

2013 NCA HLC Annual Conference
Hyatt Regency Chicago, Illinois. April 5-9, 2013

Why Do Students Fail?

Student's Perspective

Abour H. Cherif, Ph.D
Farah Movahedzadeh, Ph.D
Gerald E. Adams, Ph.D
Jeremy Dunning, Ph.D.

DeVry University
Harold Washington College
Columbia College Chicago
Indiana University



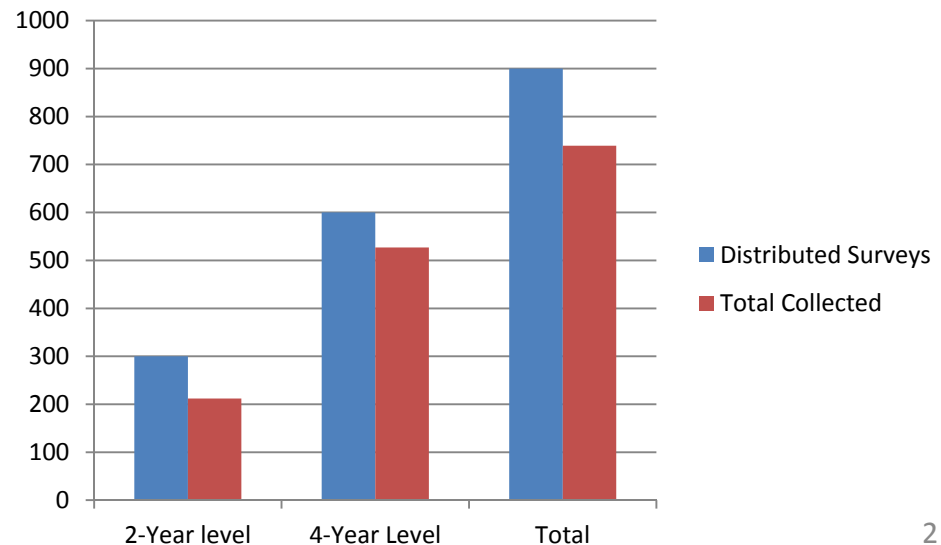
Results of the Study

I. Participants' Personal Portfolio:

739 completed surveys were collected, with an 82.1% rate of return.

College Level	Distributed Surveys	Total Collected	Rate of Return
2-Year	300	212	70.7%
4-Year	600	527	87.8%
Total	900	739	82.1%

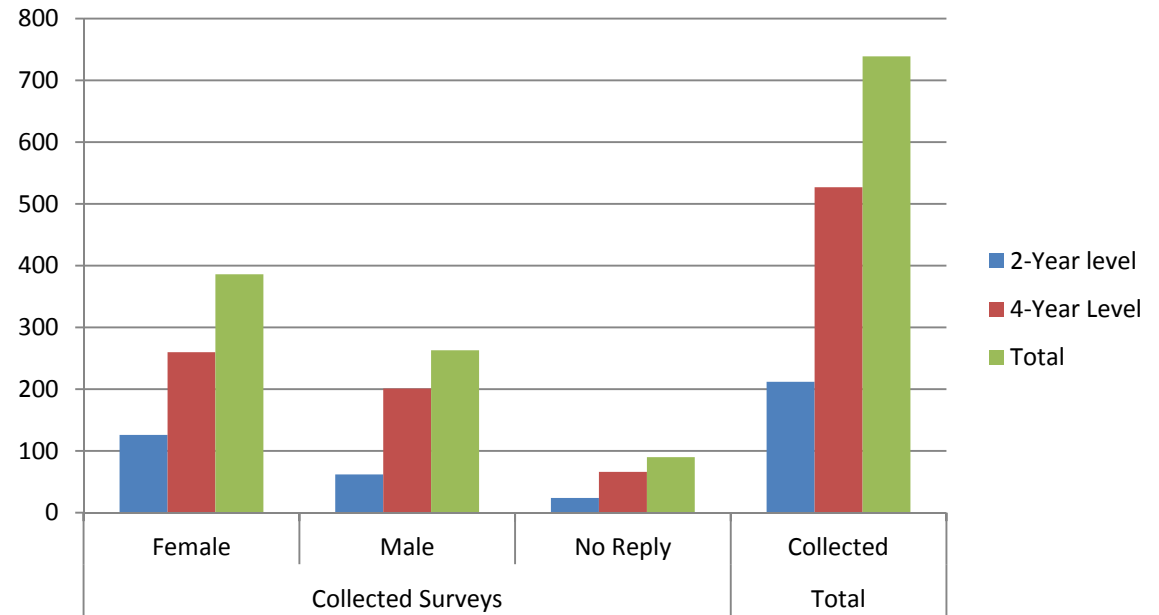
More 4-year college students (527 or 71.3%) than 2-year college students (212 or 28.7%) participated in this study.



