

Sleep Deprivation of College Students at Western

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Executive Summary

Sleep is a vital necessity, and many people overlook the importance of sleep. It is essential for a person's overall health. Sleep helps repair your body, reduce stress, improve memory, and keep you healthy. Lack of sleep can literally affect every aspect of your life. Recent studies have found that many college students are at high risk for not getting enough sleep at night. Sleep deprivation can greatly decrease a student's academic performance, therefore leading to lower GPA's and fewer college graduates.

The following research demonstrates the importance of sleep and how it can impact the success of students at Western. It also identifies the main causes of sleep deprivation for Western students and the steps that should be taken to improve this issue.

We surveyed a total of 76 Western students to determine how their sleep habits and lifestyles affect performance at school. Surprisingly, the results showed that the majority of Western students are getting an adequate amount of sleep per night and are succeeding academically. And while these results do not show resemblance to recent studies, they do however show that a small part of the student population is suffering from sleep deprivation. Over half of the students surveyed responded in saying that they do not have a consistent sleep schedule, and there are those select few who often get sleepy in class, occasionally do homework after 10 p.m., and pull all-nighters studying.

Here at Western Technical College, student success and excellence in learning are important. Based on our research, a part of the student population is still suffering from sleep deprivation. We feel that this issue needs to be addressed. Western should take steps to increase student awareness on the topic of sleep deprivation and how it relates to academic performance. Not only will this benefit the students, but it will also benefit the college in the long run. We recommend that a portion of student orientation be geared towards a discussion on sleep deprivation and why sleep is vital not only for one's health but also for college success. Since most students did say that they often get sleepy in class, we feel it would be beneficial if instructors implement at least one five to ten minute break for each class period. Some other suggestions we have come up with include inviting guest speakers that specialize in the study of sleep deprivation and student success, offering more classes after 8 a.m. to increase student awareness in the classroom, and also offering classes that teach time management skills. With the help of the college, those students that suffer from sleep deprivation can get the knowledge they need to not only increase academic success, but also live a happy and healthy life.

Introduction

Do you often forget things that you are sure you know? Is it hard to concentrate on what you are doing? Do you get less than six hours of sleep a night? If you answered yes to any of these questions, most likely you are not getting the amount of sleep you truly need. Sleep is a vital necessity and many people overlook the importance of sleep. It is essential for a person's overall health. Sleep helps repair your body, reduce stress, improve memory, and keep you healthy. Adults typically need seven to nine hours of sleep a night to be fully rested. According to Dr. Jaime Boero, a sleep specialist at Marshfield Clinic, "The less you sleep, the sooner you die" ("Sleep Well") and that is the harsh truth. Lack of sleep can literally affect every aspect of your life. It hinders you from thinking clearly and will impair your ability to handle stress. Sleep deprivation can have many short term and long term effects including decreased performance and alertness, memory loss, mood disorders, high blood pressure, weight gain, and even diabetes.

So, what can you do to get a better night's sleep? First, you should establish a regular sleep schedule. Try to go to bed and wake up at approximately the same time every day. A regular sleep pattern increases your alertness during the day. You should exercise regularly and eat a well-balanced diet. However, avoid exercising a few hours before bedtime since it increases alertness. You should also try to reduce your daily caffeine intake, decrease smoking, and modify alcohol consumption. Most importantly, relax! It is more difficult to fall asleep if there is a lot on your mind. Try jotting down everything that's on your mind, and then forget about it.

Many college students are at high risk for not getting enough sleep at night. "A recent study on sleep deprivation found that around 60 percent of college students are sleep deprived. Another 30 percent fall asleep in class at least one day a week" ("Sleep Deprivation"). There are many underlying issues as to why students are not getting the amount of sleep that they really need. "Varying class times, demanding work schedules, and busy social lives often mean that sleep is a low priority" ("College Students"). Students who are not getting enough sleep have decreases in both efficiency and concentration. Sleep deprivation can greatly decrease a student's academic performance, therefore leading to lower GPA's and fewer college graduates. Here at Western Technical College "We value the success of our students and hold ourselves accountable for providing excellence in student learning" ("Western Technical"), therefore making this issue a hot topic that needs to be discussed. The following research demonstrates the importance of sleep and how it can impact the success of students at Western. It also identifies the main causes of sleep deprivation for Western students and the steps that should be taken to improve this issue.

