

# **Academic Barriers and Student Success: Are Students Seeking Academic Help?**

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**Abstract:** In order to find solutions to academic barriers that first year students face, our team decided to use ethnography to help identify common barriers. We conducted face-to-face interviews with first year students to get a deeper understanding of their academic concerns. The question that is being researched is “what are barriers that first year students face when seeking help from faculty and other resources with class work?” The data collected revealed some of the academic barriers are self-induced due to aspects such as procrastination and poor time management skills.

## **Research Question**

- **We researched the barriers that first year students face when seeking help with class work from faculty and other resources.**
- **It is important to understand what obstacles first year students endure and to create possible solutions enhance their academic performance**

## **Methods**

- **Ethnographic approach: Face-to-face interviews of first-year students combined with auto-ethnography – all members of the research team are first-year students.**
- **Structured Interviews**
  - **Participants: 10 students interviewed**
  - **Data Gathering: Team of one interviewer and two not-takers to carefully record responses**
  - **Data Analysis: collective examination of interview notes for themes**

- **Auto-ethnography**
  - **Self-reflections: How do research team members feel about the issues raised? What has our experience been?**
  - **Similarities, Differences with Participants**

## **Results**

- **Procrastination is a common barrier.**
  - **Creates additional obstacles that negatively impacts students' success**
    - **Prevents students from seeking help from professors' due to time constraints.**
- **Students feel embarrassed**
  - **Fear of looking “dumb” while asking professors**
    - **Downfall: students do not understand the needed material**
- **Poor time management**
  - **Students prioritize social lives over academics**

## **Recommendations:**

- **Use posters instead of emails to advertise academic support services**
- **Upperclassmen tell stories of their experience using the current available academic programs in order to encourage first year students to take advantage of all available resources**
- **Provide more experienced tutors**
- **A video tutorial about how to register for classes**
- **Adjust the times and dates of academic workshops to better suit students' schedules**

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