

**Harper College**  
**2007 Transfer and Career Graduate Surveys**  
**Executive Summary**

*Prepared by the Office of Research*  
*Teaming to serve research needs of the College*  
June 30, 2008

This report presents highlights and significant findings from two surveys of Harper College's 2007 graduates.<sup>1</sup> Overall, graduates reported that their experiences at Harper were positive and that they were successful in the next stage of their lives. Some key outcomes include:

- 98% of career graduates and 99% of transfer graduates said they would recommend Harper to friends and family;
- 92% of transfer graduates and 88% of career graduates said they would return to Harper in the future;
- 77% of transfer graduates and 85% of career graduates reported being employed at least part-time;
- 77% of employed career graduates were in a job related to their Harper program and 88% reported being satisfied in their jobs;
- 75% of transfer graduates and 29% of career graduates reported being enrolled at least part-time in another institution;
- 78% of transfer graduates reported that all their Harper credits transferred to their new institution; 74% of transfer graduates were enrolled in a field of study related to their major at Harper; 52% of transfer graduates plan to achieve a graduate degree (Master's level or higher).

The purpose of this report is to compare and contrast these two sets of graduates and come to a better understanding of their similarities and differences. Comparisons to the responses of the 2006 graduates are also drawn when appropriate. This report is organized into an Introduction, a Graduate Demographics section that discusses the characteristics of the graduates, a Graduate Ratings of Harper section that highlights key survey results, and a Summary section that recaps the main findings.

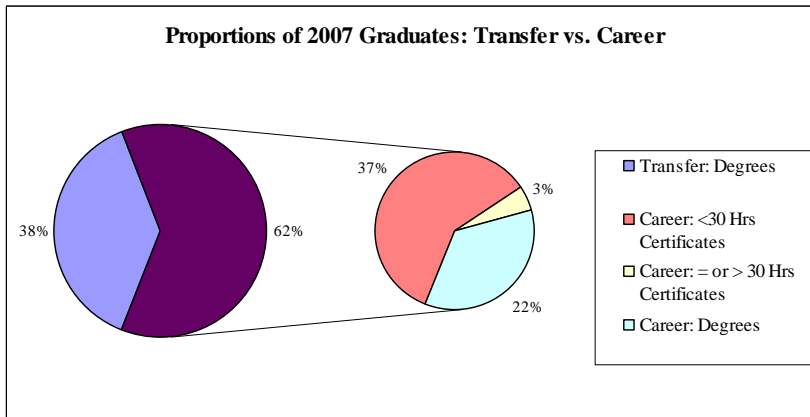
## **Graduate Demographics**

Among Harper's 2007 graduates, career graduates outnumbered transfer graduates (see Chart 1 below). Among career program graduates, most had received either an A.A.S. degree or a certificate of less than 30 credit hours. A relatively small proportion of graduates had received a certificate of 30 credit hours or more.