I. Participants' Personal Portfolio:

More female (52.2%) than male (35.6%) students participated in this study.

It is the same at each college level.

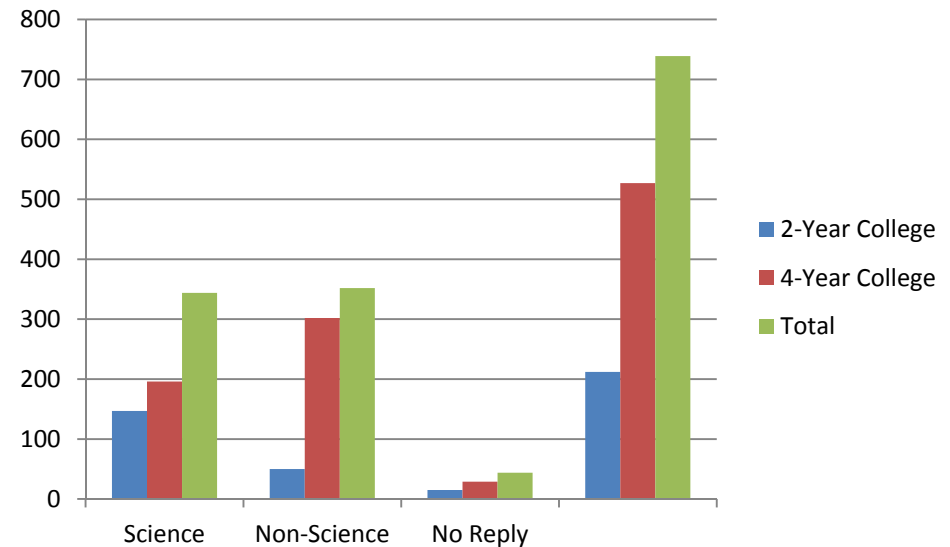


College Level	Student Participants (N=739)						Total	
	Female		Male		No Reply		#	%
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
2-Year	126	17.1%	62	8.4%	24	3.2%	212	28.7%
4-Year	260	35.1%	201	27.2%	66	9%	527	71.3%
Total	386	52.2%	263	35.6%	90	12.2%	739	100%

I. Participants' Personal Portfolio:

Nearly an equal number of participants majoring in science (46.4%) and in non-science (47.6%)

- More non-science majors (302) than science majors (196) from 4-year colleges participated in the study.
- More science majors (147) than non-science majors (50) from 2-year colleges participated in the study.



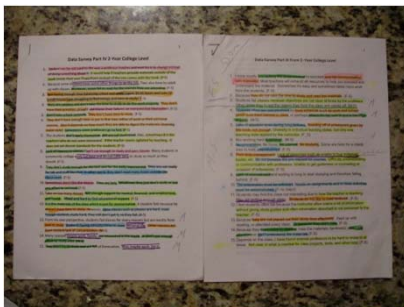
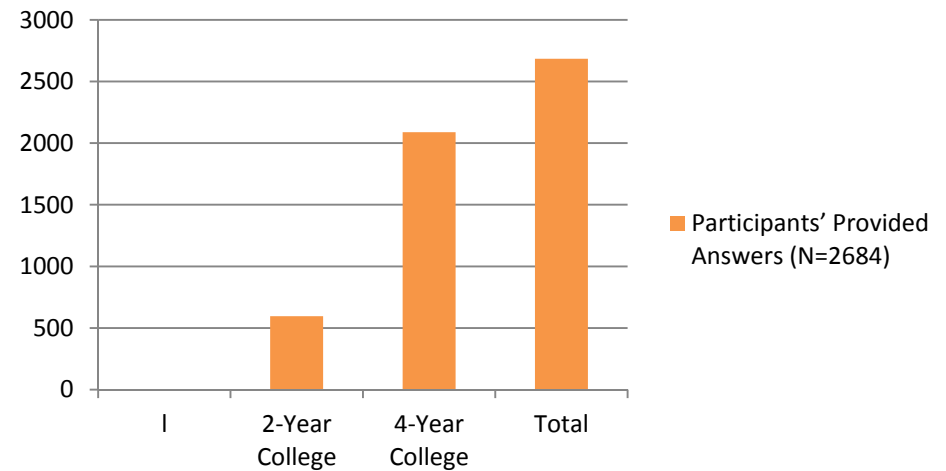
College Level	Student Participants (N=739)						Total	
	Science		Non-Science		No Reply		#	%
	#	%	#	%	#	%		
2-Year	147	19.9%	50	6.8%	15	2%	212	28.7%
4-Year	196	26.5%	302	40.9%	29	3.9%	527	71.3%
Total	344	46.4%	352	47.6%	44	6%	739	100%

Participants' Provided Total Answers

A total of **2088** responses were identified from answers provided by the **4-year college** participants.

