

California Maritime Academy
Annual Learning Results: Institution-Wide Writing Assessment
2009-2010

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in conjunction with the Committee on Educational Effectiveness

1. Executive Summary:

In its endeavor to further develop a comprehensive culture of evidence for effective student learning, the faculty of the Writing Program, in conjunction with the Institution-Wide Assessment Council, set out to measure written communication through a variety of assessment instruments, including Graduate Writing Exam data, cross-disciplinary and campus wide surveys, and data collection for multiple types of student writing. The following results represent a multi-faceted, aggregated and disaggregated analysis of student performance in written communication.

Were Standards Met?:

- Student Writing Samples: Yes: Writing standards were met by students of all majors and levels in the areas of “content” and “organization,” with scores no lower than a “four” out of a possible “five.” No: Standards were nearly, but not quite met in the area of “mechanics,” with an averaged score of 3.79 out of a possible “five.”
- Faculty Attitudes Survey: Yes: 89% of seniors were ranked “adequately” or “well-prepared” for writing on the job. No: faculty were satisfied with seniors’ abilities in eight of sixteen skill sets. The remaining eight (skill sets in mechanics/utilizing and documenting external sources) ranked between “somewhat satisfied” and “somewhat dissatisfied.”
- Comparison of Student Test Scores With Demographic Data: No: Technical fields are much less likely to pass the Graduate Writing Exam than non-technical fields.

Improvement Plans:

1. Review of current assessment tools and standards for success.
2. Correlation of the 2010-11 Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) data (forthcoming) with current faculty perceptions of student achievement.
3. Development and implementation of a cross-disciplinary faculty poll, clarifying/determining:
 - a. Which, if any, documentation style is preferred in student research papers?
 - b. Which aspects of integrating and citing source material are especially problematic for students?
2. More specific assessment of writing mechanics issues on the lower-division level, across the Culture & Communication program, and implementation of changes in relevant course(s).
3. Development of a plan for improving GWE pass rates for more technical majors.

This report will be included in the 2010 EER for WASC Accreditation, as part of Cal Maritime’s Assessment of Institution-Wide Student Learning Outcomes for 2009-2010. It will also be housed in the UWAC database and made available on the Cal Maritime website. Finally, this report will be instrumental in the development and implementation of the 2010-2011 Culture & Communication Program Review.

2. Closing the Loop: Status of Proposed Action Items

	Next Step #1
a) "Next Steps"	Design/implement university-wide assessment of UW-SLO: Communicate effectively
b) Status of Next Steps	Completed, 5/10✓

3. What do We Want Students to Learn?

	Evidence #1	Evidence #2	Evidence #3
a) 2009-10 UW-SLO	"Communicate effectively"	"Communicate effectively"	"Communicate effectively"
b) Learning Criteria: (specific qualities desired in student work)	"Acceptable" levels of content mastery, organization, and mechanics.		
c) Standards for Success:	Desired outcome: Score averages above 4.0, in all three areas. Required outcome: Consistent "acceptable" score averages, even when disaggregated by course level and type.	Desired outcome: At least 80% of seniors ranked at least "adequately" or "well" equipped for writing on the job. Even distribution of adequate scores in specific writing skill sets.	Desired outcome: More or less equal pass rates across majors.

4. What Evidence do We Use to Assess Their Learning?

	Evidence #1	Evidence #2	Evidence #3
a) Evidence: Describe summative evidence you analyze & the size of the sample	31 courses, 596 writing samples (paper clip)	28 faculty (paper clip)	841 Graduate Writing Exams (Junior Level) (paper clip)
b) Assessment Tool/Method	Student Writing Sample/Rubric	Faculty Attitude Survey	Comparison of Test Scores With Student Demographic Data
c) Assessment Process:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faculty chose an assignment in which students wrote a minimum of 750 words of formal/structured prose. 2. Faculty randomly selected 20% of the work (or ten samples--whichever was the larger number) for assessment. 3. Faculty used the "General Writing Assessment Rubric" to generate three numerical scores for each paper: one for content, one for organization, and one for mechanics. Faculty recorded each paper's score on a score sheet ("Writing Assessment Score Sheet"). 	<p>Faculty completed a survey measuring:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confidence in student writing, both in general, and within specific parameters. 2. Total number of writing assignments in their courses. 3. Writing genres utilized in their courses. 4. Writing pedagogies utilized in their courses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student test data was disaggregated by major, over a period of four semesters, to determine whether a pattern was discernible. 2. Student test scores were disaggregated by transfer status, to see if a pattern was discernible.

5. How Well Are They Learning? (And SO WHAT?)

a) Results of Student Learning	Evidence #1	Evidence #2	Evidence #3
	<p>1. Averaged student writing scores across all majors and levels were ranked as follows: 4.01 (Content); 4.07 (Organization) and 3.79 (Mechanics) out of a possible six. All three scores fell within the "Acceptable" range. Note: scores in mechanics were the lowest of the three scores. (Figure 1)</p> <p>2. Averaged student writing scores disaggregated by course level (lower vs. upper division) fell within an "Acceptable" range of 3.67 (mechanics, upper division) and 4.15 (content, upper division). (Figure 2)</p> <p>3. Though averaged student writing scores disaggregated by course type (general education vs. courses in the major) fell within "Acceptable" levels (ranging from 3.7 (mechanics in major courses)-4.3 (organization in general education courses), in all three areas, scores were higher in general education courses and lower in courses in the major. (Figure 3)</p>	<p>1. Confidence: 0% of faculty surveyed believe that entering freshmen are "well-prepared" for college-level writing; 46% believed they are "poorly" prepared; 29% "do not know." (Figure 5)</p> <p>2. Confidence: 52% of faculty surveyed "do not know" how prepared transfer students are for college-level writing; however, 37% believe that they are "adequately" prepared. 0% believe they write "well"; (Figure 6)</p> <p>3. Confidence 68% of faculty surveyed believe that graduating seniors write "adequately"; 21% believe they write "well." (Figure 7)</p> <p>4. Confidence in seniors' specific writing skills: Faculty were only "somewhat satisfied," at best, across all skill sets. Skill sets which ranked the lowest involved mechanics, and integration and citation of outside source material. (Figure 8)</p> <p>5. Average number of writing assignments: Culture & Communication, the department housing Cal Maritime's composition courses, had the highest number of writing assignments per course, at 11.9. IBL held the second highest average, at 4.3, and ET the third, at 3.2. The rest of the departments fell under 3 writing assignments per course. (Figure 9)</p> <p>6. Writing genres utilized (total): Research papers were by far the most frequently assigned writing genre (17, in all departments), followed by lab reports (10), collaborative projects (10), summaries/abstracts (8) and journals/reflection papers (7). Case studies (5) and position papers (5) were also assigned somewhat frequently. (Figure 10)</p> <p>7. Writing genres (by department): C&C and IBL assigned the widest</p>	<p>1. The average pass rate across all majors, from fall 2008-spring 2010 was 34%.</p> <p>2. GSMA and IBL students had the highest passing rates, at 50% and 45%, respectively. MET was the next highest, at 39%. MT, ME and FET scored below average, at 26%, 20% and 13%, respectively. (Figure 19)</p> <p>3. Students who take their lower-division composition at Cal Maritime pass the GWE at a 57% pass rate. Students who transfer in their lower-division composition course are much less likely to pass the GWE (31%). (Figures 21 & 23)</p> <p>4. Additional information: between fall 2004-Spring 2008, 31% of students who transferred in their basic composition course left Cal Maritime before taking the GWE. (Figure 22)</p>

