



## Student Experience in the Research University 2017 Employment Topics

The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) is a consortium of research institutions in the Association of American Universities who administer a common survey in an effort to generate knowledge and help further the goals of higher education in general and at the member institutions specifically. The SERU survey is a comprehensive survey of all undergraduate students at Texas A&M University (TAMU) intended to give faculty, students and administration in-depth insights into the undergraduate experience. SERU was most recently administered at TAMU in the spring, 2017. A total of 6,655 undergraduates completed the survey, representing 14% of the overall undergraduate population. Students were asked a variety of questions about their employment experiences, which included internships.

About half of respondents reported being employed for pay in the 2017 academic year. While 24% of undergraduates reported working for pay *on* campus, 27% of students worked for pay *off* campus. Of the students who did work *on* campus, the average number of hours worked per week was 15, while students employed *off* campus worked about 18 hours a week. When asked how many hours of their employment related to their academic interests, the average number was about six hours.

In looking at the 2017 academic year and college expenses, 30% of the employed students took a job for the first time at college (now or in the past) to meet college expenses. Similarly, 30% of the respondents worked before but increased their hours.

Students can face a variety of obstacles to academic success, including job responsibilities. Nearly half of respondents overall reported that employment was never a barrier to school work (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Competing job responsibilities as an obstacle to school work or academic success

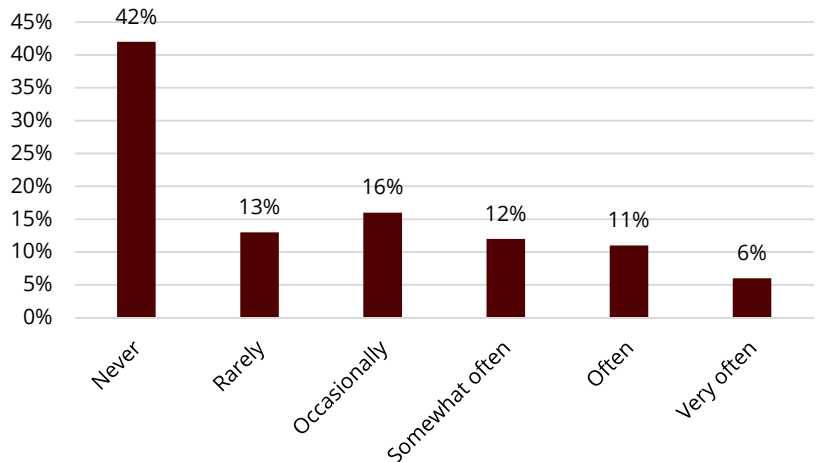
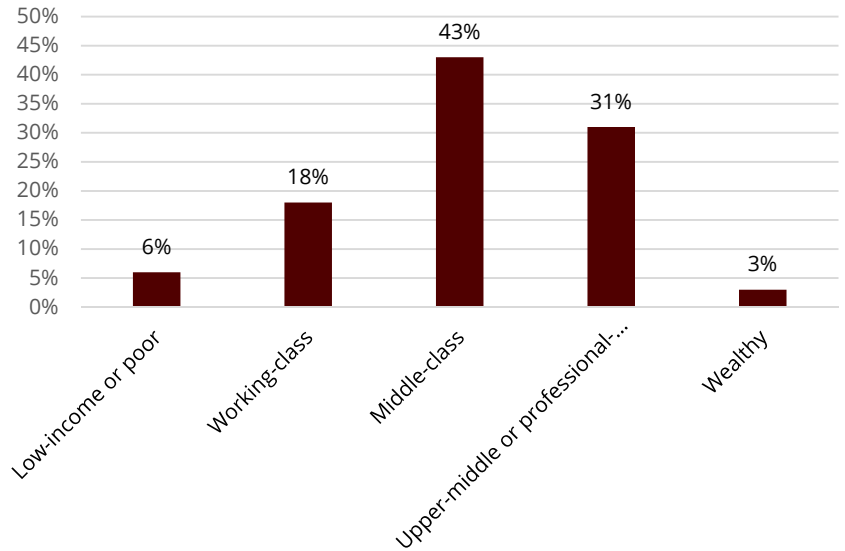




Figure 2: Social Class Growing Up



Respondents were asked to self-identify their social class growing up. As seen in Figure 2, most of the undergraduates identified as middle class or upper middle/professional middle class.

In comparing self-reported social class and work as an obstacle to academic success, 25% of students in the low-income/poor or working-class categories reported that competing job responsibilities often or very often were obstacles, although 12% of the upper-middle/professional-middle or wealthy students reporting work as an obstacle often or very often.

In looking at social class and student employment, 36% of students in the low-income/poor or working-class categories took a job for the first time in college to meet college expense, while 25% of the upper-middle/professional-middle or wealthy students took a job for the first time. Additionally, 42% of low-income/poor or working-class students worked before but increased their hours to cover expenses, while 20% of upper-middle/professional-middle or wealthy students increased their work hours.

Conclusion

While many of the undergraduate students at Texas A&M reported that they were not necessarily employed to cover college expenses, about half of students were employed either on or off campus. Part-time work can be a financial and learning benefit for students, but it should not be an obstacle for academic success. Some Texas A&M undergraduates, especially at the lower income levels, reported that work can be an impediment to their school work. Students who work in an area related to their academic interests not only receive income, they get exposure to and experience in their career choice.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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