A total of **596** responses were identified from the **2-year college** participants.

Participants' Provided Answers (N=2684)



College Level	Participants (N=739)		Participants' Provided Answers (N=2684)					
	#	%	Provided		Used In Study		Not Used	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
2-Year	212	28.7%	596	22.2%	596	22.2%	0	0%
4-Year	527	71.3%	2088	77.8%	2088	77.8%	0	0%
Total	739	100%	2684	100%	2684	100%	0	0%

II. Participants' Response to Inquiry Question

General Results:

Reasons for student failure were grouped into **seven main categories** and **fifteen sub-categories**. All responses fell under one of the specific fifteen identified sub-categories.

- Data Survey Part IV 2-Year College Level
- Student can be not used to the way a professor teaches and wait for it to change instead of doing something about it. It would help if teachers provide materials outside of the book inside their own PowerPoints instead of the one comes with the book. (P-1)
 - Because some professors have their own way of teaching. They also have to catch up with classes. Whenever come fall semester that's the reason they are attending. (P-1)
 - Not studying enough, time balancing school and work. (P-1)
 - Most are nervous and don't take the time to study on their own proactively. They don't have their parents' insight and blame their failure on everyone but themselves. (P-1)
 - Don't take school seriously. They don't have time to study. (P-1)
 - They don't have enough time to put in that class either of work or their personal reasons. Also it depends on how much they are able to digest the materials (learning habit varies). Sometimes some professors go to fast. (P-1)
 - The students don't apply themselves and aren't motivated. Also, sometimes it is the teachers who do not seem interested. If the teacher seems apathetic by teaching, it does not set decent standards for the students. (P-1)
 - Lack of interest in the class or not enough to study and pass classes. Many students in community college work full time for 40 hours a week to study so much as they should. (P-1)
 - They don't study enough for the test and for the daily requirement. They are not ready for job and stuff like that in other words they don't read many hours outside the classroom. (P-1)
 - Sometimes don't like the classes. They are busy. Sometimes they just don't study or put any effort to succeed. (P-1)
 - Take on too many classes, not enough support for mental, financial, and employment, and health. About and hard to find educational support. (P-1)
 - It is in the materials of the class which is just for memorization. A student fails because he doesn't have time to study however, some classes such as physics are hard, even though students study hard, they still don't get it so they fail. (P-1)
 - From my own perspective, students fail classes for many reasons but are mostly from lack of study. Students taking multiple times in class. (P-1)
 - Some students lack of concentration. (P-1)
 - Many reasons. (P-1)
 - They don't try to study and are not interested in the topics, or don't put enough effort to study. (P-1)



	Category	Subcategory	Notices and Observation
I	Motivation	Level of interest	
		Lack of conscientiousness	
		Laziness	
II	Study habits	Study habits	
		Managing time	
III	Instruction	Instructor's instruction	
		Perceptions of the class	
IV	Academic Preparedness	Academic challenges	
		Stress	
		Course rigor	
V	External Factors	Outside influences	
		Cost of education	
VI	Attitudes	Pride	
		Attitudinal concerns	
VII	Relevancy Issues	Disconnect of course work	6

While it can be disputed to which category or subcategory some of the responses belong, distinctions can generally be made for the seven separate categories and the fifteen separate sub-categories.

Participants' Provided Total Answers Based on Identified Categories (N=2684)

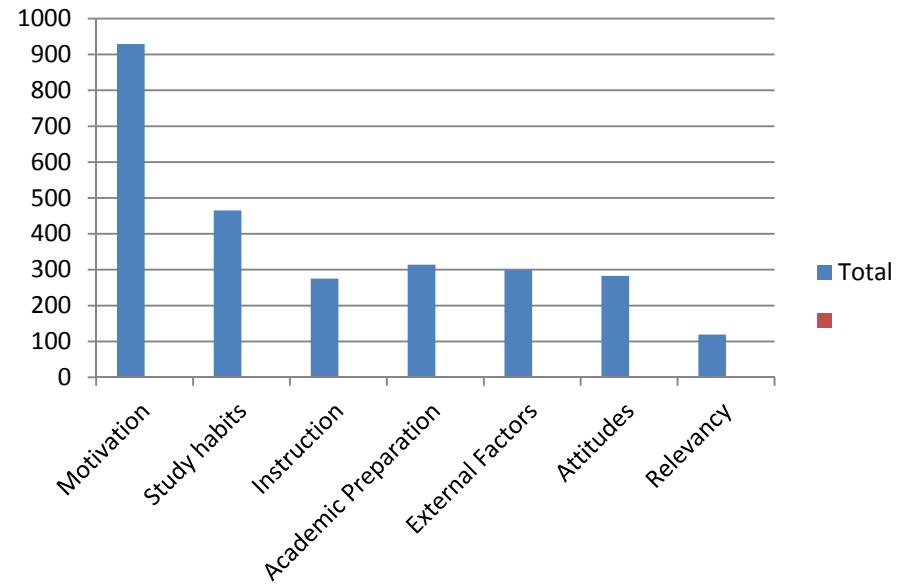
	Category	Total	
		No.	%
I	Motivation & related issues	929	35%
II	Study habits & related issues	465	17%
III	Instruction & related issues	275	10%
IV	Academic Preparedness & related issues	314	12%
V	External Factors & related issues	299	11%
VI	Attitudes & related issues	283	11%
VII	Relevancy & related issues	119	4%
Total		2684	



