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# Omaha Public School's High School Graduates Attending The University of Nebraska at Omaha

by Floyd T. Waterman

## Introduction

During the 1986-87 school year, the University of Nebraska at Omaha/Omaha Public Schools (UNO/OPS) Liaison Committee requested a study to determine how high school graduates from the Omaha Public Schools were progressing in their college careers at UNO. The author was asked to work with Paul Malcom of the Research Department of Omaha Public Schools to determine how the study might be conducted. Possible research questions were shared with the committee. The author met with Malcom to obtain lists of names of high school graduates.

Earlier, OPS conducted a survey of its high school graduates and developed a list of high schools graduates who reported attending UNO. More than one-third of the names listed as attending UNO were not found in UNO records. Of the one-third missing from UNO records, half had arranged to send American College Test (ACT) scores to UNO, although they had not registered for classes. Apparently, some students who intended to go to UNO decided to work for a period of time before they registered at the university. (The follow-up study with its self-reporting procedures presented too many problems, and was not used in this study.)

## Methodology

Complete lists of all high school graduates from Omaha Public Schools were obtained from Malcom. The OPS database did not contain social security numbers, whereas the UNO database is driven by social security numbers. Thus, names and birth dates from the OPS data were compared with alphabetical lists of students enrolled at UNO so that social security numbers could be obtained and entered into the UNO computer. James Maynard, director of UNO's Office of Institutional Research, completed this task. Timothy Humberger of UNO's Center for Applied Urban Research managed the data analysis after UNO and OPS databases were integrated.

## Results

OPS had 10,655 high school graduates during the following periods: 1982-83; 1983-84; 1984-85; and 1985-86. Of that number, 2,041 (19.2 percent)

enrolled for at least one semester of study at UNO during that period. Female graduates of OPS who were married after high school graduation and before enrollment at UNO will not appear in these data unless the student enrolled using her unmarried name.

*OPS Graduates Attending UNO*

Table 1 shows the total number of OPS graduates and the number and percentage who attended UNO during 1982-86. Only students who obtained a GPA are included. Because incomplete grades or audits do not enter into the calculation of GPA, a student could have been attending UNO but may not be included in this study's data.

Table 1  
OPS High School Graduates Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

Item	Year				Total
	1982- 1983	1983- 1984	1984- 1985	1985- 1986	
	Number				
Number of high school graduates per year	2,976	2,705	2,564	2,410	10,655
Number registered at UNO (GPA reported)	689	583	434	335	2,041
	Percent				
Percentage of OPS graduates attending UNO	23.2	21.6	16.9	13.9	19.2

The 2,041 students who attended UNO graduated from Omaha's eight public high schools. However, Technical High School supplied graduating students in only 2 of the 4 years, because Technical High School was closed after graduation of the class of 1983.

Table 2 shows the number of students from each high school who enrolled at UNO during 1982-86.

Table 2  
OPS Graduates Enrolled at UNO, by High School, 1982-86

High school	Graduates
	Number
Benson	216
Bryan	178
Burke	405
Central	438
North	145
Northwest	360
South	249
Technical	50
Total	2,041

### *Minority Student Enrollment*

The racial designation of the 2,041 OPS high school graduates who entered UNO during 1982-86 is displayed in table 3.

Table 3  
Racial Designation of OPS High School Graduates Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

Race	OPS High School Graduates	
	Number	Percent
White	1,608	78.8
Black	310	15.2
Hispanic	76	3.7
Asian	37	1.8
Indian	10	.5
Total	2,041	100.0

Of the 2,041 students, 433 (21.22 percent) were members of minority groups. There were 310 (15.19 percent) Blacks; 76 (3.72 percent) Hispanics; 37 (1.81 percent) Asians; and 10 (0.49 percent) Indians. (Technical High School, which is closed now, contributed four of the ten Indian students.)

Table 4 shows the number of minority students from each high school who enrolled at UNO during 1982-86.