		<p>variety of writing genres, at 10 each. ET and ME each assigned 7 genres; GSMA 5, S&M 4, and MT 2. (Figures 11-17)</p> <p>8. Faculty across the disciplines tended to use most “best practices” writing pedagogies either “always” or “sometimes,” with the exceptions of “having students read/respond to other students’ writing” and “conferring with students on papers in progress.” (Figure 18)</p>	
b) Achieving Standards: Did your program achieve its standards for success?	Yes, in the areas of “content” and “organization.” Not quite, in “mechanics.”	<p>Yes: 89% of seniors were ranked “adequately” or “well-prepared” for writing on the job. No: faculty were satisfied with seniors’ abilities in eight of sixteen skill sets. The remaining eight (skill sets in mechanics and utilizing and documenting external sources) ranked between “somewhat satisfied” and “somewhat dissatisfied.”</p>	No: Technical fields (especially FET) are much less likely to pass the Graduate Writing Exam than non-technical fields.
c) Discussion of Results for Program Improvement:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For the next iteration of this assessment tool, distribution of scores, as well as averages, should be calculated. 2. Upper-division instructors should be polled as to what mechanics issues they are seeing in their courses, in order to determine why they are ranking mechanics so low. Are there higher-order mechanics concerns? 3. An attempt should be made to determine why major professors are ranking student writing lower than general education professors. Is this a matter of genre/writing in the disciplines issues? 4. The definition of “mechanics” needs to be discussed and agreed upon by faculty, to ensure that it is being assessed accurately (e.g. Are documentation style and essay formatting a part of mechanics?). 5. In some cases, students do not seem to be practicing upper-division genres until they are upper-division students. Perhaps this should happen earlier? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 89% of faculty feel that seniors write adequately or well. 2. Some faculty did not answer some of the questions on the survey, which indicated that they do/did not teach freshmen or seniors; because of this, some of the results may not be entirely accurate. 3. The progress of transfer students, as a group, needs to be made more visible. 4. Not enough courses were assessed in the “Average Number of Writing Assignments Per Course” assessment tool. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students in more technical majors need to have similar GWE pass rates. 2. The progress of transfer students, especially if they tend to leave Cal Maritime at a higher rate than traditional students, needs to be made more visible.
d) Participants in	Vivienne McClendon, Director, CETL		

Discussing/Reviewing Results	Graham Benton, ALO/C&C core faculty Stephen Pronchick, Chair, ME Lloyd Kitazono, Chair, M & S/Coordinator, Faculty Development Lui Hebron, GSMA core faculty Bunny Paine-Clemes, C&C core faculty Julie Chisholm, C&C core faculty
e) Communication of Results:	This report will be included in the 2010 EER for WASC Accreditation, as part of Cal Maritime's Assessment of University-Wide Student Learning Outcomes for 2009-2010. It will also be housed in the UWAC database and made available on the Cal Maritime website. Finally, this report will be instrumental in the development and implementation of the 2010-2011 Culture & Communication Program Review.

5. Now What? (Plan to Improve Our Program)

	Proposed Change #1	Proposed Change #2	Proposed Change #3
a) Proposed Changes	Faculty poll, asking: 1. Which, if any, documentation style is preferred in student research papers? 2. Which aspects of integrating and citing source material are especially problematic for students?	More specific assessment of mechanics issues on the lower-division level, across the Culture & Communication program, and implementing changes in the relevant course(s).	A plan for improving GWE pass rates for more technical majors (especially FET students) should be developed.
b) Rationale for Proposed Changes	1. It is unclear whether the documentation styles taught in lower-division composition are compatible with upper-division writing assignments. 2. It is not known whether students have more trouble literally incorporating the ideas of others into their work, or citing their sources, or both.	1. It is not known how much and what kind of mechanics instruction is occurring in C&C courses, especially EGL 100. 2. What is being taught in the C&C program is not adequate for upper-division students in the majors.	1. Students in technical fields fall well below the average in passing the GWE.
c) Proposed Completion Date	Fall 2010	Fall 2010-Spring 2011	Fall 2010-Spring 2011
d) Stakeholders Involved	C&C Program	C&C Program	C&C Program; core faculty
e) Vetting to Stakeholders	Coordinators of Writing Program	Coordinators of Writing Program	Coordinators of Writing Program
f) Shepherding Changes	Coordinators of Writing Program	Coordinators of Writing Program	Coordinators of Writing Program
g) Budget Integration	N/A	N/A	UWAC?
h) Incorporating Changes	Coordinators of Writing Program	Coordinators of Writing Program	Coordinators of Writing Program
i) Improvement Target Goals	Across the board improvement in faculty perception in seniors' documentation/citation abilities.	Equal coverage of common mechanics issues in lower-division composition courses.	Less disparity in the pass rates of students majoring in technical fields, on the GWE.
j) Evidence of effectiveness	Across the board improvement in faculty perception in seniors' documentation/citation abilities.	Less disparity between lower-and upper-division mechanics scores, on the next iteration of the UW writing assessment.	Less disparity in the pass rates of students majoring in technical fields, on the GWE.

6. Reflection on Assessment Process

	Reflection #1	Reflection #2	Reflection #3
a) Strengths	A large amount of data/multiple assessment tools yielded a great deal of information.	Assessment was developed and implemented efficiently and in a timely manner.	Assessment tools were developed in accordance with UW- and Program SLOs.
b) Modifications	Assessment tools need to be fine-tuned to ensure that all data is statistically significant.	Faculty buy-in needs to be stronger. In some cases, data samples were too small.	Technology support needs to be more consistent/robust. Data collection/analysis tools needs standardization.

7. What do We Want Students to Learn?

a) UW-SLOs	"Communicate Effectively"
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Appendix: Graphs generated by raw data

