

WESTERN EDUCATIONAL  
LONGITUDINAL STUDY (WELS):  
FALL, 2005, BASELINE SURVEY OF  
IN-COMING FRESHMEN

(REPORT 2006-02)

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## INTRODUCTION

The Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS) was conceived as a process to obtain data more relevant to Western and its mission than survey data had been able to obtain previously. Rather than continuing to rely on outside survey forms, researchers developed a Western-specific survey form. Development of this survey took about three years, with researchers soliciting input from dozens of individuals, departments and offices. Along the way, WELS researchers also noted where data was already being collected so that doubling up on survey questions was minimized.

The final survey form was considered by all participants to be as thorough and Western-specific as it could be. In the inaugural WELS survey, 1580 in-coming 2003 freshmen participated. These respondents became the baseline cohort. From this baseline—and also from the general population of Western students—samples have been and will continue to be drawn for subsequent WELS surveys.

The fall, 2005, WELS baseline survey of freshmen was administered to students online and over the phone. There were 2,037 in-coming fall, 2005, freshman and 349 in-coming Running Start students contacted to complete the survey. Students were initially emailed the survey and 1326 of the freshman and 177 of the Running Start students took the survey online. Additionally, freshman were contacted over the phone and given a shorter version of the survey, which 188 completed. In all, 1514 (74%) of in-coming freshman and 177 (51%) of the in-coming Running Start students took the survey. Hence, the overall response rate for the fall, 2005, WELS baseline survey was 71%.

General topics covered in the fall, 2005, survey included: initial perceptions and expectations; academic self-perceptions; college preparedness, concern, and motivation; high school experiences; and personal self-perceptions.

Other principle WELS frequency surveys to date include:

- Baseline (summer, 2003): *Western Educational Longitudinal Study* (OIART Report 2003-02).
- First quarter transitions (late fall, 2003): *Fall 2003 Freshmen Transition* (OIART Focus Summary, Issue 8, Volume 4).
- End of first year follow-up (spring, 2004): *Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003* (OIART Report 2004-01).
- End of sophomore year follow-up (spring, 2005): *Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS): Spring Follow-up of Freshmen Entering Fall, 2003* (OIART Report 2006-01).

All OIART reports can be accessed in pdf form at <http://www.wwu.edu/depts/assess>. For hard copies, please contact Gary McKinney. E-mail: [gary.mckinney@wwu.edu](mailto:gary.mckinney@wwu.edu). Telephone: 360-650-3409.

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WELS Fall, 2005, Survey of First-time,  
In-coming Freshmen

**Combined Survey Form  
and Findings**

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