

NEW FRESHMAN OUTCOMES: RETENTION AND GRADUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fifty-three percent of Fall 1989 entering freshmen graduated from the University of Wisconsin System institutions in six years, up from 49 percent for Fall 1984 freshmen, and 45 percent for Fall 1980 freshmen. Institutional graduation rates range from 25 percent for UW Centers to 74 percent at UW-Madison. Eighty percent of UW System graduates start as new freshmen, compared to 20 percent who transfer from other non-UW institutions.

UW System students are ultimately graduating at higher rates than in the past, but it is taking them somewhat longer to do so. The proportion of students returning for a fifth year was 46 percent for Fall 1991 entering freshmen, compared to 48 percent for Fall 1989 freshmen, 43 percent for Fall 1984 freshmen and 37 percent for Fall 1980 freshmen.

The six-year graduation rate was highest for those from the top quartile of their high school class – 70 percent for Fall 1989 new freshmen, up from 62 percent for Fall 1976 new freshmen. Smaller increases were evident for those who graduated from the second, third, and fourth quartiles of their high school classes.

Graduation rates have increased substantially since the mid-1970's for all racial/ethnic groups and for all age groups, however new freshmen who were younger than 20 years at entrance graduated at more than twice the rate of older new freshmen.

Beginning with 1989 entering freshmen, six-year graduation rates for Wisconsin residents (51%) fell below Minnesota compact student graduation rates (58%) and non-resident graduation rates (61%). Conversely, a greater percentage of Wisconsin residents (9%) were still retained in the seventh year than Minnesota compact students (3%) and non-residents (2%).

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Introduction

This report describes retention and graduation patterns for *all* freshmen who entered the UW System in a fall term (or the preceding summer). This includes those who began on a part-time basis and those who later transferred to a UW System institution other than the one at which they began.

Section I: UW System Retention and Graduation Rates

Retention of Fall New Freshmen

Table 1 shows the retention rates of new freshman cohorts entering the UW System between Fall 1980 and Fall 1994. Columns show the percentage of each new freshman cohort "surviving" to the next year. Retention rates have generally increased for each successive freshman cohort for each year of enrollment. Appendix A shows four-year retention rates by institution and Appendix B shows seven-year retention rates by institution.

Table 1

**University of Wisconsin System
Percentage of New Freshman Cohort Retained by Years Since Entrance**

Fall	Size of Cohort	Year of Enrollment					
		2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
1980	28,452	73.2	61.7	56.9	36.6	12.9	6.5
1981	27,830	74.3	63.4	58.0	39.0	13.7	6.6
1982	26,892	76.3	64.5	59.9	41.1	14.4	6.9
1983	27,737	75.4	64.2	59.2	41.4	14.7	6.7
1984	27,744	76.5	65.2	60.2	42.5	15.0	7.0
1985	27,951	75.8	64.4	60.0	42.7	15.7	7.3
1986	27,925	76.1	65.3	60.7	44.0	16.4	7.6
1987	26,897	77.4	66.5	62.7	45.9	17.4	8.0
1988	28,104	78.3	68.1	64.1	46.3	17.9	7.7
1989	25,044	79.8	70.3	65.5	48.4	18.7	7.7
1990	24,095	78.7	68.7	63.3	47.6	18.4	
1991	23,722	78.2	67.0	62.1	46.0		
1992	22,673	78.6	67.3	63.5			
1993	23,207	77.7	68.1				
1994	22,650	77.4					

Note: A significant proportion (80%) of the students not retained after the fourth year have graduated