Cal Maritime Summer 2010

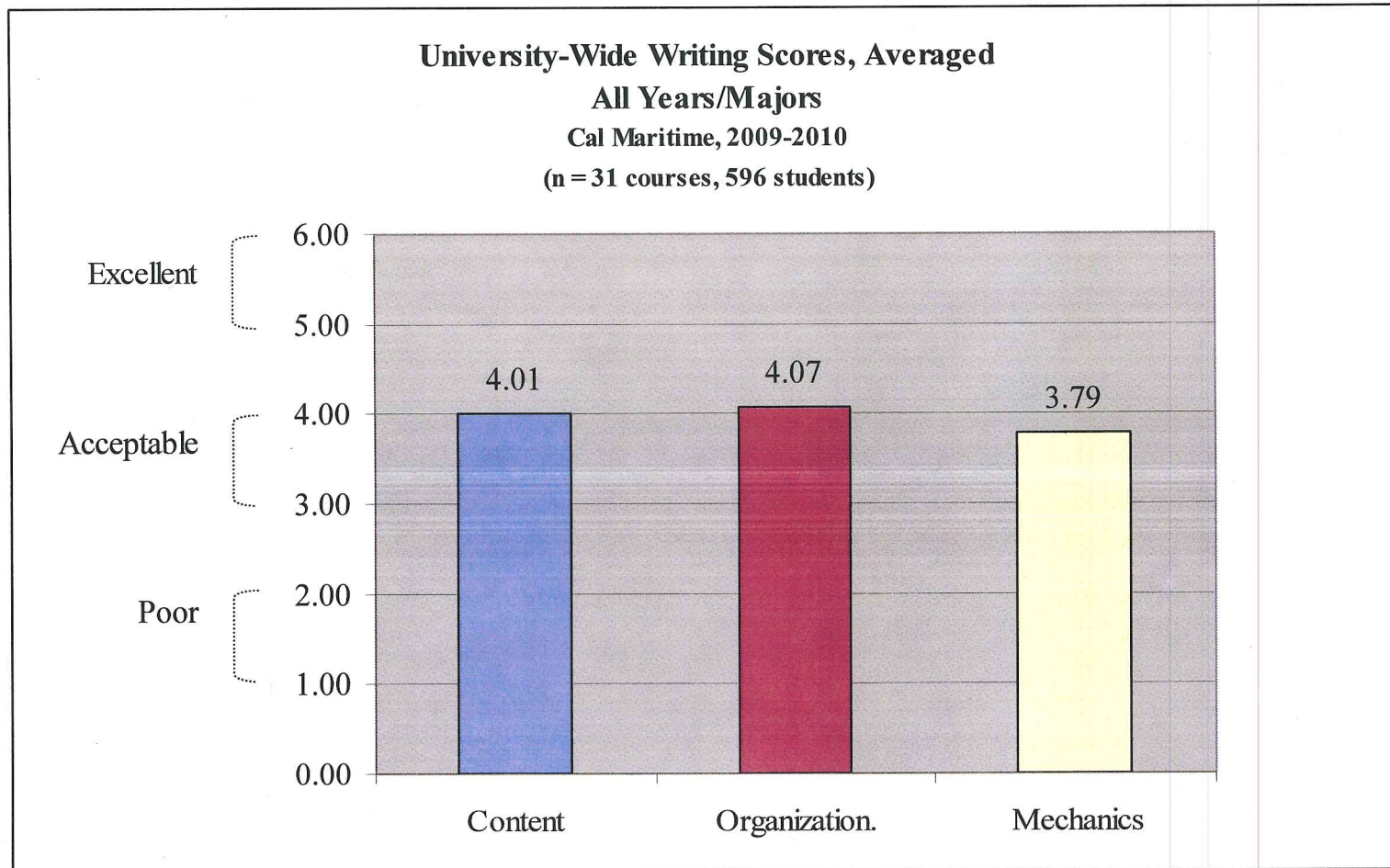


Figure 1

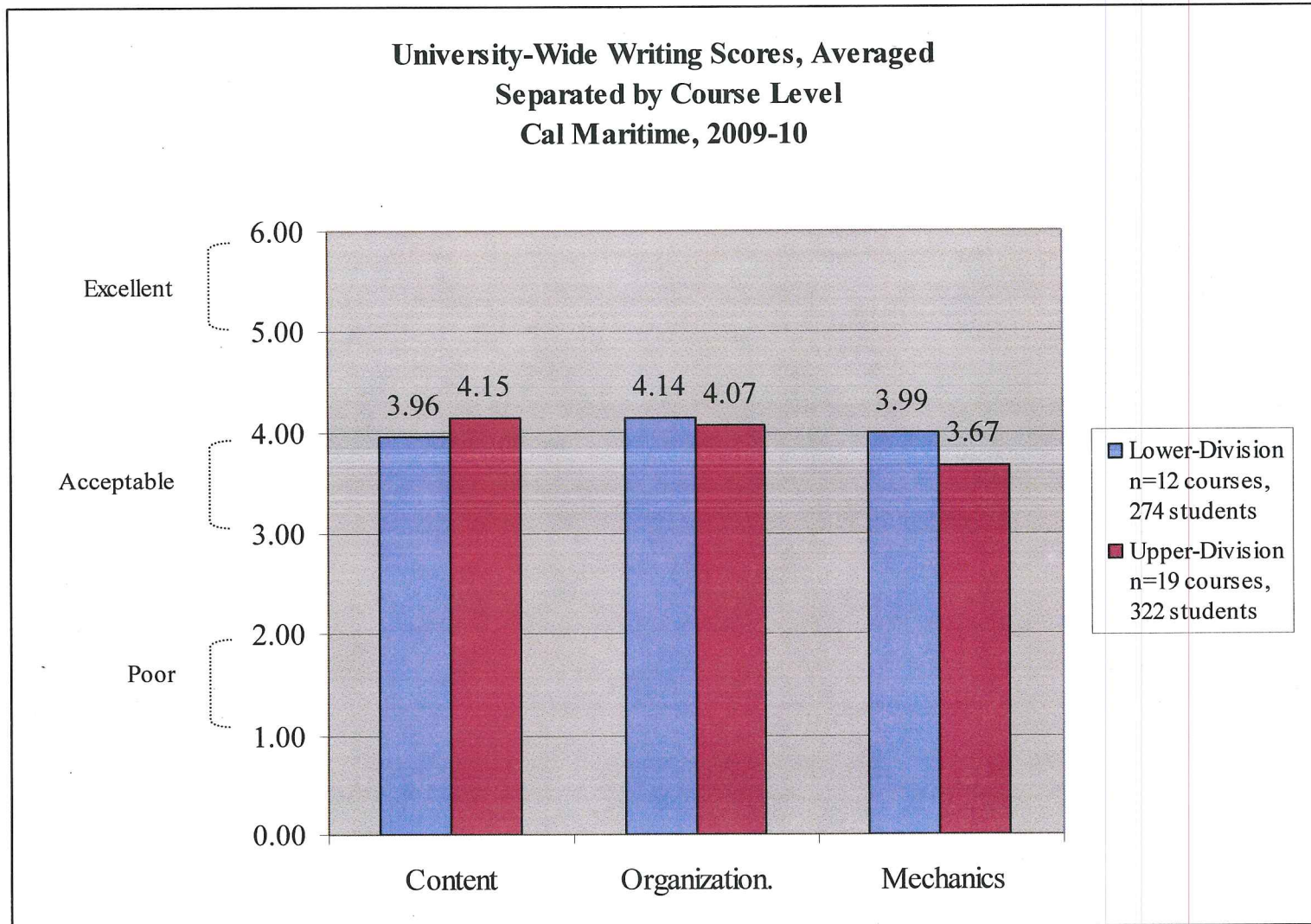


Figure 2

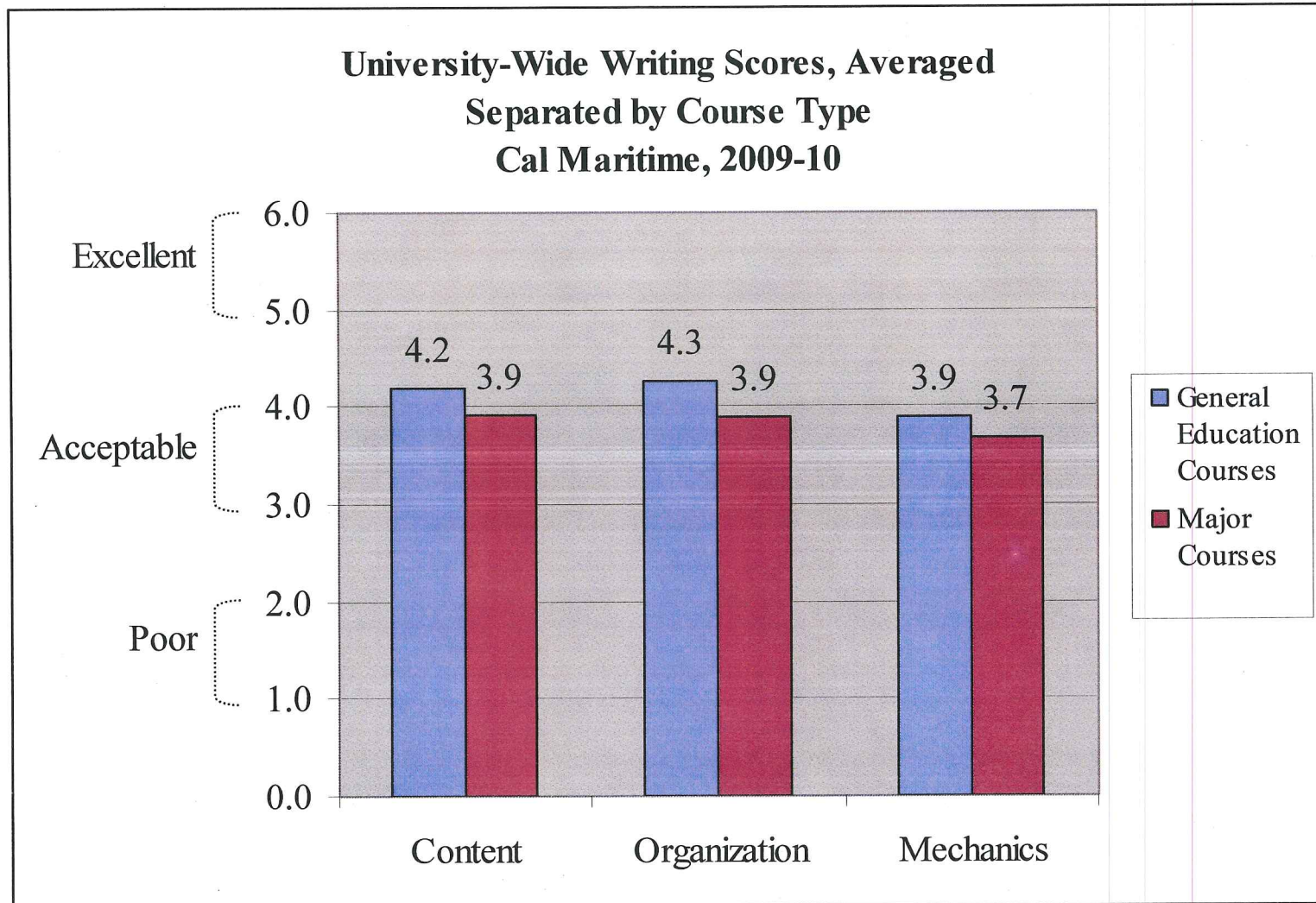


Figure 3

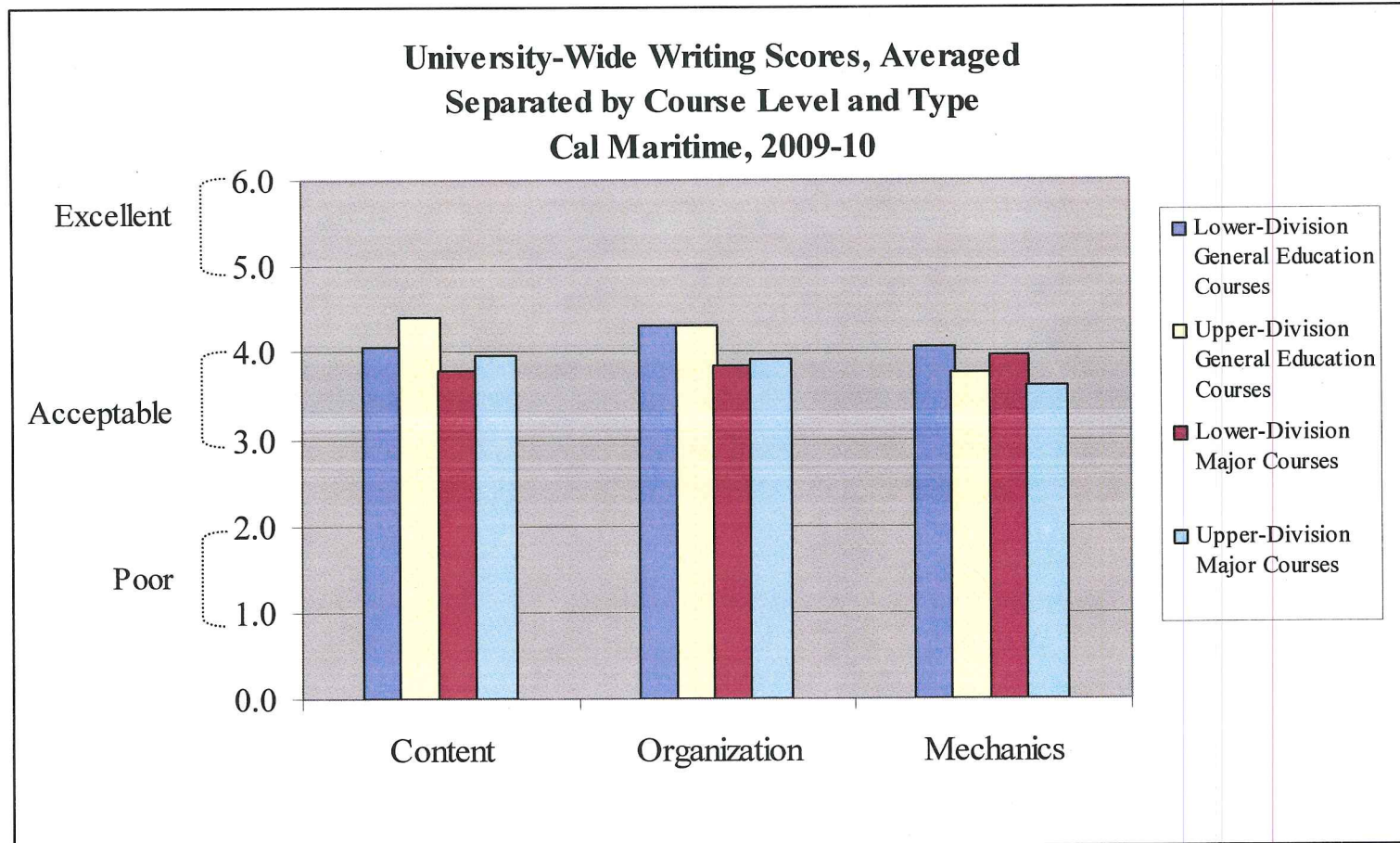


Figure 4

Faculty Survey: How Prepared are Entering Freshmen for College-Level Writing?
Fall 2009