Methods

The following methods were used to conduct our research.

1. Researched appropriate material using credible Internet Web sites and hard copy print to gain knowledge about sleep deprivation and how it relates to college students.
2. Surveyed 76 Western students to determine how their sleep habits and lifestyles affect performance at school.

Survey

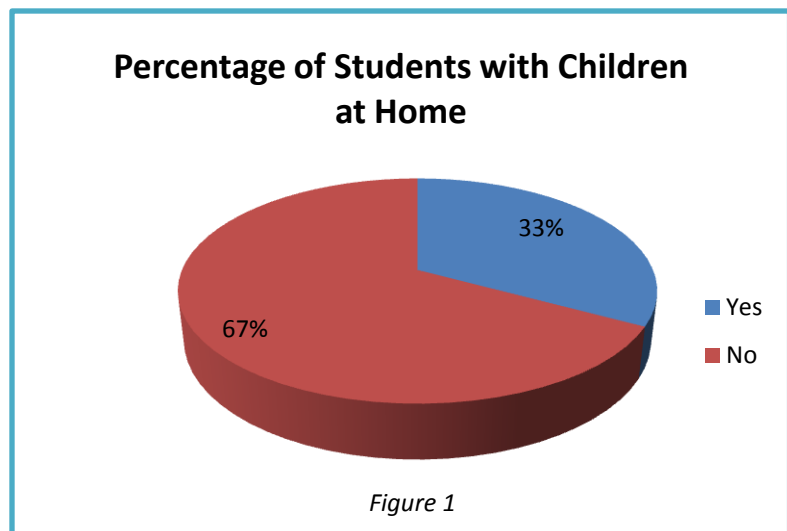
This survey consisted of fifteen questions and was conducted to gain further knowledge on the sleep habits and lifestyles of students at Western Technical College. A total of 76 students completed this survey, between November 17 through November 24. The responses of this survey were collected by email and face-to-face contact.

Results

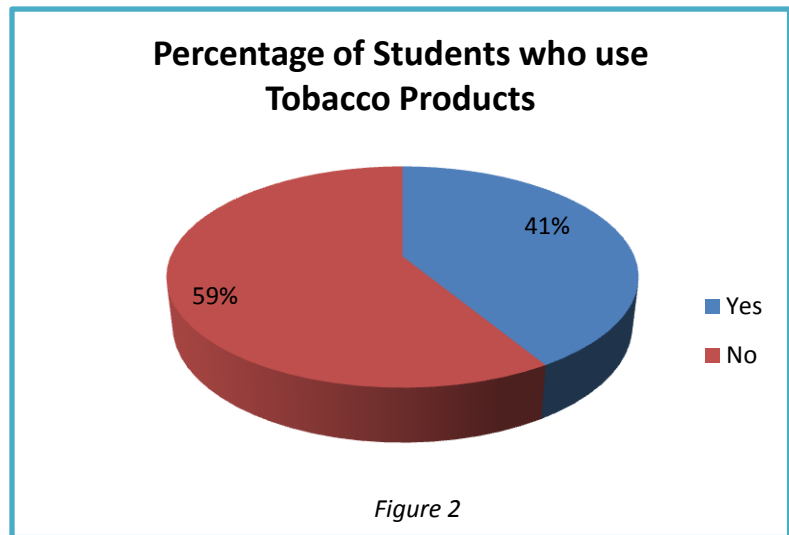
After collecting the data, all responses were tallied and are summarized below.

1. Do you have children at home?

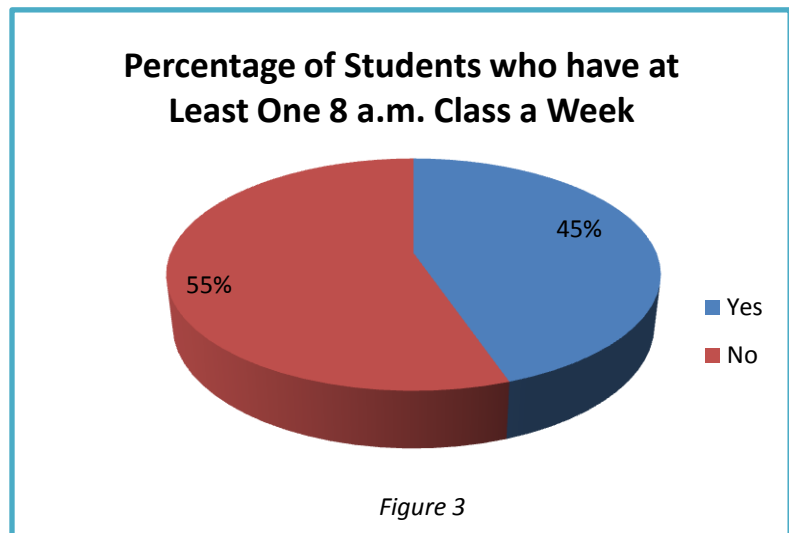
Figure 1 shows the percentage of students who have children at home. Of the 76 surveyed, 33% of students have children at home and 67% of students do not.



