

Graduation Rates and Major-Program Switching Behavior
for New Freshmen and New Transfers:
Examining the Fall 1993 and Fall 1997 Cohorts

This report on the graduation rates and major-program switching behaviors of new freshmen and new transfer students at UMBC is in part a response to questions raised by the *Planning Leadership Team* (PLT) Working Group on Undergraduate Retention in its efforts to develop strategies for increasing the retention and graduation rate of undergraduate students. How many of our students graduate in six years? Are they graduating in the same major chosen when they entered UMBC? If they are not graduating in their original major, in what fields are they graduating?

To answer these questions, this study examines students entering UMBC full-time in Fall 1993 and Fall 1997 as new freshmen or new transfers. The graduation rates and switching behavior for Fall 1993 entrants are shown in Table 1; similar data for the Fall 1997 cohorts are found in Table 2.

TABLE 1: Graduation and Major Switching Behavior of Fall 1993 Full-Time New Freshmen and New Transfers										
NEW FRESHMEN										
Original Discipline Area	# starting Fall 1993	# grad in 6 yrs	% grad in 6 yrs	% grad same major*	% grad same area*	# Graduating in Another Area				
						A&H	SS	SCI	HLTH	INDS
Arts & Humanities	71	39	55%	51%	64%		10	3	1	0
Social Sciences	100	51	51%	47%	78%	3		5	0	3
Science & Engineering	407	224	55%	38%	69%	15	49		2	4
Health-Related	29	9	31%	22%	22%	0	7	0		0
Interdisciplinary	11	6	55%	33%	33%	2	1	1	0	
Undeclared	312	142	46%	na	na	15	81	41	2	3
Total	930	471	51%	40%	68%	35	148	50	5	10
NEW TRANSFERS										
Original Discipline Area	# starting Fall 1993	# grad in 6 yrs	% grad in 6 yrs	% grad same major*	% grad same area*	# Graduating in Another Area				
						A&H	SS	SCI	HLTH	INDS
Arts & Humanities	116	68	59%	79%	90%		6	1	0	0
Social Sciences	269	169	63%	82%	94%	4		5	1	0
Science & Engineering	316	160	51%	70%	90%	0	14		1	1
Health-Related	64	43	67%	91%	93%	1	2	0		0
Interdisciplinary	25	15	60%	27%	27%	4	7	0	0	
Undeclared	208	84	40%	na	na	19	39	22	4	0
Total	998	539	54%	76%	90%	28	68	28	6	1

* percents graduating in the same major and same area for the Total are based on degree-seeking students only. When the undeclared students are included, the % graduating in the same major is 28% for New Freshmen and 64% for New Transfers; the % graduating in the same area is 47% for New Freshmen and 76% for New Transfers.

TABLE 2: Graduation and Major Switching Behavior of Fall 1997 Full-Time New Freshmen and New Transfers

NEW FRESHMEN										
Original Discipline Area	# starting Fall 1997	# grad in 6 yrs	% grad in 6 yrs	% grad same major*	% grad same area*	# Graduating in Another Area				
						A&H	SS	SCI	HLTH	INDS
Arts & Humanities	129	76	59%	43%	79%		11	3	0	2
Social Sciences	156	79	51%	34%	73%	11		7	1	2
Science & Engineering	493	271	55%	33%	69%	21	55		1	6
Health-Related	15	7	47%	57%	57%	1	2	0		0
Interdisciplinary	7	4	57%	0%	0%	1	3	0	0	
Undeclared	339	180	53%	na	na	24	61	89	1	5
Total	1139	617	54%	35%	71%	58	132	99	3	15

NEW TRANSFERS										
Original Discipline Area	# starting Fall 1997	# grad in 6 yrs	% grad in 6 yrs	% grad same major*	% grad same area*	# Graduating in Another Area				
						A&H	SS	SCI	HLTH	INDS
Arts & Humanities	146	96	66%	75%	91%		7	0	1	1
Social Sciences	228	139	61%	67%	86%	12		5	0	3
Science & Engineering	271	169	62%	66%	89%	3	15		0	1
Health-Related	13	6	46%	100%	100%	0	0	0		0
Interdisciplinary	10	6	60%	50%	50%	1	2	0	0	
Undeclared	118	51	43%	na	na	6	23	20	1	1
Total	786	467	59%	69%	88%	22	47	25	2	6

* percents graduating in the same major and same area for the Total are based on degree-seeking students only. When the undeclared students are included, the % graduating in the same major is 25% for New Freshmen and 61% for New Transfers; the % graduating in the same area is 50% for New Freshmen and 78% for New Transfers.

