

Freshmen Enrollment Focus Groups

Summary of Group 5

Conducted February 6, 2008

Group 5. Eleven students participated. All eleven were assigned to the “undecided” Summerstart advising group, and all took fewer than 15 credits in the fall with three taking 13 and eight taking 14. Seven participants are female, three are students of color, and six transferred credits from high school. One participated in an FIG and one in an FYE. None are honors students, all eleven attended Summerstart, and one participated in fall athletics (football).

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Introductions

First, let's go around the room and say a little about yourself—Why you chose Western, what major you were interested in when you first started at Western and whether that's different now, and your educational plans for the future (do you plan to stay at Western, and how many years until you graduate?)

The majority chose Western for the following reasons:

- The location (close to home)
- The size (compared to other colleges)
- Really like Western (pretty; and the way its set up)
- The people and atmosphere
- Got a scholarship
- Friends or family attend (or attended) Western
- Certain sports

- Certain programs (debate; science)

The majority in this group are undecided as to major. Students are tentatively interested in the following areas: medicine (possibly dermatology), business marketing, engineering (2), environmental science, pre-law, physics, communication sciences and disorders, biology. Most are hoping to graduate in four years, however two students are athletes so they estimate they will be here four and half to five years. One student may take longer than four years because he doesn't want to "cram", and another plans to transfer to the U.W. for law school.

I came to Western because it was the best school in state that I got into, and I'm undecided. 4 years to graduation I think.

I chose Western because I really liked it, I thought it was really pretty, and I liked the way it was set up, I think I want to do something in medicine, like be a dermatologist, and I hope it'll take me 4 years to get my undergraduate, but then I'll probably go back to school.

I chose Western because it was kind of in between sizes between WSU or UW and some smaller schools, so that's why I chose Western. And I think want to do business marketing, kind of undecided, if I want to change. And hopefully 4 years, graduate in maybe less if I do summer.

I came to Western because I like the location and my parents could afford it, because I got a scholarship, and then I'm studying linguistics and Japanese, and I'm gonna be done in 4 years, because that's when the money stops rolling in, so whether I graduate or not, I get 4 years.

I chose Western because I got an athletic scholarship here, so that's why I came. My major will probably be engineering technology, but I'm already under contract here for 5 years because I red shirted this year. So it'll take me at least 5 years, I'm kind of taking my time here.

I didn't really care at the time, what college I went to. I was just putting it off, putting off a decision, putting off a job. I don't know my major, I was looking at something in engineering. I was thinking 4 years. My boyfriend's 200 miles a way and he wants me to come home sooner than 4, so I don't know.

I came to Western because I really liked the people, and I thought it was a great atmosphere to be in. I don't know what I want to major in, I'm considering maybe environmental science, but I don't know. So I'm hoping that I'll graduate in 4 years, but if I don't make up my mind in time it'll probably be a little hard.

I came to Western because it was the best school that I got into, and it offered a debate program, which at the time I was planning on doing. I am trying to do pre-law, and I am trying to graduate in 3 years, but I'm the process of trying to transfer to the University of Washington.

I chose Western because of the size and location, and I have a lot of friends who came up here the year before, and they liked it. Major, probably physics, it might change, but that's what I'm looking for right now. And then hopefully 4 years, maybe a little bit longer, because I don't want to cram.

I came to Western because of the size, and I can run here. I'm running on the cross country team and track team. And because of that I'll probably be here for at least 4 and a quarter years, because I red shirted also. But just for cross country, so I'll have 4 more seasons of that. So yeah, 4 and a quarter years I guess. And I don't know what my major is. I haven't decided.

I came to Western because of the location and because of the size. It was a medium size, the UW was too big, and all the other colleges that I looked at were too small. I plan on majoring in communication science and disorders, and hopefully it will be 4 years.

I went to Western because I had heard good things about it from friends who had been here for a few years. And I didn't get into UW and I wanted somewhere with a good science program, and I think this one has that. I plan on going into biology, and hopefully as close to 4 years as possible. It might be like four and a half years.

Registration Experience

Please talk about your registration experience and the reasons why you chose to take the types of classes and the number of credits that you chose when you initially registered.

In this general overview, students listed various reasons why they took the number of credits that they chose. For the most part, students chose courses to fulfill GUR's or because they wanted to explore potential majors.

One student was advised to take 14-15 credits.

I took classes just for GURs except for badminton, which I took for fun because the counselor said I should take like a 15 or 14 credit load, so, and then I also had biology, which I thought I could use, because I might be interested in something medical.

