

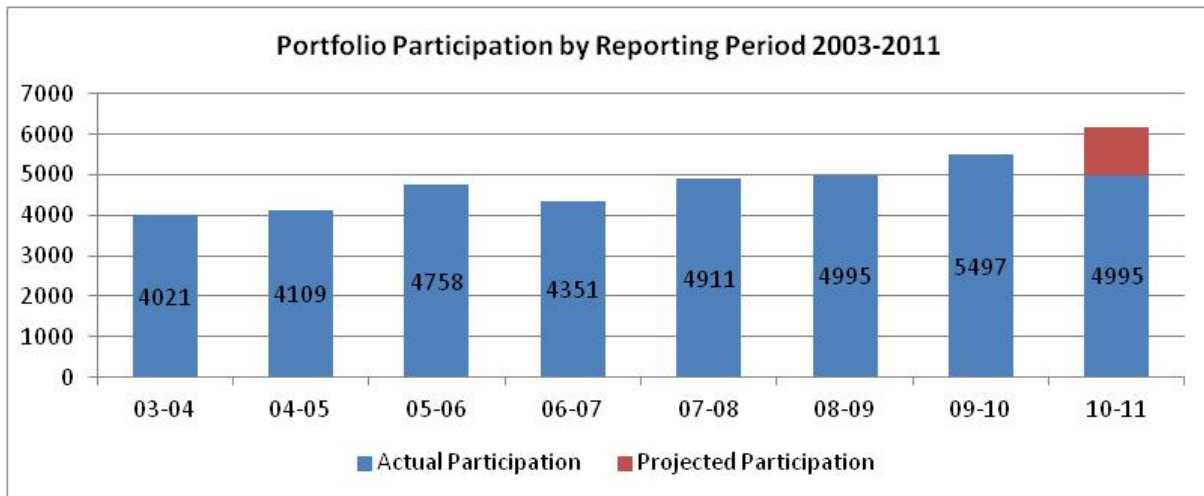
**Writing Portfolio Internal Report #10 Summary**  
Office of Writing Assessment  
Washington State University

**Ninth Findings**  
**June 2009 – May 2011**

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**Participation**

Since its first implementation in Spring 1993, more than 65,000 students have completed the Washington State University Writing Portfolio. A record total of 10,492 students submitted work between June 1, 2009 and May 31, 2011. This represents the highest number of participants in the history of the program.

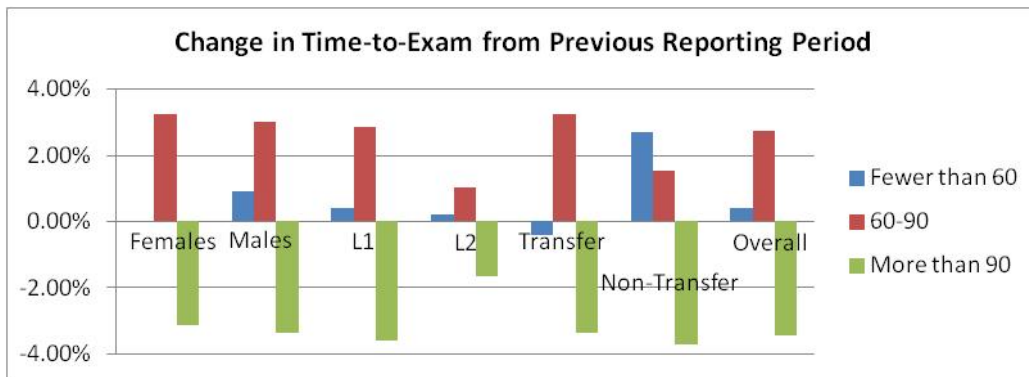


The 2009-2010 reporting period shows the highest participation in Portfolio submissions in the Writing Assessment Program's history. Because 2011 data represents only a partial year, projections suggest an even higher number of submissions. Fluctuations in Writing Program participation likely reflect changes in overall enrollment at WSU, and as a result, a continued increase in participation is likely as overall enrollment numbers continue to rise.

Despite the significant increase in participation, students' overall pass rates have remained stable at close to 90%. The overall pass rate for the previous reporting period was 90.4%; for the 2009-2011 reporting period the pass rate was 90.3%. Given these increasing demands placed on an assessment mechanism designed for roughly half the number of participating students, the administrative staff of the writing program should be commended for the ongoing excellence and efficacy of this program.