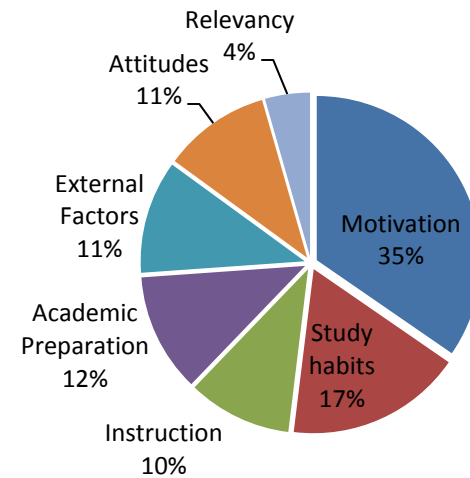
929	465	314	299	283	275	119
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Participants' Provided Total Answers Based on Identified Categories (N=2684)

	Category	Total	
I	Motivation	929	35%
II	Study habits	465	17%
III	Instruction	275	10%
IV	Academic Preparedness	314	12%
V	External Factors	299	11%
VI	Attitudes	283	11%
VII	Relevancy	119	4%



929	465	314	299	283	275	119
1	2	3	4	5	6	7



Participants' Provided Total Answers Based on Identified Categories (Provided Answers= 2684)

	Category	2-Year College		4-year College		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
I	Motivation	167	6.2%	762	28.4%	929	35%
II	Study habits	145	5.4%	320	12%	465	17%
III	Instruction	91	3.4%	184	6.9%	275	10%
IV	Academic Preparedness	55	2%	259	9.6%	314	12%
V	External Factors	58	2.2%	241	9%	299	11%
VI	Attitudes	77	2.9%	206	7.7%	283	11%
VII	Relevancy Issues	3	0.1%	116	4.3%	119	4%
Total		596	%	2088	%		

929	465	314	299	283	275	119
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Answers Based on Identified Categories by Students

College Type (Provided Answers= 2684)

	All Participants (N=2684)	2-Year College Participants (N=596)	4-Year College Participants (N=2088)
1	Motivation (929 times)	Motivation (167 times)	Motivation (762 times)
2	Study Habits (465 times)	Study Habits (145 times)	Study Habits (320 times)
3	Academic Preparedness (314 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (91 times)	Academic Preparedness (259 times)
4	External Factors (299 times)	Student Attitudes (77 times)	External Factors (241 times)
5	Student Attitudes (283 times)	External Factors (58 times)	Student Attitudes (206 times)
6	Instruction /Instructional Materials (275 times)	Academic Preparedness (55 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (184 times)
7	Relevancy Issues (119 times)	Relevancy Issues (3 times)	Relevancy Issues (116 times)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers Based on Identified Categories by Students Gender (Provided Answers= 2684)

	All Participants (N=2684)	Female Participants (N=1351)	Male Participants (N=960)	No Reply Participant (N=373)
1	Motivation (929 times)	Motivation (468 times)	Motivation (325 times)	Motivation (133 times)
2	Study Habits (465 times)	Study Habits (251 times)	Study Habits (170 times)	External Factors (54 times)
3	Academic Preparedness (314 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (165 times)	Academic Preparedness (122 times)	Academic Preparedness (45 times)
4	External Factors (299 times)	Academic Preparedness (147 times)	External Factors (106 times)	Study Habits (44 times)
5	Student Attitudes (283 times)	External Factors (139 times)	Student Attitudes (111 times)	Student Attitudes (37 times)
6	Instruction /Instructional Materials (275 times)	Student Attitudes (135 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (75 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (35 times)
7	Relevancy Issues (119 times)	Relevancy Issues (46 times)	Relevancy Issues (51 times)	Relevancy Issues (22 times)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Answers Based on Identified Categories by Students Academic Majors (Provided Answers=2684)