Two students chose to take fewer than 15 credits because they didn't know what college was going to be like, and they wanted to be able to adjust.

I took Math 112 because to get into the science classes, you have to have that as a prerequisite, and then I took Communication 101, because I'm not very good at speaking in front of people and I figured that's a skill you're gonna need in college for doing presentations and whatnot, so I should take that first to get it out of the way, and then I took Spanish because I would like to learn Spanish and I thought it'd be a good idea to take it. And I only took 14 credits because I thought that if I took more than that, I was just not sure how I was going to adjust. I decided on classes on

my own.

I took a psych class, anthropology, and a communications class. And I really did them because they were GURs and I took a lighter load of just 13 credits, because I didn't know what college was gonna be like exactly, so I just kind of took it easy, so I could adjust. (And did you get help with registering for classes?) I guess kind of. When I asked what classes some of the people in there enjoyed, because there were helpers in there. They told me some that they personally enjoyed, so I guess in that way I did.

One student took fewer than 15 credits because he needed time for football practice.

I took Linguistics 201, Psych 119, and a performing art class for a humanities credit. I took 12 credits because I'm in football. They were saying like, football takes a lot of time of the day. So I took 12 but it added to 14 because we get 2 for playing sports, so. I had 3 classes, with football, and football's like another class. We have an athletic advisor, but he wasn't there at the time. So when Summerstart was here, I just went up there and registered. It was like a 20 minute thing, just went in, did the little class thing, and went back to practice.

One student was signed up for 17 credits originally, but decided this would be too much.

I took engineering graphic design. It was one of those freshmen only classes. I considered majoring in it, but... English 335... Introduction to Martial Arts, that was cool, and I signed up for Math 112 or something, but it was too easy, and I transferred into Math 114, which was still too easy. I took calculus, when I was a junior in high school. But I was afraid, since I hadn't taken any math for a year, I was afraid of college math. I was signed up for 17 credits the day of Summerstart, but I dropped a class because 5 seemed like a lot. I switched to PE because this girl said PE classes fill up if you're not a senior or at Summerstart. I figured this was my chance.

This student took a FIG as well as English 101, yet the credits added up to fewer than 15.

I took classes for GURs. I took a FIG, and then I took English 101 because I knew I had to do it by the end of my freshman year, so basically my schedule was pretty much set up for me when I signed up for my FIG, and then I added English 101. I pretty much registered on my own.

Three students registered for three classes each, to explore certain majors and to fulfill GUR's. Clearly these students were thinking about the *types of courses* they were taking and whether they made sense. They were not thinking about credit loads.

I took Political Science 261, Sociology 210 and Computer Science 101, because I figured that really if I'm going to try and undergrad in political science, then those two classes really made sense, and taking a computer science class is pretty much necessary in college these days. And so, all the help I really got from there was, I had an advisor sign off on my schedule and make sure that everything was fine.

I took English 101, and then Psychology 101. I was originally signed up for physics also, but I dropped that, because it seemed like a lot of credits, and people on the cross country team were kind of telling me that the first quarter's really hard, it's like wake up call, so I kind of wanted to ease into it. And I took the classes that I did take because they were all GURs and I was kind of considering majoring in psychology or English, so I wanted to get a feel for both of those, like in the college setting. And then, at registration, kind of the same thing someone said before. The teacher just walking around, had to sign off on my paper, make sure I wasn't taking too many or too little credits or something like that.

I signed up for History 104 and Physics and Math 112. I took the history just because it sounded fun-- it just seemed interesting. And then the physics and math I took because I'm thinking about majoring in physics, and you basically have to take math all 4 years to do physics. And I went to Summerstart, and when I was there, I got help if I asked for it, but basically I flipped through the book to see what classes were about because there were other people that needed help too.

Academic advising

How did the academic advising you received at Summer Start or from the Advising Center affect the number of credits you registered for? Were you encouraged to enroll in 15 or more credits? What were you told about this? What was your reaction to the advice?

Four students were advised to take 15 credits (or around 15 credits) as it is the average load, or the number of credits needed to graduate in four years. However they took 13-14 credits and figured that was okay.

My advisor, I think she did a pretty good job explaining to us, just kind of broken down, like how many credits we need to graduate, and then that equals out to about 15 a quarter. So then we just, she kind of just said as a disclaimer, so that we know if we take less, we just have to take more later if we want to graduate in 4 years, so I just took 14 because I figured down the road I could take 16 and it wouldn't be that big of a deal. So I had an easier time last quarter.

