

Student Employment Survey

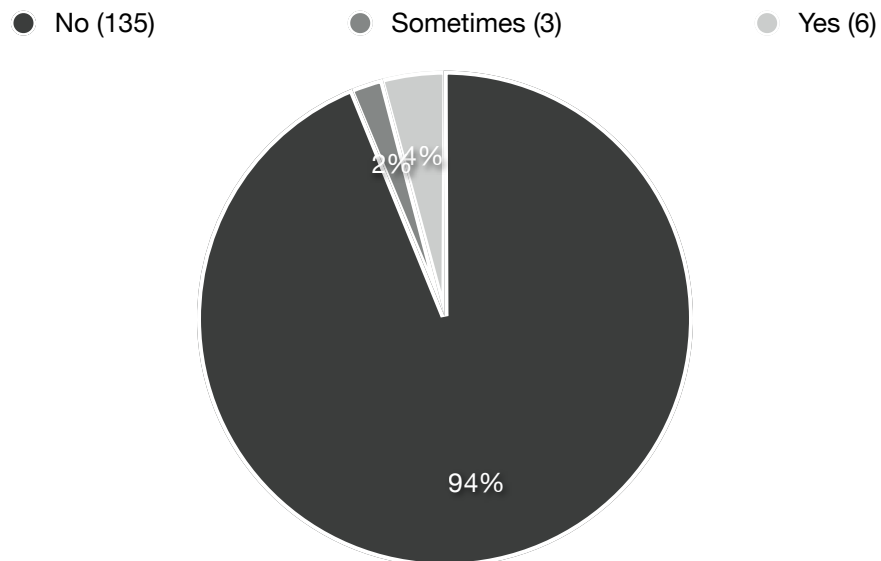
Commissioned by the Educational Policies Committee of the Student Association Government

Student Employment Survey

This survey was commissioned by the Educational Policies Committee of the Student Association Government of Bard College in order to assess the Student Association's views on a policy of the Student Employment Office and the Dean of Students Office, implemented in the Fall of 2008, limiting the number of hours and number of jobs students could work. The policy, as it stands restricts students to thirty (30) hours per pay period (pay periods are scheduled biweekly) and two (2) jobs total. Exceptions are not granted for any reason. Violators of the policy are reported to the Dean of Students Office. The survey contains both an empirical element, attempting to assess the validity of certain arguments advanced by Ms. Denise Ackerman, head of the Financial Aid Office, in addition to the opinions of students, as expressed in their own words. Student names have been removed to protect anonymity.

1. The Relationship between Academics and Work

Figure 1.1: Do you feel that your job interferes with (or takes time away from) your academics?



Comments 1.1: Do you feel that your job interferes with (or takes time away from) your academics?

"It just forces me to plan my time accordingly and be more organized, which is a good thing."

"My jobs keep me sane! In a way, they are like an escape from my grueling academic life. I enjoy working both of my jobs! Also, balancing work and academics has forced me to be more responsible. This new found sense of responsibility has helped me cope the most."

“I would say it's quite the opposite - having a job has taught me how to use my time more efficiently, and therefore learn how to work more efficiently.”

“No, absolutely not. The busiest semester I've ever had I had four jobs, often worked 20 or more hours a week, took five courses for twenty credits, and got a 4.00 GPA. Some people work better when they're busy. I'm one.”

“Very rarely. I think having a job helps to structure my time appropriately, especially since it is not very many hours a week. And it is up to me whether to work or not and how many hours to work, which is important, so I can choose not to work if I think it interferes with the semester's work.”

“Well, of course my jobs consume a fair amount of my free time. It would be ridiculous to say that they didn't. However, because my time is limited, I am forced to efficiently allocate it. ... Generally I find that I probably otherwise would have squandered the hours that I spend working, and on the rare occasion that I cannot budget my time to fit both work and school, my bosses are accommodating.”

“Time management is a crucial skill to learn, and college is a prime opportunity to learn it. From my own experience I learned when it was worth holding extra jobs and when it was not. What was key was that I needed to make the best decisions for myself on a case by case basis. I believe the same is true for each student. By managing students' schedules for them, it not only assumes an immaturity and irresponsibility on the part of the students, but denies them the chance to learn how to structure their own time.”

Figure 1.2: Effect of Hours Worked on Students' Grade Point Average

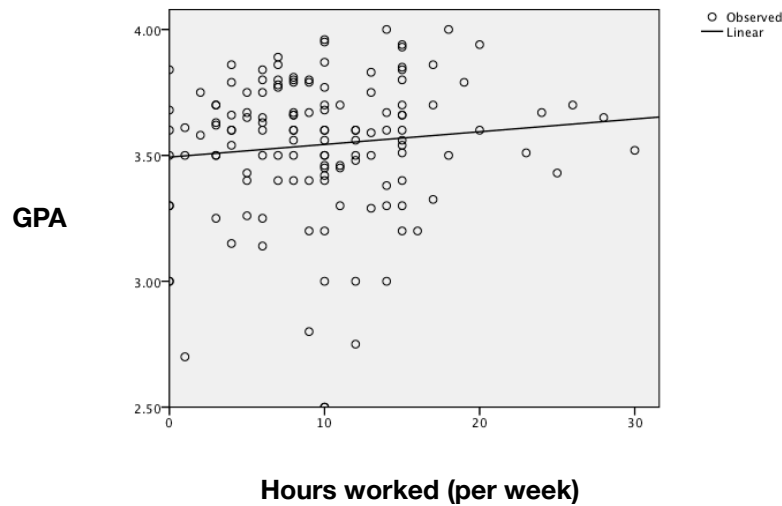


Chart 1.1: Effect of Hours Worked on GPA and Time Spent on Homework

	Avg. GPA	Avg. Homework Hours (per week)
Less than 15 hours	3.52	18.13
15 or more hours	3.63	19.36

2. On-campus vs. Off-campus Jobs

Comments 2.1: Benefits of On-campus Employers

"Generally employers are pretty understanding. They know you're a student when they hire you, if you give due notice - say two weeks before midterms, and ask for more time off, they will almost always comply."