	All Participants (N=2684)	Science (N=909)	Non-science (N=1371)	No Reply Participant (N= 404)
1	Motivation (929 times)	Motivation (225 times)	Motivation (536 times)	Motivation (168 times)
2	Study Habits (465 times)	Study Habits (176 times)	Study Habits (245 times)	External Factors (54 times)
3	Academic Preparedness (314 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (120 times)	Academic Preparedness (159 times)	Academic Preparedness (45 times)
4	External Factors (299 times)	External Factors (119 times)	External Factors (126 times)	Study Habits (44 times)
5	Student Attitudes (283 times)	Student Attitudes (118 times)	Student Attitudes (129 times)	Student Attitudes (36 times)
6	Instruction /Instructional Materials (275 times)	Academic Preparedness (110 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (120 times)	Instruction /Instructional Materials (35 times)
7	Relevancy Issues (119 times)	Relevancy Issues (41 times)	Relevancy Issues (56 times)	Relevancy Issues (22 times)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Detailed Results:

Total Provided Answers by 2-Year & 4-Year College Students (N=2684)

	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
Motivation	150	318	468	105	223	325	133	929	35%
Study Habits	107	144	251	69	101	170	44	465	17%
Instruction & Instruction Materials	81	84	165	39	36	75	35	275	10%
Academic Preparedness	57	90	147	53	69	122	45	314	12%
External factors	62	77	139	57	49	106	54	299	11%
Student Attitude	79	56	135	39	73	111	37	283	11%
Relevancy Issues	19	27	46	22	29	51	22	119	4%
Total	1351			960			373	2684	
	50.3%			35.8%			13.9%	100%	

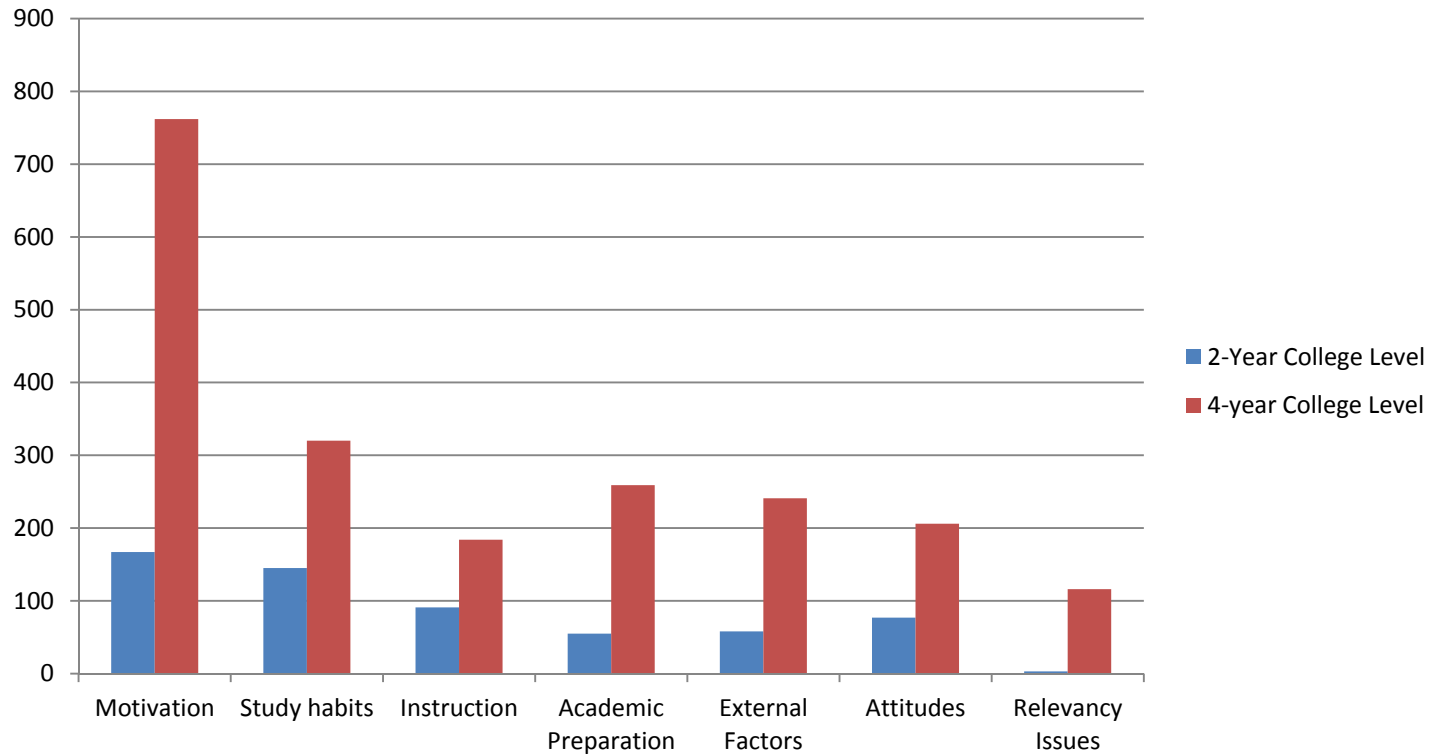
929	465	314	299	283	275	119
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Detailed Results:

Total Provided Answers by 2-Year & 4-Year College Students (N=2684)

Data Survey Part IV 2-Year College Level

1. Student can be not used to the way a professor teaches and wait for it to change instead of doing something about it. It would help if teachers provide materials outside of the book (books that were Powerpoint instead of the one comes with the book) (P-5)
2. Because some of **classroom** **work** **isn't** **relevant** **to** **the** **job**, They also have to catch up with classes. Moreover, some fall to read for the content they are attending. (P-5)
3. **Not** **having** **enough** **time** **to** **study** **and** **prepare** **for** **the** **class** **and** **the** **work** **that** **is** **given** **to** **do** **at** **home** **is** **one** **of** **the** **reasons** **why** **students** **struggle** **to** **find** **enough** **time** **to** **study** (P-5)
4. **Most** **are** **overwhelmed** **and** **don't** **take** **time** **to** **study** **or** **do** **the** **work** **properly**. They don't have their priorities set right and blame their failures on everyone but themselves. (P-5)
5. **Don't** **take** **school** **seriously**. They don't take time to study. (P-5)
6. They don't have enough time to put in that class either of work or their personal reason. Also it depends on how much they are able to digest the materials (learning mode style). Sometimes some professors go too fast. (P-5)
7. The students don't apply themselves and are not motivated. Also, sometimes it is the teachers who do not seem interested. If the teacher seems ignited by teaching, it does not set decent standards for the students. (P-4)
8. **Lack** **of** **interest** **in** **classes** **isn't** **enough** **to** **study** **and** **prepare** **for** **the** **class** **and** **the** **work** **that** **is** **given** **to** **do** **at** **home** **is** **one** **of** **the** **reasons** **why** **students** **struggle** **to** **find** **enough** **time** **to** **study** (P-5)
9. They don't study enough for the test and for the daily requirements. They are not ready for lab and stuff like that so other words they don't read many hours outside the classroom. (P-5)
10. Sometimes don't like the classes. They are busy, sometimes they just don't study or put any effort to succeed. (P-5)
11. **Take** **on** **too** **many** **classes**. **Not** **enough** **support** **for** **mental**, **financial**, **and** **employment**, **and** **health**. **Afford** **and** **hard** **to** **find** **educational** **support**. (P-5)
12. It is in the materials of the class which is not for memorization. A student fails because he doesn't have time to study. However, some classes such as physics are hard, even though the students study hard, they still don't get it so they fail. (P-5)
13. From my own perspective, students fail classes for many reasons but are mostly from lack of study. **Classes** **being** **uninteresting** **is** **one** **of** **the** **reasons** **why** **students** **struggle** **to** **find** **enough** **time** **to** **study** (P-5). Other reasons are **lack** **of** **interest** **in** **classes** **isn't** **enough** **to** **study** **and** **prepare** **for** **the** **class** **and** **the** **work** **that** **is** **given** **to** **do** **at** **home** **is** **one** **of** **the** **reasons** **why** **students** **struggle** **to** **find** **enough** **time** **to** **study** (P-5)
14. Many reason **lack** **of** **interest** **in** **classes** **isn't** **enough** **to** **study** **and** **prepare** **for** **the** **class** **and** **the** **work** **that** **is** **given** **to** **do** **at** **home** **is** **one** **of** **the** **reasons** **why** **students** **struggle** **to** **find** **enough** **time** **to** **study** (P-5)
15. They don't try to study and are full of themselves. **Not** **enough** **support** **for** **mental**, **financial**, **and** **employment**, **and** **health**. **Afford** **and** **hard** **to** **find** **educational** **support**. (P-5)