Source: EIS and DIS Files
Prepared by UMBC OIR, 8/2004.

Graduation Rates

The overall six-year graduation rate for both groups of students improved between the Fall 1993 and 1997 cohorts, increasing from 51% to 54% for new freshmen and from 54% to 59% for new transfers. However, the percent of those who declared a major upon entry actually graduating in that *same major* declined, dropping from 40% to 35% for new freshmen and from 76% to 69% for new transfer students. When looking at the percent of students graduating in the *same broad academic area*, the percentage for new freshmen increased from 68% to 71%, while that for new transfers decreased slightly from 90% to 88%.

Where Did They Go?

Of those new freshmen in Fall 1993 who declared a major, 106 graduated in six years in an academic area different from that original major. The majority of these students who switched academic areas went into a Social Science major (63%), with the majority of these (73%) coming from Science & Engineering. Among this same group in Fall 1997 (n=127), the majority (56%) also switched to the Social Sciences, with about three-fourths of these students again coming from Science & Engineering.

For those new freshmen who graduated in six years but had not declared a major upon entry in Fall 1993 (n=142), most (57%) went into the Social Sciences, followed by Science & Engineering (29%). However, for this same group in Fall 1997 (n=180), the highest percent (49%) graduated in a Science & Engineering major, followed by 39% in the Social Sciences.

Among students entering in both fall semesters, new transfers were more likely than new freshmen to graduate in the same major and the same broad academic area. For those new transfers entering in Fall 1993 with a declared major and graduating within six years in a different broad academic area (n=47), most (62%) switched into the Social Sciences. The same is true for those students who entered without a declared major, with almost half graduating in a Social Science major. These trends hold true for the new transfers entering in Fall 1997, as well.

Differences in Graduation Rates by Academic Area

Charts 1 and 2 indicate the percent of those new freshmen and new transfers who graduated within six years and did so in their original major. It is clear that those students who enter as new transfers are more likely than those who come in as new freshmen to graduate in the major declared upon entering UMBC. For both new freshmen and new transfers in the three areas with the most majors- Science & Engineering, Social Sciences, and Arts & Humanities- students entering and declaring a major in Fall 1997 were less likely than those entering in Fall 1993 to graduate in that same major.

