



Fact Sheet

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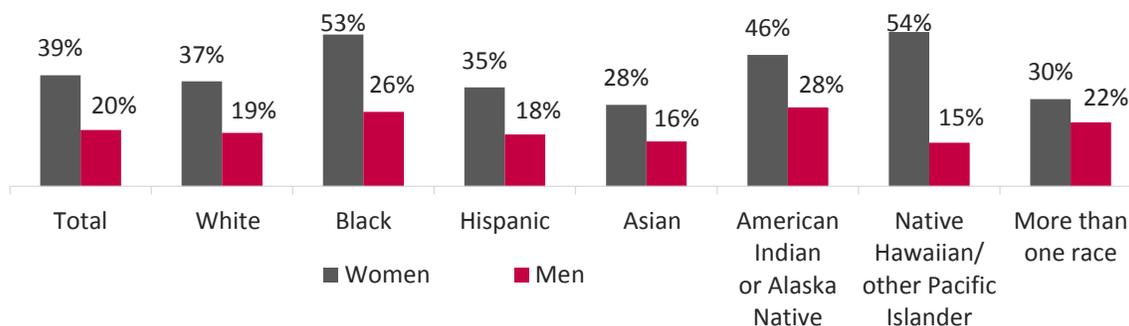
Community College Students Need Fair Job Scheduling Practices

Working is often critical to community college students' ability to pursue a postsecondary education, but holding a job while in school can threaten a student's success in college. For students to succeed at both school and work, they need jobs with predictable schedules and they need to have a say in scheduling so that work does not conflict with classes. This is especially important for students who are also parents, who must often schedule child care in addition to work and school.

A large proportion of community college students work for pay while pursuing a postsecondary degree. On average, community college students work 22 hours per week (including work study hours),¹ and over a quarter of community college students at public two-year schools (26 percent) worked 40 hours or more during the 2011-12 school year.² Thirty-nine percent of students in community colleges say that working full-time is likely or very likely to cause them to withdraw from class or from college altogether.³

Working while getting a degree is especially complicated for the 30 percent of community college students who are raising dependent children. Approximately 2.1 million community college students are juggling school and parenthood, and the majority of these students are women: 39 percent of women in community college are mothers, and 20 percent of male community college students are fathers (Figure 1). Women of color are particularly likely to be student parents: over half of African American and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander female community college students are raising children (53 percent and 54 percent, respectively), as are nearly half (46 percent) of American Indian or Alaska Native female students (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proportion of Community College Students with Children by Race/Ethnicity and Gender



Source: IWPR analysis, U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12).

¹ IWPR analysis of 2012 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey data. National Center for Education Statistics

² Gault, Barbara, Lindsey Reichlin, and Stephanie Román. 2014. *College Affordability for Low-Income Adults: Improving Returns on Investment for Families and Society*. IWPR #C412. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

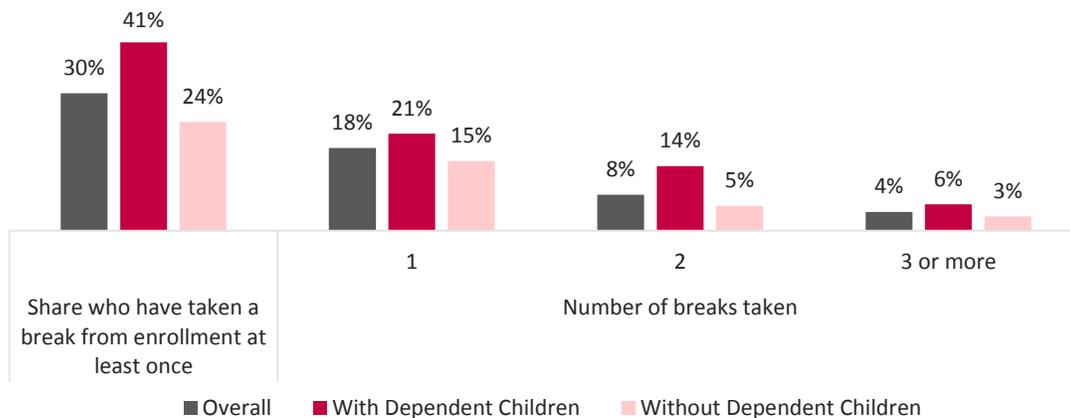
³ Community College Survey of Student Engagement. 2013. *2013 Frequency Distributions - Main Survey*. Austin, TX: Community College Survey of Student Engagement. <http://www.ccsse.org/survey/reports/2013/standard_reports/ccsse_2013_coh_freqs_allstu.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2014).