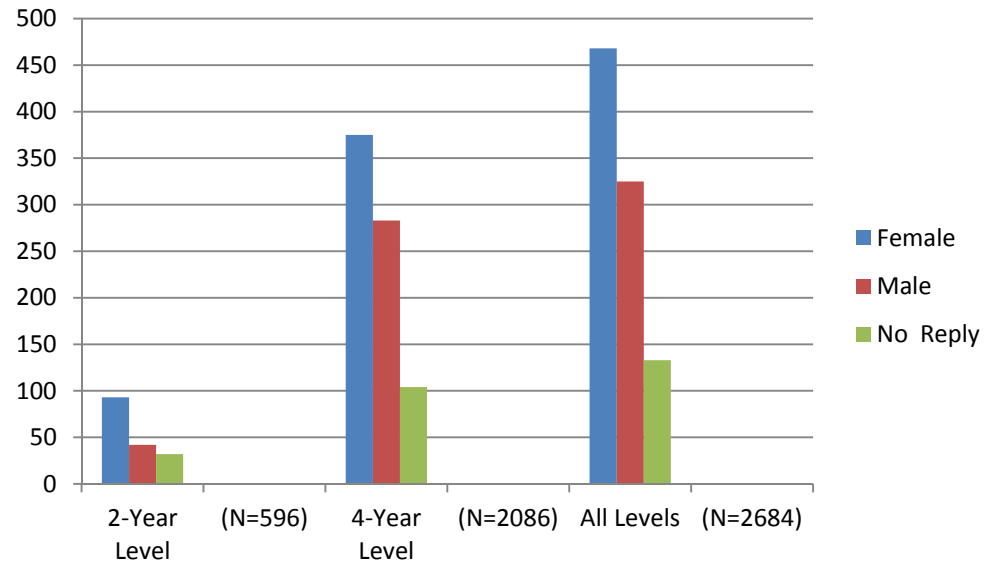
929	465	314	299	283	275	119
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Detailed Results

Motivation (929 times – 35% responses)

Motivation was reported:

- **468 times (50.4%)** by female students
- **325 times (35%)** by male student
- **541 times (58%)** by non-science majors, and **255 times (27%)** by science major



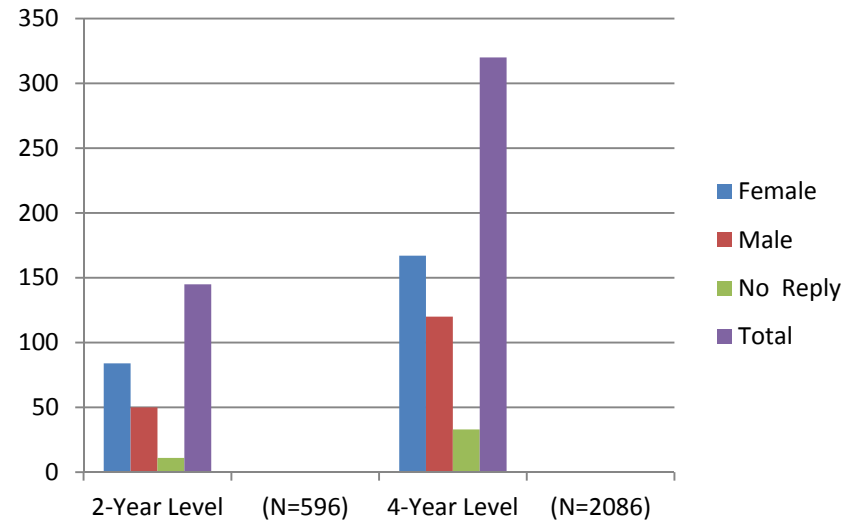
College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	80	13	93	33	9	42	32	167	28%
4-year (N=2086)	70	305	375	72	214	283	104	762	37%
All (N=2684)	150	318	468	105	223	325	133	929	35%

Detailed Results:

Study Habits (465 times – 17% responses)

While Study Habits was reported **251 times (54%)** by female students, male students mentioned Study Habits only **170 times (36.6%)**.

In addition, Study Habits was mentioned **245 times (53%)** by non-science majors and **176 times (38%)** by science majors.



College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	72	12	84	35	15	50	11	145	24.2%
4-Year (N=2086)	35	132	167	34	86	120	33	320	15.3%
All (N=2684)	107	144	251	69	101	170	44	465	17%

Detailed Results:

Academic Preparedness (314 times – 12% responses)

- Academic Preparedness is the category mentioned the **third most frequently (314 times or 12%)** as a contributing factor for why students fail.
- However, at the college level, it was mentioned the sixth root-cause by 2-year college students and the third root-cause by the 4-year college students participated in the study.

College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	26	2	28	17	1	19	8	55	9.2%
4-Year (N=2086)	31	88	119	36	68	103	37	259	12.4%
All (N=2684)	57	90	147	53	69	122	45	314	12%



Detailed Results:

Academic Preparedness (314 times – 12% responses)

- By gender, academic preparedness as a root-cause for students failing courses was mentioned as the **fifth root cause by female** students and as the **third root-cause by male** students.
- However, it was mentioned as the **sixth root-cause** by students majoring in science and as the **third root-cause** by non-science majors who participated in the study.