**Graduation Rates of
Fall New Freshmen**

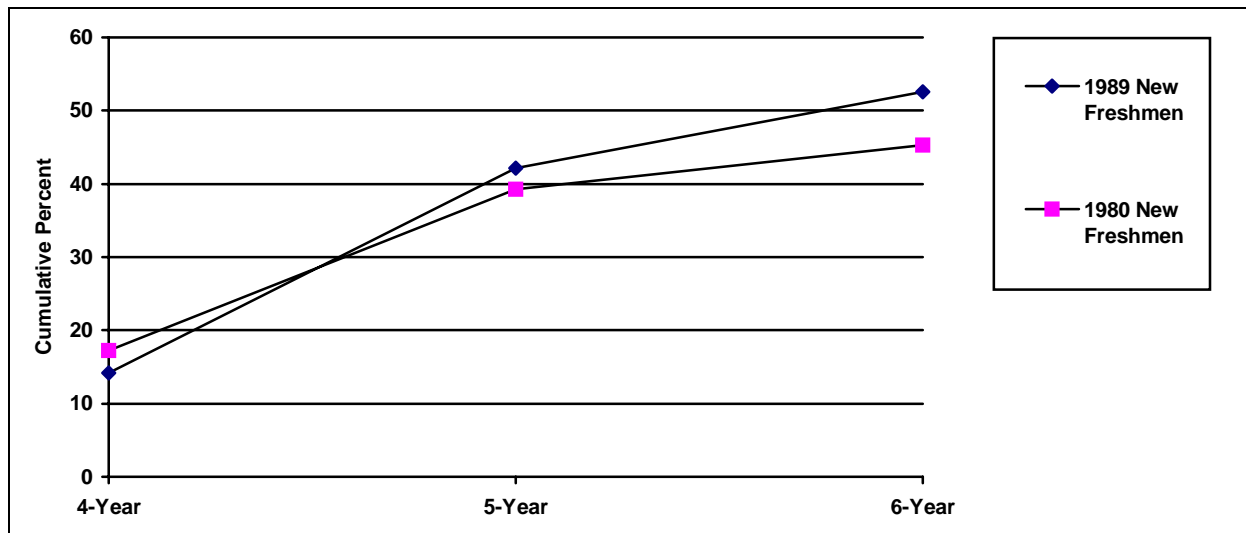
Graduation rates for new freshman cohorts are shown in Table 2. While four-year graduation rates have declined between 1980 and 1990, six-year graduation rates have risen. As a point of reference, the four-year graduation rate for UW System freshmen has been below 25 percent since the start of systemwide data collection in 1973. Appendix B provides six-year graduation rates by institution.

Table 2
University of Wisconsin System
Cumulative Percentage of New Freshman Cohort Graduated by Years Since Entrance

Fall	Size of Cohort	Year of Graduation			
		4th	5th	6th	7th
1980	28,452	17.2	39.3	45.3	47.6
1981	27,830	16.5	39.8	46.5	49.0
1982	26,892	16.4	41.1	48.3	50.9
1983	27,737	15.3	40.1	47.5	50.4
1984	27,744	15.2	41.0	48.8	51.7
1985	27,951	14.8	40.5	48.6	51.6
1986	27,925	14.6	40.6	49.0	52.0
1987	26,897	14.5	41.0	50.3	53.6
1988	28,104	15.4	41.8	51.6	55.0
1989	25,044	14.2	42.2	52.6	
1990	24,095	13.2	40.5		
1991	23,722	13.8			

Figure 1

Trend in Graduation Rates for Fall 1980 and Fall 1989 New Freshmen



Section II: Graduation Rates by Characteristics of New Freshmen

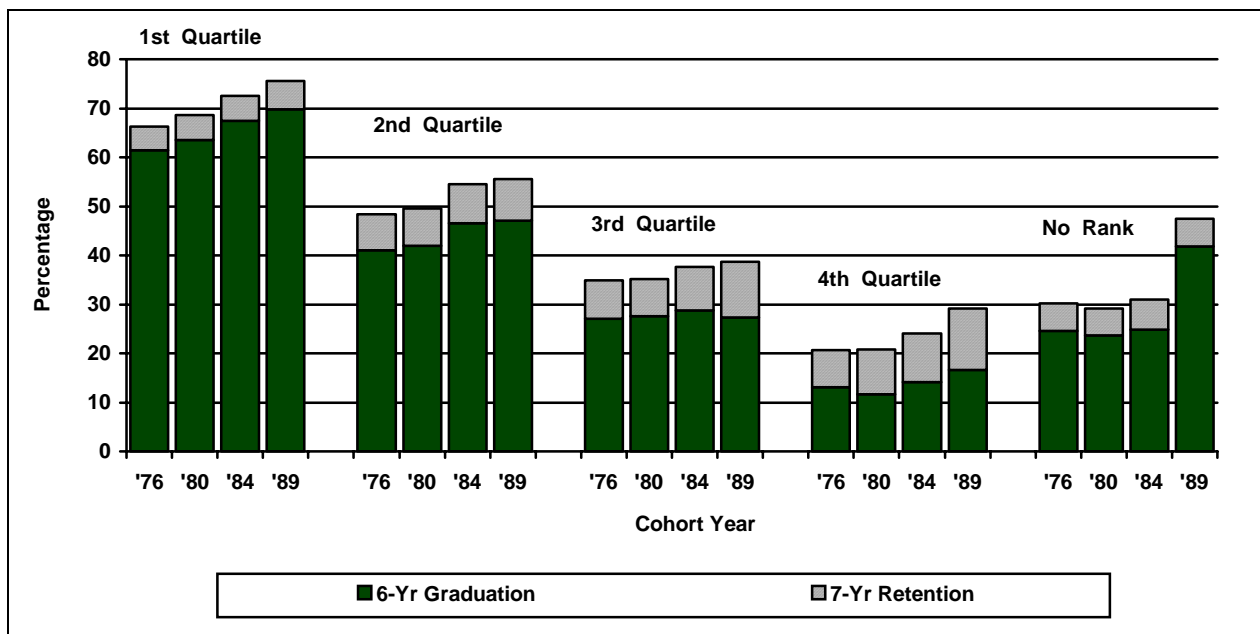
Graduation rates of new freshmen vary with their high school rank, age, race/ethnicity, and residency characteristics. The eventual graduation rate is closely predicted by the six-year graduation rate plus the seven-year retention rate. This combined rate has been rising steadily since 1976. Appendix C contains the detailed data for each of the figures in this section. Appendix D compares new freshman student characteristics for the corresponding years.

