

Trends

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A Research Newsletter Prepared by the Office of Institutional Planning, Research, and Communication

Student Health at CSB/SJU

During spring semester 2005, CSB/SJU students completed the online *Men's and Women's Health Survey*. 795 usable surveys were returned, for a 21% return rate. (The sample reflects the population on key demographic variables with a 95% confidence interval.) This instrument gathered information on a broad range of physical and mental health areas, risk and protective behaviors, consequences of behavior, and student perceptions. In addition, we learned about selected health conditions and their relationship to academic performance. This special edition of *Trends* will focus on student health as it relates to academic performance.

How health has affected the academic performance of CSB/SJU students

Students were asked about impediments to academic performance within the last school year. Results indicate that five of the top six health-related issues were not physical, but mental health concerns. The table below reports these health issues, which also reflect the top issues for a national sample of college students. The academic consequences ranged from receiving a lower grade on an exam/project, to receiving a lower grade in the course, to receiving an incomplete or dropping the course. Fortunately, most students who reported difficulties with academics experienced the lesser negative affect.

Health-Related Impediments to Academic Performance for CSB/SJU Students

	This did not happen to me/NA	Experienced this, but academics weren't affected	Academics Affected
Stress	10.7%	56.1%	33.2%*
Cold, Flu, Sore Throat	18.6%	60.1%	21.3%*
Sleep Difficulties	37.9%	41.6%	20.4%*
Concern for a Friend/Family Member	31.8%	51.3%	16.9%*
Depression/Anxiety/SAD	68.5%	18.5%	15.9%*
Relationship Difficulty	54.9%	34.3%	10.8%
Internet Use/Computer Games	47.0%	45.6%	7.5%
Sinus/Ear Infection, Bronchitis, Strep Throat	73.5%	19.5%	7.0%*
Death of a Friend/Family Member	76.0%	17.3%	6.7%
Attention Deficit Disorder	87.9%	5.5%	6.6%**
Alcohol Use	35.4%	58.7%	6.0%

*Significant differences were found, with CSB students experiencing more negative effects than their SJU counterparts (p=.001)

** Significant differences were found, with SJU students experiencing more negative effects than their CSB counterparts (p=.01)

Sleep difficulties were a common barrier to academic success, with 20.4% of our students experiencing negative effects from lack of sleep or other related problems. When asked "On how many of the past seven days did you get enough sleep so that you felt rested when you woke up in the morning," few CSB students responded all seven days (3.8%), as did few SJU students (7%). Overall, four days a week received the most responses (18.8%), with two days a week (18%) following closely behind. Eight percent of our students report not getting enough sleep on any of the seven days.

Students report that stress is the health issue which most often affects their academic performance.

This special edition of *Trends* was prepared by the CSB/SJU Health and Wellness Assessment Committee:

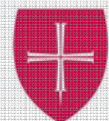
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Cold/flu/sore throat adversely affected the academics of 21.3% of our students, yet 81.4% experienced one, two or all three of these illnesses. It will be interesting to learn how many of our students receive a flu shot after the recent postponement or cancellation of the flu shot clinic on campus. Lack of flu vaccine (or the perception that they do not need the flu vaccine), poor sleep habits, and the close living arrangements in apartments and residence halls contribute to the higher incidence of these illnesses.

Top presenting issues for CSB/SJU counseling clients

Through data collected from students utilizing CSB/SJU counseling services, we know the top presenting concerns of our students. (Presenting concerns are the reasons why a student is seeking counseling, which may or may not be the therapist's diagnosis.) Not surprisingly, the top presenting concerns of CSB/SJU students closely mirror the health-related obstacles to academic success. Please note that the categories of presenting concerns are classified differently from the Health Survey.

Top Presenting Concerns for CSB/SJU Counseling Clients (2005-2006 year to date)

Presenting Concern	Percent*
Anxiety/Stress	64%
Depression	55%
Self-Esteem	38%
Relationship Concerns	36%
Health Concerns	20%
Family Issues	19%
Academic Performance/Grades	18%
Eating Behaviors	18%
Alcohol and Other Drugs	12%
Suicidal Thoughts	7%

*Students may indicate more than one presenting concern

Implications and conclusions for faculty and staff

The Counseling and Health Promotion Department is using these data, along with other information learned from the Health Survey, to enhance services to students. We hope this will prevent more serious issues from developing and assist with reducing the negative effects of these problems where intervention or services are appropriate. For example, Counseling and Health Promotion developed a weekly "Stress Busters" workshop to help students deal more effectively with stress. We provided cold and flu kits and other information to the residential life staff that include both prevention and self-care items. We also created "Walk in Wednesday" to provide anonymous mental health screening on a variety of topics. Because stress/anxiety and depression are the highest presenting concerns for counseling clients, and almost half of our students surveyed had their academics adversely affected by these issues, we continue to search for ways to encourage students to seek counseling before it negatively affects their academics.

We encourage you to continue to refer students to Counseling and Health Promotion services and to use this information to become more aware of the issues influencing the lives of our students. You can also request a specialized outreach program on a variety of mental and physical health issues (e.g., study skills, test anxiety) for students in your academic program or residence hall. Visit our website at http://www.csbsju.edu/counseling/counseling_services.htm to learn about other resources available to students.

While we will never be able to eliminate these problems, we hope to hopefully provide students with information and skills to help them become well-rounded and healthy men and women.

Additional information about the *Men's and Women's Health Survey* can be found at the Counseling and Health Promotion website at www.csbsju.edu/counseling&healthed/ on the "Surveys" link.