

## The Undergraduate General Education Courses Offered at UW-Madison

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In September 2014, the University Academic Planning Council reviewed the annual report from the University General Education Committee. Though the focus of that meeting was on a particular issue related to the timing of completion of the Ethnic Studies requirement, there was a general request for more information about the general education course array and its implementation. This analysis provides the requested information with an emphasis on the general education courses offered to undergraduates in the last five years. For each of the five requirements we provide information about:

1. **Courses approved to satisfy the requirements.** How many courses are there and when were they last offered?
2. **Enrollment trends.** How many undergraduates enroll in general education courses?
3. **Semester type.** Are courses offered and enrollments aligned between spring, summer, and fall semesters?
4. **Instructor role.** Are general education courses taught by faculty, academic staff, or graduate students?
5. **Courses.** Which courses do undergraduates take to satisfy general education requirements?

This report focuses on the five core general education requirements in communication, ethnic studies, and quantitative reasoning. These requirements include:

1. Two levels of **communication**
  - **Part A: Literacy Proficiency:** Credits at the first year level dedicated to reading, listening, and discussion, with emphasis on writing.
  - **Part B: Enhancing Literary Proficiency:** More advanced work for students who have completed Communications Part A, usually in a discipline.
2. **Ethnic Studies:** A course intended to increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community.
3. Two levels of **quantitative reasoning**
  - **Part A: Quantitative Reading Proficiency:** A college level course in mathematics or formal logic.
  - **Part B: Enhancing Quantitative Reasoning Proficiency:** A more advanced course in mathematics or formal logic for students who have completed Quantitative Reasoning Part A.

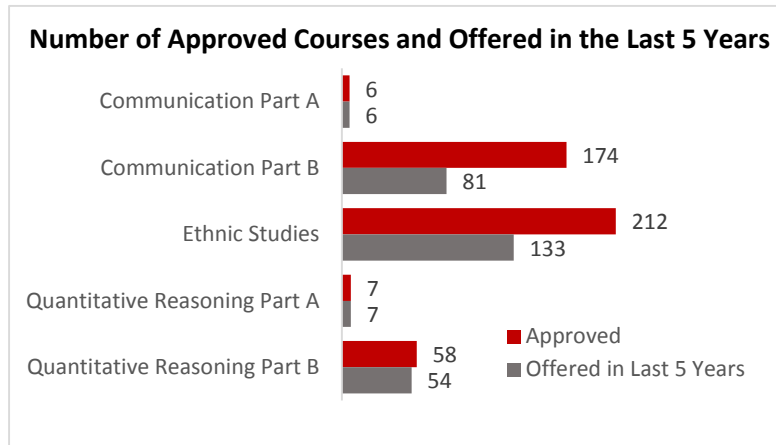
### About the Data

1. The data used in this report includes courses approved to satisfy the five general education requirements as of April 1, 2015.
2. Counts of enrollments and course offerings include the semesters between spring 2010 and fall 2014 (five calendar years). When a year is cited (for example, 2014) it refers to a calendar year (spring, summer, and fall) so that the most recent completed semester, fall 2014, could be included.
3. Information about the type of instructor (faculty, graduate assistant etc.) was obtained by linking the instructor information provided in the schedule of classes to their title codes in the human resources data system. Courses with multiple instructors are counted only once. If one of the instructors was a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, then the course is counted as having a faculty instructor. A course that has both an academic staff instructor AND a graduate student instructor is counted as having an academic staff instructor.
4. Course enrollments are undergraduates only. Special students or graduate students (most commonly in upper level Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses) also enroll in these courses. They are not included in the enrollments reported in this analysis because the focus is on general education requirements that only apply to undergraduates.

**Courses Approved to Satisfy General Education Requirements**

The number of courses available to undergraduates ranges from six Communication Part A courses to 212 possible Ethnic Studies courses. All of the Communication Part A and Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were offered at least once in the last five years. Most (93%) Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses were also offered at least once in the last five years.