Graduation Rates by High School Rank

Figure 2 shows the six-year graduation and seven-year retention rates of four new freshman cohorts according to their high school quartile. Graduation rates were highest for freshmen from the top quartile and decreased by quartile for the remaining cohorts. Those with no rank graduated at significantly higher rates in the 1989 freshman cohort. This figure indicates that high school rank is a strong predictor of success in college.

Figure 2

**Percentage Graduating and Retained by High School Quartile
Six-Year Graduation Rates and Seven-Year Retention Rates**



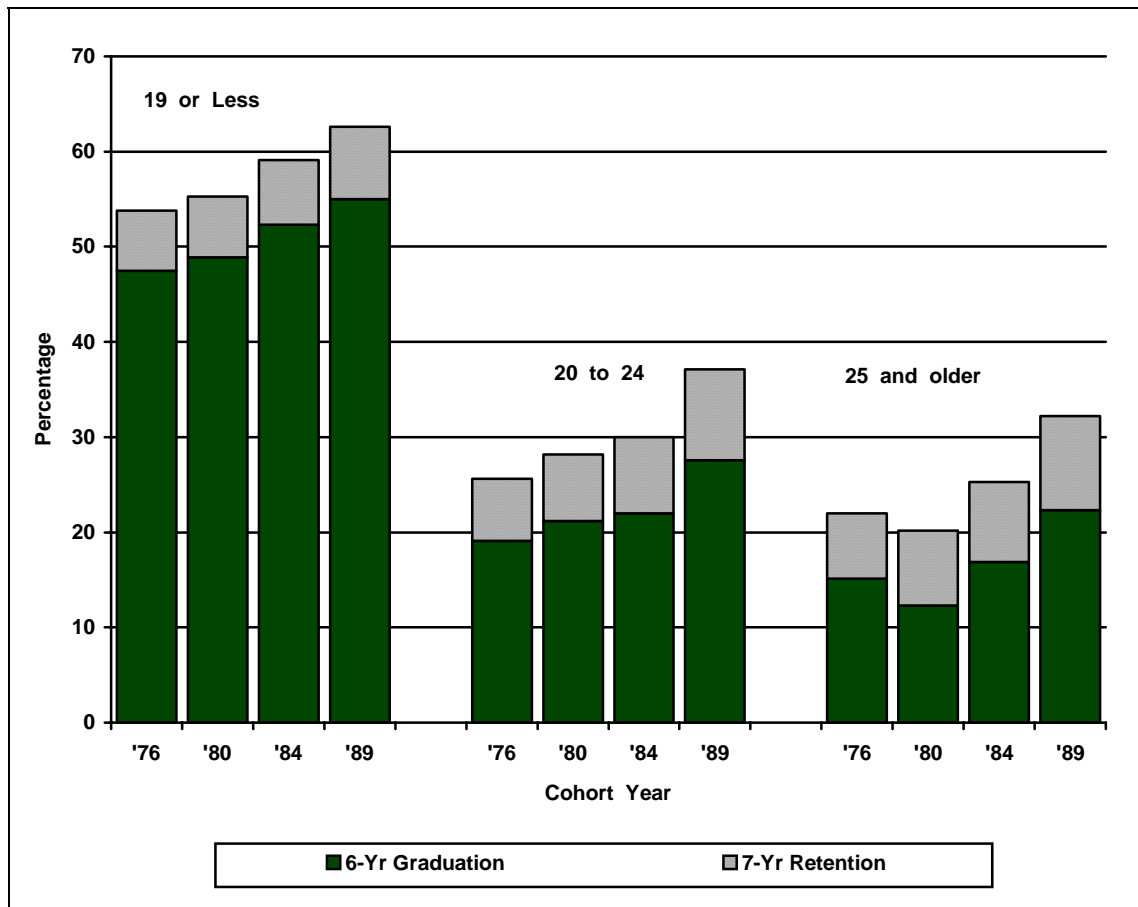
Graduation Rates by Age at Entry

Figure 3 shows the graduation rates for different age groups of new freshmen who entered in 1976, 1980, 1984 and 1989. All age groups increased their graduation rates between the 1976 and 1989 entering cohorts.

Retention rates also rose for each age group. However, the increase was much greater for 20 years or more at entrance to the university than for those 19 years or less. About 90 percent of new freshmen are in the 19 years or less age group at entry. They graduate at more than twice the rate of older new freshmen.