I had the same thing. They told me 15 was average. I was coming in with 20-24 credits, so because those covered some GURs, I thought maybe it would be okay if I, I think I ended up taking 13 credits, so yeah.

My lady said to take around 15 credits, and the maximum was 18, so I took, well I had 13 and she said I should get another credit, so I just took a 1 credit class, and it was 14 credits or something like that.

It was the same. They told me like 15 credits, so I took 14 credits.

Four students were advised to take 14 or 15 credits as this is a “normal load” or a “reasonable load.” Their schedules worked out to less than 15 credits.

I was told 14 or 15 credits is like a normal load, and I actually ended up taking 13 just because my schedule didn't fit with another 5 credit class, because I actually showed up late to my, I couldn't find where I was on the computers, so I was there a half an hour after it already started, so there wasn't that much space in the classes I wanted, but yeah, basically 14 or 15 credits was normal, and they said that's pretty reasonable as long as you stay on top of your homework, so I tried to stay as close to that as I can.

I had a lot of friends who took freshmen interest groups, and I didn't want to just because I didn't want to have the same classes with the same people. I wanted to meet new people when I came up here. And so, I just was like “Well I'm going to register on my own,” and so I registered for 15 credits, and then when I dropped French and picked up linguistics, it went down to 14, and that was fine. I was really happy that I chose that number. Like, I was told the same thing that you were, that 14 to 15 is a good load for my first quarter, and it was. I had homework, but I mean, I'm taking 17 now, and I feel like it prepped me for that, and I'm not overwhelmed now.

I was also told that taking 14-15 credits was really reasonable, and my advisor actually kind of recommended me to not take 15 if I wasn't going to take introductory courses, because he felt like the work load was going to be a lot, or pretty heavy. And so, he said 14 was a really reasonable expectation for first quarter.

I did 13 credits, but I think that was really good because I kind of had to re-teach myself how to learn because learning in college is a little bit different for the exams, so I thought that was really good. And they said 14-15 I think in my group.

This student didn't know what was considered a normal load. The advisor questioned why she was signing up for 17 credits and asked for her high school GPA.

I didn't know what was normal, but when I went to get my schedule approved by the supervisor lady at Summerstart, she saw I was signed up for 17 credits, and asked me my high school GPA, like asked me “Are you sure you can handle this?” and I was like “Is that a lot?” Four classes didn't seem like a lot because I was used to so many, and that was part of my reasoning when I did drop a class for PE, like apparently 17 is a lot, so maybe I'm over my head.

This student was advised to take 14-18 credits. She ended up dropping from 18 down to 14 because of the amount of homework.

My lady actually said, she didn't really say what was reasonable, she just said sign up for 14-18 credits, and she helped a couple of people, but she was kind of moving really slow around the room, so most people didn't get any help, and basically when she looked at mine, she was supposed to look at ours or something before we left, and she just kind of looked and I was signed

up for 18 and she was just like "Okay, yep, all your times work out good, you'll have time to get from that, okay good," and I was like "Okay." And I only signed up for 18, because she said 18 was the maximum, just because my dad was waiting outside, waiting to hear how many credits, I signed up for, and if I had signed up for less than the maximum, he would have gone "Oh go back and get another class." So, I did it at that time, and then I just had a lot of homework, and that's why I dropped it, and I still had hours of homework every night, so like, I was at 14 credits, but there was no way I could have taken another class, even though that other class was only 3 more credits, I had no time to really get it, so that's why I dropped it.

They told me to take in between 12-17 credits, so I just took 14. I really don't have that good of a reason. And then none of the other classes, the ones I wanted to take were 4 credits, then I'd be taking 18 credits, so I just kept it at 14 credits.

We asked the group to tell us the reasons *why* they were advised to take 14-15 credits, or 14-18. Six students believe the concern was about adjusting to the workload in college and learning how to study.

So you can like, handle the classes first quarter probably.

They just said, like make sure you can handle getting into your first quarter in college and not go overboard.

I just think it's different because in high school, you have homework, so if your grade is bad, you can just turn in a bunch of homework you'll have like an A in the class, but here it's just mainly tests, well most of my classes are, I don't know about the other ones. So I think that when they told us that, it's probably because you have to, it's like you actually have to study, and know it. You can't just like make up and get through the class. So I thought it was good advice to study.

I agree with that. I think they didn't, well my advisors didn't say anything specifically why to take 14 or 15 but I think they meant like, in high school it's different because some people are just good at high school for example, and they can just go through not really having to study, and then to make that transition into college, you have to learn how to study again. So taking a little bit lighter credit load maybe will help you re-learn those things.