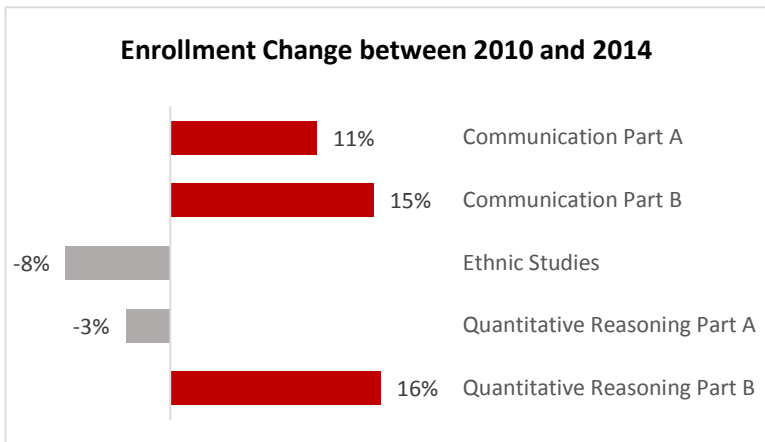
Compared to courses that fulfill these three requirements, courses that fulfill the Ethnic Studies and Communication Part B requirements were not all routinely offered. Of the 174 approved Communication Part B courses, 81 (47%) were offered at least once in the last five years. Of the 212 approved Ethnic Studies courses, 133 (63%) were offered at least once in the last five years.



**Enrollment Trends**

Between 2010 and 2014 there was an increase in enrollments in three of the five general education requirements and a decrease in two. The largest increase, 16%, was in Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses. During this same time period there was a rapid increase in enrollments in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) majors. The major-specific portion of STEM majors often requires multiple courses that also fulfill the Quantitative Reasoning Part B requirement and may have contributed to the increase.

The second largest increase was in Communication Part B courses, where enrollments grew 15% over the last five years. This increase is probably most related to higher overall undergraduate enrollments but some of the growth may be from students taking more than one course.



The third largest increase was in Communication Part A courses where enrollments grew by 11% over the last five years. Some of the increase came from an increasing number of new freshman students. At the same time, an increasing percentage of new students satisfied the requirement through the English placement test or through Advanced Placement tests, so the increase in enrollments was not as

high as for Communication Part B courses.

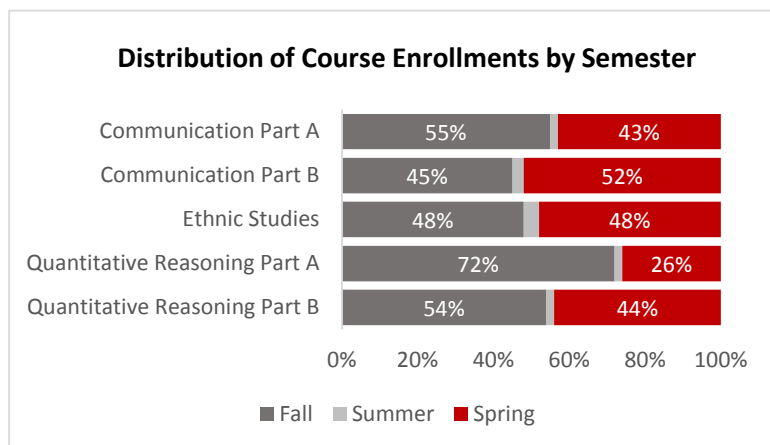
Enrollment in Quantitative Reasoning Part A decreased by 3% over the last five years. Even though there was an increase in the number of new freshmen over the same time period, these students increasingly satisfied this requirement through placement testing or through Advanced Placement tests.

The largest decrease in course enrollments occurred in Ethnic Studies courses, where enrollments decreased by 8% over the last five years. Because the Ethnic Studies requirement cannot be satisfied through Advanced Placement tests or through a UW placement test, every UW-Madison graduate needs to take an Ethnic Studies course. Decreasing enrollments in Ethnic Studies courses at a time when overall undergraduate enrollment

increased means either that the proportion of students who enrolled in multiple Ethnic Studies courses decreased, that students took these courses at other institutions (other studies show no evidence to support this), or that students delayed enrolling in Ethnic Studies courses.

### Semester Type

Undergraduate enrollments in Communication Part A, Quantitative Reasoning Part A, and Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses were higher in fall semesters than spring semesters. Enrollments in Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were particularly imbalanced, with 72% of enrollments occurring in the fall semester and 26% in the spring semester.



