

**The Correlation of Working College Students  
And Their Grade Point Average**

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*Students that work while in school have higher grade point averages than students who do not work. The number of students that work while in college has increased over the years. In this study 28 participants were asked to full out a ten question survey that pertaining to the number of hours they worked and their academic performance. Then the results were compared to determine the correlation between the student grade point average and the number of hours they worked. The results found that there was a positive correlation between the two. It seemed that the more hours the students worked the higher their grade point averages.*

Students may decide to work while attending college full-time for number different of reasons. Our research shows that the most recorded reason for students deciding to work while attending a university is for extra money. Students are also increasingly likely to work while in college. Since 1984 the number of students, between the ages of 16 to 24 that work full time has increased from 49 to 57 percent. Many of the students that work while in school are more likely to work full- time than part-time: it seems that over time these numbers has nearly doubled, rising from 5.6 percent in 1985 to 10.4 percent in 2000. The number of full-time students who worked full-time went from 366,000 in 1985 to 828,000 in 2000 (Orszag, 2001). Working while in school can be a problem for students who cannot exert enough energy for more than one task. This

problem is then shown in student's grade point averages and their class attendance. Overall, it would seem that students who work either a part-time or full-time job outside of school are more likely to have a lower GPA than a student who does not work outside of school, because of the lack of available time to study. Many reasons have been discovered for the dropping of student's grade point average, while working outside of school such as energy, time, number of hours, and the type of job.

The position held by the student either part-time or a full-time positions may affect the students performance in class. This is due the amount of time exerted by the student when at work and at school. Our research indicates that the more time spent at work (full-time position) the less time available for time studying, doing research papers, and homework. Contrastingly, the less time spent at work (part-time position) the more time available for the student to study and prepare for class.

The type of job held by the student may affect the student's performance in school. If they are working either a blue collar (ex. janitor, groundskeeper, and cook) or white collar (ex. lab technician, doctor, and dentist) job may have a crucial affect on the student's performance in school. Blue-collar jobs are manual labor jobs, which in most cases; do not correlate with student's majors. White-collar jobs are jobs that rely more on mental labor and are most likely to be pursued by students after college. The two types of employment for students who work while in school my have different affects on the students academic performance. Blue-collar on one hand may provide quick money with not a lot of skill, but it does not usually apply to the student's area of study in school, assuming that most students intended to have careers in the white collar job field. The lack of the relationship between the student's area of study and their job could lower the

possibility of performing well in school because they are not able to apply the things that they are learning to their job. White-collar jobs on the other hand are assumed to have a positive relationship between the student's area of study and their jobs (Quasnitschka, 1998).

The amount of hours a student works per week may affect their grade point average. We feel that students that work part-time and go to school full-time have a higher chance of being successful in both areas rather than students who work full-time. "...students who work part-time (and particularly those who work on the campus) are more connected to the institution, manage their time more efficiently, and are more focused on their academic work than students who don't work at all" (King, 2002: 20). Many of these part-time positions are with the constitution to pay off loans taken out to finance their full-time attendance. In other studies, students that worked part-time, at most ten hours a week had a slightly higher GPA than their cohorts.

Whether or not the job correlates with the student's major can be another important factor in one's academic success. Goldstein and High (1992) observed that employment outside the classroom had a damaging effect on the grade point average of art and science majors, but none on the business majors.

Evidence supports the idea of college students working full-time results in lower GPAs even dropping out (Orszag, 2001). Negative effects typically arise because hours spent at work take time away from studying, which may lead to lower grades and less attractive post-college opportunities. Student employment can also be a positive experience, for example, some students may gain experience in their job which will help them in the classroom or in the labor market after college.

Thus, we predicted that college students that worked either part-time or full-time and attend school full-time will have a higher grade point average, than students who do not work at all and attended school full-time.

## Method

### *Participants*

Participating were 28 male and female undergraduate students that attend Lindenwood University. These students are between the ages of 18 to 30. These participants signed up for the study through the human subject pool and by word of mouth. In fulfilling their participation of the study all students were given ball point pens for their participation, all of the students from the human research pool also received extra credit from their instructor for their participation.

### *Materials*

The materials used in this research were 3 sheets of paper for each participant, which was used for the informed consent, survey (see Appendix A), and feedback letter. Pencils and Pens were used by both the participants and experimenters to record and analyze data. Tables and desks were utilized by both parties to have something to write on and record data on. We also utilized computers to organize, retrieve, and type up data used in the study.