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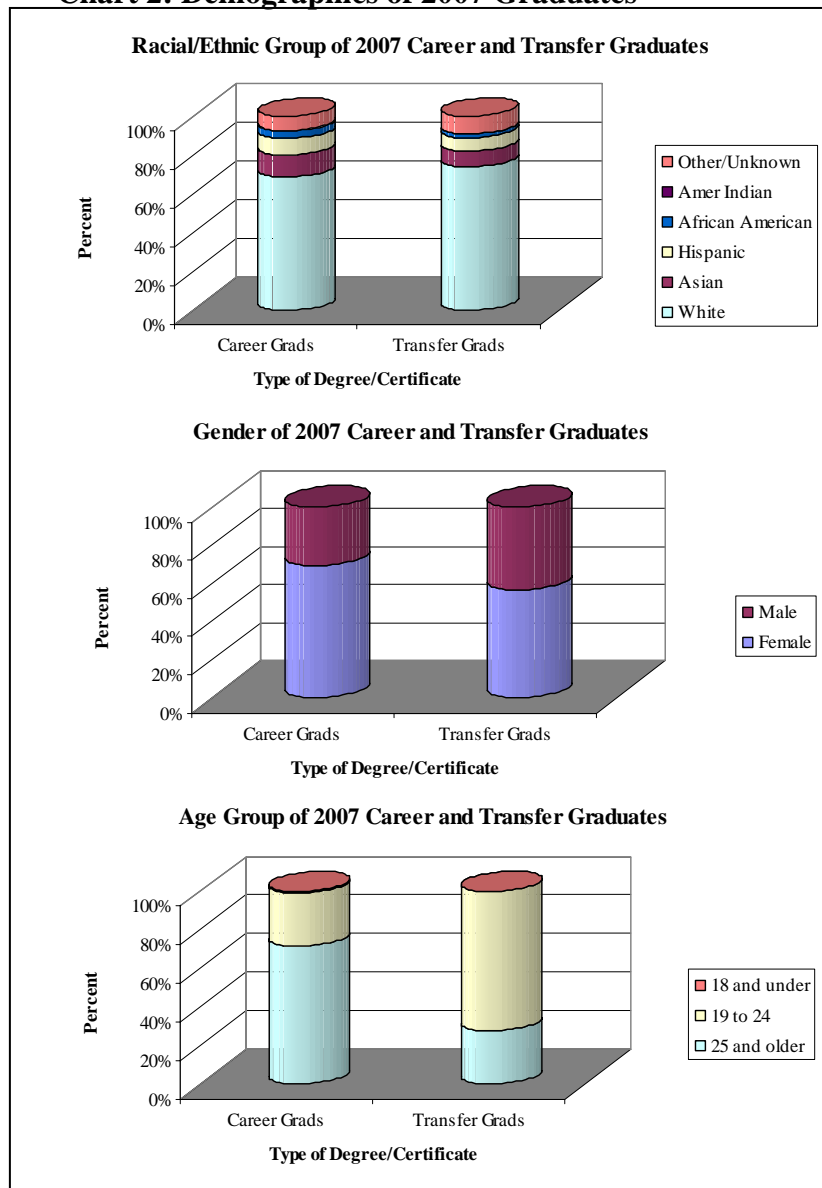
<sup>1</sup> Because different issues are relevant to graduates of transfer and career programs, these two groups of graduates were surveyed separately. Detailed results for graduates of career and transfer programs can be found in the reports titled *Results of 2007 Career Graduate Survey* and *Results of 2007 Transfer Graduate Survey*, respectively. In addition, results for specific career programs can be found in the *Results of 2007 Career Graduate Survey – Program-Level Results*.

**Chart 1: Proportions of 2007 Career and Transfer Graduates**



In terms of age, gender, and racial/ethnic group (refer to Chart 2 below), the 2007 graduates were generally comparable to the student body as a whole. Continuing the pattern from previous years, the 2007 career graduates contained a slightly higher proportion of Asians, as well as higher proportions of females and adult students. The charts (left) reflect the characteristics of *all* graduates. It is important to note that there was no response bias for gender or racial/ethnic group in either set of graduates. Among the career graduates, the older graduates were more likely to respond to the survey than younger graduates.

**Chart 2: Demographics of 2007 Graduates**



## Graduate Ratings of Harper

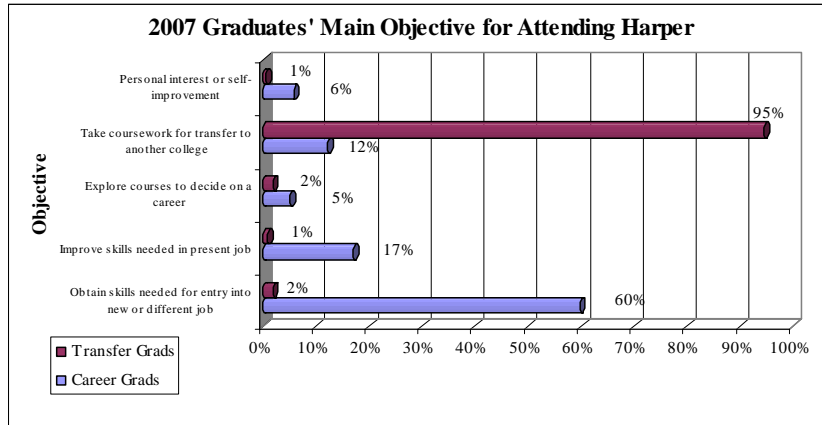
In 2007, there were 809 transfer graduates and 1,300 career graduates. The number of transfer graduates remained stable compared to the prior year (809 vs. 817 in 2006) while the number of career graduates increased by 17 percent (1,300 vs. 1,113 in 2006). Of the 2007 graduates, 469 transfer graduates and 772 career graduates responded to the surveys for response rates of 58 percent and 59 percent, respectively.

