

POST SECONDARY ACADEMIC SUCCESS SURVEY REPORT

In East Los Angeles



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UCLA in collaboration with InnerCity Struggle



Executive Summary

UCLA Researchers worked with a community non-profit organization called InnerCity Struggle to understand the reasons that hinder academic success in East Los Angeles college students. After designing a comprehensive survey, we distributed it to two colleges in East Los Angeles and gathered 648 responses. We learned that our sample consisted of mostly Latinx or Hispanic first generation students whose familial income was less than \$40,000 a year. In order to understand what hinders academic success, we asked students whether they had been placed on academic probation or academically withdrawn in the past, and used their responses as **outcome variables**. We analyzed the data using statistical software, testing the significance of a variety of predictor variables using **multiple one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) tests**, and found that the **following predictor variables are significantly related to academic probation**: current GPA, stress in school, high school GPA, family support, time spent in college, and age. We also found that the **following predictor variables are significantly related to academic withdrawal**: current GPA, high school GPA, time spent in college, financial factors, and age.

InnerCity Struggle (ICS)

ICS is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 by a group of young adults who were concerned about the high crime rate and the constant, serious neighborhood violence in the East Los Angeles area. The organization focused on helping vulnerable immigrant populations in the Boyle Heights area with economic support, educational resources, and knowledge of civil rights. The organization influenced re-allocation of state funds, establishing A through G graduation requirements in LAUSD high schools, securing permanent rent stabilization ordinance, facilitating the completion of a new elementary adult school, two new high schools on the East Side, and more. Through the information ICS has gathered in recent times, they were able to identify that several of their previous participants seem to have trouble graduating college. Some graduate on time, while others need to drop out of school due to a variety of reasons.

Study Question

What factors hinder students' success rate in California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) and East Los Angeles College (ELAC)?



Methods

- Literature review provided a theoretical framework for the survey questions.
- We found that graduation rates of the ICS student population rely on 4 major influences: student background information and demographics, information about high school experience and preparation for college, outside support from their friends and families, and college experience and access and use of academic resources. The structure of the survey was designed around these 4 cardinal points.
- We administered a pilot survey to ICS youth leaders and directors and together, we reviewed the answers, adjusted the questions accordingly.
- With the help of ICS leadership, the fill survey was administered to ELAC and Cal State LA students between February 19 and February 27
- With 650 survey responses, statistical analysis was done using R and STATA for descriptive and correlational analyses of the quantitative data.
- Qualitative data from open ended questions was coded accordingly.

