



## “Super Seniors”: Who, What, Why, and How Many?

*Editor’s note: This is Part II of a three-part series on Super Seniors.*

We modify our working definition to describe super seniors as students who have more than 120 earned credits, are currently designated as active in fall 2009, and who have not applied for graduation as of fall 2009. By this definition, 500 super seniors are identified.<sup>1</sup>

**Gender.** The majority of super seniors are women (59.6% female; 40.4% male). However, since females account for the majority of undergraduate enrollment (66%), this may be an artifact of the overall enrollment picture. While males occupy a smaller proportion of the enrollment (34%), data suggest they are slightly overrepresented as super seniors. The slight overrepresentation can be seen in the units earned category of 140-159 and 160-179 units in Table 1.

**Ethnicity.** As displayed in the unit category of 140-159 units in Table 2, data suggest excess units are more likely for Whites and Asians than for Hispanics. (The number of seniors in some of the race/ethnic categories such as American Indian, African American, Pacific Islander, as well as Non-resident Alien is so few as to limit any generalizations).

**Table 1. Number and Percent Units by Gender, Fall 2009**

Unit Earned	Female	Male	Total
120-139	202	126	328
	67.8%	62.4%	65.6%
140-159	67	53	120
	22.5%	26.2%	24.0%
160-179	19	21	40
	6.4%	10.4%	8.0%
180+	10	2	12
	3.4%	1.0%	2.4%
Total	298	202	500
	59.6%	40.4%	100.0%

Source: PeopleSoft student record extract, October 19, 2009. OIR analysis, November 23, 2009.

**Table 2. Number and Percent Units by Race/Ethnicity, Fall 2009**

Units Earned	American Indian or Alaskan Native	Asian	Black or African American	Hispanic/Latino	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Non-resident Alien	Unknown	White non-Hispanic	Total
120-139	3	49	14	88	4	3	41	126	328
	75.0%	65.3%	63.6%	69.3%	100.0%	60.0%	66.1%	62.7%	65.6%
140-159	1	22	4	27	0	0	16	50	120
	25.0%	29.3%	18.2%	21.3%	.0%	.0%	25.8%	24.9%	24.0%
160-179	0	4	2	8	0	1	5	20	40
	.0%	5.3%	9.1%	6.3%	.0%	20.0%	8.1%	10.0%	8.0%
180+	0	0	2	4	0	1	0	5	12
	.0%	.0%	9.1%	3.1%	.0%	20.0%	.0%	2.5%	2.4%
Total	4	75	22	127	4	5	62	201	500
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: PeopleSoft student record extract, October 19, 2009. OIR analysis, November 23, 2009.

**GPA.** Does GPA reveal any pattern among students with excess units? As shown in Table 3, largely there appears to be no discernable pattern of GPA and excess units. GPA is consistent from one unit category to the next.

**Age.** What about age of student? A pattern, indeed emerges when taking into consideration the age of students. Table 3 reveals average age to correspond with a greater number of units earned. While this

<sup>1</sup> Of the 500 seniors, 154 were found to be “active” but not enrolled in fall 2009. According to university admissions policy, active means students are not currently taking classes but are eligible to take classes in spring 2010. If any student misses or skips two consecutive semesters of instruction the student is required to re-apply and re-enroll. The analysis includes the 154 “actively” enrolled students.

relationship is logical, the feature of interest is the significant difference in average age from the 120-unit category (28 years) to the 160-unit (32 years) and 180-unit categories (36 years). The higher unit categories reveal a much older adult learner group of seniors.

### Units Earned, GPA, Age, Gender

Analysis suggests a statistically significant relationship between age of student and excess units earned. However, the fact is more pronounced for males (Table 4). There is a greater tendency for excess units among older adult male learners.

Analyses revealed no statistically significant relationship among females between GPA and age. However, among males, there is a statistically significant and negative relationship (-.187,  $p < .01$ ,  $n = 202$ ) suggesting older adult male learners tend to have lower GPAs and higher units earned (.355,  $p < .01$ ,  $n = 202$ ).

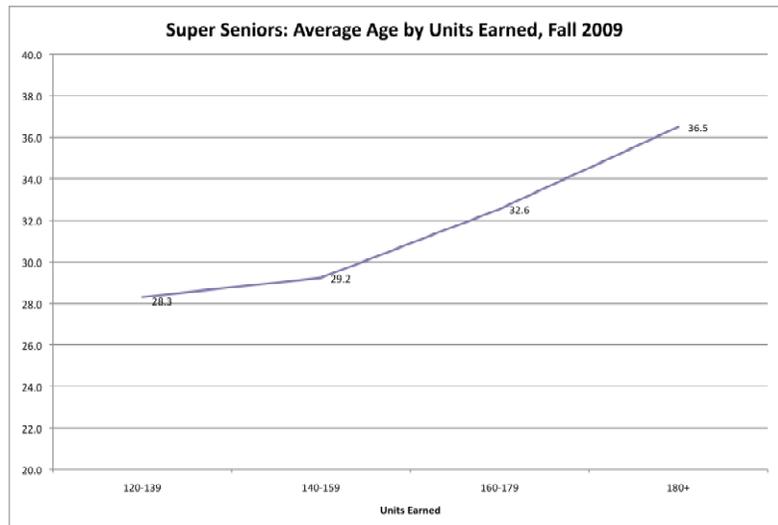
**Table 3. Super Seniors: GPA and Age by Unit Category, Fall 2009**

Units Earned	N	GPA		AGE	
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.
120-139	328	2.99	0.443	28.31	7.813
140-159	120	3.00	0.434	29.23	7.921
160-179	40	2.96	0.459	32.55	9.716
180+	12	2.93	0.474	36.50	7.404
Total	500	2.99	0.442	29.07	8.139

Source: PeopleSoft student record extract, October 19, 2009. OIR analysis, November 23, 2009.

### How may we use this information?

These data may inform department programs and student services to focus particular attention on older adult male learners (undergraduate students older than 30 years of age) and with more than 120 units earned. In particular it appears adult male learners have the more difficult struggle to graduation compared to females. CSU Stanislaus already excels in the student advising process, but in focusing on adult male learners, departments may request from Enrollment Services (each term) a report at the program major level that identifies students with more than 120 units earned by gender and



corresponding GPA. This information may be used to monitor and track students likely to be experiencing academic challenges or impediments toward their successful graduation.

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