The transfer and career surveys had different foci (e.g., the transfer graduate survey asked questions about graduates' transfer institution, their major and their educational aspirations; the career graduate survey asked questions about graduates' job satisfaction, work schedule and earnings), but they also shared common questions. The common questions asked graduates:

- for their objective for attending Harper;
- to rate the quality of instruction at Harper;
- to rate their satisfaction with support services;
- if they gained an appreciation for diversity as a result of their experiences at Harper;
- how likely they would be to recommend Harper; and
- how likely they would be to return for additional coursework.

In general, both transfer and career graduates had very positive things to say about their experiences at Harper. When rating instruction, 87 percent to 95 percent of graduates gave ratings of "excellent" or "good". When rating services, 80 percent to 97 percent of graduates reported being "somewhat satisfied" or "very satisfied". Large majorities (82% of career graduates and 89% of transfer graduates) indicated that their experiences at Harper have led them to a greater appreciation for diversity and different values and cultures. Importantly, when asked if they would recommend Harper to friends and family (a key measure of customer loyalty), 98 percent of career graduates and 99 percent of transfer graduates replied "yes" or "definitely yes". When asked if they would return to Harper (another key customer loyalty metric), 88 percent of career graduates and 92 percent of transfer graduates replied "yes" or "definitely yes".

**Chart 3: Educational Objective**

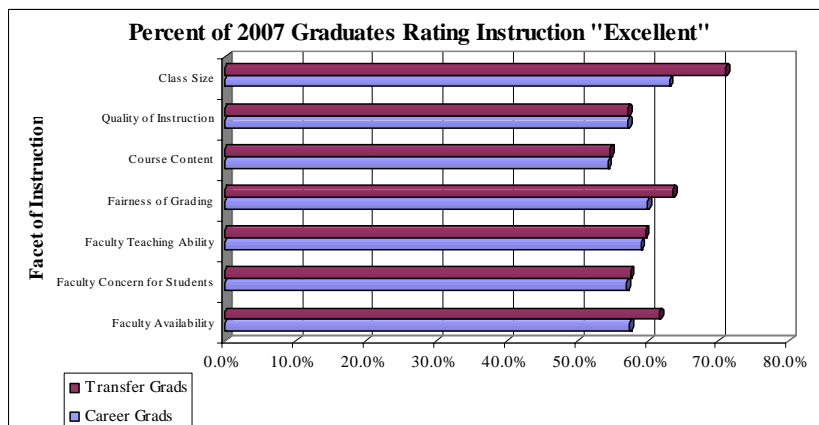


As we can see in Chart 3, the large majority of transfer graduates reported that their main objective was to take courses for transfer to another college. Compared to prior years, a much higher proportion of transfer

graduates indicated that transferring was their main objective (95% in 2007 vs. 80% in 2006). The majority of career graduates indicated that they were taking courses to obtain skills needed for a new job.

There were also differences among career graduates depending on the length of their program.<sup>2</sup> Graduates earning either two-year degrees or short certificates (less than 30 credit hours) indicated a range of educational objectives, while those earning certificates of more than 30 credit hours were focused exclusively on obtaining skills for future or current jobs (i.e., none of the graduates with a longer-term certificate reported that they intended to transfer, etc.).

**Chart 4: Ratings of Instructional Quality**



Graduates rated the quality of various facets of instruction on a four-point scale (4=excellent, 1=poor). Chart 4 shows the proportions of 2007 graduates who gave ratings of “excellent” (the most positive rating) to each facet.

