferred from community-junior colleges to Washington State University was low, the transfer students in this sample
population generally did as well as the students in the Washington
State University category of Knoell and Medsker's study and better



than the national sample for all categories. Considering that Knoell and Medsker's GPA data at four-year institutions were taken two years after transfer, and data in this author's study were drawn following just one semester of coursework, a tentative hypothesis might be made that above—the—median—age transfer students would do better after two years than did Knoell and Medsker's national sample. Closer scrutiny should be made, however, of the relatively low number of credit hours transferred to Washington State University by this sample.

More emphasis might be given to enrolling females. Both residence patterns and financial assistance to transfer students are in their infancy. Additional research and development of programs is indicated.

If Washington State University wants to continue to draw increasing numbers of older Washington state transfer students, the following recommendations might be given serious consideration:

- (1) research concerning how the transfer student makes use of services offered by the university (financial assistance, university-owned housing, counseling, student activities) should be undertaken.
- (2) determine how the transfer student and his family fit into the general university community, i.e. do they feel a part of or apart from the university's goals and activities.
- (3) dialogue should continue and increase between community-junior college administrators in admissions, registrar functions, and student services as an aspect of the articulation process to provide a deeper understanding of problems faced by transfer students.
 - (4) dialogue should be continued and increase through a formal



advisory committee to allow transfer students, Washington State University administrators in admissions, registrar functions, and student affairs to keep abreast of problems and changes in transfer student activities.

- (5) continued critical observation and analysis must be made of the academic performance of older transfer students, specifically: how many credit hours are transferred from the previous institution; how long does it take the transfer student to graduate; are learning center resources and tutoring services used when needed; understanding degree of GPA drop at four-year institution.
- (6) perhaps most important, an Office or Directorate of Transfer Student Activities should be established to help the general university understand more about transfer students and guide and direct the steady growth of this student population (all types of transfer students) at Washington State University. ... individual serving as director would have charge over all research, program development, acting as advisor to the transfer student advisory committee, and provide general resource information concerning transfer students to the state, the university, and the community.

This author strongly encourages the Washington State University administration to take action that might improve the institution's effect on the personal development of transfer students. With the growing awareness of the importance of the community-junior college as a source of new students for the four-year institution, educators concerned with the health of the institution and the transfer student



can no longer afford the luxury of ignorance and inaction.



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