### *Procedure*

The subjects were 28 university students attending Lindenwood University. Some were recruited by the human subject pool advertised on the fourth floor of Young Hall and others were recruited by word of mouth. Ball point pens were given to all the participants for their participation, and bonus points were given to students from the

human subject pool from selected classes for their participation. Each participant was tested individually. Upon arrival each participant was presented with 3 sheets of paper face down on the desk. Then they were given instructions to take a seat in front of the paper and to wait for further instructions. The experimenter then explained the purpose of the study and then asked each participant to fill out a 10 question survey (see Appendix A) pertaining to his/her work schedule and academic grades. Each participant was also asked to provide his/her full name to the study in order for the true grade point average to be retrieved. Then the participants were instructed to read the informed consent form carefully and sign and provide their initials if they agreed to the terms. Once the informed consent form was collected, then the participants were instructed to fill out the 10 question survey (see Appendix A) to their best ability. After the survey was collected the participants were told to flip over the last sheet, which was the feedback letter providing each participant with the researcher contact information and then debriefed about the project regarding the project.

If the students gave permission, the experimenter then used the information given by the participant to retrieve the participant's current grade point average anonymously. Once all the data was collected the surveys were given to Professor Nohara-LeClair and she pulled the students true grade point average from the academic roster at Lindenwood University. She then returned the surveys after removing the students name and replacing them with the student's true grade point average. The results were then compared and analyzed. Once all of the scores are retrieved, we then split the scores up into two groups (students that work and students that do not work) and compare

these scores using a with-in subjects design to determine if working a job either full-time or part-time and going to school full-time does actually affect a students grade.

### Results

We had 30 participants, but we were only able to use 28 participants' results, due to two of the students being transfer students, their grade point averages were not available. Out of the 28 participants 16 of them actually worked and 12 of them did not work (mean GPA= 2.5/mean number of hours worked 14.2). The number of students that actually worked ranged from 0-16.

The GPA value of these working students ranged from 1.7-4.0 ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = .74$ ). The amount of hours worked by the students ranged from 0-50 hours per week ( $M = 14.2$ ,  $SD = .89$ ). The average amount of hours worked of the students who actually worked was 25 hours per week.

There was positive correlations between the amount of hours the students worked and the students actual GPA. Full- time students were described as working at 40 hours or more a week. In the results, there were only three students who worked full time, out of those three, there was an average grade point average of 3.4, which was higher than those students who worked part time, which was at an average of 2.7. Working was positively correlated with the GPA,  $r = .36$  ( $n = 28$ ). Our directional hypothesis was found to be true; students that work have higher grade point averages, than students who do not work. In our study, when asked, many of the participants felt that working while in school had a negative impact on student's grades. They suggested that there was a negative relationship between bad grades and having a job outside of school. However, the results

showed that there was a positive relationship; the average number of students who worked had a higher grade point average than the students who did not work at all.

### Discussion

The results showed that the average number of students who worked had a higher grade point average than the students who did not work at all. In the results there were only 3 students who worked full time, out of those three they had a average grade point average of 3.4, which was higher than those students who worked part-time. The amount of students that worked 40 or more hours a week was only three, if there was more students that worked full time that results may have been different. When given the survey, before the actual grade point average was looked up on the register, many students gave a very accurate estimate of their grade point averages which was surprising, because we expected the students to inflate their grade point averages.

Regarding the absence of the positive correlation between working and going to school full-time, it may be that many students that work outside of school have less time to dedicate to their studies while students that did not work have more time to study. In contrast, to the results most of the research supported our hypothesis that students would have a higher GPA than students that did not work at all. Due to the motivating factor of having a full schedule and a higher degree of seriousness, the student is more inclined to having academic success as so in their job. If this explanation was true this study would have shown a positive correlation between working and going to school full-time.

Another factor is that working while in school may help students keep a better schedule in life and they are able to stay focused on all tasks at hand. The lack of participants may have been crucial to the results. If this research was to be done over I

would liked to have used at least 300 hundred students. One hundred that work full, one hundred that works part time and one hundred that did not work. In future studies we would have asked the participants if they worked either white collar or white-collar jobs. We felt that working helps students keep better schedules, and stay in line with their duties.

#### References

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- King, J. (2002). *Crucial Choices: How Students' Financial Decisions Affect Their Academic Success* (Electronic version). Washington: American Council on Education.
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## **Appendix A**

### **Survey**

How does work affect your schooling?

Student Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Do you have a job?

2. If so, why do you work?

3. If not, why not?

4. How hours a week do you work?

5. What is your current GPA?

6. Do you feel that working, affects your grades?

7. Are you a full time student?

8. Do you participant in other extra curriculum activities?

9. How long have you been working?

10. What year are you?