Table 4  
OPS High School Minority Graduates Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

High school	Racial Designation				Total
	Blacks	Hispanic	Asian	Indian	
	Number				
Benson	29	3	15	0	47
Bryan	17	11	1	1	30
Burke	19	4	1	0	24
Central	90	6	9	1	106
North	55	2	0	1	58
Northwest	78	2	3	1	84
South	12	45	8	2	67
Technical	10	3	0	4	17
Total	310	76	37	10	433

The number of OPS 12th grade students in each minority category in 1985 were as follows: American Indian or Alaskan, 24 (0.9 percent of the school year's population); Hispanic, 60 (2.2 percent); Black, 648 (24.2 percent); and Asian, 38 (1.4 percent). While these data are for the 1985 school year only and table 3 shows the total number of minority students for the four enrollment periods, the proportion of 12th grade students from minority groups attending UNO can be determined. A total of 310 Black students from OPS enrolled at UNO during 1982-86, while a total of 648 Blacks graduated from OPS in 1985. Also, during 1985, 60 Hispanics graduated from OPS, while 76 entered UNO during 1982-86; 38 Asians graduated from OPS and 37 enrolled at UNO during the 4-year period; and 24 Indians/Alaskans graduated from OPS, and 10 enrolled during the 4-year period.

Table 5 shows the number of minority students who enrolled at UNO between the fall of 1982 and the summer of 1986. These data are from all high schools and are not limited to OPS graduates.

Table 5  
 Minority Students Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Racial Designation				Total
	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Indian	
	Number				
1982-83	835	193	114	47	1,189
1983-84	835	205	84	53	1,177
1984-85	763	212	84	63	1,122
1985-86	705	196	86	43	1,030
Average	784.5	201.5	92.0	51.5	1,129.5

The total number of Black OPS graduates who enrolled at UNO during the period studied was 310 (15.2 percent of the total number of graduates). The 310 Blacks from OPS represented 39.5 percent of the total average number of Blacks (784.5) enrolled at UNO during 1982-86. Hispanics averaged 201.5 at UNO, and the OPS graduates represented 38 percent of that total. Asian enrollment averaged 92 at UNO, and OPS supplied 40 percent of this group. Enrollment of American Indians at UNO averaged 51.5, and OPS supplied 10 students (19 percent).

Table 6 shows the year in which students graduated from OPS, by high school. Again, only students receiving a grade point average at UNO for the attendance period were included in the study data.

Table 6  
 OPS High School Graduates Enrolled at UNO, by School, 1982-86

High school	Year				Total
	1982	1983	1984	1985	
	Number				
Benson	77	60	34	45	216
Bryan	50	56	47	25	178
Burke	130	124	83	68	405
Central	151	110	110	67	438
North	60	29	30	26	145
Northwest	118	99	82	61	360
South	77	81	48	43	249
Technical	26	24	School Closed		50
Total	689	583	434	335	2,041

Clearly, the 1982 graduates of OPS high schools supplied the largest number of students--689 (33.8 percent)--to UNO during the 4-year study period. The second highest number of OPS graduates who enrolled at UNO was 583 (28.6 percent) in 1983. The OPS graduating classes of 1985 supplied the lowest number of students to UNO, 335 (16.4 percent).

Students attending UNO may declare one major one semester, and then switch. Also, students who plan to teach, for example, may be included as Arts and Science and Education majors. Thus, the number of majors will not equal the total number of OPS students attending UNO; they only provide a numerical indication of the students declared majors during a specific semester. Table 7 shows the majors declared by students from fall 1983 until fall 1986.