Demographics

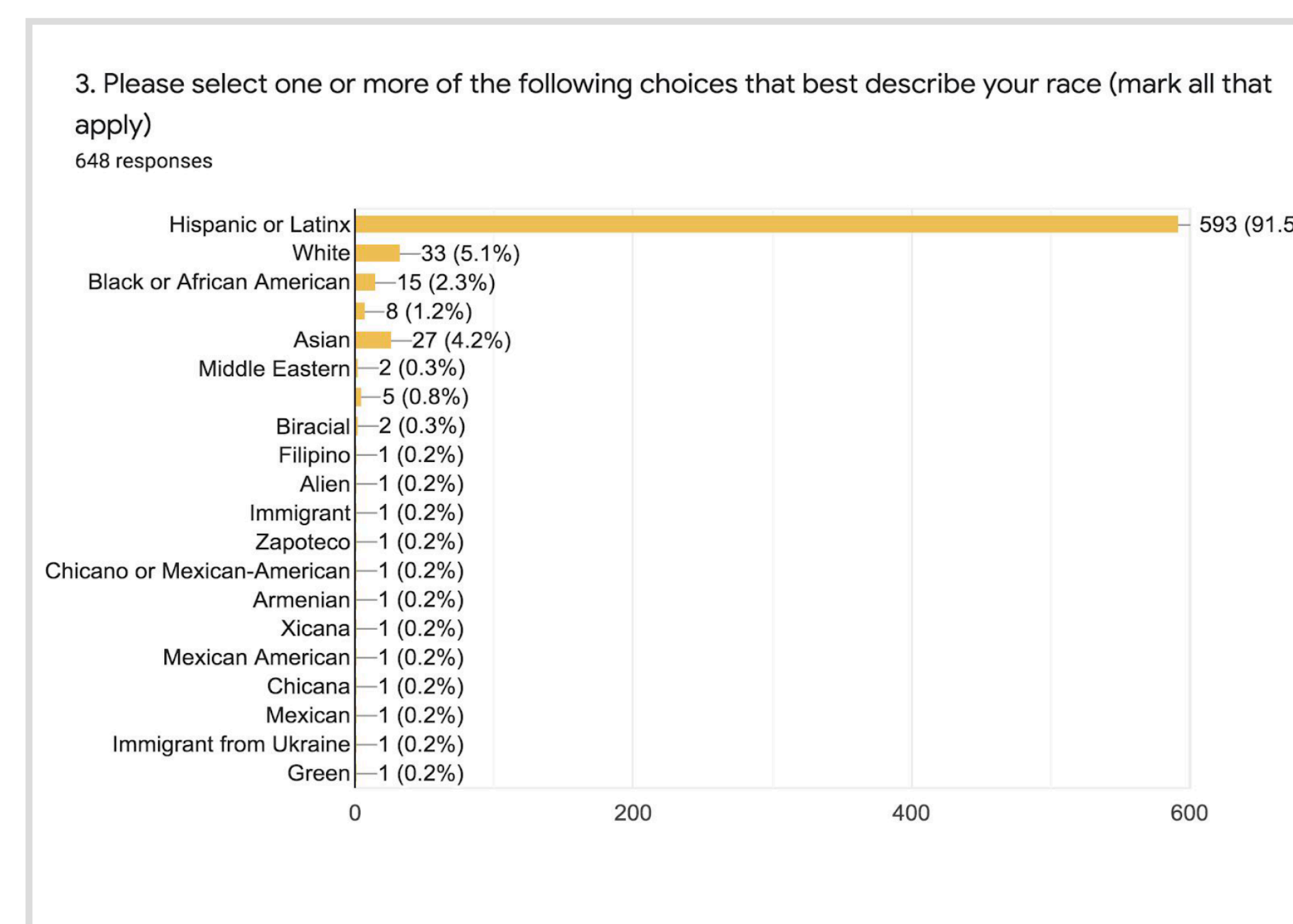


Figure 1. Our survey data shows that over 91% of our participants are of Hispanic or Latinx origin. Many prominent sociological theorists like Pierre Bourdieu believe that students' family and home life have a direct influence on students' academic success

