

Support for Peer Support: Examining Peer Leader Stress in Academic Support Programs

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Abstract

While most research has focused on the benefits of peer leadership programs, there is limited research examining potential risks for peer leaders. This study examined stress in academic support peer leaders. Findings indicated that peer leaders experienced less depression, vulnerability and perceived stress, while reporting higher levels of belonging and support (academic, financial, and peer) when compared to non-peer leaders, students employed off-campus and unemployed students. While the demands facing peer leaders are substantial, these findings suggest that there are aspects of peer leadership that mitigate the adverse effects of these challenges and help develop adaptive coping strategies.

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Higher education research has demonstrated the significant impact of peer interactions on a number of domains, including the ability to successfully navigate the transition into college, student satisfaction, learning and academic performance, and persistence and retention (Shook & Keup, 2012). As such, formal peer leadership programs have been extremely popular on college and university campuses; it is estimated that approximately 78% utilize some type of peer education/leadership programming (Sawyer et al., 1997). Peer leadership programs originated in residential life and orientation programs but have expanded to include areas such as judicial affairs, student activities, placement centers, religious centers, counseling centers, advising programs, and crisis intervention programs (Ender & Kay, 2010). In addition, peer leadership in academic support programs is now prominent (Tucker et al, 2020), which includes peer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, co-instructors in first-year seminars, and academic coaching (Latino & Unite, 2012).

The benefits for students who are served by peer leaders have been widely documented and include positive effects on academic achievement, student retention, liking of the subject matter, increased engagement, and improved access to supports through

referrals from peer leaders (Sharkin et al., 2003; Tucker et al., 2020). In addition, numerous benefits for the peer leaders themselves have been documented, indicating a mutual benefit for students who serve in these leadership roles (Shook & Keup, 2012). Research has demonstrated that peer leaders are overwhelmingly pleased with their involvement and role (Keup, 2010). In addition, peer leaders have shown an increased knowledge of campus resources; perceived changes in interpersonal communication, organization, time management, presentation skills, written communication skills, critical thinking, problem solving abilities, and group processing skills; and have experienced more meaningful interactions with faculty and staff (Ender & Newton, 2010).

While the benefits of peer leadership positions have been widely demonstrated, it cannot be assumed that peer leadership programs are free of complications and challenges. The popularity of peer leadership programs has grown, in part, due to the ability of colleges and universities to administer broad initiatives and interventions without having to hire full-time professional staff (Shook & Keup, 2012). As such, peer leaders are often asked to fulfill job responsibilities that would be expected of full-time professional staff (Shook & Keup 2012). Research has also helped identify potential risks for peer leaders, which include over-involvement resulting in adverse effects on grades, too much time devoted to peer leadership responsibilities, and stress associated

with the peer leadership role (Keup, 2010). In addition, questions of role clarification and self-presentation, perfectionistic tendencies, unrealistic workloads and a lack of guidance on how to manage the roles of peer leader and student have been identified as potential risks for peer leaders (Colvin, 2007; Colvin & Ashman 2010; Skipper & Keup, 2017).

Purpose of Research

While the large majority of attention has focused on the benefits of peer leadership programs for students, peer leaders, and their institutions, there has been limited attention and research examining the potential risks for peer leaders – this is especially true when examining academic support peer leaders. In addition, there has been no published research that has quantitatively measured stress in peer leaders. Thus, the purpose of this research was to examine the stress levels of peer leaders specifically working in academic support programs. Our research questions were as follows: 1) How does the stress level of academic peer leaders compare to non-peer leaders as measured by Dispositional Health, Types of Stressors, and Perceived Support scales? 2) Are there differences in stress levels between peer leaders, students with off-campus employment, and unemployed students? 3) Are peer leaders less likely to consider dropping out of college due to stress levels when compared to non-peer mentors?

Method

Participants

This research was conducted at a small, public regional college in the Western United States. The college is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and serves a diverse student body population. 57% of the student body population identifies as coming from a “culturally diverse” ethnic background, and 64% are first-generation college students.