Figure 3

**Percentage Graduating and Retained by Age at Entry
Six-Year Graduation Rates and Seven-Year Retention Rates**

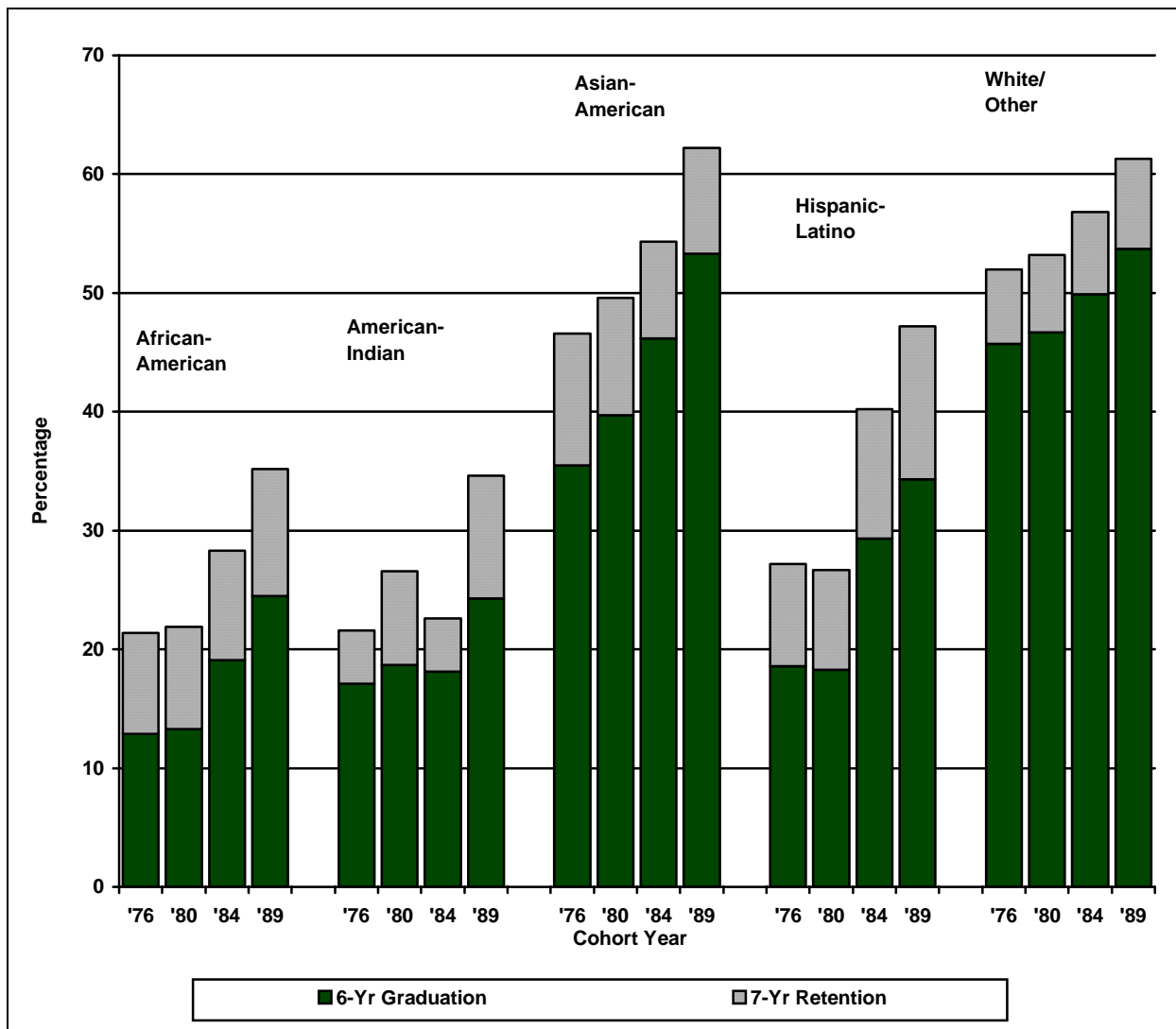


Graduation Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Graduation rates by race/ethnicity for new freshmen who entered in 1976, 1980, 1984 and 1989 are shown in Figure 4. For all racial/ethnic groups, graduation rates have been generally rising. Graduation and retention rates for Fall 1989 new freshmen were substantially higher for every race/ethnicity group than for past cohorts.