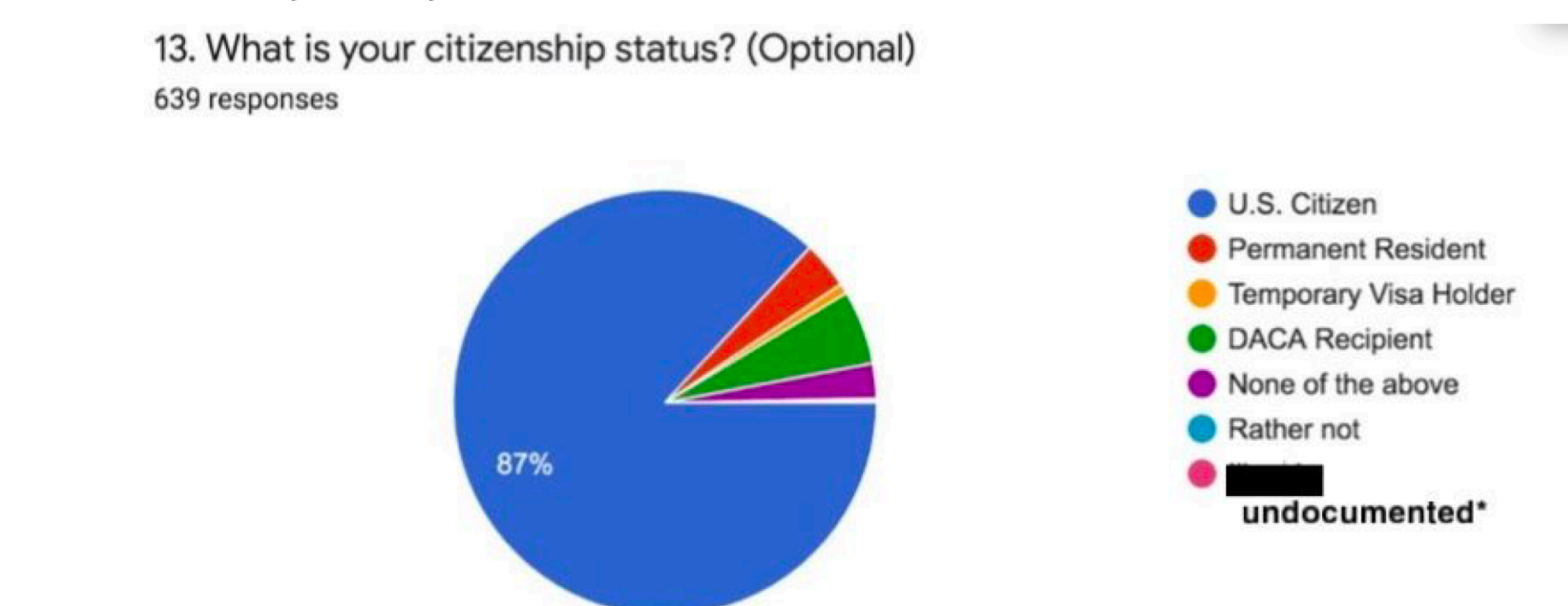


Figure 2. *Note: This pie chart has been altered to correct the usage of a term that one survey respondent wrote into this question. The correct word that should have been used is undocumented. Studies also show that a compounding factor that leads to low graduation and completion rate amongst low-income students in East LA is their immigration status. A study conducted in 2002 revealed that there are low enrollment rates and even lower graduation rates among immigrant students and students with language barriers. In order to understand whether our population may mirror these 18 findings, we offered an optional question, with the freedom to skip or decline to state an answer, that addressed the legal status of the respondents. 87% of our participants 85.8% declared that they are U.S. citizens, about 4.32% respondents declared that they are either permanent residents or temporary visa holders, and 36.55% have declared that they are DACA recipients, 2.62% have selected "none of the above" which we have taken to mean that they are undocumented and the remaining have either skipped the optional question or selected "decline to respond."

8. What was your approximate total household income in 2019? (if you are under the age of 25, this includes the income of your parents/guardians)
639 responses