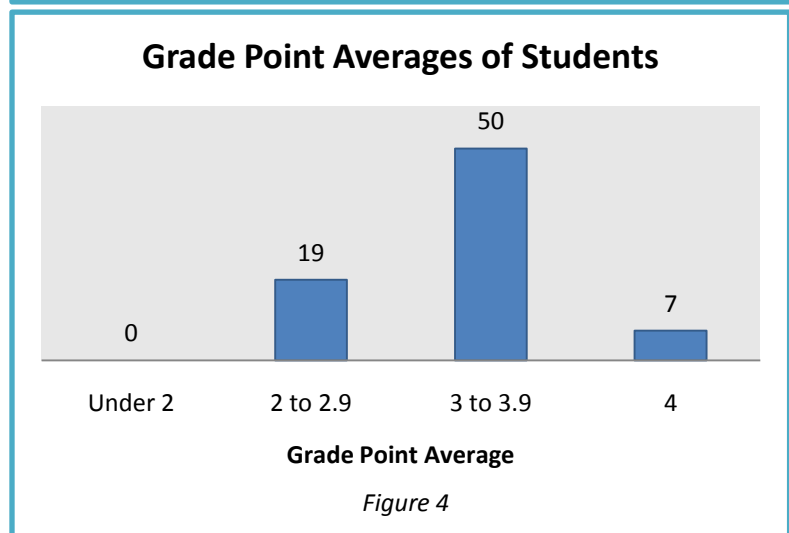
2. Do you use tobacco products?
Figure 2 shows the percentage of students who use tobacco products. Of the 76 surveyed, 41% of students use tobacco products and 59% of students do not.



3. Currently, do you have at least one 8 a.m. class a week?
Figure 3 shows the percentage of students who have at least one 8 a.m. class a week. Of the 76 surveyed, 45% of students have at least one 8 a.m. class a week and 55% of students do not.

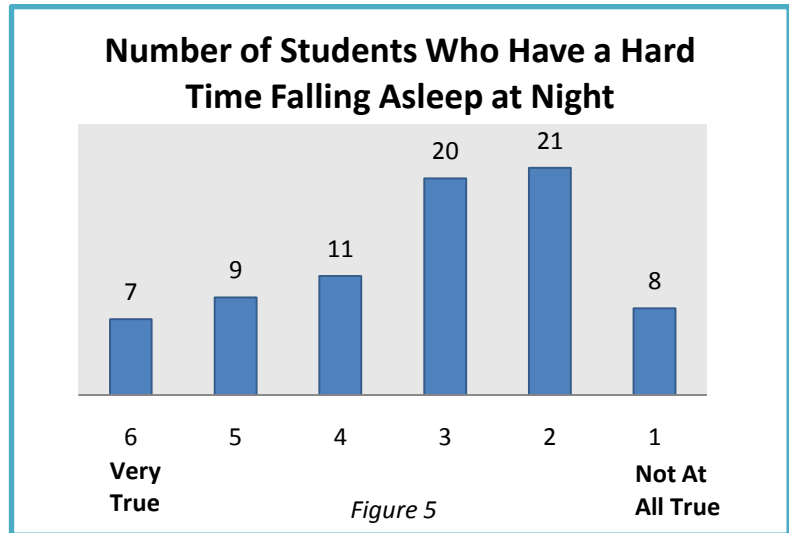


4. What is your grade point average?
Figure 4 shows the grade point average of students. Of the 76 surveyed, nineteen students that responded have a grade point average between 2 to 2.9, fifty students have a grade point average between 3 to 3.9, and seven students have a grade point average of 4.0.