Figure 4

**Percentage Graduating and Retained by Race/Ethnicity
Six-Year Graduation Rates and Seven-Year Retention Rates**



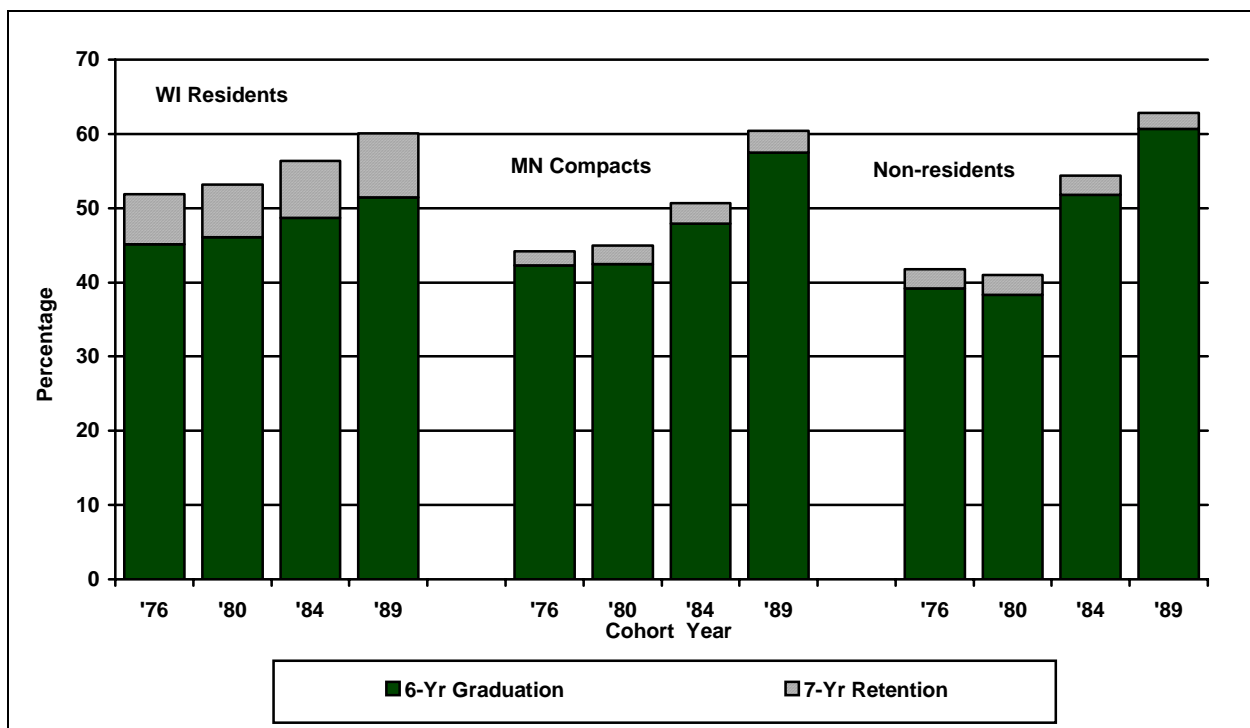
Graduation Rates by Residency Status

Figure 5 shows that the six-year graduation rates of Wisconsin residents increased steadily from the Fall 1976 to Fall 1989 new freshman cohorts. The graduation rates of Wisconsin residents were higher than those of non-residents for those freshmen entering the UW System in 1976 and 1980, while for the 1984 and 1989 cohorts, non-residents graduated at a higher rate than Wisconsin residents.

Although non-residents graduate faster than Wisconsin residents, a greater proportion of Wisconsin residents (8.7%) are still working on their degrees into the seventh year than Minnesota compact (2.9%) or other non-residents in the same entering freshman cohort (2.1%). (The sum of six-year graduation and seven-year retention rates are still higher for non-residents.)

Figure 5

**Percentage Graduating and Retained by Residency
Six-Year Graduation Rates and Seven-Year Retention Rates**



Six-Year Graduation Rates for Full-Time New Freshmen by Institution (Student Right-to-Know)

This section of our report uses the accepted Student Right-To-Know definition for graduation rates which includes new freshmen entering an institution as *full-time* students and graduating within 1.5 times the normal time for their programs. The UW System interprets the "1.5 times the normal time" for its four-year institutions to mean graduating within six years, even though some UW System baccalaureate programs would normally take more than four years to complete. Two-year institutions such as UW Centers have a different definition. UW Centers' new freshmen are counted as having completed their programs if they either receive an associate degree or transfer to a baccalaureate institution within three years of entry as full-time students.

Table 3

**Six-Year Graduation Rates by Institution
Fall 1989 Full-Time New Freshmen**