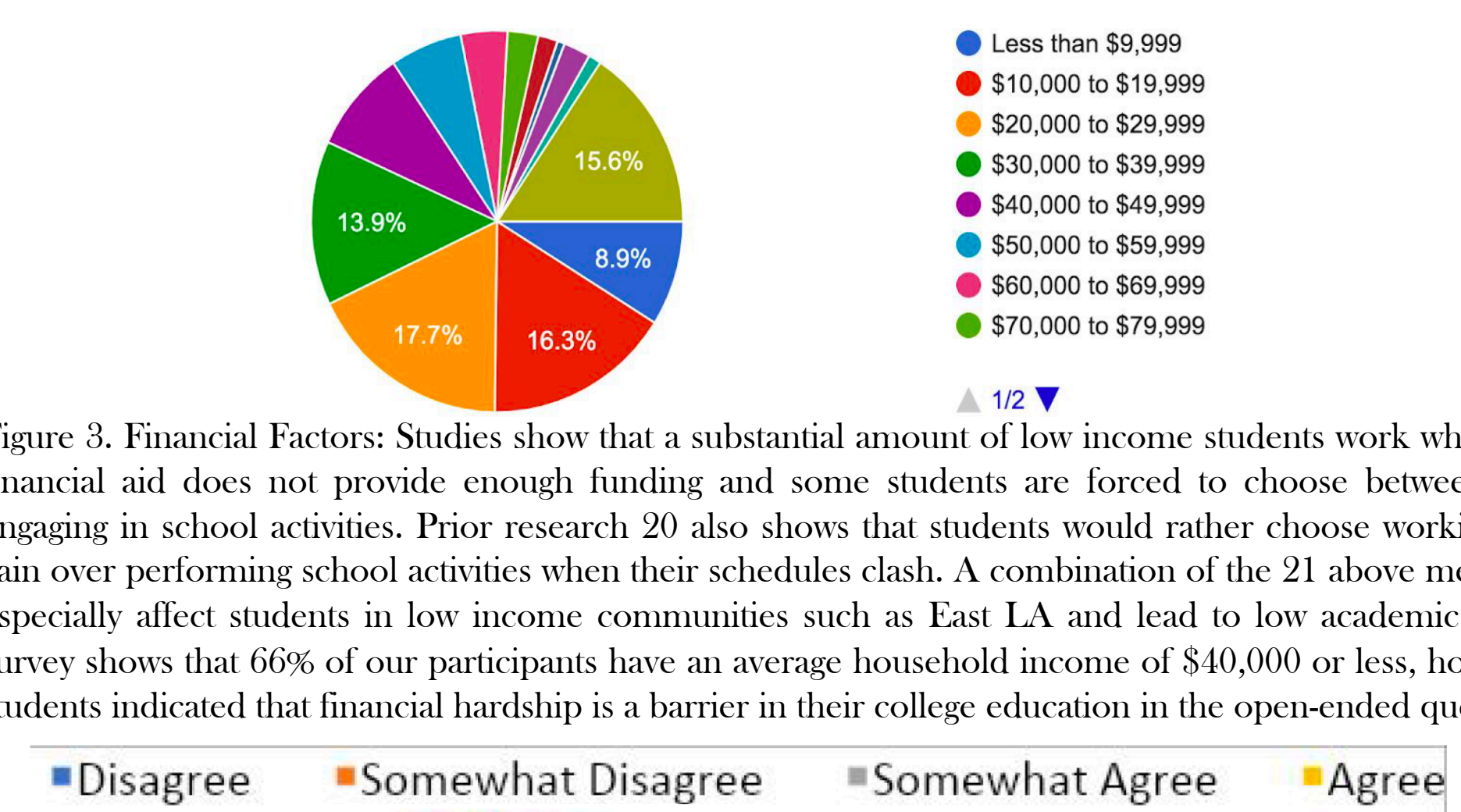


Figure 3. Financial Factors: Studies show that a substantial amount of low income students work while in school, as financial aid does not provide enough funding and some students are forced to choose between working and engaging in school activities. Prior research 20 also shows that students would rather choose working for financial gain over performing school activities when their schedules clash. A combination of the 21 above mentioned factors especially affect students in low income communities such as East LA and lead to low academic retention. Our survey shows that 66% of our participants have an average household income of \$40,000 or less, however, very few students indicated that financial hardship is a barrier in their college education in the open-ended questions.

