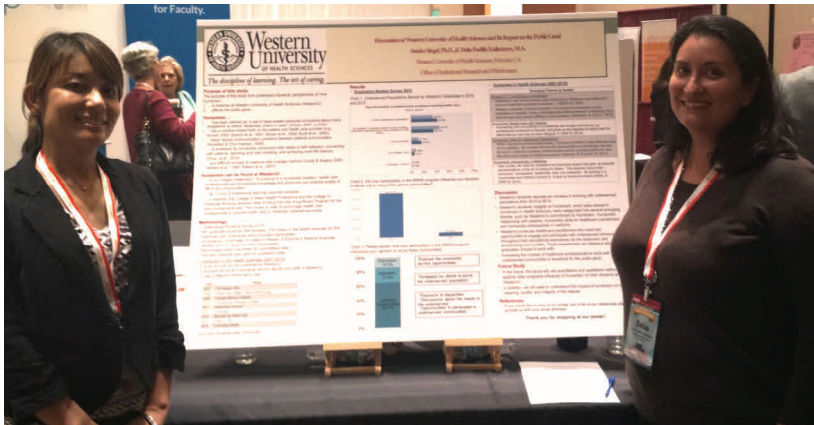# Descriptives
Western University of Health Sciences

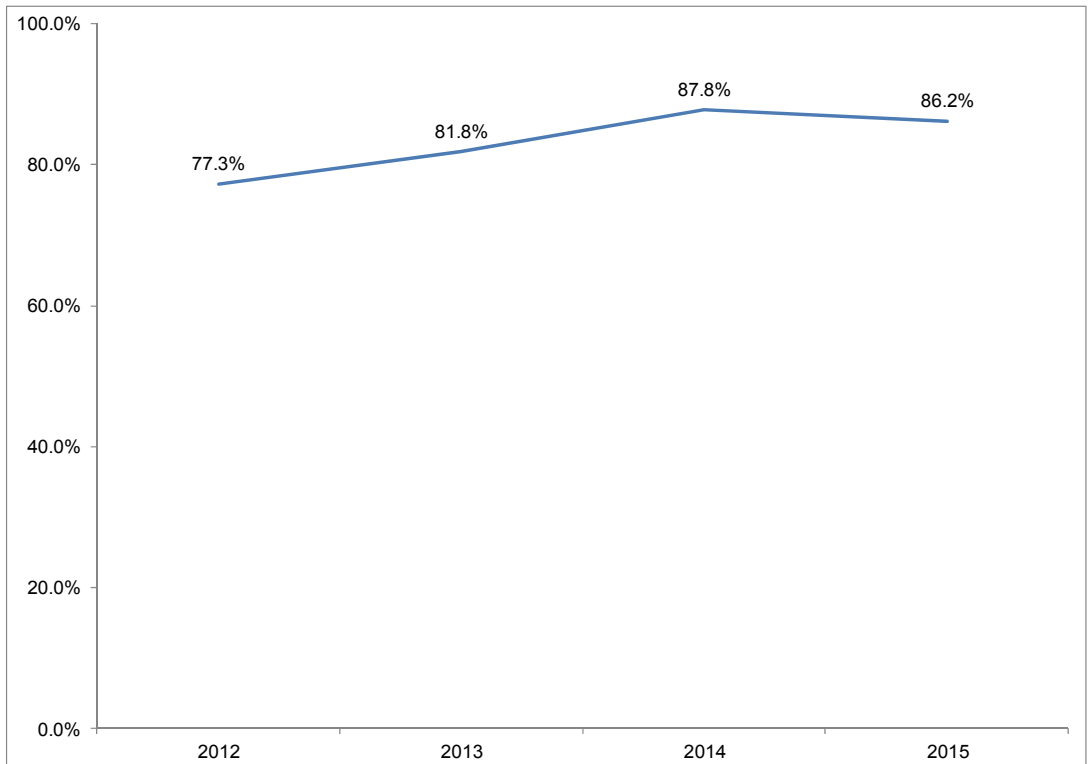## Welcome to the Spring Issue of Descriptives!

We hope you enjoy this issue! We welcome comments at: pkallemyn@westernu.edu

What's Happening at WesternU IRE?

- The Master of Science in Health Sciences program along with the assistance of IRE had their first external review site visit on May 12-13. Congratulations!
- Congratulations to Satoko Siegel & Delia Padilla Kallemeyn for presenting their poster at the 2016 Academic Resources Conference in Garden Grove entitled, "Humanism at Western University of Health Sciences and Its Impact on the Public Good."