Similar to their peers from 2006, over 87 percent of the career graduates and 90 percent of transfer graduates gave ratings of “excellent” or “good” to each facet of instruction. We will focus on the graduates giving the most positive ratings (i.e., ratings of “excellent”). There is precedent in this in the disciplines of quality/continuous improvement and market research. In continuous improvement circles, focusing on the most positive responses is a tool used when the goal is to move from “good” to “great”; it can be especially useful in cases like this when nearly all respondents are providing positive ratings. Market research also often focuses on the most positive responses to

<sup>2</sup> Career graduates’ responses to this question varied by length of program ( $\chi^2=24.45$ ,  $df=8$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

questions (called the “top box” responses). The rationale is that only the respondents who give the most positive responses can be counted as truly loyal customers, and that people who say they will “definitely” do something are much more likely to actually follow through on their stated opinion.

As we can see in Chart 4, both career and transfer graduates had a very positive impression of instructional quality at Harper. Transfer graduates rated class size, fairness of grading, and faculty availability more positively than career graduates ( $p < .05$ ). These differences appear to be driven by career graduates giving slightly more “average” or “good” ratings while transfer graduates gave slightly more “excellent” ratings. Compared to results from prior years, there were fewer differences between career and transfer graduates among the 2007 graduates. It appears that the career graduates’ perceptions of instructional quality have improved while transfer graduates’ perceptions have maintained their high levels. This trend was first noted in last year’s *Executive Summary* (pp. 5-6).

As in prior years, two separate analyses were conducted to investigate any differences in graduates’ ratings of instructional quality based on program length (<30 credits, >30 credits, or A.A.S. degree) and curriculum type (career or transfer). The analysis of program length examined only career graduates and looked for differences in ratings depending on the length of their program. The analysis of curriculum type examined only degree graduates (transfer graduates or career graduates with an A.A.S.) and looked for differences in ratings depending on the curriculum type. Results are shown in Table 1 below; percentages shown in **bold** are significantly different within factor (i.e., length of program or curriculum type).

**Table 1: Instructional Quality, Length of Program, and Curriculum Type**

Rate the instruction at Harper College. (% “excellent” ratings)	Length of Program (Career Grads Only; N=767)			Curriculum Type (Degrees Only; N=747)	
	<30 creds	>30 creds	AAS	Career	Transfer
Class size	61.8%	64.1%	64.7%	64.7%	71.0%
Quality of instruction	58.4%	65.0%	54.0%	54.0%	57.1%
Course content <sup>a</sup>	<b>57.1%</b>	<b>57.5%</b>	<b>49.3%</b>	49.3%	54.6%
Fairness of grading <sup>b, d</sup>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>60.0%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>50.4%</b>	<b>63.5%</b>
Faculty teaching ability	62.5%	62.5%	52.9%	52.9%	59.6%
Faculty concern for students <sup>c, e</sup>	<b>60.1%</b>	<b>70.0%</b>	<b>50.2%</b>	<b>50.2%</b>	<b>57.5%</b>
Faculty availability <sup>f</sup>	60.9%	65.0%	50.7%	<b>50.7%</b>	<b>61.6%</b>

<sup>a</sup> Responses were significantly different based on program length ( $\chi^2=15.47$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

<sup>b</sup> Responses were significantly different based on program length ( $\chi^2=23.45$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

<sup>c</sup> Responses were significantly different based on program length ( $\chi^2=19.66$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

<sup>d</sup> Responses were significantly different based on curriculum type ( $\chi^2=26.42$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

<sup>e</sup> Responses were significantly different based on curriculum type ( $\chi^2=13.61$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

<sup>f</sup> Responses were significantly different based on curriculum type ( $\chi^2=18.37$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

As can be seen in Table 1, career graduates degree recipients tended to give somewhat lower ratings than certificate recipients in the areas of course content, fairness of grading, and faculty concern for students. Career degree recipients tended to give lower ratings than transfer graduates in the areas of fairness of grading, faculty concern for students,

and faculty availability. As noted previously, it appears that differences between career graduates' ratings do appear to be improving since 2004.