Participants in the experimental group were peer leaders in academic support programs, which included the following programs: course assistants (embedded academic peer support in high “Drop, Fail, Withdraw DFW” gateway courses), writing center specialists, and tutors and Supplemental Instruction leaders from the Academic Success Center (n=34). The comparison group consisted of non-academic peer leader students from a previously administered comprehensive mental health needs assessment (n=119). The demographic variables collected and the respective breakdown for both groups are found in Table 1. The means and standard deviations for both groups with regards to age, credit load, and hours worked are found in Table 2.

Table 1.*Participant Demographic Variables: Frequencies and Percentages*

Demographics	Peer Leaders (%)	Non-Peer Leaders (%)
Gender		
Male	12 (35%)	18 (15%)
Female	22 (65%)	100 (84%)
Age		
25 and over	11 (32%)	48 (40%)
Under 25	23 (68%)	71 (60%)
First-Generation		
Yes	16 (47%)	53 (45%)
No	18 (53%)	65 (55%)
Caregiver Status		
Yes	15 (44%)	53 (45%)
No	19 (56%)	64 (54%)
Employment Hours		
Over 20	24 (71%)	65 (55%)
Under 20	10 (29%)	54 (45%)
Credit Load		
Full-time (12+)	21 (62%)	76 (64%)
Part-time (under 12)	13 (38%)	43 (36%)

Table 2.*Means and Standard Deviations for Age, Credit Load, and Work Hours*

	Peer Leaders (SD)	Non-Peer Leaders (SD)
Age	24.21 (5.767)	25.87 (7.955)
Credit Hours	11.00 (4.105)	11.45 (4.435)
Work Hours	25.67 (10.222)	20.05 (16.661)

Apparatus and Materials

The survey utilized in this study consisted of a subset of scales and associated questions from a self-developed, previously administered, comprehensive mental health needs assessment. The initial survey was developed to specifically address campus-specific concerns regarding students' mental health and utilized a combination of self-authored questions and select items from previously established assessments. The following scales from the initial survey instrument were utilized as part of this study:

Dispositional Health, Types of Stressors, and Perceived Support.

The Dispositional Health scale consisted of the following sub-scales: Depression, Vulnerability, Anxiety, and Perceived Stress. The Vulnerability, Depression, and Anxiety sub-scale questions consisted of chosen items from the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (Costa & McCrae (1992)). The Dispositional Health scale was utilized as the primary measure of overall stress, as indicators of depression, vulnerability, anxiety and perceived stress are likely to be associated with higher stress levels. The Types of Stressors scale was self-developed and categorized various types of stressors into the following sub-scales: Task Stressors, Social Stressors, and Financial Stressors. Lastly, the Perceived Support scale was also self-developed and categorized various sources of support into the following sub-scales: Academic, Financial, Peer, Family, and Campus Belonging. Cronbach's alphas for the Dispositional Health

and Perceived Support scales were .784 and .791, respectively, indicating acceptable scale reliability. The survey questions and respective scales and subscales can be found in Appendix A.

Procedure

This research project received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, which initially involved the previous mental health needs assessment research project, the subsequent modified use of the survey instrument for the current research project, and the recruitment and data collection of the academic peer leader group. The independent variable for this research was participation in an academic peer leadership role, and the dependent variables included dispositional health, types of stressors, and perceived support networks. A comparison of academic peer leaders v. students employed off-campus v. unemployed students was also conducted on the various dependent variable measures.

Recruitment efforts focused specifically on peer leaders in academic support programs, which included course assistants, writing center specialists, and tutors and Supplemental Instruction leaders from the Academic Success Center. The primary investigator attended program meetings to explain the purpose of the study, review informed consent, request their participation in the research, and answer any questions. Participants completed hard copy surveys, and the survey responses were coded for the purposes of the statistical analyses. The academic peer leader data

was examined with the comparison group data on the selected scales and subscales for the statistical analyses. Statistical analyses compared the academic peer mentor group with the comparison group on the Dispositional Health, Types of Stress, and Perceived Support scales and their respective sub-scales.