(n=28)

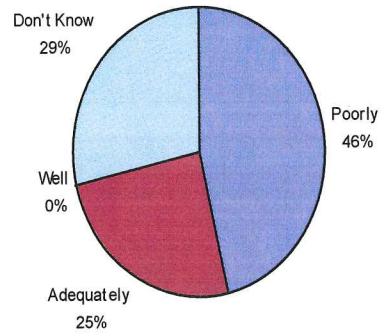


Figure 5

Faculty Survey: How Prepared are Transfer Students for College-Level Writing?
Fall 2009
(n=27)

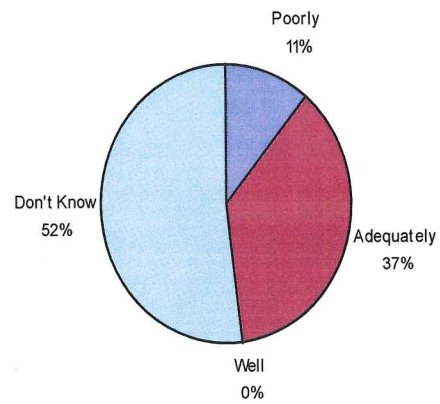


Figure 6

Faculty Survey: How Prepared are Your Department's Graduating Seniors for Writing on the Job?
Fall 2009
(n=19)