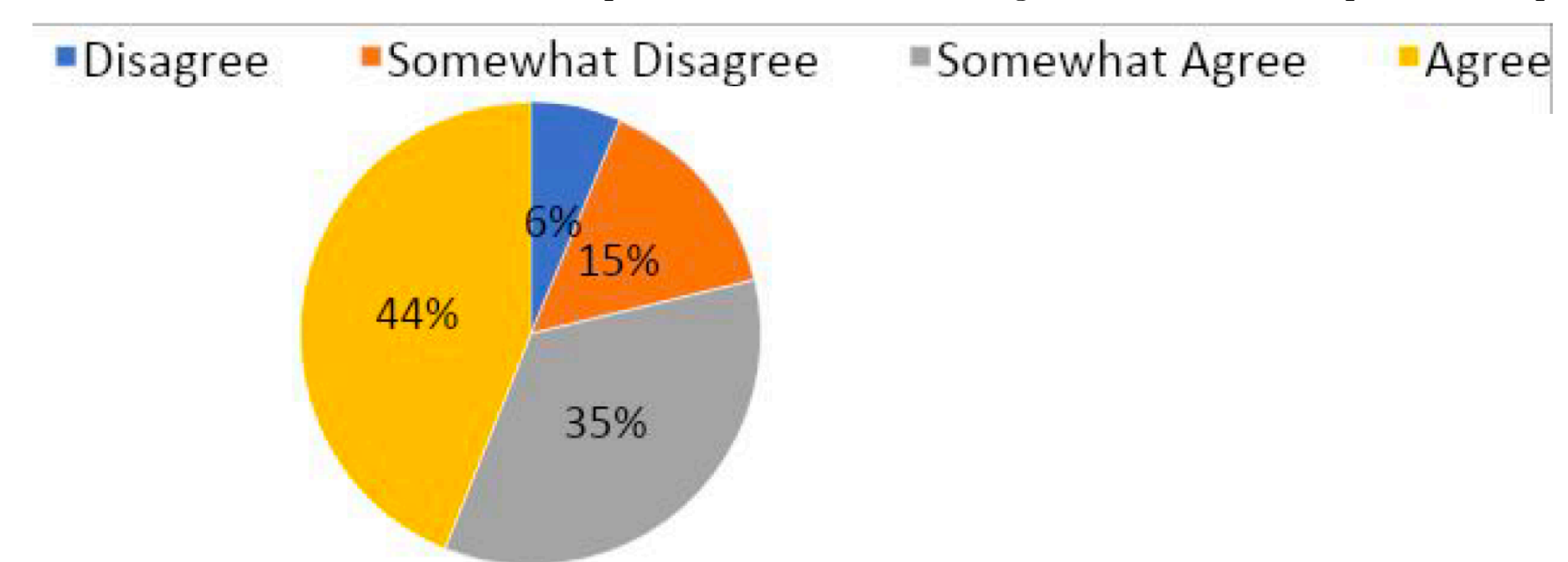
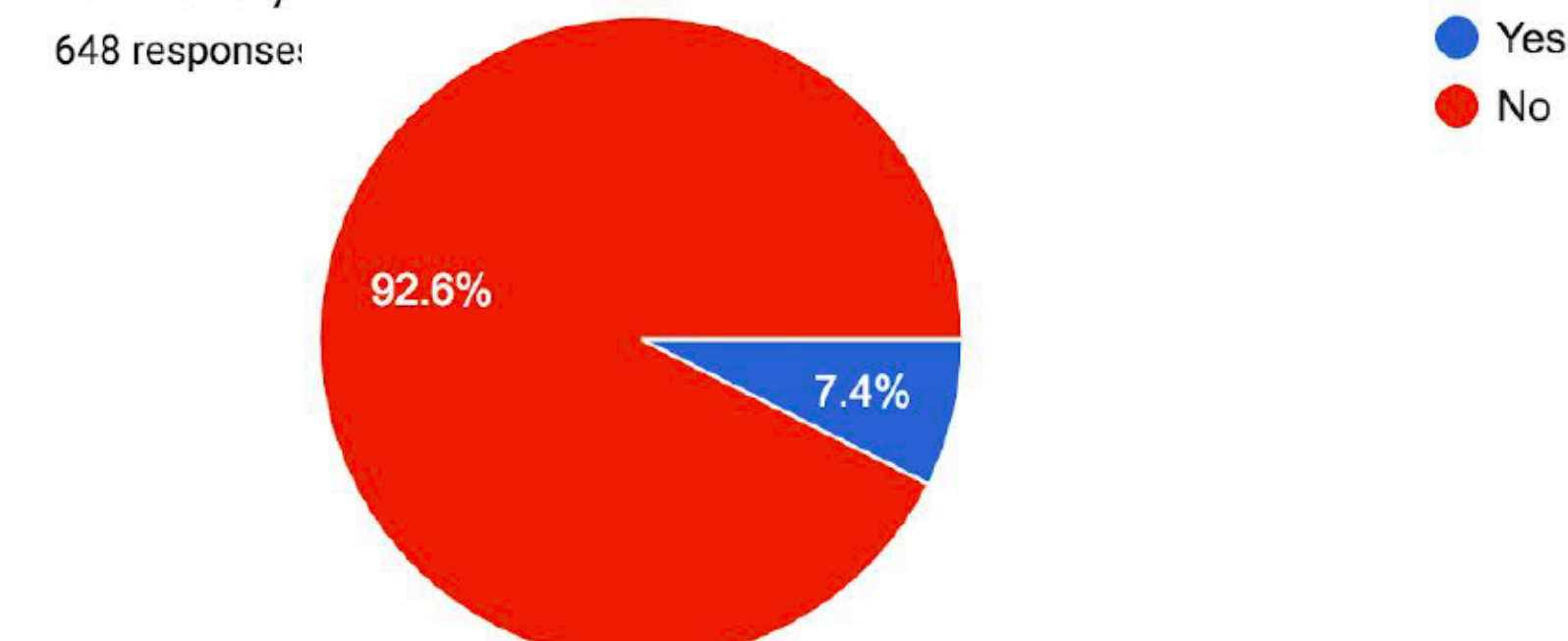