Results

Research Question 1: *How does the stress level of academic peer leaders compare to non-peer mentors as measured by Dispositional Health, Types of Stressors, and Perceived Support scales?*

The peer leader group presented with an average Dispositional Health scale score of 52.82 (SD=12.51) compared to 61.34 (SD=12.36) for the non-peer leader group. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that the peer leader group had significantly lower Dispositional Health scale scores on average, when compared to the non-peer leader group, $F(1,151)=12.496$, $p=.001$. In addition, the peer-leader group presented with an average Perceived Support scale score of 63.12 (SD=9.19) compared to 50.76 (SD=7.78) for the non-peer leader group. A one-way ANOVA indicated that the peer leader group had significantly higher perceived support scale scores on average, in comparison to the non-peer leader group, $F(1,151)=61.449$, $p<.001$. These findings suggest that the peer leader group experienced significantly lower levels of stress when compared to the non-peer leader group (as evidenced by significant differences in Dispositional Health scores), and they also perceived

themselves as having more comprehensive support networks than the non-peer leader group (as evidenced by significant differences in the Perceived Support scores). There were no significant differences between groups on the Types of Stressors scale, $F(1,151)=.056$, $p=.814$, indicating that both groups experience similar types of stressors. However, while both groups experience similar types of stressors, the differences on the Dispositional Health scores indicate that the non-peer leader group experienced these stressors with more intensity/severity. Means and standard deviations for the main scales can be found in Table 3.

Table 3.

Means and Standard Deviations for Main Scales

	Peer Leaders	Non-Peer Leaders
Dispositional Health*	52.82 (12.51)	61.34 (12.36)
Types of Stressors	32.99 (15.17)	33.65 (10.37)
Perceived Support**	63.12 (9.19)	50.76 (7.78)

* $p=.001$ ** $p<.001$

More specifically, when examining the Depression, Vulnerability, Anxiety, and Perceived Stress subscales of the dispositional health domain, the peer leader group fared significantly better on the Depression, $F(1,151)=4.695$, $p=.032$, Vulnerability, $F(1,151)=60.090$, $p<.001$ and Perceived Stress $F(1,151)=21.181$, $p<.001$ subscales. These findings indicate that the peer leader group reported lower levels of depression,

vulnerability, and perceived stress when compared to the non-peer leader group. There were no significant differences between groups on the Anxiety subscale, $F(1,151)=.341$, $p=.560$, indicating that both peer leaders and non-peer leaders experienced similar levels of anxiety. Means and standard deviations for both groups on the Dispositional Health subscales can be found in Table 4.

Table 4.

Means and Standard Deviations for Dispositional Subscales

	Peer Leaders	Non-Peer Leaders
Depression*	49.71 (15.86)	57.82 (20.09)
Vulnerability**	42.35 (16.89)	61.59 (11.35)
Anxiety	71.15 (19.21)	69.69 (17.97)
Perceived Stress**	49.41 (14.756)	60.92 (12.28)

* $p=.032$

** $p<.001$

With regards to the subscales on the perceived support domain, the peer leader group reported significantly higher levels of support in the areas of Academic Support, $F(1,151)=134.488$, $p<.001$, Financial Support, $F(1,151)=8.585$, $p=.004$, Peer Support, $F(1,151)=64.694$, $p<.001$), and Campus Belonging, $F(1,151)=11.953$, $p=.001$. These findings indicate that the peer leader group perceived themselves as having greater academic, financial, and peer support than the non-peer leader group, and they also have a greater sense of campus belonging when compared to the non-peer leader group. There were no significant differences between groups on the Family Support subscale, $F(1,151)=.059$, $p=.808$, indicating that both groups

reported similar levels of family support. Means and standard deviations for both groups on the perceived support subscales can be found in Table 5.

Table 5.