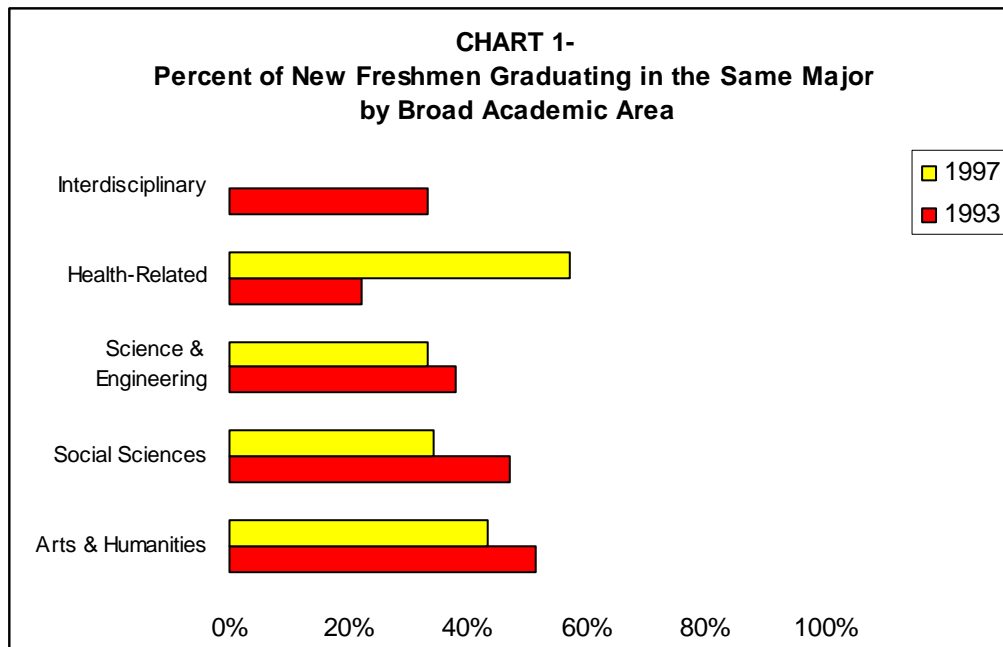
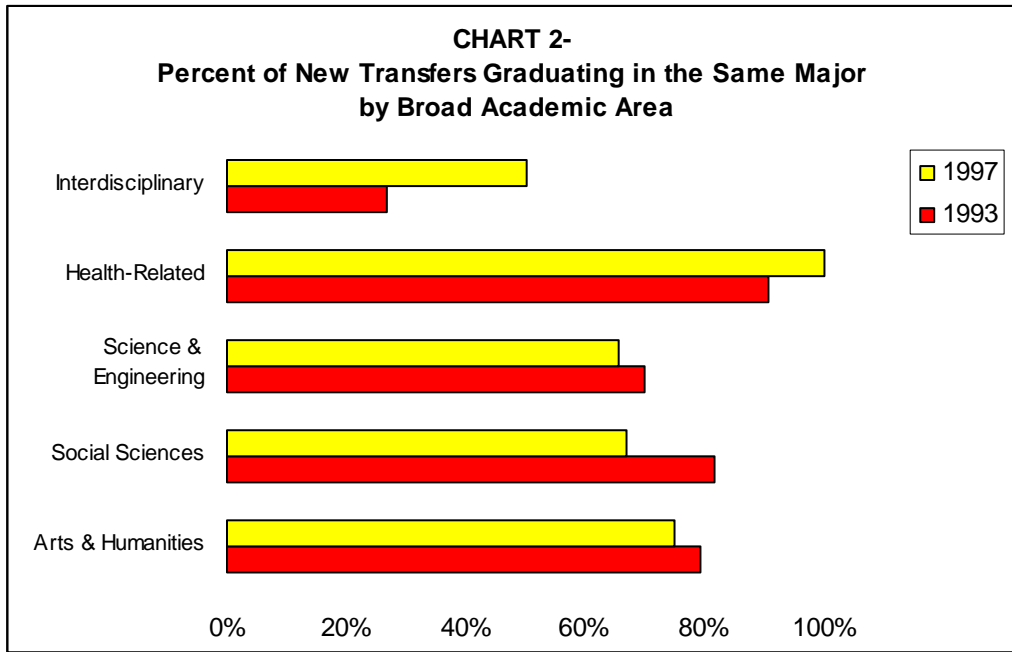
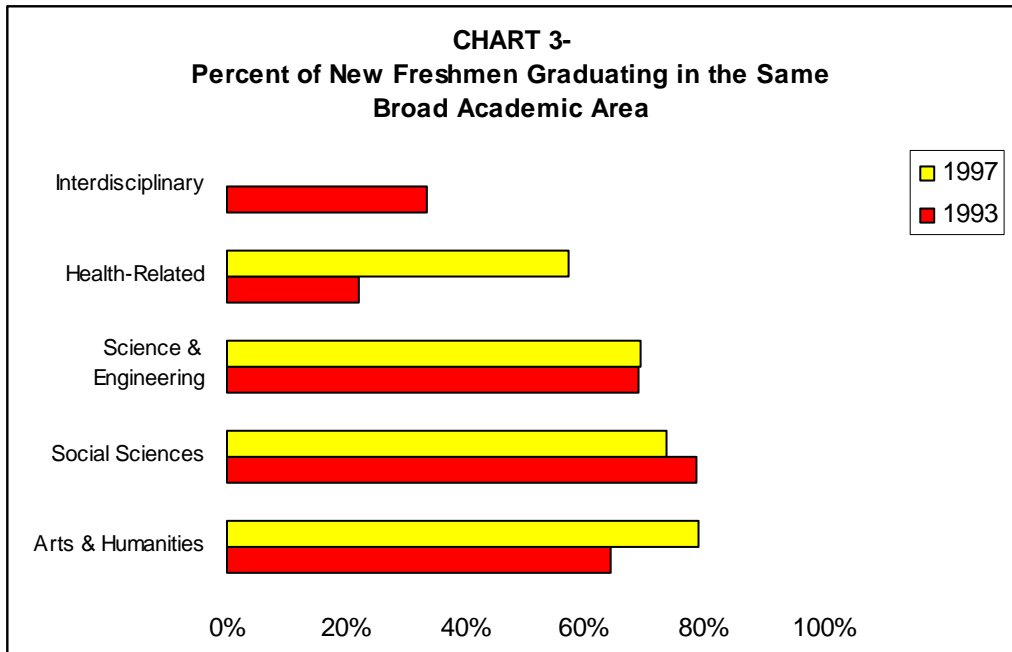
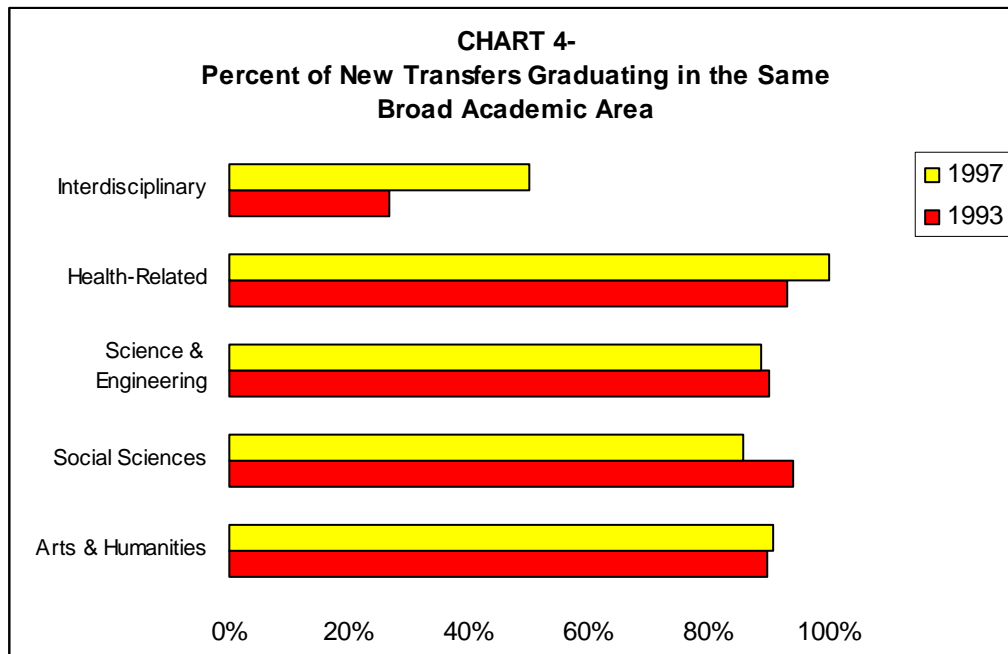


