

General Education and the Writing Proficiency Requirement

The Office of Institutional Research & Policy Studies, December 13, 2010

The students who attempted the WPR in the past year first entered UMass over 14 different semesters. This group includes both freshmen and transfers.

| | Admissions Term | Transfers | Freshmen | Total |
|----|------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 | Fall 03 | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| 2 | Spring 04 | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| 3 | Fall 04 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| 4 | Spring 05 | 9 | 0 | 9 |
| 5 | Fall 05 | 17 | 41 | 58 |
| 6 | Spring 06 | 21 | 5 | 26 |
| 7 | Fall 06 | 51 | 101 | 152 |
| 8 | Spring 07 | 44 | 4 | 48 |
| 9 | Fall 07 | 146 | 192 | 338 |
| 10 | Spring 08 | 113 | 9 | 122 |
| 11 | Fall 08 | 318 | 95 | 413 |
| 12 | Spring 09 | 163 | 0 | 163 |
| 13 | Fall 09 | 247 | 2 | 249 |
| 14 | Spring 10 | 62 | 0 | 62 |
| | Total | 1,206 | 464 | 1,670 |

There are different requirements for different people and they can be met in a number of ways.

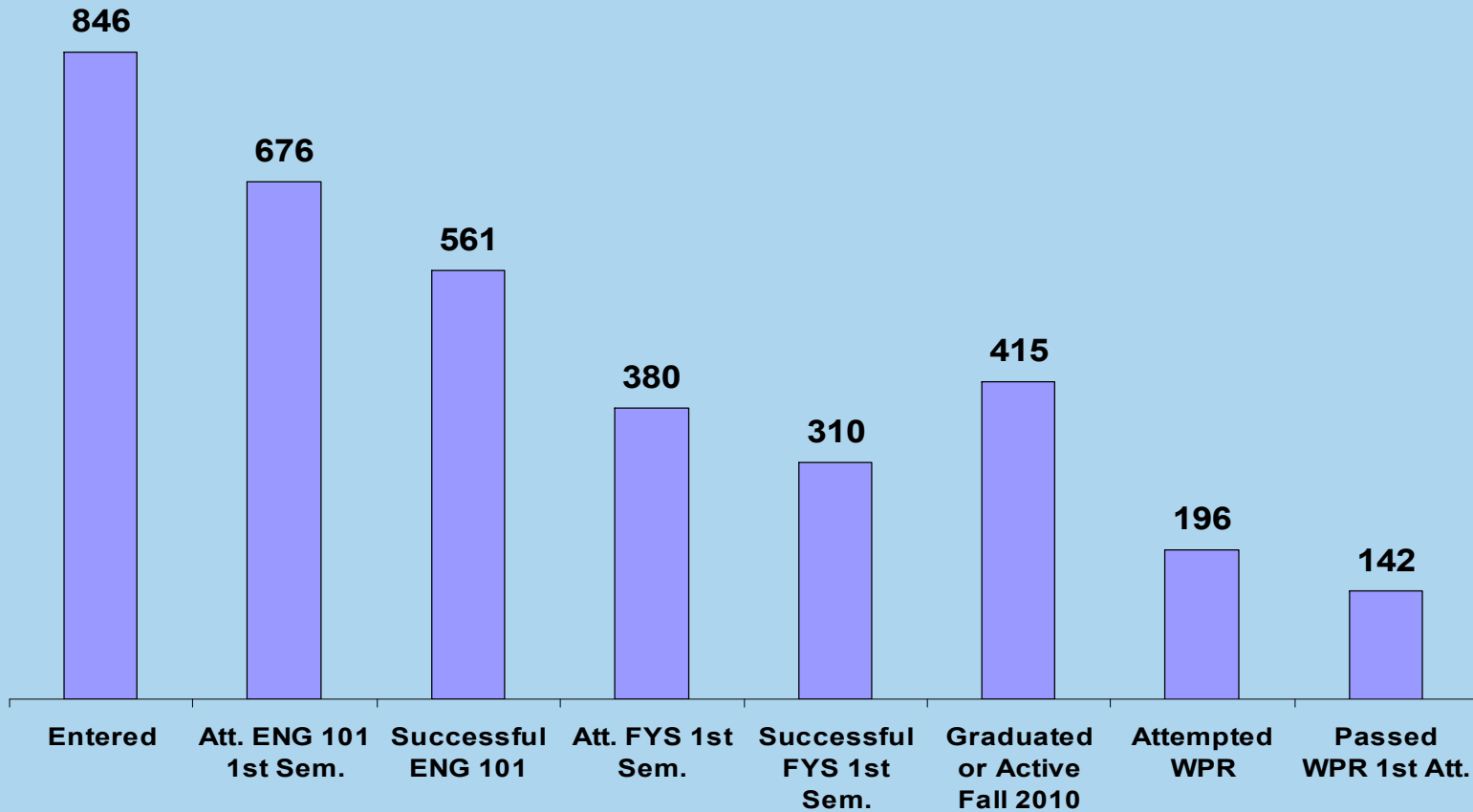
- ▶ Freshmen
 - ▶ FYS at UMB
 - ▶ ENG 101/102 at UMB (could transfer in)
 - ▶ Intermediate Seminar at UMB
 - ▶ WPR
- ▶ Transfer freshmen
 - ▶ FYS at UMB
 - ▶ ENG 101 UMB or elsewhere - ENG 102 UMB or elsewhere
 - ▶ Intermediate Seminar at UMB
 - ▶ WPR
- ▶ Transfer 30 – 89 credits
 - ▶ ENG 101 UMB or elsewhere ENG 102 UMB or elsewhere
 - ▶ Intermediate Seminar at UMB
 - ▶ WPR
- ▶ Transfer 90 or more Credits
 - ▶ ENG 101 UMB or elsewhere ENG 102 UMB or elsewhere
 - ▶ WPR

Fall 2006 freshmen attempted an FYS at different times over the first five semesters, many more than once. 32 currently active students have not attempted an FYS.

| Semester | Number Attempting an FYS | Retakes |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|
| Fall 2006 | 380 | X |
| Spring 2007 | 253 | 9 |
| Fall 2007 | 52 | 19 |
| Spring 2008 | 26 | 4 |
| Fall 2008 | 6 | 2 |
| Spring 2009 | 0 | 0 |

We looked at the fall 2006 cohort of first-time full-time freshmen because they would all be subject to the same requirements.

