

# **Struggling to Survive in College: The Benefits of Support Programs At California State University, Chico**

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**Abstract:** The authors carried out ethnographic research, using structured interviews and auto-ethnographic methods, to study the experiences of first-year students at California State University, Chico. A research team of three first-year students conducted ten interviews to determine the effects of support programs. After carefully analyzing the data conducted from these interviews, the authors selected important aspects of the research to strengthen their final paper. The authors also added their own experiences and how they related to their research question.

## **Research Question**

- We researched the difference between college students who are in support programs and those who are not.
- It's important to discover if these support programs are actually benefiting the students and how. We would also like to know if those students not in a support program are facing any difficulties and if they would like to join a support program in order to receive help.

## **Methods**

- Interviews
  - 1 interviewer and 2 note takers; we also recorded the interviews to make sure no answers or comments were missed.
  - Most of our interviews consisted of first year students as well as first generation students. The age range was between the ages of 18 and 20 years old.
  - Each member of our team had a copy of the interview notes and we each added our own annotations. After that, we

combined our notes to compare and share what we got from the interviews.

- Auto-ethnography
  - The authors used self-reflection to connect their own experiences to the experiences of the participants.
  - We each explained how our first year college experience was related or different from the experiences of the students we interviewed.

## **Results**

- Students benefit from support programs
  - Students not in a program felt that they need additional help.
- Support programs provide valuable assistance
  - Students felt that they received financial, emotional, and physical help.
- Concerns expressed about tuition price, textbooks, healthier food options, and dorm problems.
  - We present recommendations to address these concerns.

## **Recommendations**

- Textbook Prices
  - The university should make textbooks more affordable for students and offer cheaper alternatives.
- Healthier food options
  - The university should implement a food area dedicated to healthy and more nutritious foods.
- Tuition Price
  - The University should maintain a set price on tuition for students already enrolled in Chico State, thus making Chico State more consistent environment for students.

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