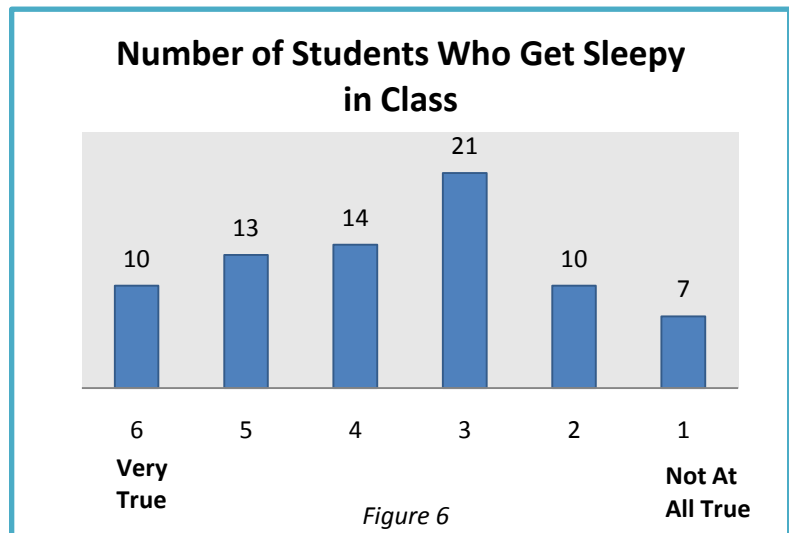
5. I have a hard time falling asleep at night.

Figure 5 shows the number of students who have a hard time falling asleep at night on a scale of one to six, six being very true and one being not at all true.



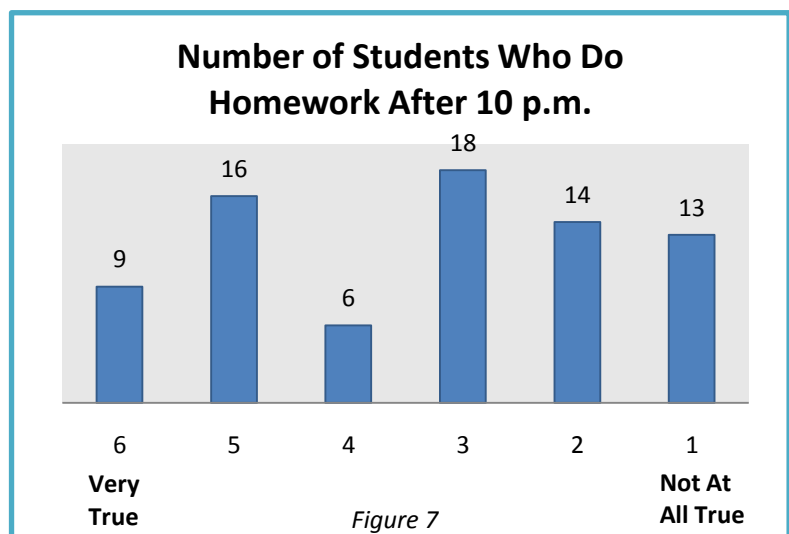
6. I get sleepy in class.

Figure 6 shows the number of students who get sleepy in class on a scale of one to six, six being very true and one being not at all true.