Fall 2006 Cohort of FT/FT Freshmen



We found pass rates lower than we expected.

- ▶ Only 196 of the 846 students in the 2006 cohort (23%) have attempted the WPR - 72% passed on the first attempt.
- ▶ This seemed low so we checked the 2007 cohort and found that 24% had attempted the WPR with 71% passing on the first attempt.
- ▶ We had expected a pass rate of about 85%.
- ▶ We find a pass rate of 85% for all first attempts we have listed in the file, but the rate is only about 72% over the past five years and 74% over the last ten years.
- ▶ For June 1990 through June 2000 the first attempt pass rate was 89%.
- ▶ The data may be suspect.

Of the 106 students who have graduated, 51 do not have WPR records we can locate.

Majors of Graduates without WPR Records

| Graduation Major | Number of Students |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Anthropology BA | 1 |
| Biochemistry BS | 1 |
| Biology BS | 5 |
| Chemistry BS | 1 |
| Criminal Justice BA | 1 |
| Economics BA | 3 |
| English BA | 3 |
| Gerontology BA | 1 |
| Individual Major BA | 1 |
| Management BS | 29 |
| Nursing BS | 2 |
| Political Science BA | 1 |
| Psychology BA | 2 |
| Total | 51 |

The majority of incoming freshmen do not attempt an FYS in the first semester

- ▶ 45% of the students attempted an FYS in the first semester
- ▶ Another 29% attempted one that spring
- ▶ 21% of the fall 2007 returning students had not attempted an FYS in the first year.
- ▶ 80% attempted an ENG 101 in the first semester
- ▶ Another 11% attempted it for the first time that spring

- ▶ We looked at fall 2007 also.
- ▶ 40% of the students attempted an FYS in the first semester
- ▶ Another 32% attempted one that spring
- ▶ 22% of the fall 2008 returning students had not attempted an FYS in the first year.
- ▶ 83% attempted an ENG 101 in the first semester
- ▶ Another 10% attempted one that spring

Less than half of the students who have attempted the WPR had an FYS in the 1st semester but 87% of them attempted ENG 101 in the 1st semester.

- ▶ Of the 310 students who successfully completed an FYS in fall 2006, 82 have attempted the WPR. 64 (78%) passed on the 1st attempt.
- ▶ Of the 69 students who were unsuccessful ($\leq C^-$) in a fall 2006 FYS only 6 have attempted the WPR. 5 passed on the 1st attempt.
- ▶ Of the 561 students who successfully completed ENG 101 in fall 2006 158 have attempted the WPR. 124 (78%) passed on the 1st attempt.
- ▶ Of the 109 students who were unsuccessful ($\leq C^-$) in a fall 2006 ENG 101 only 12 have attempted the WPR. 6 passed on the 1st attempt.

Grades in ENG 101 or an FYS do not predict success on the WPR as much as they predict who will attempt the WPR.

- ▶ 264 students received a B- or better in a 1st semester FYS. 184 (70%) eventually attempted the WPR with a 70% pass rate.
- ▶ 115 students received a C+ or lower or withdrew from the FYS. Only 12 (10%) ever attempted the WPR. 67% passed.
- ▶ 496 students received a B- or better in a 1st semester ENG 101. 173 (35%) eventually attempted the WPR with a 75% pass rate.
- ▶ 174 students received a C+ or lower or withdrew from ENG 101. Only 23 (13%) ever attempted the WPR. 52% passed.

First semester problems in any class are related to low attempt and pass rates on the WPR

- ▶ 172 students received an “F” in at least one course in fall 2006.
 - ▶ 17 (10%) have attempted the WPR
 - ▶ 10 passed on the 1st attempt
 - ▶ 74% left without graduating.
- ▶ 128 students withdrew from at least one course in fall 2006.
 - ▶ 15 (12%) have attempted the WPR
 - ▶ 7 passed on the 1st attempt
 - ▶ 67% left without graduating.
- ▶ 597 students had neither a “W” or an “F” in the first semester
 - ▶ 167 (28%) have attempted the WPR
 - ▶ 75% passed on the 1st attempt
 - ▶ 43% left without graduating.

We do not know why less than half of the students take an FYS in the first semester, but note that many sections are full.

- ▶ Fall 2008 Student numbers in FYS courses
 - ▶ 4 sections had fewer than 20 students
 - ▶ 8 had 20 to 22
 - ▶ 16 had 23 or 24
 - ▶ 5 had 25
 - ▶ 3 had 26
 - ▶ 3 had 27
 - ▶ 1 had 28
 - ▶ 1 had 29

All counts are taken after add drop, so sections probably had more students originally enrolled.

Verbal SAT Scores and H.S. GPA are both strongly associated with attempting the WPR and with passing the WPR if attempted.

▶ Verbal SAT

- ▶ Attempt 509 No Attempt 484 Pass 532
- ▶ Pass 532 Fail 447

▶ H.S. GPA

- ▶ Attempt 3.15 No Attempt 2.94
- ▶ Pass 3.20 Fail 2.99