	Percent of Freshmen who attend Full-time	Graduation Rate (entered in 1989)	
		From Initial Institution	From Any UW Institution
UW System	90.7	47.4	56.0
Madison	98.4	72.3	74.6
Milwaukee	58.3	39.9	46.2
Eau Claire	98.4	57.3	64.9
Green Bay	96.3	40.3	48.7
La Crosse	99.0	46.2	56.1
Oshkosh	97.9	47.2	54.0
Parkside	80.8	31.8	41.8
Platteville	94.6	54.5	60.5
River Falls	98.5	41.1	44.9
Stevens Point	98.3	52.1	59.0
Stout	99.6	51.0	55.9
Superior	95.9	30.4	34.2
Whitewater	99.0	55.7	62.0
Centers	77.5	n/a	48.2

Note: Includes only freshmen who started full-time. The other tables in this report include both full-time and part-time students.

APPENDIX A

Four-Year Retention Rates by Institution For Those Retained at Starting Institution or Retained at any UW Institution Fall 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988 and 1992 New Freshmen

	Entered 1976		Entered 1980		Entered 1984		Entered 1988		Entered 1992	
	Stay where started	Stay in UWS	Stay where started	Stay in UWS	Stay where started	Stay in UWS	Stay where started	Stay in UWS	Stay where started	Stay in UWS
UW System	41.9	54.3	44.5	56.9	47.6	60.2	52.7	64.1	52.3	63.5
Madison	68.0	72.4	67.4	73.7	72.0	78.4	78.2	81.4	80.1	83.6
Milwaukee	40.6	48.8	45.9	51.9	48.6	55.5	51.4	57.1	46.8	52.0
Eau Claire	48.4	62.6	47.2	61.8	50.9	64.6	57.1	68.5	60.2	71.0
Green Bay	28.7	45.7	37.6	48.4	41.1	53.6	50.3	59.7	50.8	59.8
La Crosse	44.0	56.4	44.0	58.0	47.3	59.8	54.0	67.9	56.7	69.0
Oshkosh	39.7	48.9	48.1	57.1	51.9	62.9	60.6	70.3	56.1	67.0
Parkside	29.0	42.7	28.6	40.2	28.1	39.9	39.8	51.8	32.5	42.5
Platteville	49.8	60.8	53.1	63.2	53.5	63.8	58.4	67.3	62.1	71.3
River Falls	35.4	42.0	44.1	48.5	45.3	50.3	52.3	56.0	55.0	60.2
Stevens Pt.	43.8	55.0	44.3	56.8	50.8	61.7	54.5	64.4	61.0	72.1
Stout	55.0	62.3	54.2	60.7	49.2	55.3	55.8	64.6	54.6	62.6
Superior	34.4	40.4	29.5	34.0	38.9	44.8	39.6	44.7	44.0	49.3
Whitewater	45.4	54.2	48.9	61.8	54.3	65.1	65.1	74.1	58.8	67.5
Centers	n/a	38.6	n/a	38.8	n/a	40.1	n/a	39.3	n/a	36.8