Chart 1 shows that for new freshmen in both cohorts, those students in the Arts & Humanities were more likely than those in other academic areas, with the exception of the relatively few students in Health-Related majors, to graduate in the same major. As seen in Chart 2, again excepting the Health-Related majors, the area with the highest percent of new transfers graduating in the same major was the Social Sciences for the Fall 1993 cohort and the Arts & Humanities for the Fall 1997 cohort.



Charts 3 and 4 indicate the percent of those new freshmen and new transfers who graduated within six years and did so in the same broad academic area as the major they declared upon entering UMBC. Again, those entering as new transfers were more likely than those entering as new freshmen to graduate in the same broad academic area as their declared major. And while those in the Social Sciences were more likely to graduate in the same area for the 1993 cohort of new freshmen, the area retaining the highest percentage of students for the 1997 cohort was the Arts & Humanities. This holds true for new transfers as well, with the exception of the small number of students in the Health-Related majors who exhibited relatively higher graduation rates in the same broad academic area.





Summary

- New transfers were more likely than new freshmen to graduate in the same major they planned at the time of matriculation.
- For both groups (new freshmen and new transfers), if they switched, they tended to switch to another major within the same discipline area (e.g., from a Social Science major to a different major in the Social Sciences).
- For those who graduated in a different discipline area, excluding those who started as Undeclared majors, the most common switch was from the Sciences & Engineering to the Social Sciences.
- New freshmen who started as Undeclared majors in Fall 1997 were most likely to earn a degree in the Sciences & Engineering, followed by the Social Sciences. While these two areas were also the most popular choices for Undeclared new freshmen in the Fall 1993 cohort, these students were more likely to choose the Social Sciences over Science & Engineering.
- New transfers in both cohorts who started as Undeclared majors tended to end up in the Social Sciences, followed by the Sciences & Engineering.