

Identifying Parents' Perceptions of Barriers to Student Academic Success

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Today's college freshmen have closer ties to their parents than any generation in history. Often called "Helicopter parents," they hover, and young adults apparently thrive on this attention. Parents are so involved in their child's life that letting them "go" to college has new meaning. The child "goes" away, but the traditional act of "letting go" has changed. College students often talk to mom or dad every day.

Rather than bemoan the situation and wish that our college freshmen would be more independent, we wanted to take advantage of these relationships to help us understand the barriers to success in college (academic and otherwise). Parents know a great deal about what is going on in the college lives of their children, and because of their maturity and the wisdom that comes with age and their deep understanding of their own children, they may, in fact, be able to interpret the problems (or see what things really *are* problems and what are not).

Our research project surveyed first-year students' parents for one semester. The weekly survey (online) asked parents to identify what they believed their child's biggest problem was in the previous week and how serious they thought the problem was. We ask whether the problem was affecting academic performance.

Participants completed an anonymous online survey (see form on back) each week during the fall 2006 semester. Parents of approximately 45% of the freshman class volunteered to participate. We had a weekly response rate of just about 50%.

This research project parallels one in which we asked first-year students to identify the biggest problem (**TBP**) they faced each week. Comparative analysis is underway.

TBP FORM FOR THE STUDENT SURVEY:

___ M ___ F Major _____	
The Biggest Problem I had this week was ...	(Week # ___)
<hr/> <hr/>	
What I did to deal with the problem ...	
<hr/> <hr/>	
I solved the problem	_____ Yes _____ No
How would you rate this problem?	_____ Very serious _____ Sort of serious _____ Just an annoyance
The Best/ Most Positive thing that happened to me this week was ...	
<hr/> <hr/>	



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WEEK 15

Thank you for your participation in this survey. We'll ask for input a few times next semester - probably once a month. Watch for information about the results!

*If you no longer wish to participate in this survey, please send an email to ncasey@sbu.edu -- we **cannot** identify you from your responses to the survey.*

Thank you for participating in this survey. Please complete the brief form below and click the "Submit" button at the bottom.

We are interested in finding out what parents perceive as the problems facing their sons and daughters who are college freshmen. Think about what your child has communicated to you (or has NOT communicated with you about). Tell us about YOUR perception of the problems facing your son or daughter.

We understand that sometimes the biggest problem may not be so "big" in the grand scheme of things, but if not having shampoo is getting in the way of academic performance then it really is a big problem.

Thanks for your feedback so far!

We will email you again next week to remind you to complete the survey.

1. Gender of your SBU freshman:

Male Female

2. Your child's major:

PLEASE CHOOSE FROM THIS LIST



3. My child's residence:

PLEASE CHOOSE FROM THIS LIST



4. The biggest problem I think my son/daughter had this week was...



5. The problem was solved....

- Yes No I am not sure N/A

6. I'd rate this problem as...

- Very serious Serious Just an annoyance N/A

7. Do you think this problem affects your child's academic performance?

- Yes No N/A

8. How many times did you talk to your child this week by telephone?

- 0 1-2
 3-5 6 or more

9. About how many times did you communicate with your child electronically (IM, texting, email, etc.)

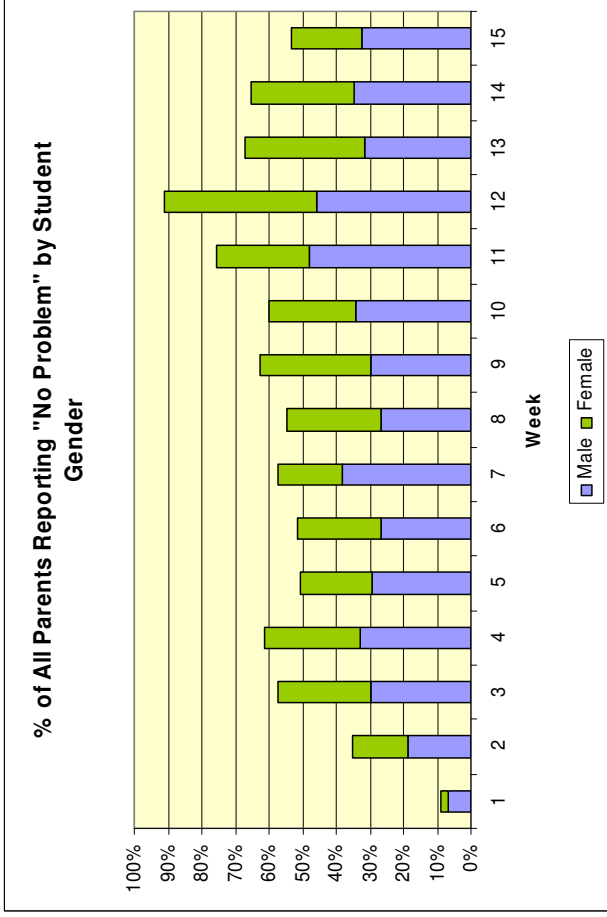
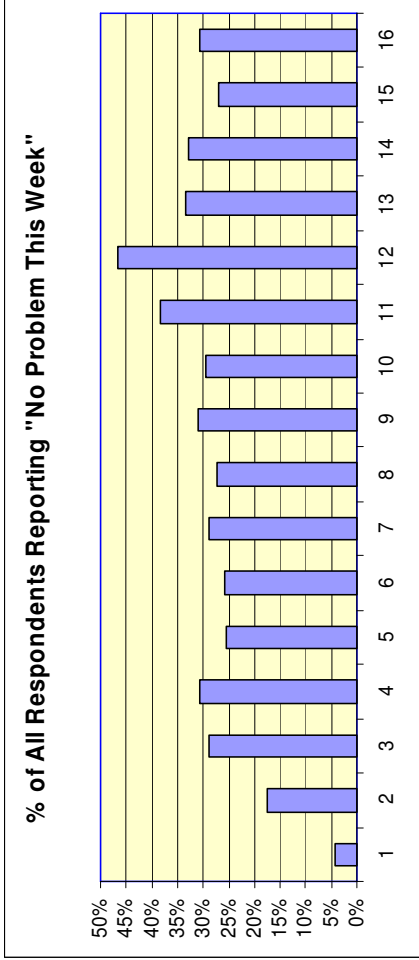
- 0 1-2
 3-5 6 or more

Questions? Dr. Nancy Casey, St. Bonaventure University

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"No Problems this Week!"



Major Problem Categories