Table 7  
UNO Majors, by Semester, Fall 1983-Fall 1986

Major	Semester							Total
	Fall 1983	Spring 1984	Fall 1984	Spring 1985	Fall 1985	Spring 1986	Fall 1986	
Arts/science	159	148	245	231	313	300	335	1,500
Business	96	97	199	200	305	289	354	1,540
CPACS	15	14	23	25	41	32	40	190
Continuing studies	2	1	3	2	3	4	9	24
Education	34	39	66	68	89	89	111	496
Engineering technology	21	22	41	36	56	46	46	268
Fine arts	12	15	24	26	47	37	46	207
Home economics	8	10	16	12	18	23	30	117
University division	80	63	132	123	148	127	138	673
Intra-campus	1	0	6	7	8	8	9	39
Undeclared	5	5	5	3	8	4	2	32
Total	433	414	760	733	1,036	959	1,120	5,086

### *College Entrance Examinations*

The college entrance examination indicates a student's ability to do college work. Once the student enters college, the grade point average reflects the student's ability to perform academically. Table 8 shows the college entrance examination (American College Test (ACT)) scores by sub-tests, composite scores, and OPS high school. The school averages are for all 4 years (except for Technical High School which closed in 1983).

Table 8  
Average ACT Scores of OPS Graduates Enrolled at UNO,  
by High School, 1982-86

High school	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
Benson	17.76	17.29	17.22	21.22	18.49
Bryan	17.53	16.80	16.30	20.03	17.80
Burke	18.52	17.06	17.55	21.27	18.73
Central	17.36	16.59	17.67	20.84	18.22
North	16.72	15.26	16.40	19.43	17.07
Northwest	17.17	15.15	16.25	19.72	17.21
South	15.78	15.33	15.64	18.05	16.31
Technical	15.44	13.65	15.26	18.44	15.85
Average	17.31	16.19	16.80	20.16	17.74

When compared with other OPS students, the graduates who enrolled at UNO appeared to score at a lower level in each of the years studied. The composite ACT scores of all OPS high school graduates for the years studied are as follows: 1982-83, 18.40; 1983-84, 18.40; 1984-85, 18.50; and 1985-86, 18.80. The average for OPS is 18.50.

The ACT scores for each of the high schools for 1982-86 are displayed in tables 9 through 15. (Again, Technical High was closed during the last 2 years studied.)

Table 9  
ACT Scores for Benson High School Graduates  
Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

Schol year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	17.51	16.11	16.93	20.51	17.93
1983-84	17.58	17.67	17.35	21.04	18.56
1984-85	19.15	18.85	18.23	23.81	20.08
1985-86	17.22	17.52	16.63	20.52	18.00
Mean	17.76	17.29	17.22	21.22	18.49



Table 10  
 ACT Scores for Bryan High School Graduates  
 Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	15.97	14.26	15.63	19.00	16.37
1983-84	17.23	17.60	16.72	20.02	18.02
1984-85	18.13	16.35	15.23	20.10	17.58
1985-86	20.64	21.93	19.71	22.43	21.36
Mean	17.53	16.80	16.30	20.03	17.80

Table 11  
 ACT Scores for Burke High School Graduates  
 Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	18.25	16.90	17.96	21.49	18.78
1983-84	18.52	17.36	16.77	21.47	18.67
1984-85	18.08	17.34	17.25	21.13	18.59
1985-86	19.73	16.32	18.92	20.60	18.97
Mean	18.52	17.06	17.55	21.27	18.73

Table 12  
 ACT Scores for Central High School Graduates  
 Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	17.52	16.57	18.50	21.22	18.63
1983-84	17.04	16.74	17.04	20.38	17.91
1984-85	16.53	15.51	16.29	20.00	17.12
1985-86	19.25	18.50	19.58	22.47	20.06
Mean	17.36	16.59	17.67	20.84	18.22

Table 13  
 ACT Scores for North High School Graduates  
 Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	16.24	14.62	17.38	19.38	16.97
1983-84	16.50	15.61	14.50	19.06	16.56
1984-85	16.75	14.90	16.90	19.85	17.25
1985-86	17.94	16.69	15.81	19.44	17.63
Mean	16.72	15.26	16.40	19.43	17.07