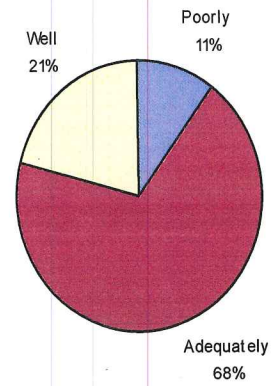


Figure 7

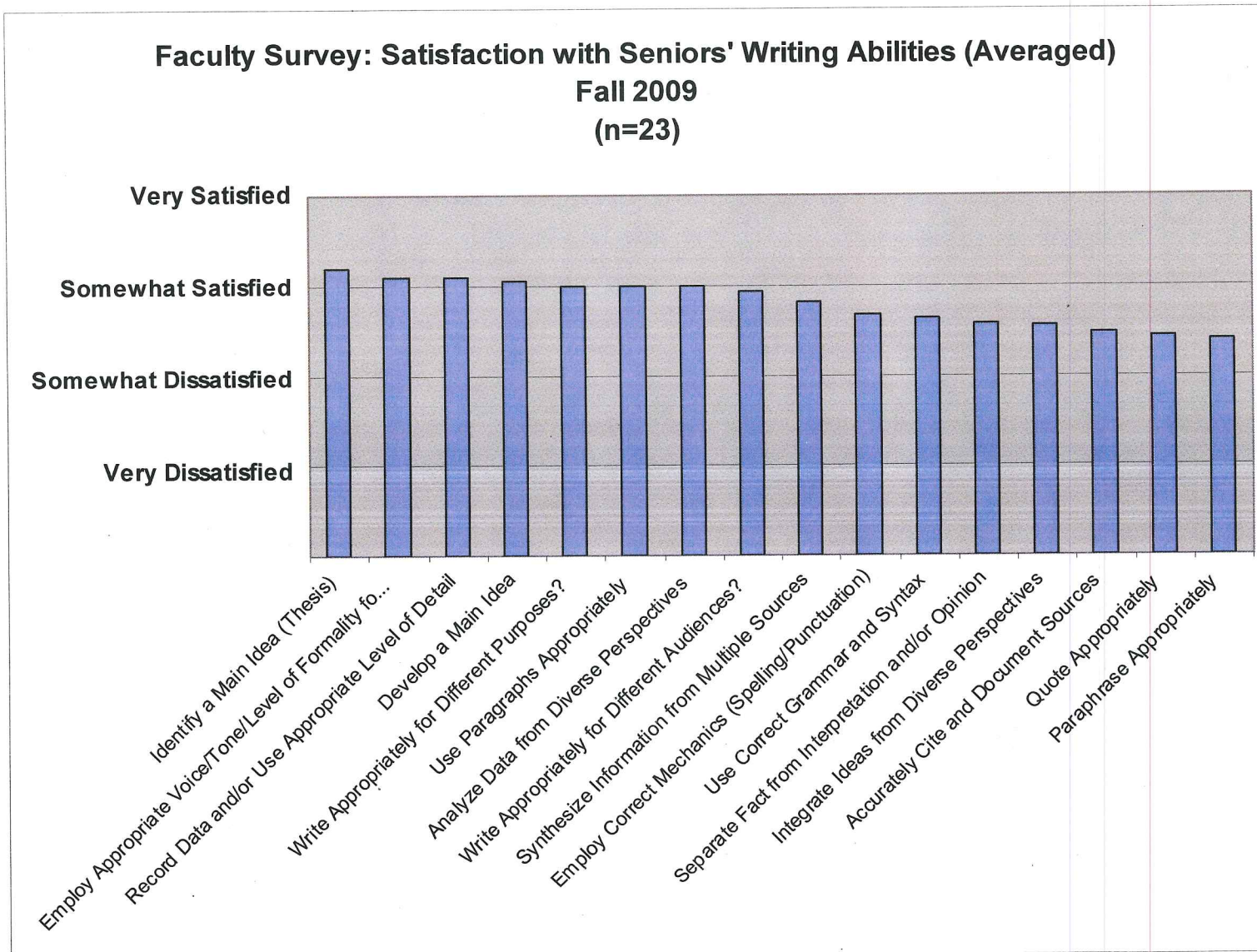


Figure 8

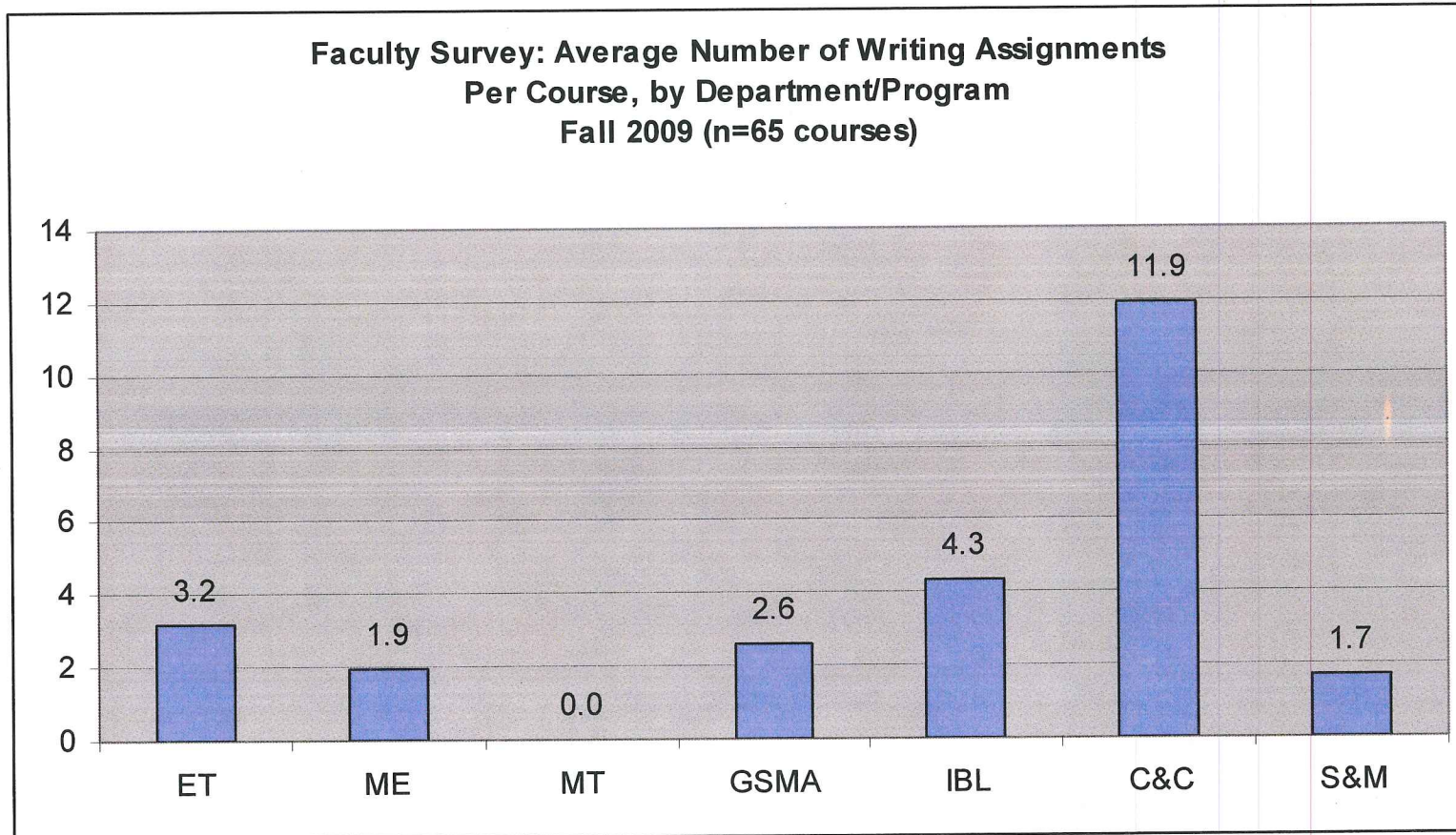


Figure 9

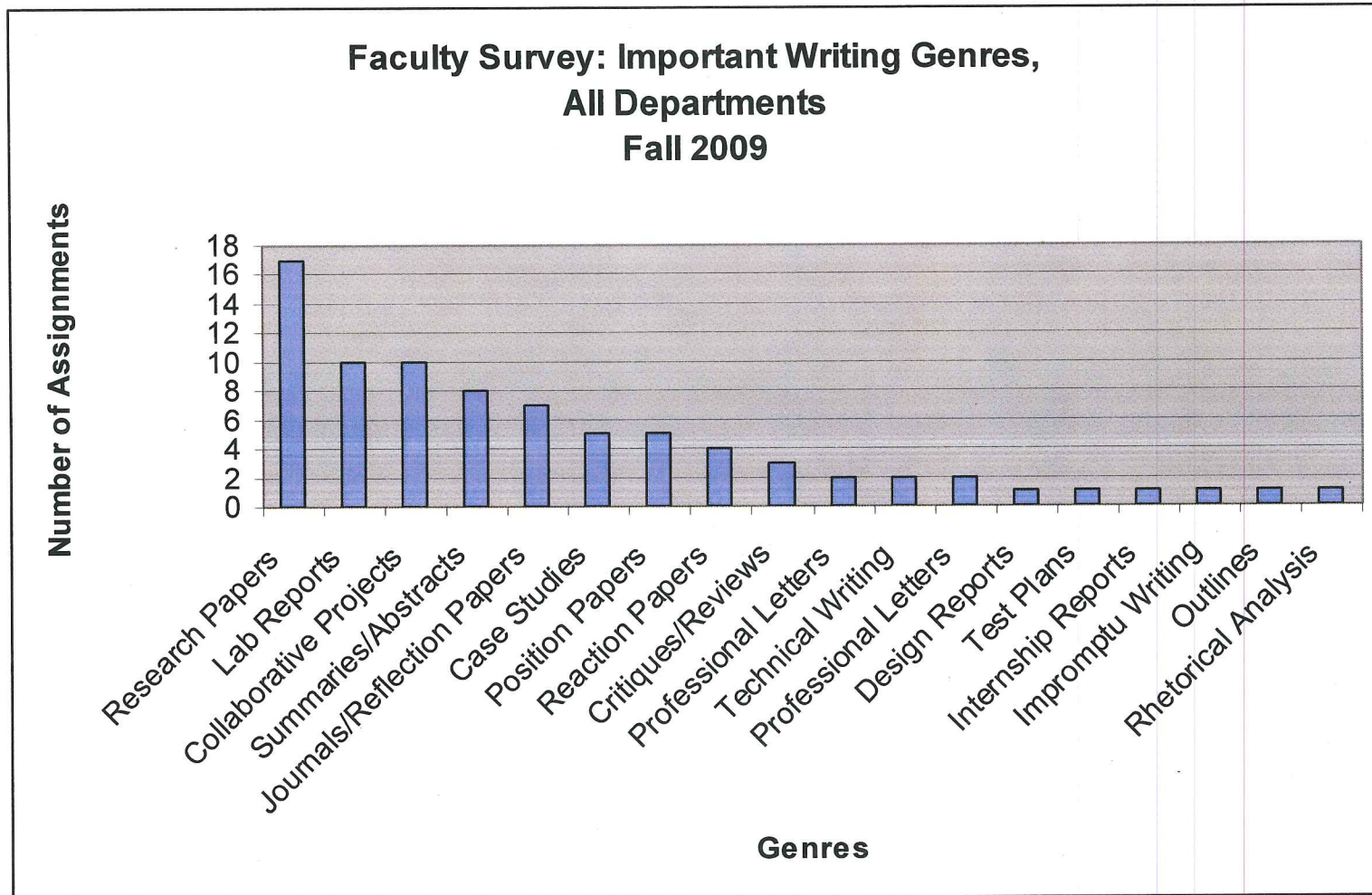


Figure 10

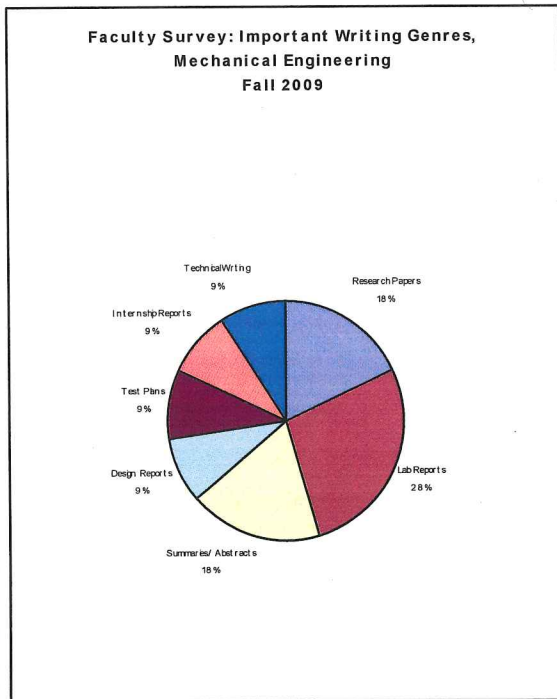


Figure 11