I was told that taking 14 was a good balance, that if you stay on track with the 15 credit a quarter average, and you wanted to start fairly easy taking 14, it would be a good balance between not being overloaded the first quarter and not having to overload yourself in subsequent quarters.

I heard that for each credit hour you have 2 hours or something of homework, a day, or maybe just for each credit hour. So for each credit you have class, it would be like 2 hours for each credit for a week. So I just figured it would okay, but I didn't end up having that much homework.

This student understood that in order to graduate in four years, it should average out to 15

credits a quarter.

My advisor told us specifically that to graduate in four years it averages out to 15 credits a quarter, so that was just her recommendation. Stick to that.

Did other students or family members influence your decision about how many credits to enroll in? Who? How? Why?

One student was pressured by her dad to take 15 or more credits in order to graduate in four years because of the money, and he was upset when she dropped below 15.

My dad wanted to know what classes I was taking, and how many credits. He wanted to make sure I was going to be done in four years because the money was gonna stop. So that's why he was worried, and they were pretty upset when I ended up dropping because I was like, I'm either gonna fail this class because I don't have time to even read the book, or you can just let me drop it now before the time period is up, and I won't even have a W on my transcript, and it's not really a big deal, because it's only 1 credit less than 15, because you have to have 15 each time to graduate in four years in something, on average about, and so I was like, I'll just take 16 or 17 some other time and catch the credits back up.

Parents told this student about the study load she might expect, and friends had taken 17-18 credits their first quarter; so she chose to take fewer than 15 credits in order to not be overwhelmed.

My mom told me the whole for every hour of class you have 2 hours of study time, and that was so overwhelming, the idea of it. And so that's why I kept it below. I had a lot of friends who took 17 and 18 credit loads their first quarter, and that seemed far too overwhelming for me, especially with what my mom and my dad was telling me especially. My dad went to law school and was like "Don't take that many."

Teammates told this student that the first quarter is the hardest, so he chose to take fewer than 15 credits.

Some of my teammates on the cross country team just told me that first quarter's the hardest, so I just thought that they were right and decided to take it a little easier than the recommendations.

Logistics of Registering

Since Western has courses with different numbers of credits attached to them, did this affect your ability to register for 15 or more credits?

One student didn't pay attention to the number of credits attached to courses.

Nope. I didn't understand, didn't really pay attention to them that much.

One student said (and several agreed) they would rather take 14 credits than add another class that would put them at 17 or 18 credits, because that would be too overwhelming.

It did seem kind of like as she said earlier, that you had 14 credits, and if you registered for another one, you would have had like 17 or 18, and that seems a tad bit overwhelming, and so it's like you have under 15 or a pretty high amount over 15, so pick one, and go.

As many of you will remember, the Summerstart registration process can be fast and furious and many times students can't get the classes that they really wanted to take. Did this affect you in terms of how many credits you ended up registering for?

The registration process during Summerstart did not affect students in terms of how many credits they ended up taking Fall quarter; however for winter quarter "everything was gone."

I took 3 years of Spanish in high school, and I really wanted to take Spanish 104, but it filled up in 10 seconds, so I took Japanese instead, but that put me at the same amount of credits so it didn't really change my number of credits and I got to learn a different language, so it's okay.

I didn't have that problem at all. Like, all the classes I signed up for, I got into right away.

Registering at Summerstart was a lot easier than registering for winter quarter. I had a wide selection of classes, but for winter quarter everything was gone.

Academic Interest Area

Do you think that the academic area you were interested in pursuing affected your decision to take the credit load that you took Fall quarter? How? In what ways?

Students in this group said no to this question (the majority is undecided as to major). One student mentioned that he couldn't get into any of the prerequisites for engineering.

I didn't really get a chance to take any of the classes I wanted to first quarter for my major, because my major is engineering, and I didn't get into any sciences or anything first quarter. And I was actually told to stay away from math and science and English during fall quarter because of football, they said you'd have a lot of papers and stuff.

For those students in this group who were undecided or unsure about your major, do you think that this uncertainty affected the number of credits you enrolled in?

The majority in this group is undecided as to major, and they were more concerned about selecting a wide variety of GUR's than they were about credit load.

I don't think so, just because I think the first two years, even though we have GURs we have to take, are basically, or me at least, are to take a wide variety of classes just so I can decide on a major, because, like the intro classes are really broad classes, so they're supposed to give you an idea to see if you like that field or that area, and so, it doesn't really bother me.