**Chart 5: Satisfaction and Usage of Support Services**

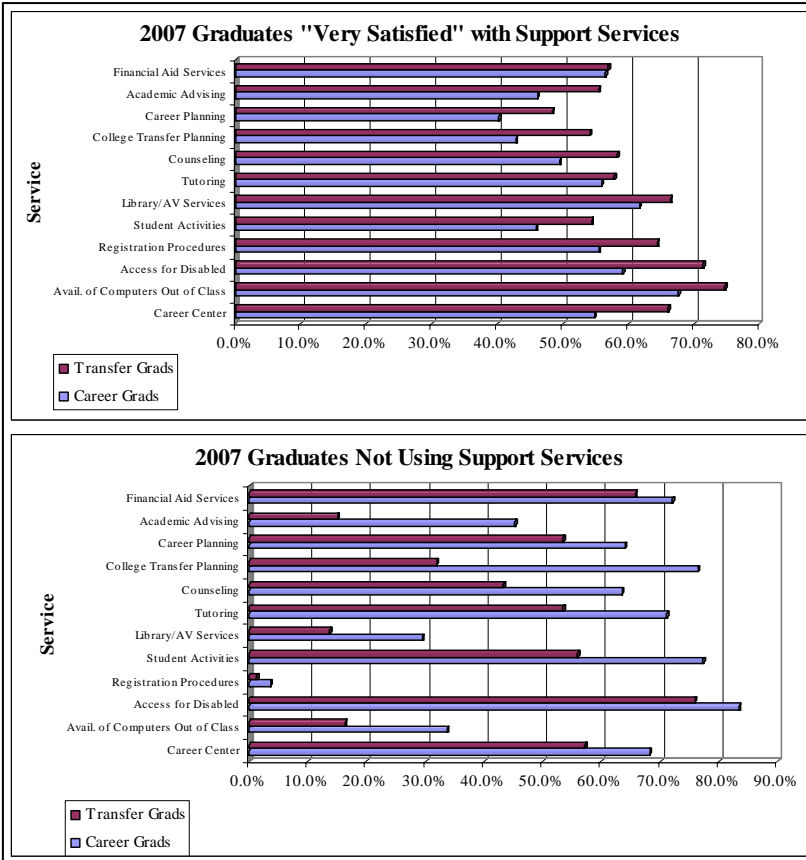


Chart 5 shows the proportion of graduates who rated themselves as “very satisfied” with support services and the frequency with which they reported that they did not use each service. As in prior years, over 80 percent of graduates gave ratings of “very satisfied” or “satisfied” to each service they used. Similar to Chart 4, we focus on the graduates giving “very satisfied” ratings. The transfer graduates gave significantly more positive ratings for academic advising, registration procedures, and availability of computers for out-of-class use. The transfer graduates were also less likely than the career graduates to say that they had not used a service. Compared to their counterparts in 2006, the 2007 career graduates rated career planning less positively but gave somewhat more positive ratings to counseling. The ratings of the 2007 transfer graduates were consistent with those given by the 2006 graduates.

and availability of computers for out-of-class use. The transfer graduates were also less likely than the career graduates to say that they had not used a service. Compared to their counterparts in 2006, the 2007 career graduates rated career planning less positively but gave somewhat more positive ratings to counseling. The ratings of the 2007 transfer graduates were consistent with those given by the 2006 graduates.

**Chart 6: Appreciation for Diversity**

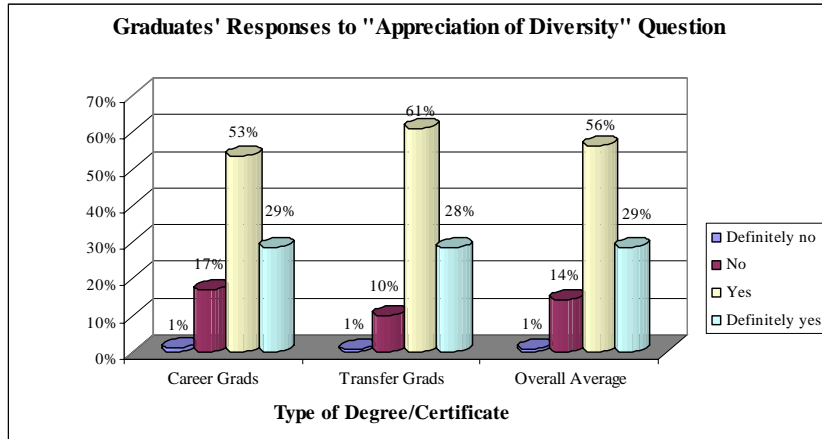


Chart 6 shows graduates' responses to a question asking them if their experiences at Harper have led them to have a greater appreciation of diversity and different cultures and values. Both career and transfer graduates responded positively