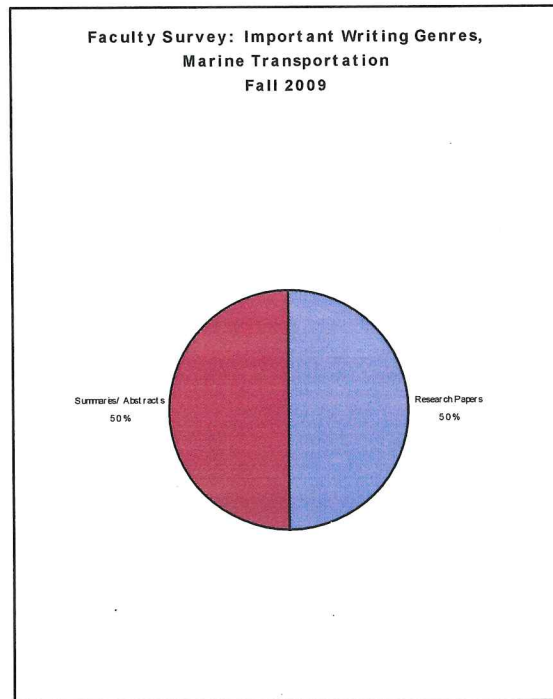


Figure 12

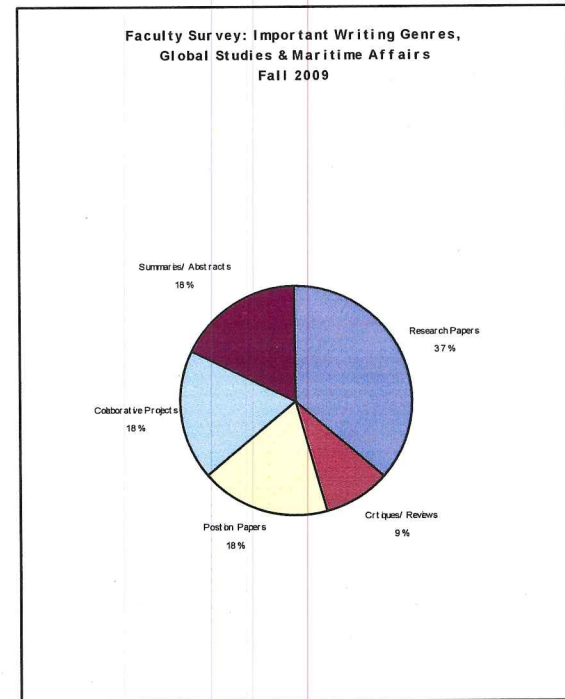


Figure 13

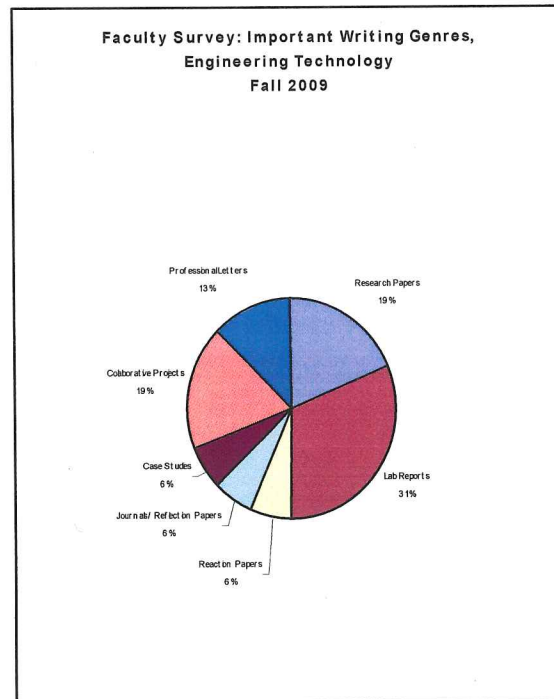


Figure 17

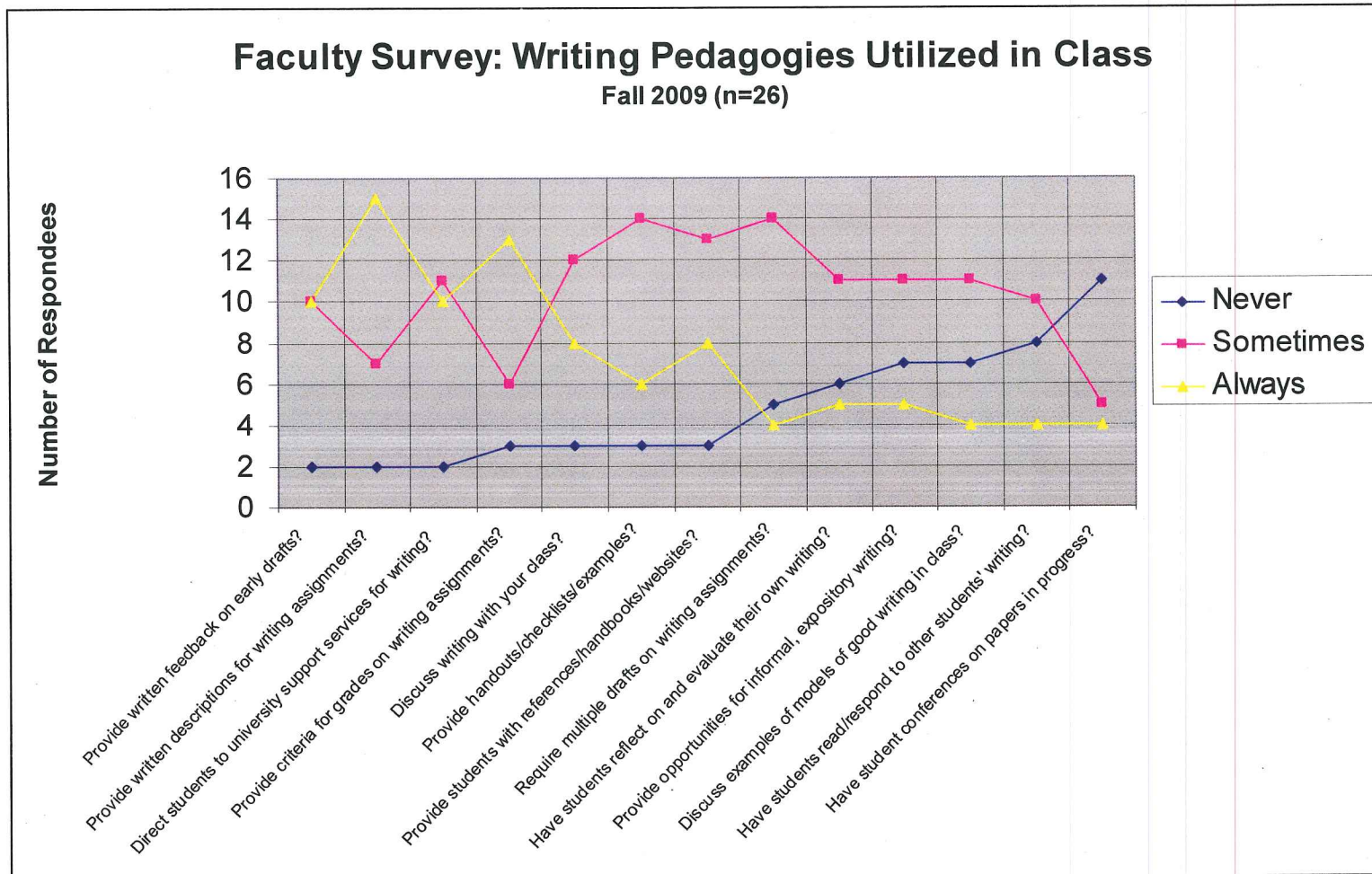


Figure 18

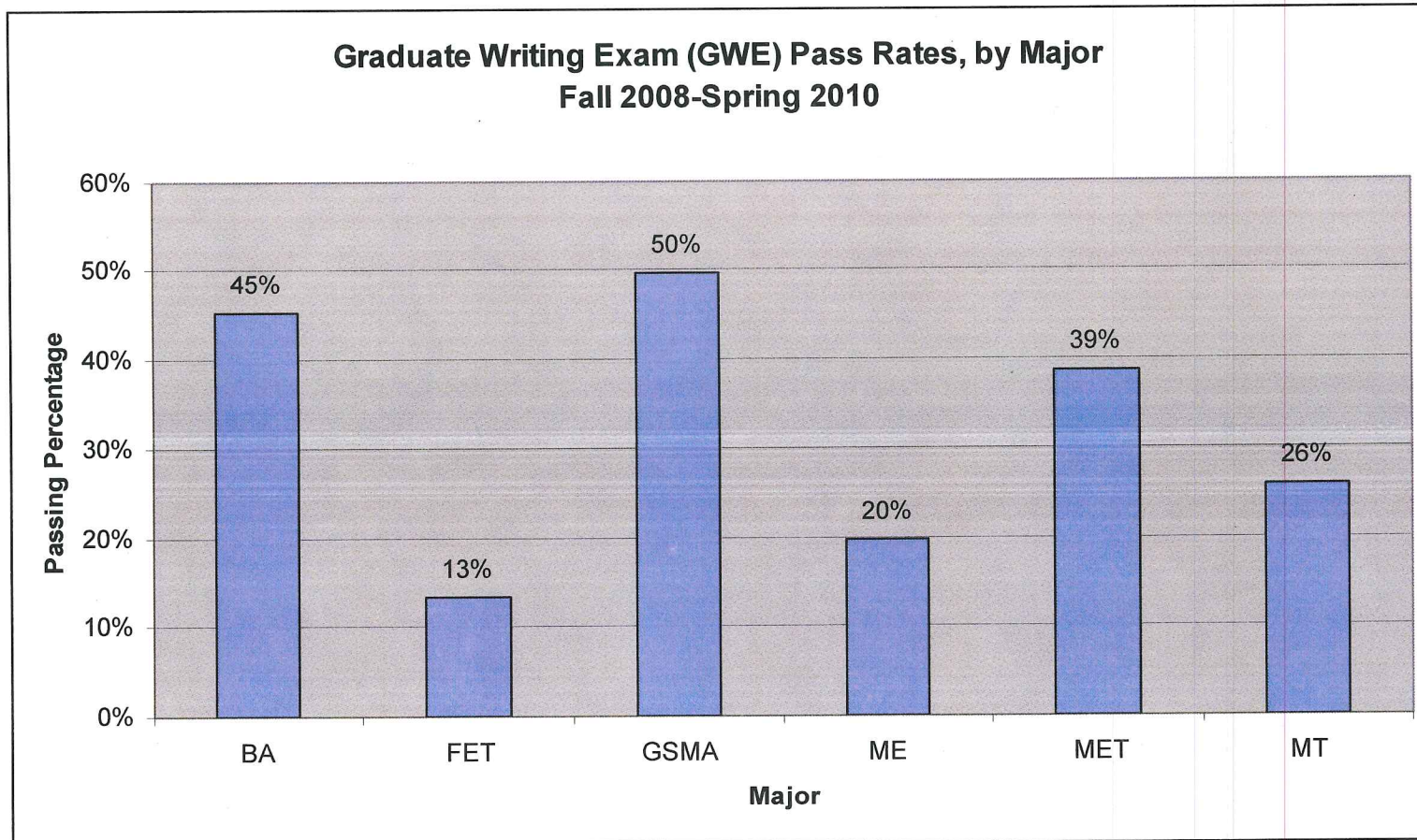


Figure 19