## Time to Exam

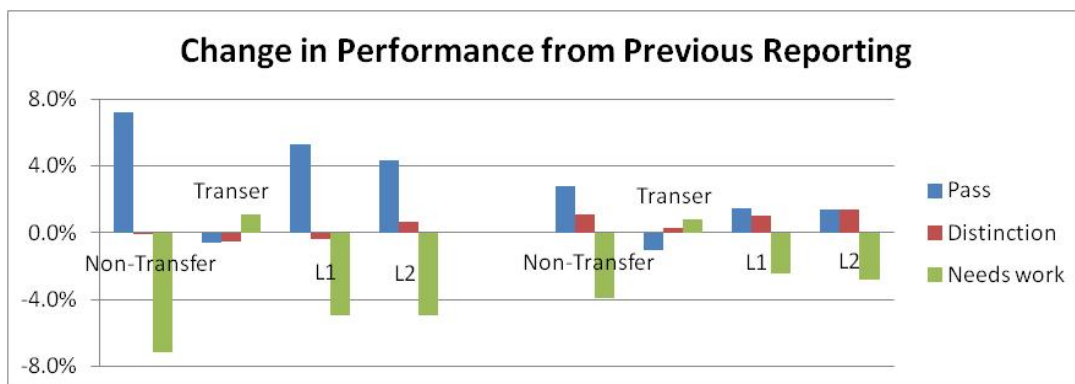
Assessment research shows that the optimal time in a student's career for the completion of the Writing Portfolio ranges from 61-90 credit hours. The 2009-2011 report indicates that over 70% of all participating students completed their portfolio between 61 and 90 credit hours. Even with the dramatically increased submission numbers, outreach efforts now have students complying with the Writing Portfolio requirement closer to the optimal timeline than ever before.



## Historically Marginalized Student Populations

Despite national efforts and significant ongoing research, students identifying as White/Caucasian continue to score higher than students from all other categorical identifications with multilingual students (L2) scoring lowest of all. This trend continues to be reflected in the WSU program data suggesting that WSU's two-tier system and Writing Portfolio are not exempt from assessment biases that favor white, monolingual students; data also suggests, however, that this happens at a lower rate than under other assessment mechanisms.

L2 writers historically have received Needs Work ratings at the Tier I level about twice as often as L1 students and about three times as often at Tier II. L2 student Pass and Pass with Distinction rates remain far below those of L1 students as well. Nevertheless, L2 students during the 2009-2011 time period did, however, demonstrate improvement when compared to historical averages. As indicated below, L2 students in 2009-2011 earned -4.5% fewer Needs Work ratings at Tier I than L2 students during 2003-2011. At Tier II, L2 students earned -2.6% fewer than the cumulative averages. This data suggests that L2 student scores may be improving.



## Conclusions

Since it was first administered during Spring Semester 1993, more than 65,000 students have completed the Washington State University Writing Portfolio. As previously mentioned, more students participated in the past two years than ever before. In the midst of these increasing numbers as well as a national educational budget crisis, this program has continued to not only serve students in the same equitable manner as in past years, but it also has offered improved support and promising results. The data in these findings demonstrates that the Writing Portfolio portion of the WSU Writing Assessment program remains a model diagnostic writing program that is and should be emulated at institutions nationwide.

In support of this program's relentless pursuit of excellence and equitability, we have identified several issues that offer potential for further research and possible growth.

- Student advising and faculty development activities that specifically address the needs of L2 learners appear to be making overall improvements in the performance of L2 students and should be continued. However, L2 students continue to be scored significantly lower than L1 students. Further research should be conducted that considers the relationship between curriculum and assessment for this student population. Rater training for reading L2 student work should be reviewed.
- Assessment research should continue to be surveyed in relation to the efficacy of the timed exam component of the Writing Portfolio. The current WSU process that uses timed writing as a *supplementary* component of the assessment mechanism has been validated as a model that is far superior to those exclusively dependent upon timed writing assessments. Nevertheless, there is significant ongoing debate over the validity and reliability of timed writing as a means of measuring student writing proficiency, its relationship to authentic professional and academic writing tasks, and its accessibility to L2 student writers and students of color.
- WSU should consider expanding self-reporting categories for gender expression. Currently, reporting is limited to cis-gender categories (male/female) and reinforces dominant but exclusive understandings of gender. The current categories do not offer options for transgender, gender-queer, and other non-normative gender expressions. Without this information, researchers are unable to assess the Writing Portfolio's role in supporting the university's mission of gender inclusiveness and the report itself can be seen as validation of exclusive gender identification processes at the university.
- Continue to monitor performance by students self-identifying with race description and also determine the criteria by which students self-identify as mono and multilingual writers. An additional category of "multiracial" should be considered. Significant debate is ongoing about the national significance of race descriptors and their role in reinforcing systemic inequality. Further research should be conducted to scrutinize the limitations and uses of race descriptors at WSU and in writing assessment