



CSU, CHICO BY THE NUMBERS – September 2020

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Using the BCSSE and NSSE Surveys to Compare Student Expectations and Experiences

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To what extent do current Chico State students need to work to support themselves and/or their families during school? What kind of support do students expect to receive from the campus community for these responsibilities? And what kind of support have students historically reported experiencing? To explore these important questions, we use **combined data from the 2019 Before College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE) and 2014, 2016, and 2018 data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)** for CSU, Chico students.

What are the BCSSE and NSSE Surveys?

Both the BCSSE and NSSE surveys are conducted annually by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, and collect information from students at hundreds of participating American four-year colleges and universities. **The BCSSE specifically surveys first-time freshmen just before the start of their Fall term, whereas the NSSE primarily surveys freshmen and senior students during the Spring term.** Because both surveys address a series of shared topics, BCSSE responses can be compared with NSSE freshmen responses to compare and contrast student expectations with their experiences. While CSU, Chico’s first year of participation in the BCSSE survey was in Fall 2019, and 2020 NSSE data will be collected over the next several months, we can nevertheless compare 2019 BCSSE responses with historical responses to the 2014, 2016, and 2018 NSSE survey to see how well current freshmen expectations align with historical freshmen experiences on our campus.

Gauging Student Work Responsibilities

As educational expenses in America continue to increase significantly faster than wages, even after controlling for inflation¹, college students at Chico

¹ Maldonado, Camilo. 2018. “Price of College Increasing Almost 8 Times Faster Than Wages.” *Forbes*, July 24. Accessed online on 1/23/2020.

State and throughout the country must increasingly juggle their responsibilities as a student with their need to financially support themselves and/or their families. Accordingly, the BCSSE survey asks incoming freshmen to report the number of hours per week that they anticipate they will be working at both on- and off-campus jobs. The distribution of responses from first-time freshmen at CSU, Chico in Fall 2019 is shown in Figure 1 below².

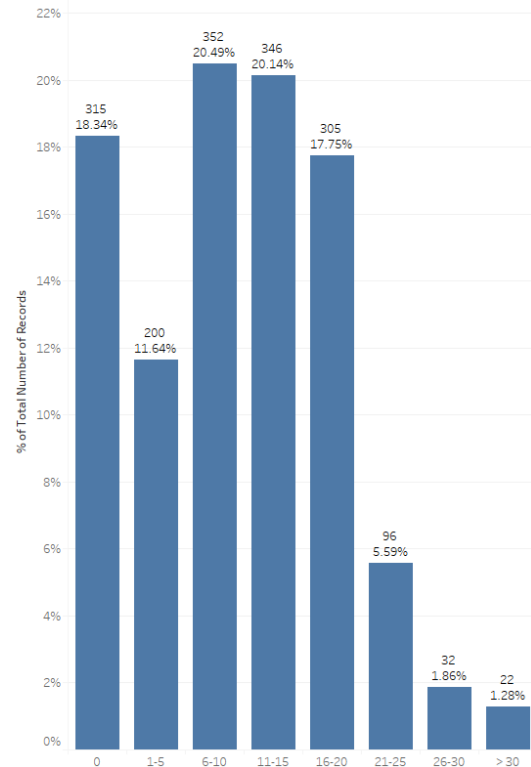


Figure 1: Anticipated Weekly Working Hours for On- & Off-Campus Employment for First-Time Freshmen, BCSSE 2019

As can be seen, there is a significant grouping of first-time freshmen (roughly 58% of total) who expect to work between 6 and 20 hours per week, while an additional 18% of freshmen reported not expecting to

² Percentages do not sum to 100% due to null or non-responses, which are not shown in Figure 1 but are reflected in percent of total figures.

work at all. Roughly 9% of respondents indicated that they expected to work over 20 hours per week. The notable clustering of responses in the middle response ranges, as well as the small but significant percentage of students expecting to work more than 20 hours per week, shows that a majority of respondents expect to support themselves through relatively time-consuming on- and off-campus employment during their college career.

The 2019 BCSSSE survey also provides additional evidence that first-time freshmen consider non-academic support services, which include support for their work responsibilities, to be quite important for their academic success. Specifically, as shown in Figure 2 below, roughly 82% of incoming first-time freshmen indicated that the availability of “non-academic support services (work, family, etc.)” was either an “important” or “very important” component of their college experience.

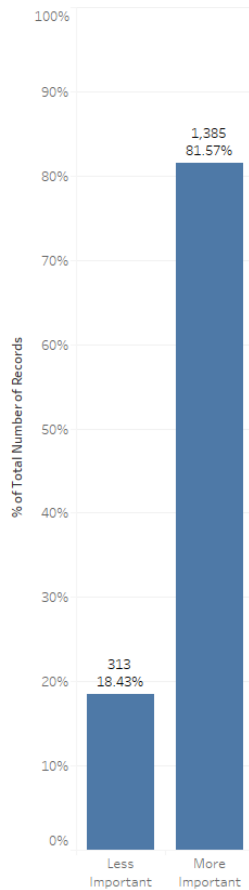


Figure 2: Importance of Non-Academic Support Services for First-Time Freshmen, BCSSSE 2019

Historical Perceived Support for Non-Academic Responsibilities

While NSSE survey data for 2020, which would allow for direct comparisons of expectations and experiences of non-academic support within the same first-year cohort, are not yet available, we are able to compare current freshmen expectations with the historical experiences of freshmen students from 2014, 2016, and 2018 NSSE responses. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of responses on the degree to which they have experienced support for non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.) As can be seen, slim majorities of students report experiencing either “very little” or “some” campus support in this area. If these historical trends continue into 2020, the data presented here suggest the importance of thinking hard about how our campus community can better support working students as they increasingly juggle work and school responsibilities.

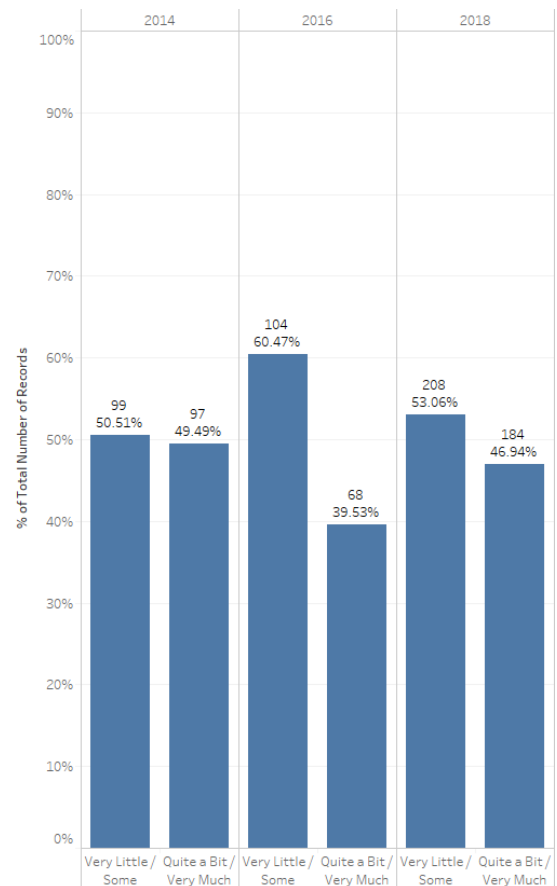


Figure 3: Historical Perceived Support for Non-Academic Responsibilities, First-Time Freshmen, NSSE 2014-2018