**GWE Results: Students Who Took EGL 100 at Cal Maritime,
Fall 2004-Spring 2008
(Old Rubric)
(n=505)**

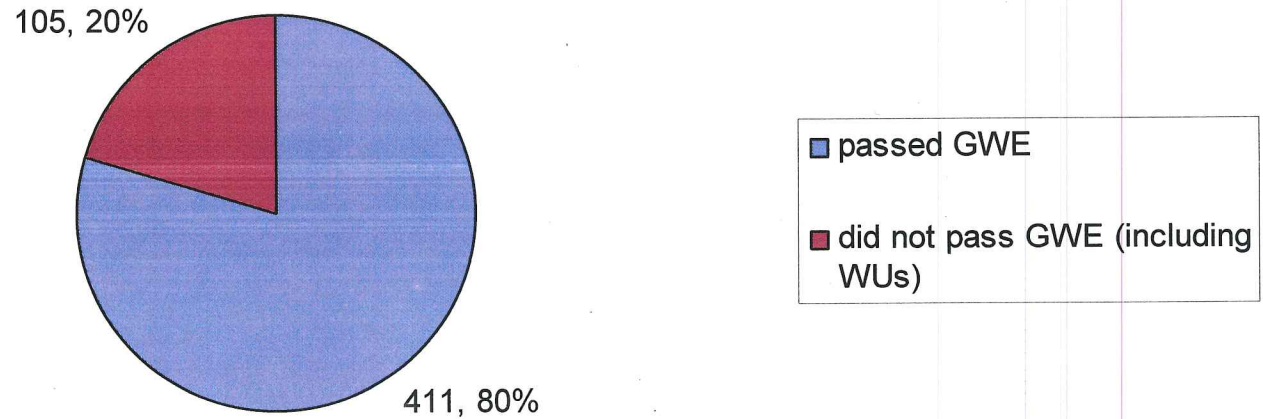


Figure 20

**GWE Results: Students Who Took EGL 100 at Cal Maritime,
Fall 2008-Present
(New Rubric)
(n=103)**

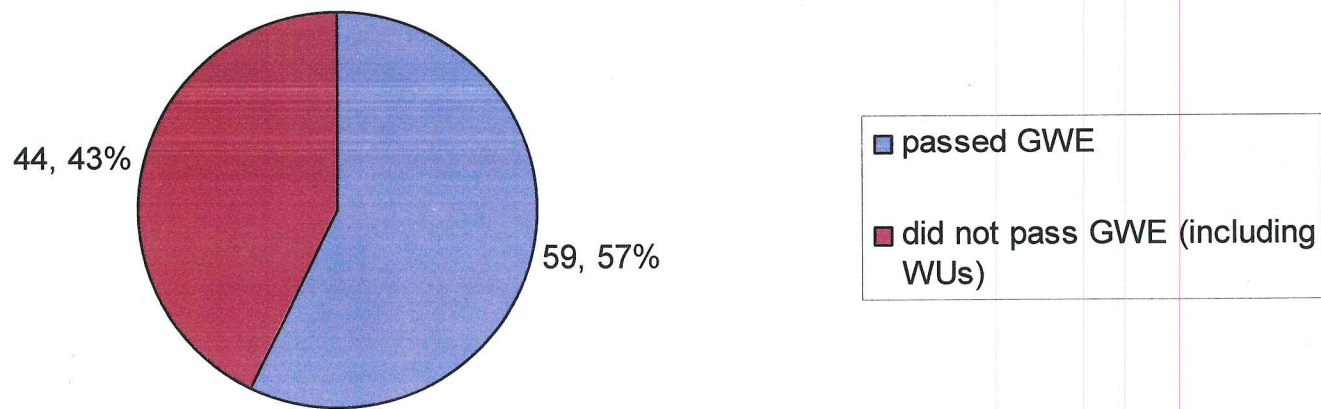


Figure 21