Figure 4. Mental Health: To adapt to a new condition, stress can come in different ways in a student's daily life. For instance, stress may be caused by failure in a college exam, financial problems, health problems or interpersonal relationships with others. Our data shows that a lot of college students significantly experience stress. In response to the question "I feel stressed when I think about school," only 6.3% of students chose "disagree". 14.9% of students chose "somewhat disagree". 34.8% of students answered "Somewhat agree" and 43.9% of students replied with "agree" (see Fig. 6). To sum up, 78.7% of students experience high levels of stress due to college life transition

10. Have you ever withdrawn from college?
648 response:



9. Have you ever been placed on academic probation?
648 responses:

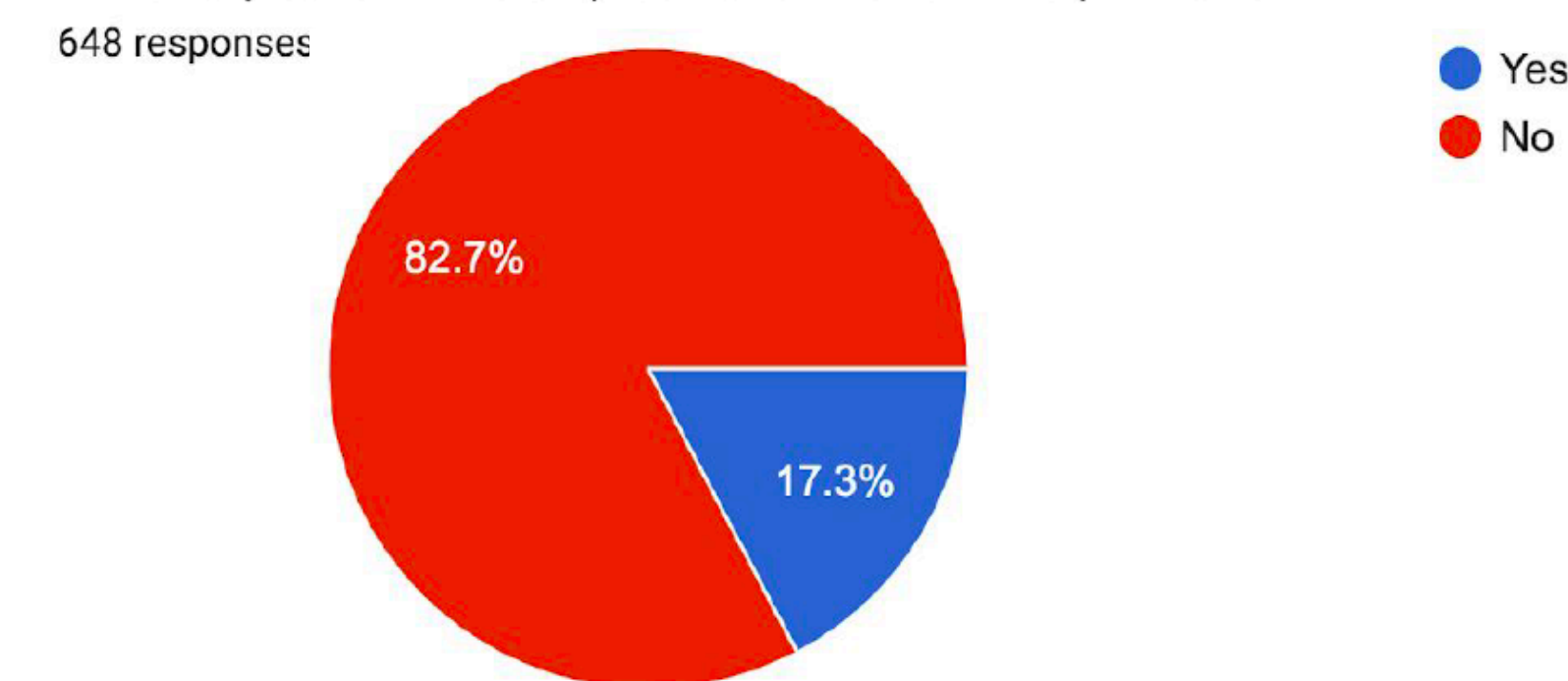


Figure 5&6: Self-Reported Reasons for Academic Probation 112 out of 648 students (17.3%) in our sample have been on academic probation, and 7.4% have previously withdrawn from college (see Figs. 8A and 8B). We gave 33 respondents space to elaborate on their probation or withdrawal experiences and found that 51.54% students claim that because low grades got them placed on academic probation, they were forced to withdraw from school. Other factors that were listed but not as significant were work 8.24%, financial problems 7.21%, mental health 3.09%, pregnancy 4.12%, personal life change 6.18%, and lack of motivation 4.12%. Other issues that were listed less than 3% of the time were social issues, family duties, and transportation.