to this question. Overall, 85 percent of graduates reported that their Harper experiences have helped them to have a greater appreciation for diversity; transfer graduates were more likely than career graduates to respond positively to this question.<sup>3</sup> Comparing these responses to those of the 2006 graduates, the career graduates became somewhat more positive while the transfer graduates became somewhat less positive. Among transfer graduates the overall level of agreement was comparable between 2006 and 2007, but responses were likely to be "yes" rather than "definitely yes".

**Chart 7: Recommending and Returning to Harper**

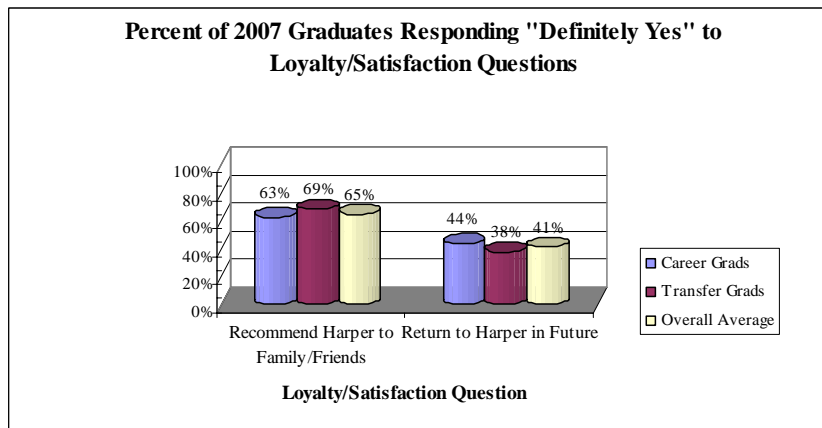


Chart 7 shows the graduates' responses to two questions that are key measures of student loyalty and satisfaction: "would you recommend Harper to your family and friends" and "would you return to Harper in the near future". As explained

above, the chart shows the proportion of respondents who replied "definitely yes"; if we include those who replied "yes" as well, 98 percent of graduates replied that they would recommend Harper and 90 percent replied that they would return to Harper. These results are quite strongly positive. Transfer graduates were more likely than career graduates to

<sup>3</sup> 89% positive responses for transfer graduates vs. 82% positive responses for career graduates;  $\chi^2=13.04$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.01$ .



report that they would definitely recommend Harper,<sup>4</sup> while career graduates were more likely to say that they would return to Harper.<sup>5</sup>

The results for the recommend and return questions continue a pattern first noted last year. Although the graduates gave more positive ratings in several areas than the prior year's graduates, they were less likely to report that they would recommend and return to Harper. Compared to the 2006 graduates, the career graduates were less likely to say that they would "definitely" return<sup>6</sup> and the transfer graduates were less likely to both recommend and return.<sup>7</sup> Given that the 2007 graduates gave ratings that were comparable if not more positive than the 2006 graduates in other areas, the reason for the lower ratings by 2007 graduates is unclear. While the graduates' responses to the recommend and return questions are still positive, the continued decline merits further discussion. The four-year patterns are presented graphically in the Appendix. The graduates' ratings of their Harper experiences (instruction, services, etc.) continue to be positive, if not more positive than prior years, and there has been no change in the survey administration process that might explain this pattern.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to share their comments on what they liked best about Harper, as well as any suggestions they might have on how to improve the College's instruction and services. When asked what they liked best about Harper, transfer graduates noted the location, the faculty, the small class size, the affordable tuition, and the campus/facilities. Career graduates made mention of the faculty, the location, the curriculum, the quality of specific programs, and the campus/facilities. When asked how Harper could improve instruction, transfer graduates often said that no change was needed, and supported Harper becoming a four-year school; career graduates suggested adding or improving specific programs or improving the experience level of faculty. In terms of service improvements, both transfer and career graduates most often requested that parking be improved. Additional detail can be found in the respective reports.