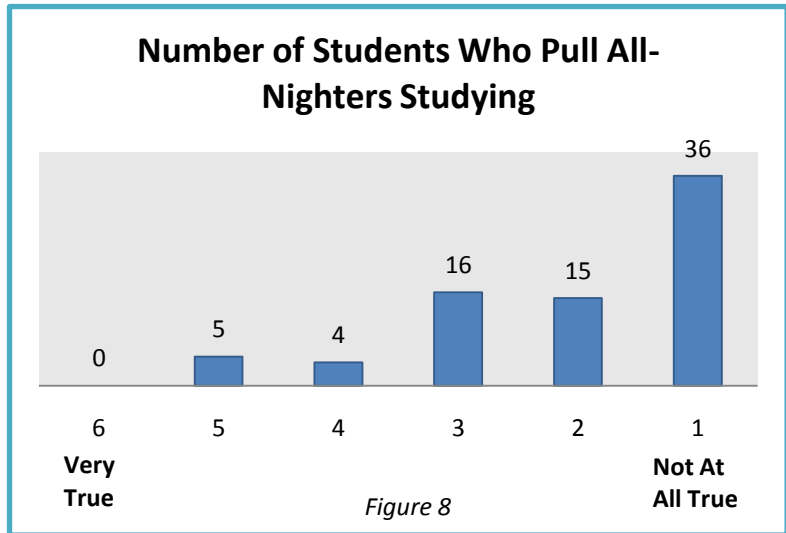


7. I do homework after 10 p.m.

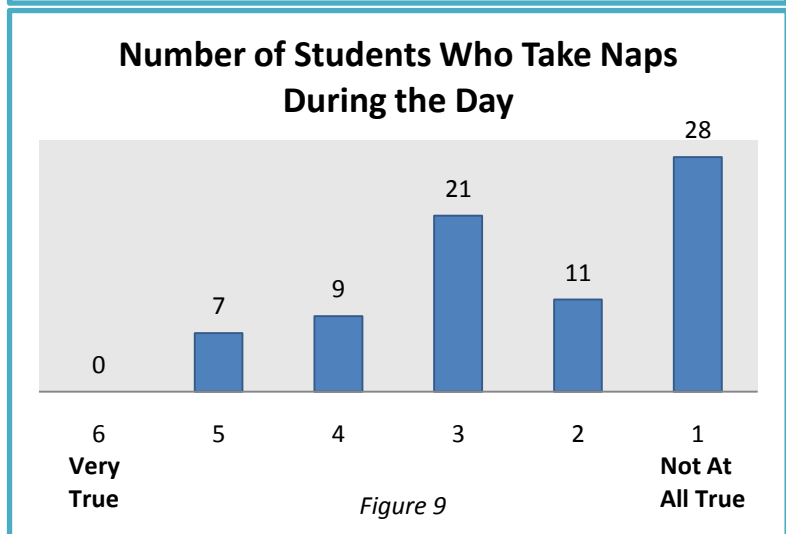
Figure 7 shows the number of students who do homework after 10 p.m. on a scale of one to six, six being very true and one being not at all true.



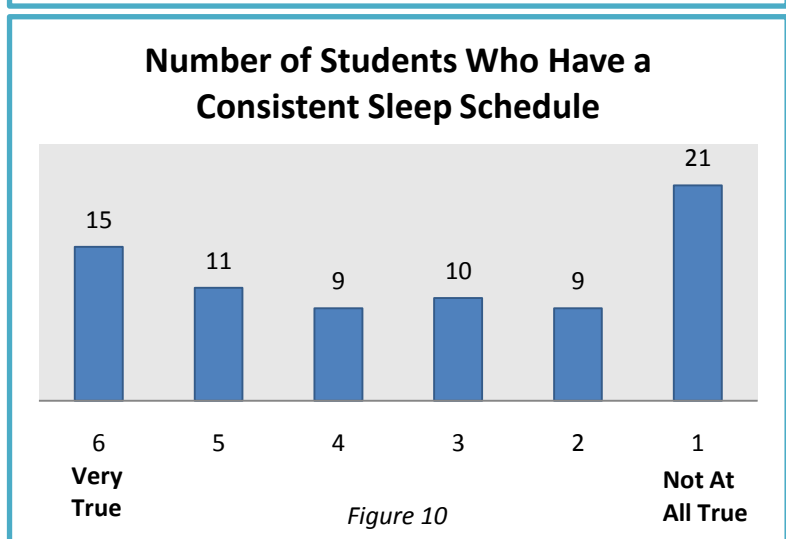
8. I pull all-nighters studying.
Figure 8 shows the number of students who pull all-nighters on a scale of one to six, six being very true and one being not at all true.



9. I take naps during the day.
Figure 9 shows the number of students who take naps during the day on a scale of one to six, six being very true and one being not at all true.