Among community college students, 30 percent of women and 13 percent of men spend 30 or more hours each week caring for dependents who live with them.⁴ For a substantial proportion of community college students, dependent care demands threaten their ability to persist in college, with 30 percent of women and 26 percent of men saying that caring for dependents is likely or very likely to cause them to withdraw from class or from college altogether.⁵ Student parents also often work more hours per week than those without children. Median weekly work hours for students with children are 25 hours per week – five hours more per week than their nonparent counterparts.⁶ Work schedules that enable student parents to better manage their myriad responsibilities will help to ensure their success in school.

More than 1 in 4 female students at Mississippi community colleges say that workplace policies allowing more flexibility or leave time would have helped them avoid dropping out of school.

A survey by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) of female students attending community colleges in Mississippi⁷ found that 41 percent of students with children under 18, and about a quarter of students without dependent children (24 percent), have taken a break from school at least once in their college careers (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Three in Ten Women Surveyed Have Taken a Break from College, Student Parents Especially Likely to Take Time Off



Source: Hess, Cynthia, Sylvia Krohn, Lindsey Reichlin, Stephanie Román, and Barbara Gault. 2014. *Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi’s Community Colleges*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research. IWPR Survey of Women in Mississippi’s Community Colleges.

For many women community college students in Mississippi, limited workplace flexibility negatively affects their ability to remain enrolled: more than one in four (26 percent) say that workplace policies allowing more flexibility or leave time would have helped them stay in college (27 percent of students without children and 25 percent of student parents).⁸

⁴ Community College Survey of Student Engagement. 2013. *2013 Frequency Distributions - Main Survey. Breakout by Sex*. Austin, TX: Community College Survey of Student Engagement.

<http://www.ccsse.org/survey/reports/2013/standard_reports/ccsse_2013_coh_freqs_bySex.pdf> (accessed July 22, 2014).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ IWPR analysis of 2012 National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey data. National Center for Education Statistics

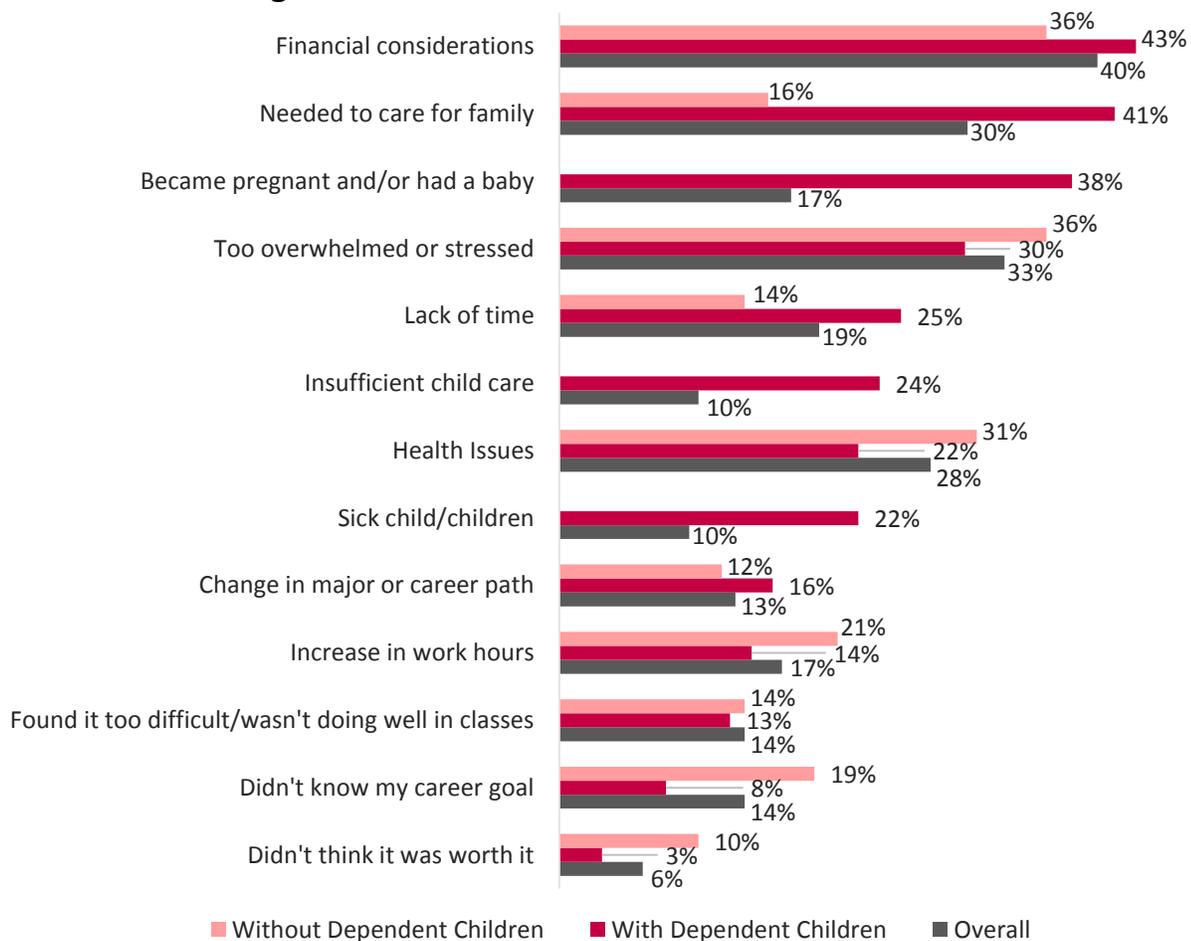
⁷ To understand the circumstances and experiences of female community college students in Mississippi, IWPR conducted an online survey of women who are students in the state’s community colleges, commissioned by the Women’s Foundation of Mississippi. Nearly 550 students from 13 of the state’s 15 community colleges responded to the survey, with the majority of responses (60 percent) coming from two schools. The results and analysis were published in a report by Hess et al. (2014) entitled *Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi’s Community Colleges*.