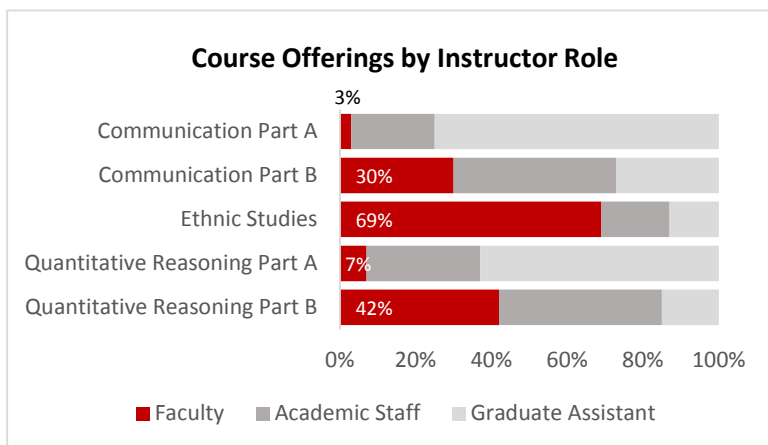
Enrollments in Ethnic Studies courses were evenly split between fall and spring semesters. The Ethnic Studies requirement also had the highest proportion of enrollments during the summer session (4%).

Communication Part B courses were the only general education courses that had a higher proportion of enrollments in the spring semester compared to the fall semester. Fifty-two percent (52%) of enrollments in Communication Part B courses were in spring semesters compared to 45% of enrollments in fall semesters.

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### Instructor Role

We classified each general education course offered in the last five years by whether the “primary” instructor was a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, an academic staff member, or a graduate assistant (see note 4 in the “About the Data” section on Page 1 for information on how courses with multiple instructors were handled). The percentage of courses taught by a UW-Madison faculty member ranged from 3% for Communication Part A courses to 69% for Ethnic Studies courses.



Graduate assistants made up more than half of the instructors in Communication Part A and Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses.

The percentage of courses taught by academic staff instructors ranged from 18% for Ethnic Studies courses to 43% for both Communication Part B and Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses.

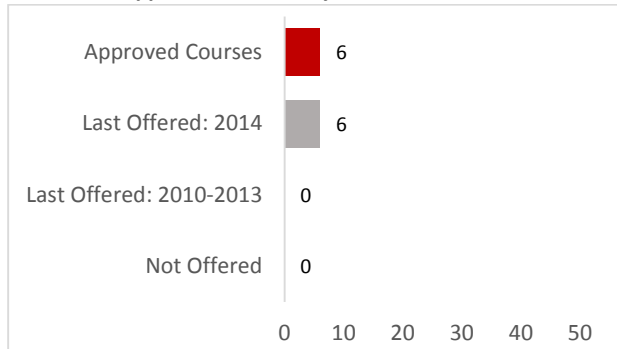
More in depth information about each of the five general education requirements follows.

## Communication Part A (Comm A)

**Approved Courses:** There are six approved courses that satisfy the Communication Part A requirement.

All six of the Communication Part A courses were offered in 2014 and all six of these courses were offered in each of the last five years.

**Approved Courses by Last Offered Year**



**Enrollments:** Enrollments in Communication Part A courses have remained relatively steady. Over the last five years, enrollments have fluctuated by 500 with a low of 3,689 enrollments in 2012 and a high of 4,189 enrollments a year later in 2013.

The two highest enrollment years in the last five occurred in the most recent two years, concurrent with larger new freshman classes.

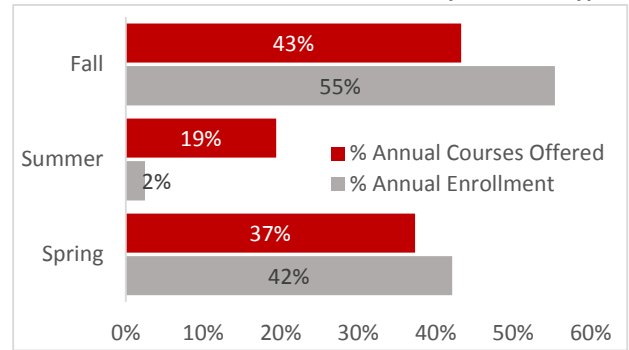
**Annual Enrollment**



**Semester Type:** Over the last five years, 43% of Communication Part A course offerings were in fall semesters and 37% were in the spring. The rest of the course offerings, 19%, occurred in summer terms.