APPENDIX B

**Six-Year Graduation and Seven-Year Retention Rates by Institution
For Those Graduating at the Starting Institution or Graduating at any UW Institution
Fall 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1989 New Freshmen
(Includes freshmen who started full-time and part-time)**

	Entered 1976				Entered 1980			
	Grad Rate from Starting UW	Grad Rate from UW System	7-Year Reten. Rate UW System	6-Year Grad + 7-Year Reten.	Grad Rate from Starting UW	Grad Rate from UW System	7-Year Reten. Rate UW System	6-Year Grad + 7-Year Reten.
UW System	34.6	44.5	6.3	50.8	36.4	45.3	6.5	51.8
Madison	61.0	64.2	6.1	70.3	59.2	63.0	5.7	68.7
Milwaukee	27.0	33.4	10.1	43.5	28.8	33.2	11.8	45.0
Eau Claire	43.4	54.6	5.2	59.8	42.1	53.1	5.2	58.3
Green Bay	24.8	36.4	6.0	42.4	27.2	34.9	5.9	40.8
La Crosse	37.7	47.6	6.0	53.6	37.6	47.3	6.1	53.4
Oshkosh	31.8	37.6	6.6	44.2	37.5	43.3	7.0	50.3
Parkside	18.1	27.8	10.5	38.3	16.8	25.9	8.3	34.2
Platteville	43.6	51.0	5.3	56.3	47.1	53.9	5.5	59.4
River Falls	29.5	34.6	4.3	38.9	35.6	38.7	5.0	43.7
Stevens Pt.	37.4	45.5	5.7	51.2	38.0	46.1	5.7	51.8
Stout	49.3	54.5	3.2	57.7	47.1	52.0	3.1	55.1
Superior	30.3	34.4	3.0	37.4	24.2	28.0	3.5	31.5
Whitewater	39.1	44.7	4.8	49.5	42.8	50.9	5.2	56.1
Centers	n/a	31.4	4.9	36.3	n/a	26.2	8.3	34.5

	Entered 1984				Entered 1989			
	Grad Rate from Starting UW	Grad Rate from UW System	7-Year Reten. Rate UW System	6-Year Grad + 7-Year Reten.	Grad Rate from Starting UW	Grad Rate from UW System	7-Year Reten. Rate UW System	6-Year Grad + 7-Year Reten.
UW System	40.1	48.8	7.0	55.8	44.3	52.6	7.7	60.3
Madison	66.5	71.2	4.4	75.6	72.1	74.4	4.8	79.2
Milwaukee	31.7	36.7	12.3	49.0	32.0	37.0	13.6	50.6
Eau Claire	45.1	55.4	6.1	61.5	56.6	64.3	5.6	69.9
Green Bay	31.2	40.2	7.0	47.2	39.5	47.5	7.1	54.6
La Crosse	37.8	47.4	7.7	55.1	45.8	55.7	6.9	62.6
Oshkosh	43.3	50.0	7.3	57.3	46.9	53.6	9.0	62.6
Parkside	17.1	24.9	9.4	34.3	26.8	35.0	12.2	47.2
Platteville	47.0	53.6	6.2	59.8	53.2	59.0	6.2	65.2
River Falls	36.6	39.8	5.5	45.3	40.7	44.5	6.3	50.8
Stevens Pt.	43.3	51.1	5.9	57.0	51.5	58.4	6.1	64.5
Stout	42.2	45.6	4.4	50.0	45.6	51.1	5.3	61.0
Superior	28.6	32.0	7.7	39.7	29.4	33.3	5.5	38.8
Whitewater	46.4	54.1	6.0	60.1	55.2	61.5	7.1	68.6