**GWE Results: Students Transferring in EGL 100,
Fall 2004-Spring 2008
(Old Rubric)
(n=241)**

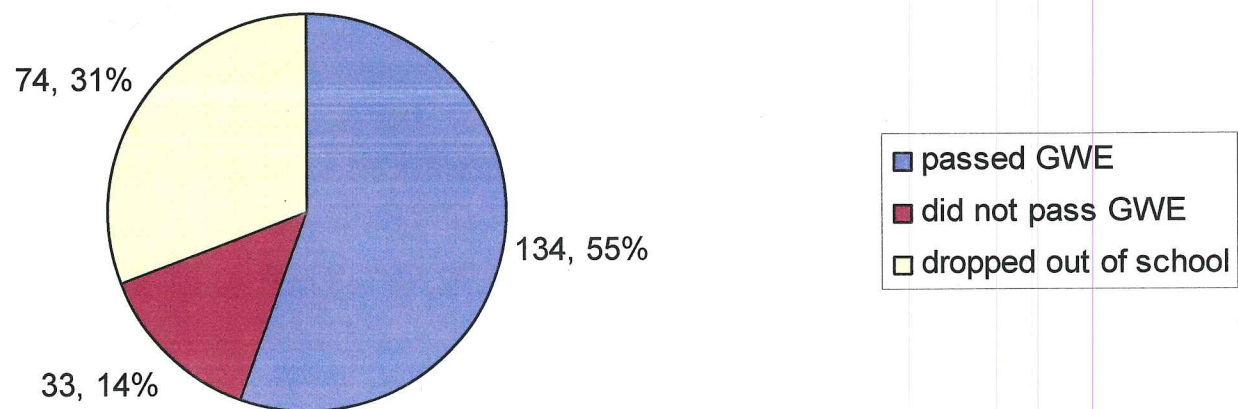


Figure 22

**GWE Results: Students Transferring in EGL 100,
Fall 2008-Present
(New Rubric)
(n=64)**

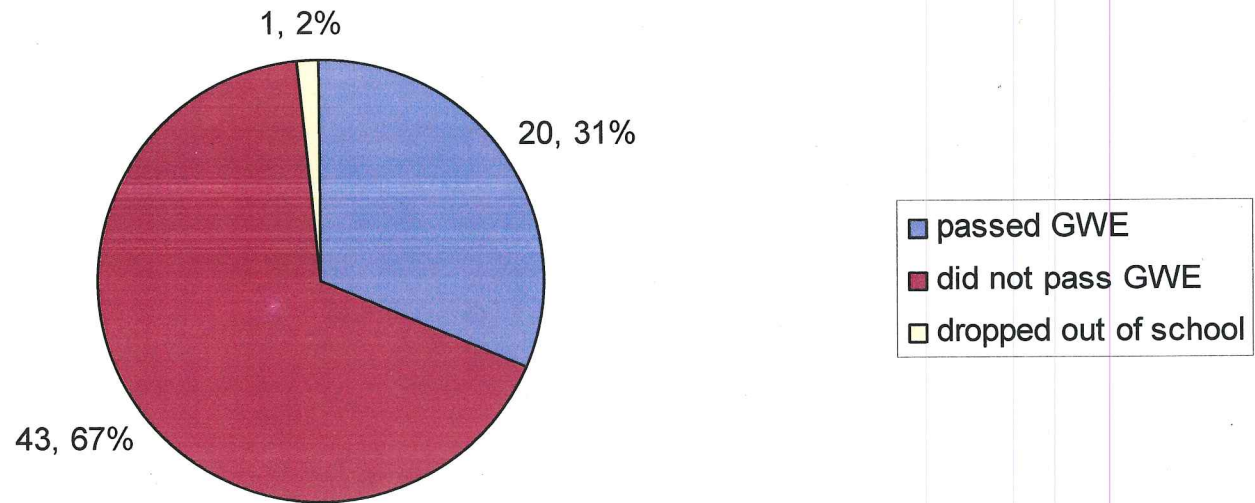


Figure 23