7. What is your current GPA?
648 responses

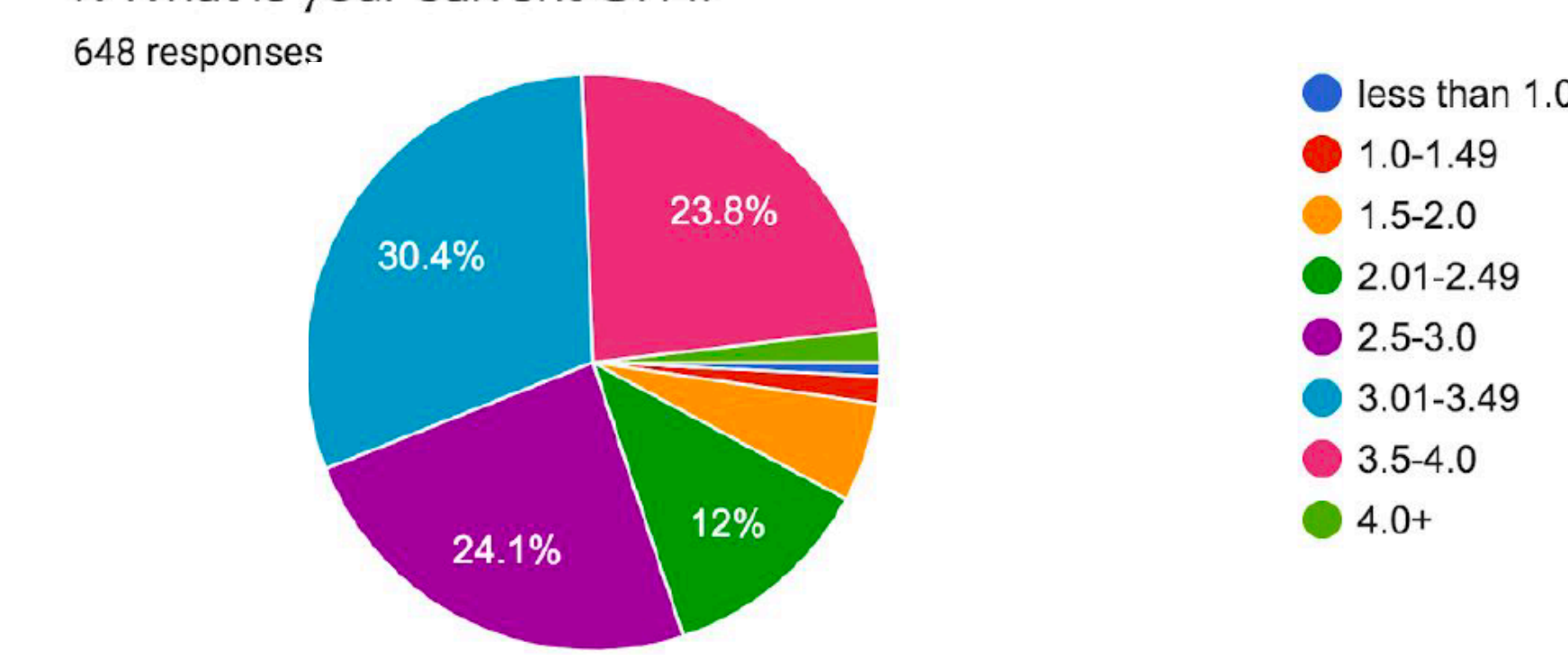


Figure 7: GPA A significant indicator of academic success is a student's grade point average (GPA). In our sample, 23.8% of respondents reported having a GPA between 3.5-4.0, which is considered excellent academic standing on the 4 point scale; 30.4% had between a 3.01-4.49 GPA, which is also considered very good; 24.1% reported having between 2.5-3.0, 12% reported a GPA of 2.01-2.49; the remaining 10% reported having a GPA less than 2.0. To be in "academic good standing" means having a 2.0 GPA or higher. About 90% of our respondents are in academic good standing, however, the remaining 10% are subject to academic probation.

Correlation Analysis

Variable	(1) Probation	(2) Withdraw	(3) Withdraw
Probation			0.864*** (0.000)
Current GPA	-0.467*** (0.000)	-0.183*** (0.006)	-0.076 (0.296)
Stress School	0.261*** (0.002)	0.018 (0.848)	-0.068 (0.492)
High School GPA	-0.221*** (0.000)	0.064 (0.356)	0.110 (0.128)
Family Support	-0.027 (0.678)	-0.041 (0.584)	-0.052 (0.498)
College year	0.205*** (0.000)	0.144** (0.010)	0.112 (0.056)
Age	0.085 (0.114)	0.261*** (0.000)	0.252*** (0.000)
Financial Responsibility	0.092* (0.059)	0.118** (0.034)	0.110* (0.057)
N	649	649	649
R ² _{adj}	0.259	0.214	0.2653

Table 2
Note : *P<0.10, **P<0.05, ***P<0.01

Fig. 8. Factors that contribute to academic probation or withdrawal are: Current GPA and High School GPA, College Year, Age, Mental Health, Family Support, Financial Factors, and most importantly being on Academic Probation.

Conclusions

The UCLA team collected a representative sample of the overall population of Cal State LA and ELAC students. We have concluded that Current college GPA, High School GPA, being Stressed in school, having/lack of family Support, duration in college, age, and having financial responsibilities are significant determinants of academic success within the ICS communities. According to our predictive analysis for the ICS community, being on probation is the single most important risk factor for academic success as compared to prior known knowledge that highlights high school as the most important factor. For this reason, the UCLA team suggests that institutions implement positive and helpful measures to help students get back on track, instead of placing students on academic probation, which may create pressure and negative mental impacts on students. Furthermore, financial hardship may directly influence a student's cognitive ability. 49 Because financial stress can be considered as a significant stressor, inducing a "scarcity mindset" (Destin & Svoboda, 2018). Students under financial burden tend to squeeze their time to work, thus they can not fully engage in college coursework. Resource scarcity induces a 'scarcity mindset', characterized by increased focus on immediate goals at the expense of peripheral tasks and long-term planning. This may contribute to perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Therefore, we suggest that in depth research be conducted to address issues of financial hardships that students face while in college

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