

Too Little Time and Too Much to Do: The Experience of Commuter Students

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INTRODUCTION

Commuter students are students who do not live in campus housing. Commuters represent 85% of American College students.

Commuter students struggle with unique challenges relative to residential students:

- Transportation Issues
 - Multiple Roles in life
 - Campus involvement
 - Belonging
- (see Simpson & Burnett, 2017)



METHOD

Focus Groups:

- 3 one-hour focus groups

Participants

- 18 Elmhurst College students (15 females and 3 males)



Focus Group Questions

1. What is it like to be a commuter student at Elmhurst College?
2. What are the top struggles of being a commuter student?
3. What do you think the college can do to better support commuters?
4. What tips do you have for incoming commuter students?
5. Do you know how to get involved?

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Sample Participant Responses

- “I don’t know about you guys, but I could never stay for all the big events and I remember freshman year or at least the first half, I felt kind of really out of the loop...and I felt bad because I wasn’t really making a lot of friends...” (comment #281, 2)
- “When I was I commuter I felt like I missed out on a lot of things because my parents wanted me home at a normal time...but I also wanted to be involved so I had to choose...” (comment #2, group 1)

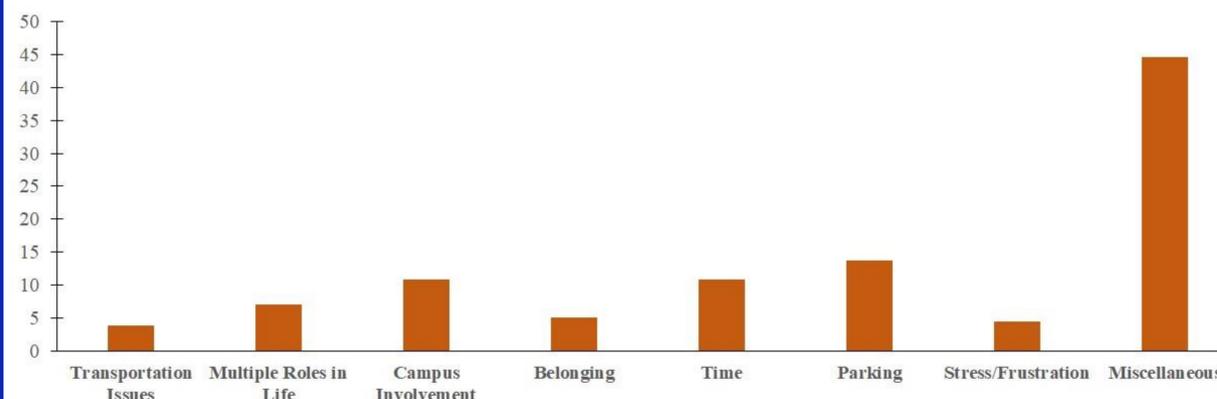
KEY QUESTIONS

What themes emerge in commuter focus groups on the Elmhurst College campus?

Do they reflect the themes in the literature?

GRAPH

Percent of Focus Group Comments Within Each Coding Category



Note. Coding categories were created using elements of thematic analysis and grounded theory (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Data presented here just correspond to combined responses to Questions 1 & 2.

DISCUSSION

- In addition to the themes in the literature, we found consistencies across focus groups for other themes including resources on campus, safety, and more.
- Future research can expand to look at how commuter experience differs based on gender, race, or even how being 1st generation can affect the experience.