I had no idea what I was going to major in, and still don't really, so I just made my first schedule feel like my high school schedule. We got an English class, got a math class, got a foreign language, and I got a science, and I was like, there that's it. So that's why I chose those classes initially.

About half of this group was advised to not take English and Math at the same time.

My advisor told us not to take both an English and a math class at the same time. (Six students agreed with this statement)

And I agree. I took an English class last quarter, math class this quarter. If I had taken them both, it would have been really bad.

Co-Curricular and Extra-Curricular Activities

When you were registering for classes, how many of you were interested in participating in extracurricular activities your first quarter?

Band — 1

Sports — 3

Did these types of interests affect your decision about how many credits to take your first quarter?

Two students chose to take lighter loads so they would have time for practice (one was playing football and the other was on the cross country team).

I took 12 credits because I knew it'd add up to 14 because I get 2 credits for playing football, so I took a light load, because it was football season, and I had to go to practice.

Some of my teammates on the cross country team just told me that first quarter's the hardest, so I just thought that they were right and decided to take it a little easier than the recommendations.

One student was in Lacrosse and another was in the Viking band, but this did not affect their decision-making about how many credits to take Fall Quarter.

I was in Lacrosse. It was fine, we had practices at night. Our season's starting right now, so just preparation. But we had practice every other day, so it didn't really affect. I still had time to study, and most of the classes that I wanted to register for or that I registered for were during the day and not conflicting.

Viking band. I was really into music in high school and I wanted to make sure that I had time to go to the practices for viking band, because I wanted to play during football season. I don't think it really affected it because in high school, you have band every day, an hour a day. I had it 2 hours a day because I had a morning class, a 0 period class, and viking band here has 2 2 hour practices a week. So that's nothing for me, so I wasn't even concerned about it.

Financial Concerns and Work Schedules

Did financial concerns enter into your thinking in any way when you were thinking about how many credits were enough or best for you your first quarter? In what ways?

Two students were thinking in terms of being a full time student (minimum 12 credits) in order to keep their scholarship.

Yes, because in order to keep my scholarship, I have to be a full time student every quarter, so I have to take at least 12 credits to be considered a full time student, so I had to make sure I at least had 12 when I was filling out my schedule. That was kind of difficult when I was going through the book, because you see certain classes you want to take, but you see it's only 3, it's only 4, and then you don't want to get up to 16, but you don't want to drop below. It was confusing, but I got through it.

Yeah I have to be a full time student to keep my scholarship.

Parents are paying for one student's tuition; and another student is paying for college on his own. This did not affect their decision-making about how many credits to take.

I just didn't really want to disappoint my parents. They're paying for my college, so when I studied and whatnot, I was obviously doing it for my future, but it was kind of like a respect thing, like if they're going to pay for my college, I should probably go to class and do my homework and keep up my grades.

I'm paying for college on my own, so I figured that this and a house is the only good that you can have, so I'm not really concerned about, I mean I'm gonna have to pay for it anyway. A couple thousand here or there, if I get my education, that's, it's what matters.

Did work levels or scheduling affect your first quarter credit load? How?

Three students worked Fall quarter, however this did not affect registration for Fall classes.

Not when I was trying to register. I knew when I was going to come up I needed to get a job, so I made my schedule so that I would be available.

I just worked weekends and break, so it didn't affect my schedule for the week, but I had to make sure I had time to do homework during the week so I could work on the weekends.

Mine was really flexible, it was kind of whenever I had time so it didn't really matter.

Academic and Social Confidence Levels

To what extent would you say that you took the credit load that you did because you were extremely confident about your ability to do well your first quarter?

Four of the eleven students in this group said they felt confident coming into Western, and they even had more time here than during high school.

I felt fine, actually. I figured, I mean, school's school to me. The only big difference between high school and college is that in college, I actually have a day where I can just sit and do homework, whereas at home I have to like cut the grass and do household chores or something like that, I actually have, I think I have more time at college than I did at home.

I definitely have more time so far this year than I did my junior and senior year of high school. So I wasn't that worried, because I was in this stupid masochistic high school study program. One of the things they always said was "When you get to college, it'll seem easy because you did this," and I'm like, great. College does seem easy having done that.

With the classes that I took fall quarter, they were really what I was big in, in high school, like it wasn't going to be that hard. So figured I'd take the harder ones first, and then just leave them up for later.

It was kind of the same for me. I feel like I'm stronger in math, and that, those subjects, like math and sciences. And so I took a math class, math and physics. Also history, I know I'm not so hard in the English and social studies area, and so I took that because I knew I had a lower credit load, so I'd have more time to study and see what those classes are like in college.