## Summary

Both career and transfer graduates reported having positive experiences at Harper and attaining success after graduating:

- A high proportion (85%) of career graduates reported being employed at least part-time, 77 percent were in a job related to their Harper program, and 88 percent reported being satisfied in their jobs;

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<sup>4</sup> Responses of "definitely yes" of 69% for transfer graduates vs. 63% for career graduates;  $\chi^2=7.92$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.05$ .

<sup>5</sup> Responses of "definitely yes" of 44% for career graduates vs. 38% for transfer graduates;  $\chi^2=13.60$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.01$ .

<sup>6</sup> 2007 career graduates 44% "definitely yes" vs. 62% "definitely yes" in 2006;  $\chi^2=44.75$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.01$ .

<sup>7</sup> Recommend: 2007 transfer graduates 69% "definitely yes" vs. 85% in 2006;  $\chi^2=36.79$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.01$ .  
Return: 2007 transfer graduates 38% "definitely yes" vs. 61% in 2006;  $\chi^2=71.44$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.01$ .

- A high proportion (77%) of transfer graduates reported being enrolled at least part-time in another institution, 74 percent of transfer graduates were enrolled in a major related to their major at Harper, and 78 percent reported that all their Harper credits transferred to their new institution;
- A very high proportion of graduates (more than 87% of career graduates and more than 90% of transfer graduates) rated instruction at Harper as good or excellent in all areas;
- Although many graduates reported not using Harper's support services, most of those who did use the services (more than 80% of both career and transfer graduates) reported being satisfied;
- 82 percent of career graduates and 89 percent of transfer graduates indicated that their experiences at Harper gave them a greater appreciation for diversity;
- 98 percent of career graduates and 99 percent of transfer graduates said they would recommend Harper to friends and family;
- 89 percent of career graduates and 92 percent of transfer graduates said they would return to Harper in the future.

Continuing a trend noted last year, career graduates' ratings of instructional quality have gotten more positive while the transfer graduates have maintained their positive ratings.