Means and Standard Deviations for Perceived Support Subscales

	Peer Leaders (SD)	Non-Peer Leaders (SD)
Academic Support*	72.35(10.46)	46.97 (11.47)
Financial Support**	57.06(16.61)	49.16 (12.99)
Peer Support*	71.18 (12.74)	53.28 (11.06)
Family Support	57.94 (19.81)	56.97 (20.61)
Sense of Belonging***	57.06 (25.05)	47.39 (9.43)

*p<.001 **p=.004 ***p=.001

There were no significant differences between the peer leader and non-peer leader groups on the Types of Stressors subscales, including Task Stressors, $F(1,151)=1.339$, $p=.249$, Social Stressors, $F(1,151)=1.733$, $p=.190$, or Financial Stressors $F(1,151)=.035$, $p=.852$. This indicates that the peer leader and non-peer leader group experienced the task, social, and financial stressors to a similar degree. Means and standard deviations for both groups on the Types of Stressors subscales can be found in Table 6.

Table 6.*Means and Standard Deviations for Types of Stressors Subscales*

	Peer Leaders (SD)	Non-Peer Leaders (SD)
Task Stressors	52.65 (17.11)	48.15 (20.71)
Social Stressors	27.25 (14.34)	31.93 (19.22)
Financial Stressors	34.31 (17.46)	33.56 (21.68)

Research Question 2: *Are there differences in stress levels between peer leaders, students with off-campus employment, and unemployed students?*

One-way ANOVA indicated that the peer leader group had significantly lower Dispositional Health scale scores on average, when compared to the students with off-campus employment and unemployed students, $F(2,150)=6.319$, $p=.002$. In addition, one-way ANOVA indicated that the peer leader group had significantly higher Perceived Support scores on average, when compared to students with off-campus employment and unemployed students, $F(2,150)=30.750$, $p<.001$. These findings suggest that the peer leader group experienced significantly lower levels of stress when compared to students who were employed off-campus and unemployed students. The peer leader group also perceived themselves as having more comprehensive support networks than students who were employed off-campus and unemployed students. There were no significant differences between groups on the Types of Stressors scale, $F(2,150)=1.144$, $p=.322$, indicating that all three groups experienced similar types of stressors. However,

while all groups experienced similar types of stressors, the differences on the Dispositional Health scores indicated that the peer leader group experienced these stressors with less intensity/severity. The means and standard deviations for all three groups on the Dispositional Health, Types of Stressors, and Perceived Support scales can be found in Table 7.

Table 7.

Means and Standard Deviations for the Dispositional Health, Types of Stressors, and Perceived Support Scales

	Peer Leaders	Off-Campus Employment	Unemployed
Dispositional Health*	52.82 (12.51)	61.69 (11.68)	60.56 (13.96)
Types of Stressors	33.65 (10.37)	31.71(13.73)	35.94 (17.94)
Perceived Support*	63.12 (9.19)	51.04 (8.08)	50.11 (7.11)

*p=.002 **p<.001

When examining the Depression, Vulnerability, Anxiety, and Perceived Stress subscales of the Dispositional Health domain, the peer leader group fared significantly better on the Vulnerability and Perceived Stress subscales. One-way ANOVA indicated that the peer leader group had significantly lower Vulnerability subscale scores on average when compared to students employed off-campus and unemployed students, $F(2,150)=30.230, p<.001$, as well as significantly lower scores on the Perceived Stress subscale, $F(2,150)=11.070, p<.001$. These findings indicate that the peer leader

group reported lower levels of vulnerability and perceived stress when compared to the students employed off-campus and the unemployed students. There were no significant differences between groups on the Depression, $F(2,150)=2.339$, $p=.10$, or Anxiety subscale, $F(2,150)=.205$, $p=.815$. However, when examining just the peer leader group with students who are employed off-campus, the peer mentor group presented with significantly lower scores on the Depression subscale, $F(1,115)=4.572$, $p=.035$). Means and standard deviations for all three groups on the Dispositional Health subscales can be found in Table 8.

Table 8.