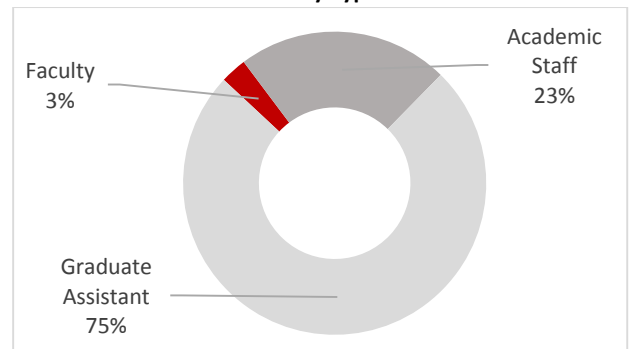
More than half (55%) of enrollments were in spring semesters and 42% of enrollments were in the fall semester. Although summer session made up 19% of Communication Part A courses offered, only 2% of enrollments occurred during the summer session.

**Distribution of Courses and Enrollments by Semester Type**



**Instructors:** Over the last five years, 3% of Communication Part A courses were taught by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member. Ninety-seven percent (97%) were taught by an academic staff instructor (23%) or graduate assistant instructor (75%) as the primary instructor.

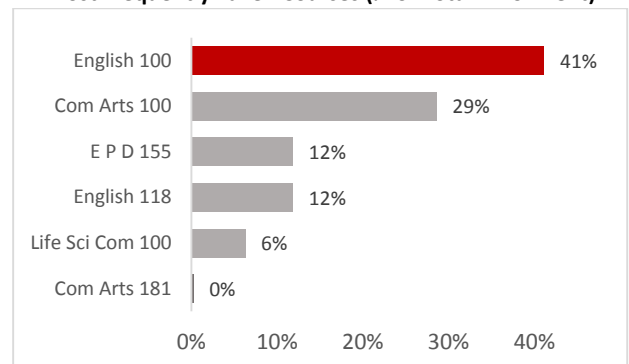
**Courses Offered by Type of Instructor**



**Courses:** English 100 accounted for 41% of Communication Part A enrollments and was the most common course students took to fulfill the Communication Part A requirement.

Four of the six Communication Part A courses were offered through College of Letters and Science subjects. Engineering Professional Development 155 and Life Sciences Communication 100 were the two non-L&S courses.

**Most Frequently Taken Courses (% of Total Enrollment)**

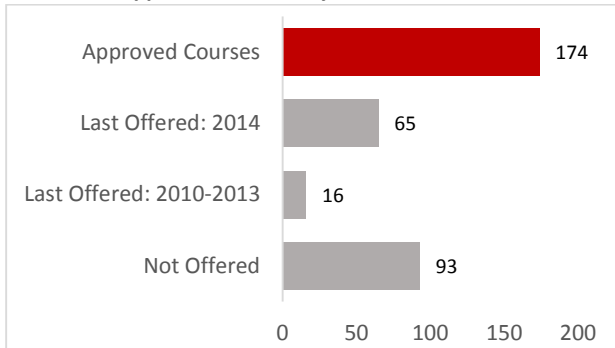


## Communication Part B (Comm B)

**Approved Courses:** There are 174 approved courses that satisfy the Communications Part B requirement – 92 approved at the course level and 82 courses approved at the section level.

Thirty-seven percent (37%) of Communications Part B courses were offered in 2014. An additional 9% were not offered in 2014 but were offered at least once between 2010 and 2013. More than half (53%) of Communication Part B courses have not been offered in the last five years.

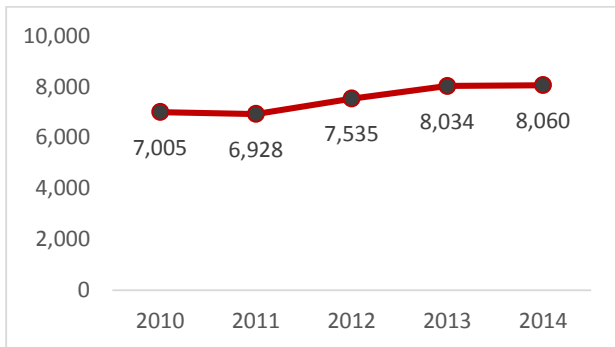
**Approved Courses by Last Offered Year**



**Enrollments:** Enrollments in Communication Part B courses have increased by 15% over the last five years, from 7,005 enrollments in 2010 to 8,060 enrollments in 2014, concurrent with larger new freshman classes.

Most of the increase occurred between 2011 and 2013.