"If I find that I do not have enough time to complete my work, I make negotiations with my employer in order to achieve a more balanced schedule. At times this has resulted in taking a short break from work during mid-terms and finals and moving more work hours to other less-stressful periods of the semester. However, the current restrictions on weekly work hours prevents me from making these types of negotiations because students are judged not by how many hours they work during the semester in total, but rather how many hours they work per week. If I needed to take a break in my job as of now, I fear that I would be forced to quit or that my employer would replace me."

"There are some weeks when I have more free time and could work more. Then again there are some weeks when I need to work less. I have to jobs with set times, but the others are very flexible. It would be great if the employment policy could be equally flexible."

"I have grown so much by being able to work here, especially with the terrific supervisors that I have been able to work under. Because of working, I have not only grown intellectually at Bard, but also professionally and as an individual. I now know how to balance my schedule because I have always balanced working and academics; take away that, and students will genuinely be losing something from their education here."

"My bosses have always been very understanding about my workload as a student, and I have never felt particular pressure on my academics from working for them."

"My hours are flexible, so it is not much of an issue for me. It's a self-motivated job, so if I don't make time to do my work, I don't get paid, it's as simple as that. Since having money pretty much rocks most of the time, I make time to do my work."

"Most on campus employers that I have encountered are sympathetic to the work load and definitely are willing to reschedule work shifts for tests, major assignments, etc. From my experience off campus employers are less likely and less able to do so."

Comments 2.2: Drawbacks to Working Off-campus

"My off-campus jobs do interfere. The three jobs I have on campus (the gym, the PAC, and TLS) all contribute to my academics."

"I wish I could find a decent job on campus so that I didn't have to drive so much for my other job."

"I think it is fair only if it takes into consideration the students' financial needs. Some students may really need the money to stay at Bard in the first place. If they can't get enough work on campus, where schedules are flexible and it is likely they can do their homework while working, they may seek work off-campus doing things such as waiting tables and cashing, which are less flexible and more likely to interfere with academics."

"What is at stake in the new campus job policy is more economic: I can get my work done while maintaining a job but limited hours make it difficult to AFFORD to pay for tuition. I feel very stressed about how little money I can make while taking classes and know that the only way I can balance my work is to have a job on campus. I know plenty of students who are struggling to make enough money to stay at Bard and therefore have to work jobs off-campus because they offer more hours and higher wages. Since on-campus jobs offer minimum wage, limited hours are extremely frustrating."

"[The policy] bothers me, because it forces me to look off-campus for jobs which has been a problem transportation wise and I worry that I may end up having to get a job that will not facilitate my academics and class schedule the way that on-campus jobs do."

"I am very upset about this new change in policy. I need to hold these jobs in order to continue going to school. Off-campus jobs would take up even more of my time than work-study ones and I'm sure would hurt my academics. However, because of this new policy, I might need to do this anyway."

"The new policy is ridiculous, and very detrimental to many students. It encourages students who actually need the money to seek off campus jobs which are more time consuming and never involve academics, so are more likely to make students fall behind on homework. It also makes it impossible to keep jobs that don't occur on a regular basis like tutoring and event staff, for instance, because when you choose the 2 jobs you obviously will prefer the regular ones."

"Please do whatever you can to change this policy. I think students at this age are responsible enough to know how much they can work. It is very ridiculous for someone (who is not even your parent or professor) to decide that for you."

"While I only work 6 hours per week I have many friends who are strongly affected by this policy. Bard is a very expensive college and several of my friends are paying for it completely on their own. It is ridiculous that Bard charges 50,000+ in tuition and then caps the hours students can work. The students I know who hold multiple jobs are definitely more dedicated students than those who don't work, perhaps it's because when you have to work for your education you know it's true value. And if you have to work, you have to work, so students may have to drive long distances to work off campus jobs with longer hours and less flexibility than campus jobs. And of course these off campus jobs are less likely to tie in with academic work and much less likely to allow time to be paid for sitting and doing homework like on campus jobs."

"My job is necessary for me to even take classes at Bard. Because I am supporting myself independently, I need to work more than perhaps other students. However, I have always balanced this part of my life with my academics (my classes have never been neglected due to my job on campus). And, in fact, the stress that comes with not being able to work enough hours in order to pay my bills is more distracting (and interferes more with my academics) than the time commitment of my job itself. Please do not continue to restrict students from working on campus ... The employment situations at Bard are respectful and safe, and without opportunities to receive a job here, students that are desperate will look for jobs elsewhere. Giving students permission to organize their own schedules in regards to work-life and school-life will promote the type of maturity that Bard expects from its students, and that is necessary for life after Bard. I am thankful for the many employment opportunities I had at Bard in the first three years of my time here, but the recent changes make me relieved that this is my final year--I would not be able to meet the costs of attending this college if I could not work..."

3. International Students

Comments 3.1: The Policy's Effect on International Students

"I feel very angry at this new policy because without the limit I could work more than 30 hours in two weeks and still do well academically or concentrate on my studies pretty well. Since I am an international student, I cannot work anywhere but Bard and therefore I am forced to work less than before. The problem is that I have to pay my bills and limiting my working hours is really making me suffer financially."