Seven students admitted they did not do well with time management in their first quarter.

I didn't do well, just because I didn't have time in class, like you do in high school, where you just sit there, and you can do your homework in class for your next class kind of thing. Like, we actually had to, here you actually have to sit down and set time to do homework, and be responsible for that. Whereas in high school, you just go day to day and do the homework in class sort of thing.

I personally had to honestly learn how to study, and was actually really surprised when I actually had to read a book. And it's hard for me to sit in stuff when reading, and so in high school it was just a lot easier to study because you got a lot more in class direction. More in class, and it was kind of harder because I had to teach myself.

I had a hard time living in the dorms and managing time, because I've never had roommates before and now I have 2, and then like, part of my building, there's like 4 of our rooms are kind of sectioned off, so we're all like really close, so there's like 10 girls that are super close and bubbly and giddy and always doing something, so it was hard to want to study when there's always something going on.

I live in a really social building. Our doors are open all the time, my entire floor knows everybody else, and myself and my 2 roommates left our door open, and people were in and out constantly. So I'd be sitting there trying to get a paper written, and I learned that I work best when left alone at 1:00 in the morning. When people aren't popping in and out of my room and dragging me along on welcome adventures.

To what extent did students take fewer credits because they wanted to get comfortable with the social climate here at Western? Three students answered this question, saying this was not a factor. They did not consider social time while registering.

When I'm filling out my schedule, I'm not really filling out thinking if I'll have time to hang out. I'm here for school, so when I fill out my schedule, I just make sure I have time to manage my school, and whatever's left, there's time to do whatever. College is short.

Same thing. I just thought about whether I felt I was going to have enough time to study and be prepared for all the classes, and being able to do homework, and if there's social time between or after, then that's fine, but that wasn't a priority.

I didn't make social time, like, I didn't put my schedule like around it, but when I was making it, I kept in mind that I was going to come here and meet a whole bunch of new people, and I had to take into account that I was probably going to want to go hang out with these new people that I'm meeting, but, I just had to take everything into account.

Transfer credits

Some of you brought in credits from either AP courses or community college coursework. Did having these credits affect your decision to take 15 or more credits? How?

Six people brought in AP coursework and one brought in community college coursework. The majority felt they could take less than 15 credits fall quarter since they had extra credits coming in.

It affected mine. I thought I could do a little less since I had so many, so I didn't feel like I needed to push that up with a bunch of credits.

I felt like you had a couple extra to fall back on, like if you had a problem or like you ended up not getting credit for one of your classes or didn't take enough credits, you had a little bit to fall back on. Which was nice.

Well I have 30 credits from that thing I was talking about, International Baccalaureate, but I don't think it really affected my decision on what to sign up for. It's kind of nice to know that I have those, like you were saying, if I ended up having a really bad quarter, it wouldn't put me really far behind, but I don't think it really affected what I signed up for.

It didn't really affect what I signed up for either, but I didn't take more than 15 credits. I was just like, okay I have them, but I still need to take these classes, like GURs.

This student felt pushed to do more so he could move ahead to sophomore status.

It kind of pushed me to actually get more, because I came in with 44 credits, and so I wanted to keep as close to 15 as I could so I could catch up and actually be a sophomore.

Another came in with 5 transfer credits and plans to schedule classes so he can move to sophomore status next fall.

Yeah, I looked at how many credits you need to become a sophomore, and I had credit already coming in, but I only had 5 credits, and so I was looking at my schedule and trying to figure out how many I'd need to take each quarter to be a sophomore next fall, and I based it off of that.

This student points out that you can stay on track if you take 16-17 one quarter then 14 another.

I think that even though you don't necessarily take 15 or more every quarter, as long as you keep within the range, you can stay at or above the average if you take say 16 or 17 one quarter and then 14 another quarter.

Academic and Social Adjustment

Now we would like to find out how you think your credit load affected the experience you had at Western during your first quarter. Do you think that taking 15 or more credits affected your ability to do well in your classes this past quarter? Explain

This group agrees that they were able to do well and to transition into college because they took fewer than 15 credits Fall Quarter. It reduced stress a lot. They were able to handle their homework, and to learn the necessary study skills. They also learned how to set up their schedules for better time management.

I think it made it easier to do well. I mean I got a 4.0 because it was just so easy. I was so bored, I could have had a bigger challenge. I ended up taking Bio 101, which I already took an AP class of, and then environmental science, and a math class.