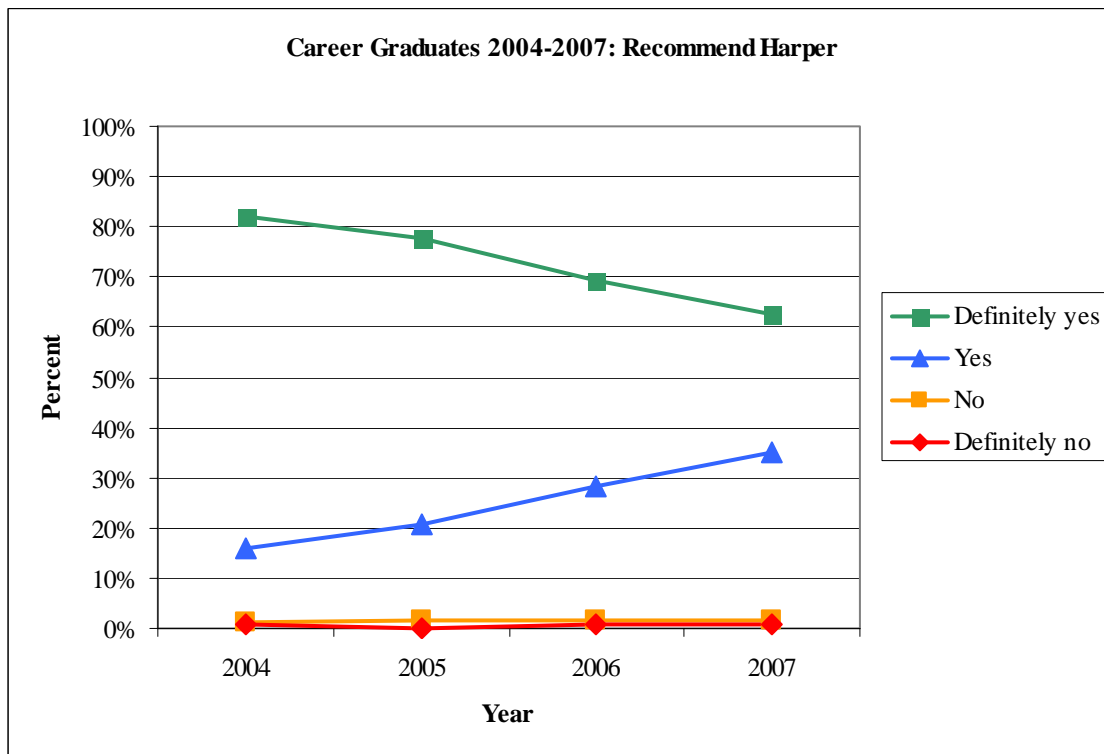
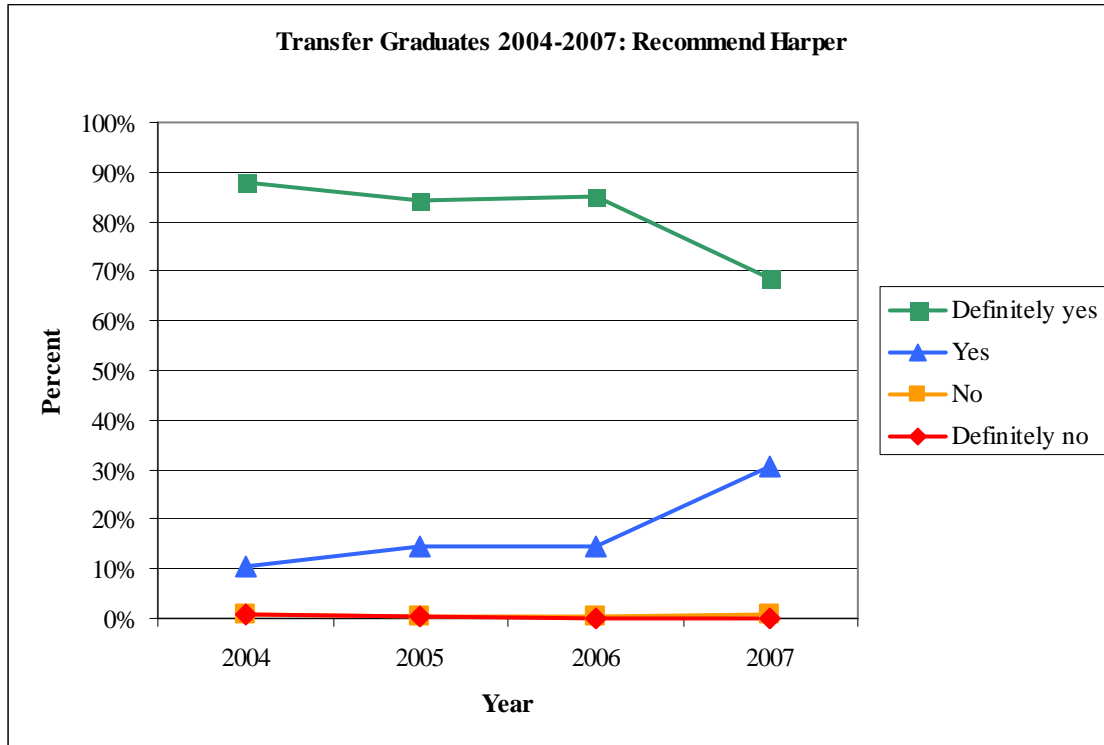
As noted above, both career and transfer graduates tended to give positive ratings to the services at Harper. The transfer graduates gave more positive ratings for academic advising, registration procedures, and the availability of computers for out-of-class use. Compared to career graduates, transfer graduates were also less likely to say that they had not used a service. The 2007 career graduates rated career planning and counseling more positively than their 2006 counterparts.

In general, the results from the 2007 graduates were quite positive. In some cases, the responses of the 2007 graduates were significantly more positive than those of the 2006 graduates. However, inexplicably, the 2007 graduates were less likely to report that they would recommend and return to Harper compared to the responses from prior years (see charts in Appendix). This finding merits further discussion, as it appears at odds with the positive ratings given to instruction and services.

## **Appendix**

**Responses to Recommend and Return Questions, 2004 through 2007**

**Chart A1: Responses of Graduates to “Would you recommend Harper to your friends and family”, 2004 through 2007**



**Chart A2: Responses of Graduates to “Would you return to Harper for educational or personal enrichment courses in the near future”, 2004 through 2007**