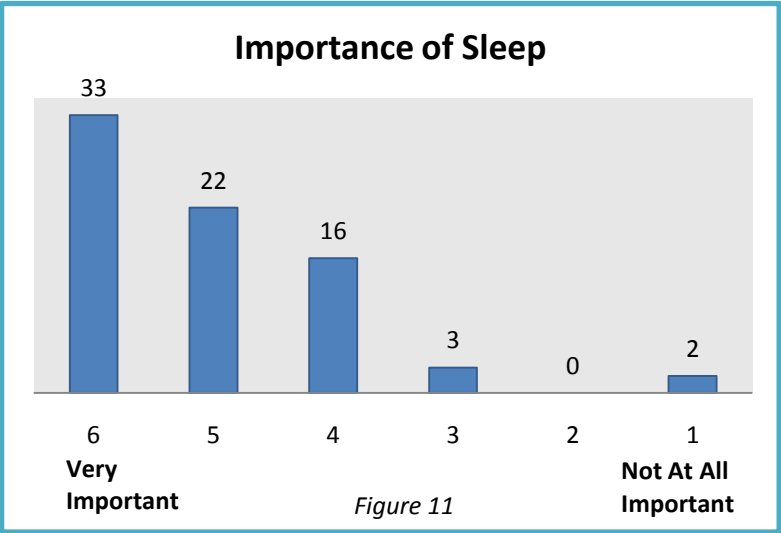


10. I have a consistent sleep schedule.
Figure 10 shows the number of students who have a consistent sleep schedule on a scale of one to six, six being very true and one being not at all true.



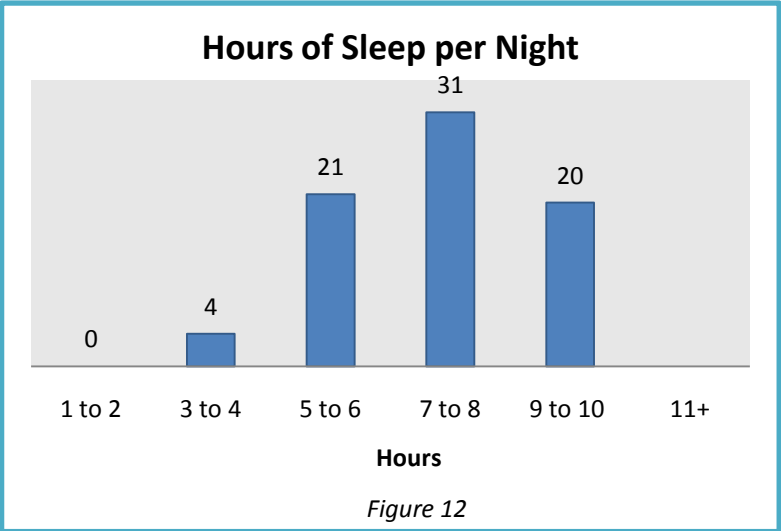
11. How important is sleep to you on a scale of 1-6, 6 being very important?

Figure 11 shows how each student rated the importance of sleep on a scale of one to six, six being very important and one being not at all important.



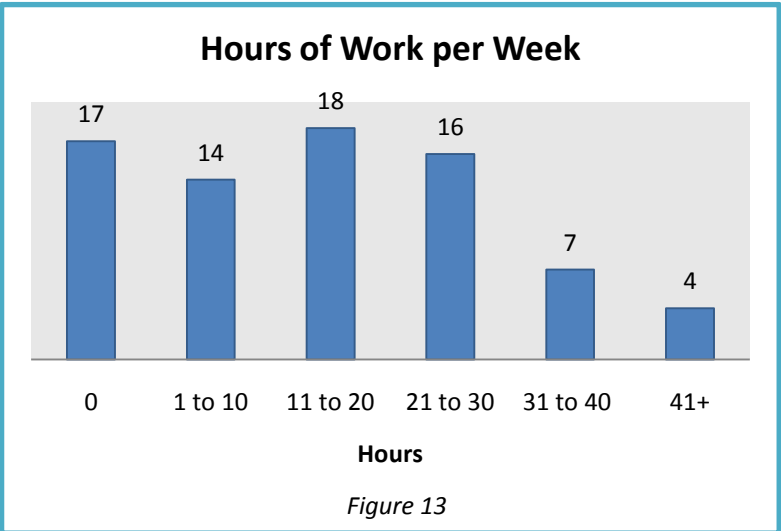
12. On average, how many hours of sleep do you get a night?

Figure 12 shows the average hours of sleep students get per night.