I think it reduced my stress a lot, because having 1 lab class early morning Tuesday and no class on Thursday pretty much, I had class 3 days a week, and just every other day, and I'd have basically a day of rest in between each class day.

I don't think I would have done as well if I had taken physics, that I dropped, just because I feel like that, with the lab and everything, would have taken up a lot more time, and a lot more effort, and I think I put just the right amount of effort in. Like I think it would have stretched me too thin if I had that many more credits.

Same for me. I didn't drop any classes when the quarter started. I already started with a 13 credit load, but I think taking a lighter load helped me transition into college. Like having to study and stuff. So now I kind of have a taste, I can take more credits and be comfortable. When I sign up for those classes and expect to be able to have time to study and that sort of thing.

I think it helped me adjust to college, and I think it helped me figure out how I wanted to set up my schedules. Like I had a 9:00 class every day, for 5 days a week, and I literally went like 7 times, and so I'll never take a class that early again. I just can't. And so, that helped me figure that out, and now I'm taking 17 credits, but on Tuesdays and Thursdays I only have one class, and so that's nice. So it just kind of taught me how I want to set up my schedule.

It did the same thing for me. When I originally was registering, I thought it was really cool that unlike high school, I could have breaks, so I had random hour long breaks in between my classes, and they ended up just being kind of a waste of my time, and this quarter, I scheduled a lot more of my classes back to back, as close as I could, just to get them out of the way so I could have time to focus and study, because I learned that in those 1 hour breaks, I didn't have time to study the way I needed to.

Yeah, I think it helped me figure out how I needed to schedule my class. Because like last quarter, I only took 14 classes, but it was like really hard, and I didn't do as well as I thought I should have, and then this quarter, I'm taking 16 credits, and it's a breeze. Like, so easy. I'm having the easiest time, so it's definitely a difference.

I'm glad I did what I did, and it was a good way to ease myself in. And it motivated me, because last quarter I learned how my study habits are and how my living situation is, and now it's like I know I can do better, and I'm going to push myself more because of last quarter.

Yeah, it's kind of the same thing for me, except for I don't think that the credit load mattered as much as just finding out how my study habits are, like when I'm living on my own versus when I have people kind of pushing me to study, because in high school, it's kind of all laid out for you. And I think the biggest thing is just going through the first quarter, so you know what your study habits are like, because it's a big transition.

Advice for Incoming Freshmen

What advice would you give to new students coming in next fall with respect to how many credits they should try to register for? Why? What would you tell them about strategies they should use to make sure that they have a good course schedule?

In sum, students in this group would advise incoming freshmen as follows:

- Take 14-15 credits so you can adjust to college, learn good study habits, and keep up with the work load. (Stay close to 15 to stay on track.)
- Consider your ability levels and set up your schedule so you are comfortable with your work load
- Sign up for 18 credits during Summerstart then drop the extra class once you've had a chance to "read the teacher" and determine how much homework there will be.
- Sign up for popular classes during Summerstart because you may not get them later
- Take a variety of courses

Eight of eleven in this group advises freshmen to take 14-15 credits-- (Six say 14-15 credits; and two more recommend staying close to 15 in order to stay on track.) They recommend 14-15 credits because it is "a reasonable amount" or a "good introductory weight"-- so freshmen can adjust to college, learn good study habits, and keep up with their work load.

I'd tell them to take like, the same amount of credits I did, because I was happy with that load. I took 14 credits. And just because it's easy-- you can adjust, and you can still handle your homework and all that. And you can probably still have a job, too, I guess. Like I could have had a job if I looked for one. So you can handle everything.

I'd tell them the same. I'd tell them to take around 14 or 15 credits. I thought that was a really good amount for the first quarter. And I'd also tell them to pick times that you actually are gonna be awake, and that you actually want to go to class.

I would tell them 14, 15 credits is probably best. To help you ease in, because college is different than high school. And I'd probably say something about taking the classes that get taken up winter quarter, because I wish I would have known that, because I would have taken English, or a PE class or really popular classes because I feel like I'm not going to get it until I'm a senior now.

I would say just to take it as close to 15 credits as possible, and for at least the first quarter, try and get things that you think you're at least fairly strong at out of the way because then it gives you a little bit of a confidence booster going into the next quarters, because then you know that you can actually keep up with college and the work load. And other than that, I would just tell them that 14, or 15. Stay within a reasonable amount.

I'd say 14 to 15 credits as well. I think the biggest thing is to realize that now like, you're more independent now that you were in high school. You have to do things for yourself. People aren't going to tell you what to do and when to do it. If you're getting behind in work, it's really gonna get you in the end because, that happened for me, you know, you just got to stay on top of things. Realize that you can't slack off anymore if you want to get a good education.