APPENDIX C

**Six-Year Graduation and Seven-Year Retention Rates by Student Characteristics
Fall 1976, 1980, 1984, and 1989 New Freshmen**

	Entered 1976			Entered 1980			Entered 1984			Entered 1989		
	6-Yr Grad Rate	7-Yr Reten. Rate	Grad + Reten. Rate	6-Yr Grad Rate	7-Yr Reten. Rate	Grad + Reten. Rate	6-Yr Grad Rate	7-Yr Reten. Rate	Grad + Reten. Rate	6-Yr Grad Rate	7-Yr Reten. Rate	Grad + Reten. Rate
UW System	44.5	6.3	50.8	45.3	6.5	51.8	48.8	7.0	55.8	52.6	7.7	60.3
High School Rank Quartile												
1st	61.5	4.8	66.3	63.5	5.1	68.6	67.5	5.0	72.5	69.8	5.7	75.5
2nd	41.0	7.4	48.5	41.9	7.6	49.5	46.5	8.0	54.5	47.0	8.5	55.5
3rd	27.1	7.8	34.9	27.6	7.5	35.1	28.7	9.0	37.7	27.3	11.4	38.7
4th	13.1	7.5	20.6	11.6	9.2	20.8	14.1	10.0	24.1	16.6	12.5	29.1
No Rank	24.6	5.6	30.2	23.7	5.5	29.2	24.8	6.2	30.9	41.8	5.6	47.4
Age at Entry												
< 20	47.5	6.3	53.8	48.9	6.4	55.3	52.3	6.8	59.1	55.0	7.6	62.6
20-24	19.1	6.5	25.6	21.2	7.0	28.2	22.0	8.0	30.0	27.6	9.5	37.1
>24	15.1	6.9	22.0	12.3	7.9	20.2	16.9	8.4	25.3	22.3	9.9	32.2
Ethnicity												
African-American	12.9	8.5	21.4	13.3	8.6	21.9	19.1	9.2	28.3	24.5	10.7	35.2
American-Indian	17.1	4.5	21.6	18.7	7.9	26.6	18.1	4.5	22.6	24.3	10.3	34.6
Asian-American	35.5	11.1	46.6	39.7	9.9	49.6	46.2	8.1	54.3	53.3	8.9	62.2
Hispanic-Latino	18.6	8.6	27.2	18.3	8.4	26.7	29.3	10.9	40.2	34.3	12.9	47.2
White/Other	45.7	6.3	52.0	46.7	6.5	53.2	49.9	6.9	56.8	53.7	7.6	61.3
Resident												
WI	45.1	6.8	51.9	46.1	7.1	53.2	48.7	7.7	56.4	51.4	8.7	60.1
MN Comp	42.3	1.9	44.2	42.5	2.5	45.0	47.9	2.8	50.7	57.5	2.9	60.4
Non WI	39.2	2.6	41.8	38.3	2.7	41.0	51.8	2.6	54.4	60.7	2.1	62.8
Gender												
Male	43.4	7.6	52.0	44.8	7.7	52.5	47.3	8.0	55.3	49.6	9.2	58.8
Female	45.6	5.0	50.6	45.7	5.4	51.1	50.2	6.0	56.2	55.3	6.5	61.8

APPENDIX D

University of Wisconsin System New Freshman Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Fall 1976	Fall 1980	Fall 1984	Fall 1989
<u>HSR</u>				
Top Quartile	41.6%	40.7%	39.9%	42.6%
Top Half	70.9%	70.6%	71.8%	77.8%
<u>Age at Entrance</u>				
19 years or younger	89.8%	87.9%	89.1%	91.9%
20-24 years	7.3%	8.3%	7.0%	4.9%
25 years or older	2.9%	3.8%	3.9%	3.2%
<u>Ethnicity</u>				
Racial/ethnic minority	4.5%	4.3%	5.2%	6.8%
<u>Residency</u>				
WI resident	87.7%	86.8%	85.5%	83.8%
MN compact	4.5%	6.2%	6.4%	8.1%
Non-resident	7.7%	7.0%	7.8%	8.1%
<u>Gender</u>				
Male	50%	49%	48%	47%
Female	50%	51%	52%	53%
<u>Enrollment Status</u>				
Full-time	94.1%	93.5%	93.7%	90.7%
Part-time	5.9%	6.5%	6.3%	9.3%