Data Corner:

This issue's Data Corner shows us the completion rates for the 2012-2015 Graduating Student Survey. A completion rate is calculated by the number of completed surveys over the number of surveys entered/started. This is different from a response rate. See page 2 for more information on response rates.

Dear IRE:
I conducted an online survey which resulted in a 40% response rate. What are the benefits of conducting an survey online and how can we achieve a better response rate?
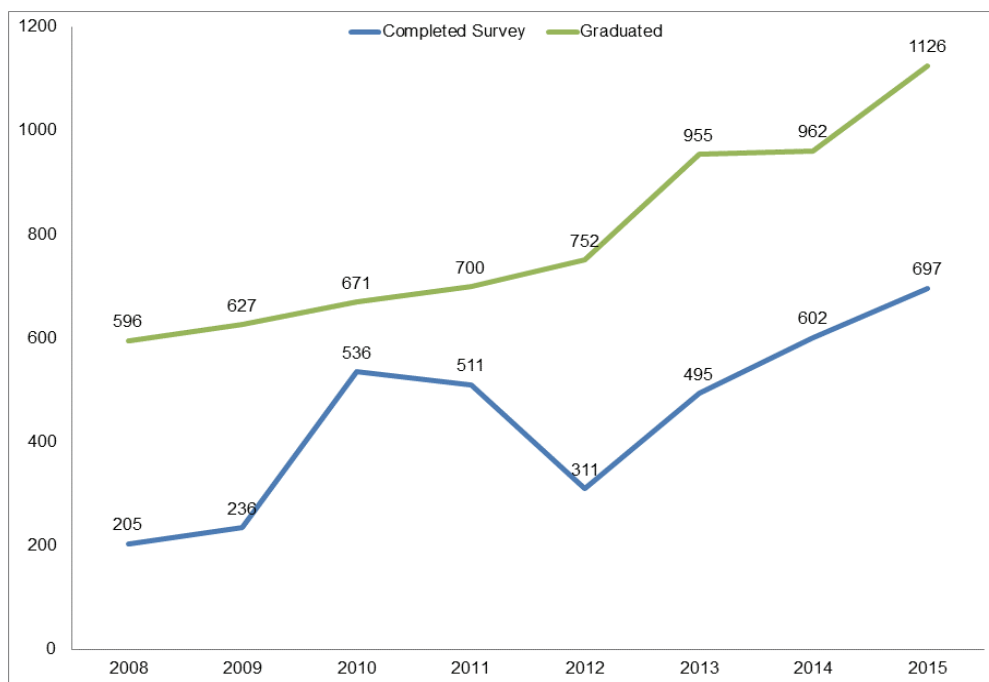**Sincerely, Puzzled over Response Rate**

Dear Puzzled:

As the demand for data increases and survey software makes it easier to collect data more surveys are conducted online. However, this shift has affected response rates. In general, paper surveys have had higher response rates than online surveys (Nulty, 2008). However, with a few strategies one can achieve a similar response rate (Kaplowitz et al. 2004, Nulty, 2008,).

Before we explore the benefits of conducting an online survey we need to define response rate. A <u>response rate</u> is the number of completed surveys over the number of survey invitations. For example, 200 students completed the survey and 1000 email invitations were sent means the response rate is 20%. A <u>completion rate</u> is the number of completed surveys over the number of persons who entered the survey. For example, 200 students completed the survey and 250 entered the survey making the completion rate 80%.

What are the benefits of conducting an online survey? Online surveys eliminate the need to print and mail the surveys. Also, the response speed is much faster as participants can complete the survey the same day they receive the link and as the survey is completed the data is entered into the database. Another benefit, is email software allows you to track surveys by knowing if an email was undeliverable or if a survey was opened and started making it easier to email survey reminders.

Speaking of reminders, <u>sending several reminders</u> (especially by a prominent person in the organization) is a great way to increase the response rate. Another strategy is to <u>pre-notify participants</u> (announce the survey a few days in advance). Also, <u>provide a survey incentive</u> (offer a prize to those that complete the survey). <u>Issue salience</u> has also been found to affect the response rate. Issue salience is how relevant the topic is for the respondents. For example, graduating students would be more interested in responding to a survey asking about job placement rather than a survey asking about home ownership. Look at our real life example below to understand how these factors can affect the number of persons who complete the survey.

This chart shows the number of WesternU graduates over the number of graduates that completed the Graduating Student Survey in 2008-2015. In 2010, we introduced an incentive. In 2012, we did not announce the survey in advance and experienced a dip. In 2013, we continued with the incentive and resumed announcing the survey in advance with the help of Deans and Chairs and sent 3 reminders to complete the survey. This method has helped increase the number of completed surveys in the last 3 years.

We welcome research/statistics questions at: pkallemyn@westernu.edu