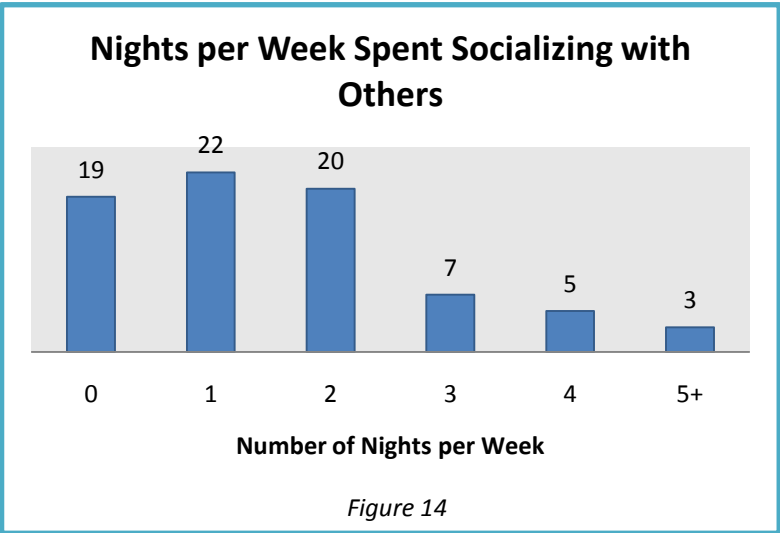
13. On average, how many hours a week do you work?

Figure 13 shows the average amount of hours students work per week.



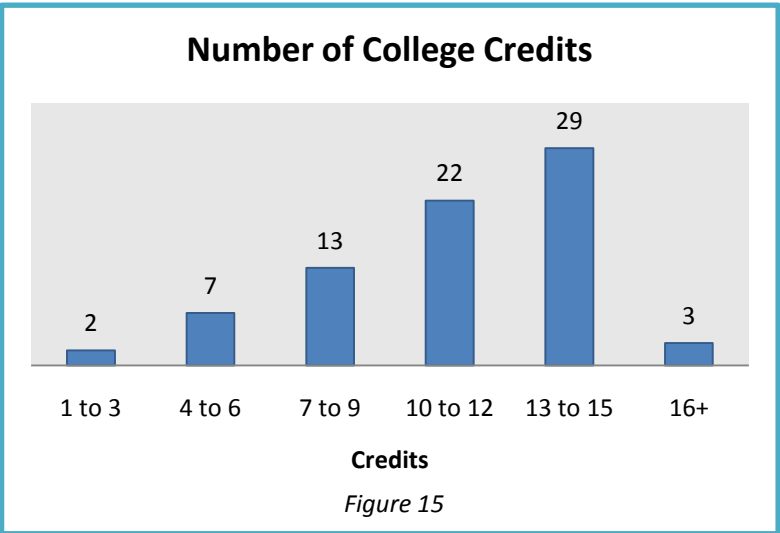
14. On average, how many nights a week do you go out to socialize with others?

Figure 14 shows the average nights per week students spend socializing with others.



15. How many credits are you currently taking?

Figure 15 shows the number of credits each student is currently taking.



Conclusion

After surveying a total of 76 students, the results showed that over half of the students surveyed do not have a consistent sleep schedule (see *figure 10*). Many students responded in saying that they often get sleepy in class, occasionally do homework after 10 p.m., and some even pull all-nighters studying. Though these results would appear to be a problem, it seems as though the majority of students here at Western are getting adequate amount of sleep per night and are succeeding academically, with most students getting the recommended seven to nine hours per night and a grade point average between 3 to 3.9 (see *Figure 4* and *Figure 12*).

Even though the majority of students at Western are getting enough sleep at night and are succeeding academically, there are still the select few that are not. We feel that Western Technical College should target these students in increasing awareness of sleep deprivation. Not only will this benefit the students, but it will also benefit the college in the long run.

In order for students to be more effective at Western, we feel that a portion of student orientation should be geared towards a discussion on sleep deprivation and why sleep is vital not only for one's health but also for college success. Since most students did respond in saying that they often get sleepy in class, we feel it would be beneficial if instructors implement at least one five to ten minute break for each class period. Some other suggestions we have come up with include inviting guest speakers that specialize in the study of sleep deprivation and student success, offering more classes after 8 a.m. to increase student awareness in the classroom, and also offering classes that teach time management skills.

We do realize that these changes are only small steps in helping those students that need it, but it is a very good start. Students that are struggling need to personally make some lifestyle changes on their own, whether it be studying earlier in the day, spending less time with friends, or working fewer hours per week. They need to take action and prioritize their life, doing this would greatly increase their college success and reduce sleep deprivation. These small changes could lead to something great!

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