⁸ Hess, Cynthia, Sylvia Krohn, Lindsey Reichlin, Stephanie Román, and Barbara Gault. 2014. *Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi’s Community Colleges*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

Juggling the responsibilities of school, work, and home life is related to high stress levels among community college students. Seventy-two percent mothers in Mississippi’s community colleges, and nearly two-thirds of all women community college students in the state, report high levels of stress while in college. For both groups, stress stems most often from the challenge of balancing work, school, and home life, and managing money and finances. One in five student parents, and a quarter of students without dependent children, report that dealing with job demands is a great source of stress.⁹

While it is not unexpected that students experience some stress in college, such high levels of stress can drive some community college students to leave school. Feeling too overwhelmed or stressed is one of the most common reasons that students in the IWPR survey report taking time off: one-third of all student respondents say that feelings of stress played a role in their decision to take time off (Figure 3). Financial considerations are another major reason for taking a break from school, and are particularly problematic for student parents who must provide for their children in addition to paying tuition and school fees (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Financial Issues, Family Care Needs, Stress, and Health Problems Are Main Reasons for Taking Time off from School



Notes: Students were asked to select all responses that apply. Percentages show the reasons for taking time off among those who have interrupted their college careers.

Source: Hess, Cynthia, Sylvia Krohn, Lindsey Reichlin, Stephanie Román, and Barbara Gault. 2014. *Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi’s Community Colleges*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research. IWPR Survey of Women in Mississippi’s Community Colleges.

⁹ Hess, Cynthia, Sylvia Krohn, Lindsey Reichlin, Stephanie Román, and Barbara Gault. 2014. *Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi’s Community Colleges*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women’s Policy Research.

In colleges across the nation, predictability and control over work schedules are critical to the success of students who are managing school, work, and parenthood. Unexpected developments in family life, such as having to care for a sick child or problems with child care arrangements, can disrupt students' schedules on short notice – increasing their stress and limiting the time they have to devote to school obligations. Policies that improve employer scheduling practices through advance notices of schedules, and allowing workers to request scheduling changes without fear of negative consequences, would improve chances of success among women pursuing postsecondary degrees.

This fact sheet was prepared by Lindsey Reichlin and Barbara Gault, of the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), with support from the Women's Foundation of Mississippi (WFM) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. It is based, in part, on the IWPR/WFM report, Securing a Better Future: A Portrait of Female Students in Mississippi's Community Colleges (Hess et al. 2014).

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