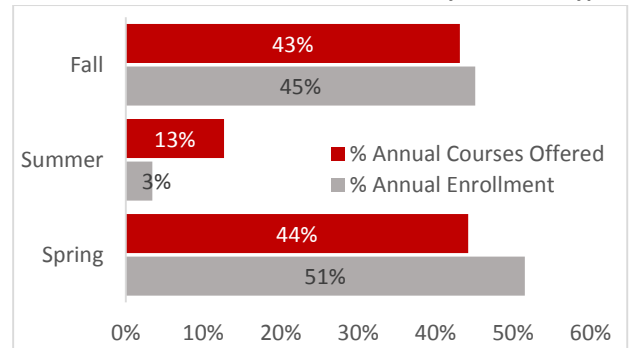
**Annual Enrollment**



**Semester Type:** Over the last five years, Communication Part B course offerings were evenly split between fall and spring semesters (43% and 44% of offerings, respectively). The rest of the course offerings, 13%, occurred in summer terms.

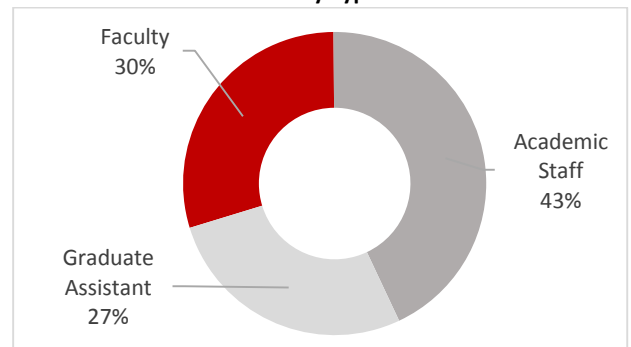
Slightly more than half (51%) of enrollments were in spring semesters and 45% of enrollments were in the fall semester. Although summer session made up 13% of Communication Part B courses offered, only 3% of enrollments occur during the summer session.

**Distribution of Courses and Enrollments by Semester Type**



**Instructors:** Over the last five years, 30% of Communication Part B courses were taught by a tenure or tenure-track faculty member. Seventy percent (70%) were taught by an academic staff instructor (43%) or a graduate assistant instructor (27%) as the primary instructor.

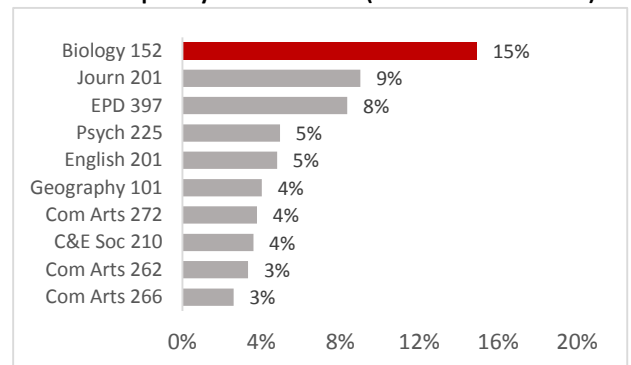
**Courses Offered by Type of Instructor**



**Courses:** Biology 152 accounted for 15% of Communication Part B enrollments and was the most common course students took to fulfill the Communication Part B requirement.

Except for Engineering Professional Development 397 and Community and Environmental Sociology 210, the other eight most commonly taken courses were offered through College of Letters and Science subjects. These ten courses accounted for 59% of Comm B enrollments over the last five years.

**Most Frequently Taken Courses (% of Total Enrollment)**

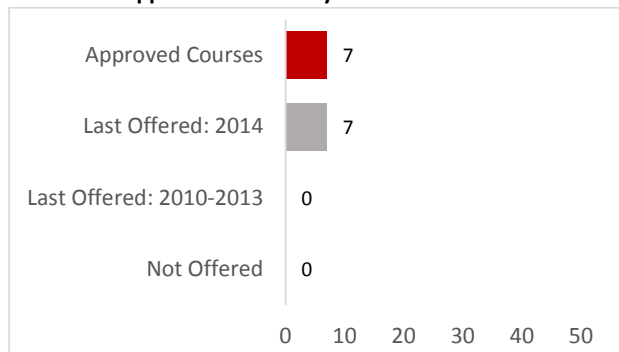


## Quantitative Reasoning Part A (QR-A)

**Approved Courses:** There are seven approved courses that satisfy the Quantitative Reasoning Part A requirement.

All seven of the Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were offered in 2014 and all seven of these courses were offered in each of the last five years.