Table 14  
 ACT Scores for Northwest High School Graduates  
 Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	17.40	16.77	17.86	20.55	18.34
1983-84	16.49	13.09	15.95	18.74	16.16
1984-85	17.17	14.57	14.70	19.11	16.51
1985-86	18.09	16.76	16.06	21.03	18.06
Mean	17.17	15.15	16.25	19.72	17.21

Table 15  
 ACT Scores for South High School Graduates  
 Enrolled at UNO, 1982-86

School year	Score				
	English	Math	Social Science	Natural Science	Composite
1982-83	14.40	15.24	14.45	17.02	15.42
1983-84	16.57	15.79	15.79	18.24	16.67
1984-85	16.57	15.30	16.48	19.23	16.95
1985-86	15.86	14.27	16.45	17.77	16.23
Mean	15.78	15.33	15.64	18.05	16.31

## Grade Point Averages

The mean grade point averages of OPS graduates attending UNO are shown in table 16. At UNO, a 4.0 is the highest possible grade point average. Unfortunately, UNO does not have similar GPAs to cover all of the periods studied because of a change in reporting systems. However, for fall 1983, the mean grade point average for all UNO students was 2.74; for spring 1984, 2.77; fall 1985, 2.78; and for spring 1987, 2.77. Thus, table 16 shows that the highest achieving OPS students are not enrolled at UNO.

Table 16  
Mean Grade Point Average of OPS Graduates  
Enrolled at UNO, by High School, Fall 1983-Fall 1986

High school	Mean Grade Point Average						
	Fall 1983	Spring 1984	Fall 1984	Spring 1985	Fall 1985	Spring 1986	Fall 1986
Benson	2.22	2.23	2.24	2.24	2.36	2.41	2.34
Bryan	1.95	2.10	2.14	2.31	2.23	2.40	2.49
Burke	2.27	2.20	2.39	2.40	2.38	2.41	2.45
Central	2.32	2.36	2.41	2.40	2.25	2.30	2.39
North	1.91	1.86	2.18	2.06	2.19	2.20	2.32
Northwest	2.37	2.40	2.38	2.28	2.26	2.37	2.37
South	1.91	2.12	2.12	2.12	2.16	2.22	2.23
Technical	1.74	1.95	2.33	2.15	2.17	2.24	2.43
Total	2.18	2.23	2.31	2.29	2.27	2.34	2.38

## Conclusions

This study built a database from which UNO and OPS can begin to chart the progress of OPS graduates who attend UNO, and established a method for the two institutions to share data so that they both may benefit. This study represents the first effort to combine data for purposes of analysis, and offers the potential for other efforts in the future. The author recommends that OPS and UNO conduct additional research and use these data as a basis for additional and follow-up studies.

We do not know why the OPS graduates studied selected UNO as their post-secondary institution. Because about half of OPS graduates enroll in college and only 19.2 percent of all OPS graduates enrolled at UNO during the 4-year period studied, many OPS graduates select a college other than UNO.

Nevertheless, when 19.2 percent of the OPS graduates attend a particular college it indicates that cooperation between OPS and UNO is necessary. If UNO can find ways to work effectively with these students and help to ensure their transition from high school to college, it will make an important contribution to these students.

One of the objectives of UNO is to retain students; another is to recruit more students from minority groups. This study demonstrates that the best OPS students are not being recruited by UNO and that the students who do attend UNO are not doing well after they enroll. This study also suggests that UNO should increase its efforts to enroll OPS graduates.

Clearly, OPS could be a source of more minority students, and UNO should recruit more members of minority groups. Retention of minority students in college is another area that requires attention. Marginal students require support, tutoring, and counseling to stay in college.

Perhaps both institutions can help minority students gain better basic skills and study habits. The author thinks that students may require additional help with basic study skills throughout junior high and high school; some type of group support and assistance may be necessary as early as 5th or 6th grade. In addition, students should be encouraged to prepare for and to attend college, and receive encouragement and support while attending UNO.