I'd say 15 or 16 or 14. I mean, I think that's a good load because it's like, a reasonable amount of homework, but it's not a ton, and it's good to just get used to college. It's a different way of life.

I would recommend as close to 15 as possible because it's still keeping you on track with becoming a sophomore on time, and graduating in 4 years, but it also is a good introductory weight as a freshman. You don't have too much homework, but you're understanding how to study for college, with just the right amount. Know your study habits and talk to your roommates about their scheduling and how they study, because you find that some people really like studying with the TV on or something, and you have to know that if you need a quiet place to study, when are you going to get that time, and make sure you schedule time for that? Because if you leave all these random breaks where you're going to want to sleep and stuff, that's going to happen, and you're going to get distracted. So you just have to know yourself, know your study abilities, and what environments you work well in, and schedule something that you'll thrive in.

This group emphasizes the importance of considering students' ability levels, and setting up a schedule so they will feel comfortable with their workload.

I'd probably try to give somebody an idea of how I felt with my work load because I felt pretty comfortable with 14 and maybe let them know that, and maybe try to push them toward taking a little bit more, just so they could keep up, and kind of maybe get an idea of how comfortable they feel, because if it's someone like, if it's my brother for example, I know his abilities, and I would

tell him to take 15, because I know he can do it, I know he can handle that load, but like if it's just some person, you don't really want to push them too hard so you tell them 14 or 15 to stay on track.

I'd just say make sure you set up your schedule with whatever's comfortable that you think you have time for. Manage your schedule to your day.

I would say be realistic. Like, be super realistic. Don't take a 17 credit quarter just because you want to be able to; take it because if you're going to do that, make sure you can do that. Make sure your classes aren't going to be a pain. Don't take an 8:00 class because you wish you could get up at 6:30 to go to an 8:00 class, and then you'll only have part of the day to fill up with classes, you'll have a lot of the day to kill. So just like, make sure you know your abilities.

Another suggestion is to sign up for 18 credits during Summerstart then drop the extra class once you've had a chance to "read the teacher" and determine how much homework there will be.

When you're at Summerstart where there's so much to choose from, you could sign up for 18, because isn't there like 3 or 4 days when you can drop classes with no penalty? Because every class I've ever taken, I could pretty much read the teacher and know what the coursework was gonna be the first day. So you could say, maybe sign up for more classes than you're likely to want, now that you've got the chance, and then you can pick out of what you have. But you'd have to remember that you did that, and remember to drop the extra class.

This student recommends getting involved in clubs or activities in order to have more fun in the first quarter.

With the amount of credit I took I could have probably gotten involved in a club or activity, I mean I probably should have, I'd probably recommend that, because then it's more fun your first quarter, because you don't get a chance to get involved in stuff that often.

Three students suggest signing up for popular classes during summerstart because you may not get them later.

Everything fills up if you're a freshman winter quarter, so sign up for what you can at Summerstart because you're signing up before some people then, and someone said don't take math and English at the same time, I disagree, it wasn't that bad. And the best part is that once it's done, you never have to take another math or English class ever again after that, so I felt really great having that out of the way, doing that first quarter and all.

I would say to take the GURs that are the most popular, because I'm having problems right now because the last 2 quarters, I've tried to get into English 101, and just like with the other classes I'm taking, it just doesn't fit with my schedule, and I have to take it by the end of my freshman

quarter, or my freshman year, so there's gonna be advisors and they're helping people at Summerstart, so talking to them about what are the most popular GURs, like introductory courses and stuff, and get those out of the way so you can take later on when you're a junior or senior, when you need PE just for credit.

Register for things that you're gonna need. I needed English 101, I registered for it, I'm so glad I got it out of the way. It's your one opportunity to be ahead of upper classmen. Take it and run with it, steal the spots.

Finally, this student suggests taking a variety of classes, not just classes toward a major. And again, it's important to register for the popular classes during Summerstart because they fill up.

Well I'd tell them to take a variety, because even if you, I sort of question people who are super certain about their major and they're only going to take that class. If you were going to be encouraging kids to take the popular classes during Summerstart because that makes sense, you sort of have to tell them what those classes are, because you don't really know. I mean, PE, the cool sounding PE classes are sort of a given, but when you're looking at like, various other classes, you don't know. And maybe even though something doesn't sound like it's going to be any fun, maybe everyone has to take it, or a lot of people have to take it, so it's going to fill up anyway.