**Approved Courses by Last Offered Year**



**Enrollments:** Enrollments in Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses have remained relatively steady. Over the last five years, enrollments fluctuated by 233 with a low of 2,248 enrollments in 2011 and a high of 2,481 enrollments a year later in 2012.

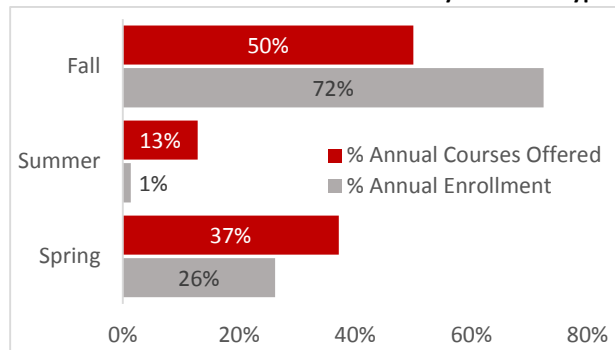
**Annual Enrollment**



**Semester Type:** Over the last five years, Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were more likely to be offered in the fall instead of the spring. Half (50%) of courses were offered in fall semesters compared to 37% offered in spring semesters. The rest of the course offerings, 13%, occurred in the summer session.

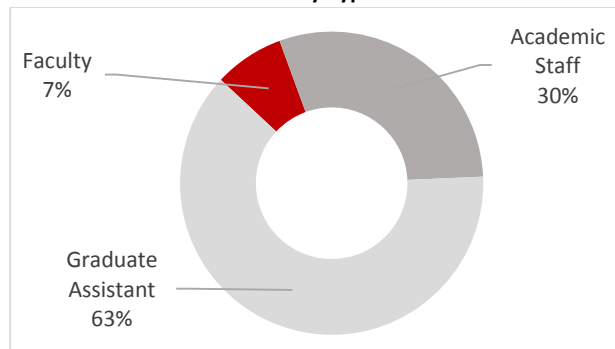
Almost three quarters (72%) of enrollments in Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were in fall semesters and 26% of enrollments were in the spring semester. Although summer session made up 13% of Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses offered, only 1% of enrollments occurred during the summer session.

**Distribution of Courses and Enrollments by Semester Type**



**Instructors:** Over the last five years, 7% of Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were taught by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member. Ninety-three percent (93%) were taught by an academic staff instructor (30%) or a graduate assistant instructor (63%) as the primary instructor.

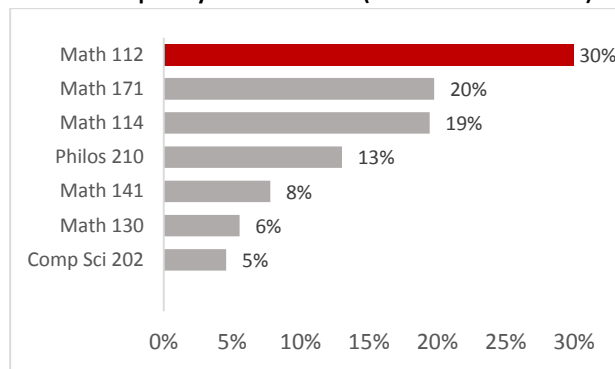
**Courses Offered by Type of Instructor**



**Courses:** Math 112 accounted for 30% of Quantitative Reasoning Part A enrollments and was the most common course students took to fulfill the QR-A requirement.

All seven of the Quantitative Reasoning Part A courses were offered through College of Letters and Science subjects.

**Most Frequently Taken Courses (% of Total Enrollment)**

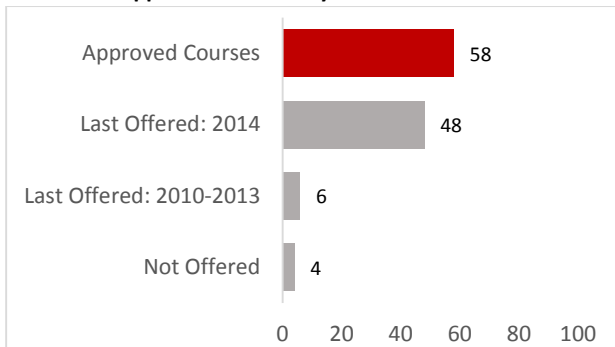


## Quantitative Reasoning Part B (QR-B)

**Approved Courses:** There are 58 approved courses that satisfy the Quantitative Reasoning Part B requirement.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses were offered in 2014. An additional 10% were not offered in 2014 but were offered at least once between 2010 and 2013. Seven percent (7%) of Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses were offered in the last 5 years (4 courses).