Means and Standard Deviations for the Dispositional Health Subscales (Peer Leaders vs. Off-Campus Employment vs. Unemployed)

	Peer Leaders	Off-Campus Employment	Unemployed
Depression	49.71 (15.86)	57.95 (20.05)	57.50 (20.4)
Vulnerability*	42.35 (16.89)	62.17 (11.16)	60.28 8 (11.83)
Anxiety	71.75(19.21)	69.39 (16.59)	70.37 (21.05)
Perceived Stress*	49.41 (14.76)	61.69 (12.38)	59.17 (12.04)

* $p<.001$

With regard to the subscales on the Perceived Support domain, the peer leader group reported significantly higher levels of support in the areas of Academic Support, $F(2,150)=67.909$, $p<.001$, Financial Support, $F(2,150)=4.441$, $p=.013$, Peer Support, $F(2,150)=32.445$, $p<.001$, and Campus Belonging, $F(2,150)=5.941$, $p=.003$. These findings indicated that the peer leader group perceived themselves

as having greater academic, financial, and peer support than the students employed off-campus and unemployed students, and they also had a greater sense of belonging when compared to the other groups. There were no significant differences between groups on the Family Support subscale, $F(2,150)=.153$, $p=.858$, indicating that all three groups reported similar levels of family support. Means and standard deviations for all three groups on the Perceived Support subscales can be found in Table 9.

Table 9.

Means and Standard Deviations for the Perceived Support Subscales (Peer Leaders vs. Off-Campus Employment vs. Unemployed)

	Peer Leaders	Off-Campus Employment	Unemployed
Academic Support*	72.35(10.46)	47.711 (10.63)	45.28 (13.19)
Financial Support**	57.06 (16.61)	48.67 (13.05)	50.28 (12.98)
Peer Support*	71.18 (12.74)	53.73 (11.55)	52.22 (9.89)
Family Support	57.94 (19.81)	57.59 (19.79)	55.56 (22.61)
Sense of Belonging***	57.06 (25.05)	47.47 (8.67)	47.22 (11.11)

* $p<.001$ ** $p=.013$ *** $p=.003$

With regard to the subscales on the Types of Stressors domain, unemployed students had significantly higher Financial Stressor scores on average, in comparison to students with off-campus employment, $F(2,150)=3.548$, $p=.031$. There were no significant differences between the groups on the Task Stressor, $F(2,150)=1.314$, $p=.272$, or Social Stressors subscales, $F(2,150)=1.790$, $p=.171$. This indicates that the peer leader group, students employed off-campus,

and unemployed students experienced task and social stressors to a similar degree. Means and standard deviations for all three groups can be found in Table 10.

Table 10. Means and Standard Deviations for the Types of Stressors Subscales (Peer Leaders vs. Off-Campus Employment vs. Unemployed)

	Peer Leaders	Off-Campus Employment	Unemployed
Task Stressors	52.65 (17.11)	49.52 (19.37)	45.00 (23.48)
Social Stressors	27.25 (14.34)	30.44 (17.55)	35.37 (22.53)
Financial Stressors*	34.31 (17.46)	30.28 (20.04)	41.11 (23.66)

* $p=.031$

Research Question 3: *Are peer mentors less likely to consider dropping out of college due to stress levels when compared to non-peer mentors?*

A chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between peer leader status and the consideration of dropping out of school due to stress levels. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(1)=10.279$, $p=.001$. This indicates that peer leaders were significantly less likely to consider dropping out of college due to their stress levels when compared to the non-peer leader group. An additional chi-square was performed to examine peer leaders, students employed off-campus, and unemployed students in relation to consideration of dropping out of school due to stress. The relationship between these variables was also significant, $X^2(2)=10.787$, $p=.005$. This indicates that peer leaders

were significantly less likely to consider dropping out of school due to stress when compared to students with off-campus employment and unemployed students.

Discussion

The main findings of this study indicated that the peer mentor leader group experienced significantly lower levels of stress and significantly higher levels of overall support when compared to the non-peer leader group, students with off-campus unemployment, and unemployed students. More specifically, they experienced less depression, vulnerability, and perceived stress, while reporting higher levels of academic support, financial support, peer support and sense of campus belonging. In addition, peer leaders were significantly less likely to consider dropping out of college due to their stress levels when compared to the other groups in this study.

These findings are significant because colleges and universities are under pressure to improve student retention, persistence and graduation rates, as well as closing equity gaps for students from historically underrepresented groups and low-income families. As such, academic support peer leaders are becoming increasingly popular to meet these demands. While the demands, responsibilities, role expectations and systemic challenges for peer leaders are substantial, these research findings suggest that there are aspects of the peer leader experience that serve as protective factors that mitigate the adverse effects of these challenges and

serve as a catalyst for the development of more adaptive coping strategies.

Our findings suggest that the peer leader group may have a better developed sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) as it relates to their ability to navigate the various responsibilities and stressors associated with the peer leader role. While the self-efficacy literature has primarily focused on performance accomplishments as the most influential learning experience that promotes self-efficacy (Lent et al., 2002), another experience that is directly relevant to this research and is often overlooked in the literature is the ability to navigate “negative” physiological and affective states. While the peer leader group experienced similar types of stressors as the other student groups, they experienced these stressors with less intensity and severity. In their development as peer leaders, they may have learned to normalize and embrace the stressors associated with the college experience and as a result, developed a greater sense of efficacy in how they navigate their professional, academic, and personal demands and responsibilities. As a result, peer leaders may have developed a higher “threshold” with regards to how many responsibilities and demands they can effectively navigate. In addition, peer leaders may have developed increased efficacy through observational learning and vicarious reinforcement. That is, since a significant aspect of their training focuses on identifying risk factors in their peers, they may have developed the ability to more

effectively self-assess their own needs and determine when to seek support. Peer leaders also experience vicarious reinforcement by engaging and interacting with their professional staff mentors, who can model how to effectively navigate high-level demands and various types of professional stressors.

These findings are also consistent with previous research illustrating the benefits of serving in the peer leadership role, with a specific emphasis on navigational capital and greater access to campus support systems (Austin, 1993; Eells, 2017; Shook & Keup, 2012). The peer leader group reported substantially higher levels of perceived academic support, financial support, peer support, and sense of campus belonging. The increased level of campus connectedness and various forms of campus support are essential in helping peer leaders successfully navigate the stress associated with the peer leader role and college experience. In addition, peer leaders may actually benefit from the “fishbowl effect,” with their various campus touch-points and support systems “keeping an eye out” for the well-being of their peer leaders. Professional staff are likely to proactively engage peer leaders when they observe difficulties and can provide support and resources as deemed necessary.

The positive reinforcement peer leaders receive from the campus community related to their role may also contribute to their ability to more effectively navigate stress. As peer leaders, they serve as a model for other students, and this reinforcement and campus

investment from a financial, professional, and psychosocial perspective may help foster a higher sense of personal commitment and accountability to serve in the peer leader role. This sense of personal commitment may facilitate a greater investment in adaptively coping with and persevering through the various stressors associated with the peer leader role.

Our findings have significant training implications for peer leaders in academic support programs. While many programs include a “self-care” component in their training programs, it is recommended that training include a more formal and comprehensive self-efficacy theoretical framework, with a specific emphasis on normalizing the negative affective states that are required for personal and professional growth and accompany the everyday demands and responsibilities of the peer leader role. In addition, training can emphasize the role of cognitive-behavioral strategies in the development of more adaptive coping strategies and information processing skills (Hollon & Beck, 2013). These research findings indicated no significant differences in the types of stressors experienced between the student groups, which suggests that the peer mentors have developed more adaptive cognitive strategies to reduce the intensity of the perceived stressors. This type of cognitive reframing is what then leads to more effective behavioral coping strategies. The combination of self-efficacy and