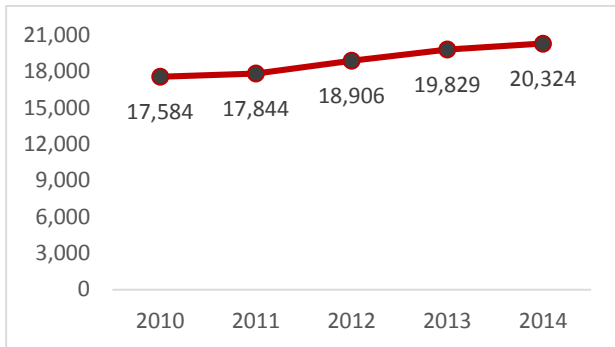
**Approved Courses by Last Offered Year**



**Enrollments:** Enrollments in Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses increased by 16% over the last five years, from 17,584 enrollments in 2010 to 20,324 enrollments in 2014, concurrent with larger new freshman classes.

Most of the increase occurred between 2011 and 2013.

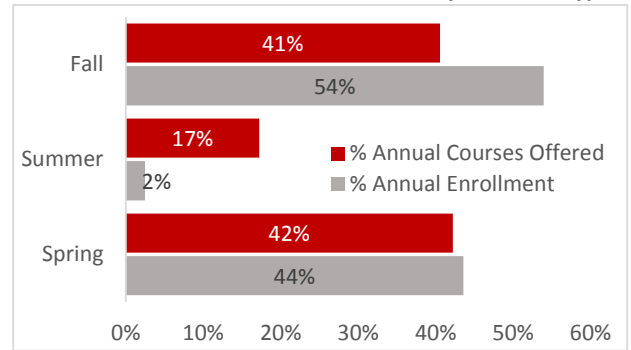
**Annual Enrollment**



**Semester Type:** Over the last five years, Quantitative Reasoning Part B course offerings were evenly split between fall and spring semesters (41% and 42% of offerings, respectively). The rest of the course offerings, 17%, occurred in summer terms.

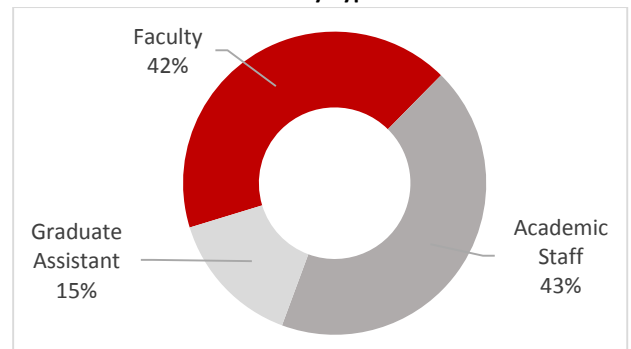
More than half (54%) of enrollments were in spring semesters and 44% of enrollments were in the fall semester. Although summer session made up 17% of Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses offered, only 2% of enrollments occurred during the summer session.

**Distribution of Courses and Enrollments by Semester Type**



**Instructors:** Over the last five years, 42% of Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses were taught by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member. Fifty-eight percent (58%) were taught by an academic staff instructor (43%) or a graduate assistant instructor (15%) as the primary instructor.

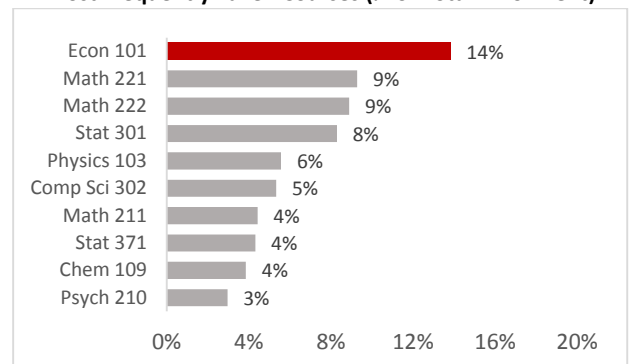
**Courses Offered by Type of Instructor**



**Courses:** Economics 101 accounted for 14% of Quantitative Reasoning Part B enrollments and was the most common course students took to fulfill the QR-B requirement.

All of the ten most commonly taken Quantitative Reasoning Part B courses were offered through College of Letters and Science subjects. These ten courses accounted for 67% of QR-B enrollments over the last five years.

**Most Frequently Taken Courses (% of Total Enrollment)**

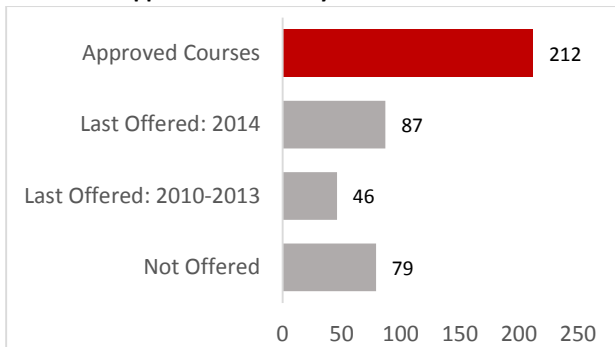


## Ethnic Studies

**Approved Courses:** There are 212 approved courses that satisfy the Ethnic Studies requirement.

Forty-one percent (41%) of Ethnic Studies courses were offered in 2014. An additional 22% were not offered in 2014 but were offered at least once between 2010 and 2013. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of Ethnic Studies courses were not offered in the last 5 years.

**Approved Courses by Last Offered Year**



**Enrollments:** Enrollments in Ethnic Studies courses have decreased by 8% over the last five years, from 9,086 enrollments in 2010 to 8,381 enrollments in 2014.

Between 2012 and 2013, and 2013 and 2014, there were particularly large fluctuations in enrollments in Ethnic Studies courses. The fluctuations were not caused by changes in the number of Ethnic Studies courses offered as these remained relatively constant over the last five years.

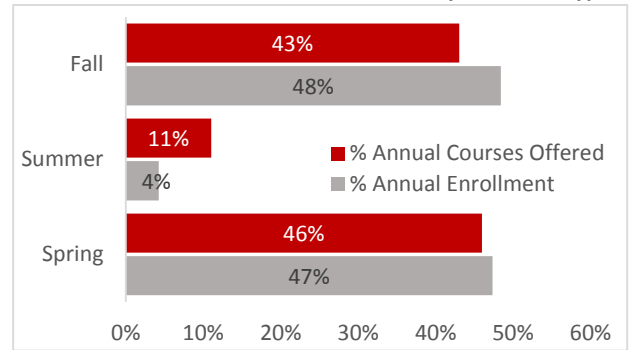
**Annual Enrollment**



**Semester Type:** Over the last five years, 43% of Ethnic Studies course offerings were in fall semesters and 46% were in spring semesters. The rest of the course offerings, 11%, occurred in summer terms.

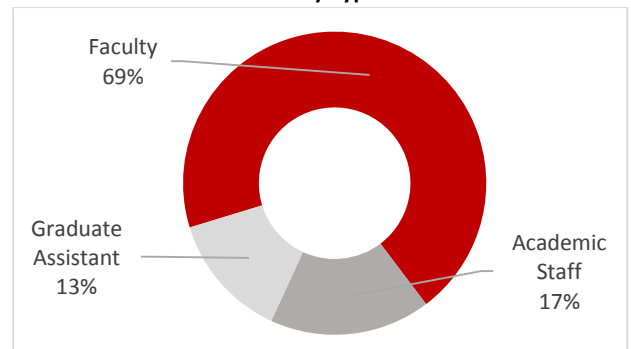
Enrollments were evenly split between fall and spring semesters (48% and 47% respectively). Although summer session made up 11% of Ethnic Studies courses offered, only 4% of enrollments occurred during the summer session.

**Distribution of Courses and Enrollments by Semester Type**



**Instructors:** Over the last five years, 69% of Ethnic Studies courses were taught by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member. Thirty-one percent (31%) were taught by an academic staff instructor (17%) or a graduate assistant instructor (13%) as the primary instructor.

**Courses Offered by Type of Instructor**



**Courses:** Anthropology 104 accounted for 17% of Ethnic Studies enrollments and was the most common course students took to fulfill the Ethnic Studies requirement.

All of the ten most commonly taken Ethnic Studies courses were offered through College of Letters and Science subjects. These ten courses accounted for almost half (47%) of Ethnic Studies enrollments over the last five years.

**Most Frequently Taken Courses (% of Total Enrollment)**