cognitive-behavioral theories can further strengthen the theoretical foundations of training curricula for peer mentors.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of this research was the small sample size of the peer leader group, which inhibited the ability to examine group differences based on various demographic variables. As such, future research can expand the scope to include a broader and more comprehensive array of peer mentors, which will allow for comparisons between different types of peer leaders, as well as group differences based on demographic variables. In addition, there was a higher percentage of male peer mentors (35%) when compared to the non-peer mentor group (15%), which may require further examination into gender differences as it relates to managing stress. The peer mentor group also presented with a higher percentage of individuals who worked more than 20 hours per week (71%) when compared to the non-peer mentor group (55%). It is possible that various dynamics associated with increased work hours could have an impact on how one manages stress, in addition to an increased sense of campus belonging. Another limitation is the absence of an additional comparison group consisting of students who were employed on-campus, but not as peer leaders. Further inquiry may discover whether being employed on-campus in other positions may also contribute to lower stress and higher perceived support, or if there are specific

aspects and/or characteristics of peer leadership positions in academic support programs that better explain these findings.

From a methodological perspective, a mixed methods approach may prove to be more beneficial, as a qualitative component will provide more depth and understanding into the experiences of peer leaders and better ascertain the differences in stress levels and perceived support among student groups. In addition, research examining intersectional identities as they relate to the peer mentor experience will provide added knowledge about how historically marginalized identities experience and navigate the peer mentor role.

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Appendix A

Dispositional Health: During the course of this semester, how often have you: (Not at all, Infrequently, Sometimes, Often, Very often)

1. Felt like you were capable of coping with most of your problems (NEO Vulnerability)
2. Gotten stressed out easily (NEO Anxiety)
3. Felt discouraged and wanted to give up (NEO Depression)
4. Found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do (Perceived Stress)
5. Felt sad or depressed (NEO Depression)
6. Felt that you were able to manage all of the things you had to do (Perceived Stress)
7. Felt tense or anxious (NEO Anxiety)
8. Worried about things (NEO Anxiety)
9. Felt helpless and wanted someone else to solve your problems (NEO Vulnerability)
10. Contemplated dropping out or withdrawing from school (Withdrawing from School)

Types of Stressors: During the current semester, how frequently have you experienced stress or pressure due to: (N/A, Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always)

11. School responsibilities (e.g., meeting deadlines, successfully completing assignments) (Task Stressor)
12. Work responsibilities (e.g., scheduled hours, meeting deadlines, working overtime) (Task Stressor)
13. Caregiver responsibilities (e.g., children, parents/grandparents) (Social Stressor)
14. Transportation issues (e.g., unexpected auto repair, long commute) (Financial Stressor)
15. Lack of finances (e.g. money for auto repair, tuition, child care, etc.) (Financial Stressor)
16. No or inadequate employment (e.g., unemployed, underemployed, low wages) (Financial Stressor)

17. Poor physical health (e.g., extended sickness, health problems) (Other Stressor)
18. Issues in my romantic relationship (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend, spouse partner) (Social Stressor)
19. Issues in my social relationships (e.g., difficult family, friends, coworkers) (Social Stressor)
20. Experiencing bias or discrimination (e.g., based on gender, race, sexuality, etc.) (Other Stressor)

Perceived Support: Do you feel supported? Please indicate your agreement with the following statements (Disagree, Mostly disagree, Mostly agree, Agree)

21. I know someone who could loan me money to help cover my tuition or books (Financial Support)
22. I don't know anyone at school who would help me study for an exam (Academic Support)
23. I belong to a group or club at school that meets regularly or does things together regularly (Campus Belonging)
24. I don't know anyone at school who I feel comfortable talking about problems with (Peer Support)
25. I feel comfortable talking about my problems with my family (Family Support)
26. Even if I needed it, my family does not have the means to give me money for tuition or books (Financial Support)
27. I know someone at school who would get assignments from my teachers if I was sick (Academic Support)
28. I am not a member of any social groups or clubs at my school (Campus Belonging)
29. I know someone who I see or talk to regularly who I feel comfortable sharing my problems with (Peer Support)
30. I get the emotional help and support I need from my family (Family Support)