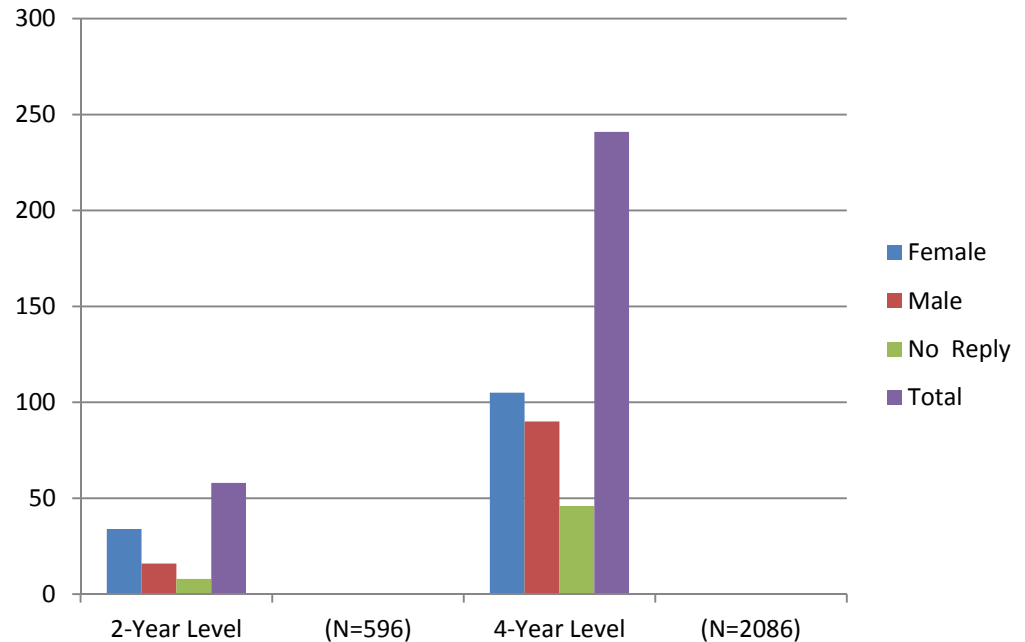
College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	26	2	28	17	1	19	8	55	9.2%
4-Year (N=2086)	31	88	119	36	68	103	37	259	12.4%
All (N=2684)	57	90	147	53	69	122	45	314	12%

Detailed Results:

External Factors (299 times – 11% responses)

External Factors is the category mentioned the fourth most frequently (**229 times or 11%**) as the root-cause of student’s failure.

At both college levels, External Factors was mentioned more by female students (**139 times or 46%**) than male students (**106 times or 35%**).

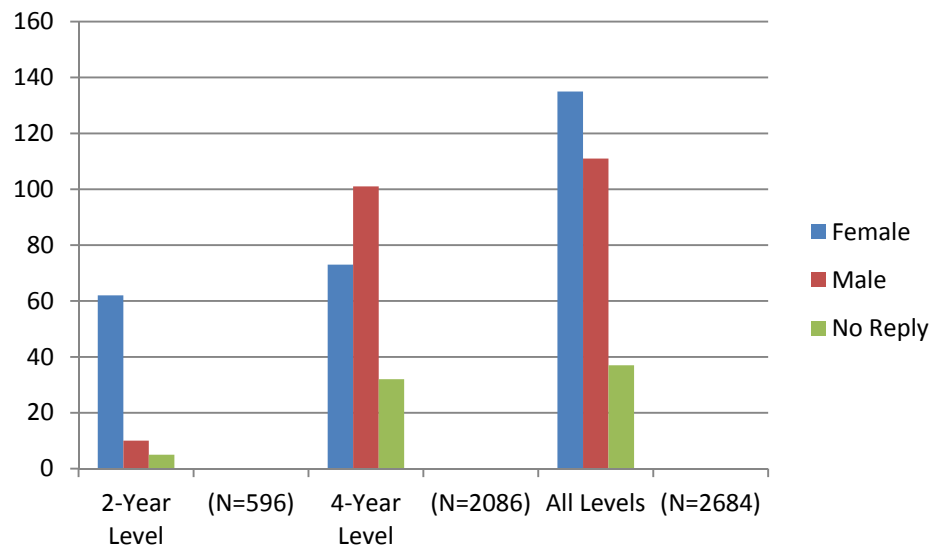


College Level	Female	Male	No Reply	Total
2-Year (N=596)	34	16	8	58
4-Year (N=2086)	105	90	46	241
All (N=2684)	139	106	54	299

Detailed Results:

Attitudes (283 times – 11% responses)

Student Attitudes is the category mentioned fifth most frequently (283 times) as a contributing factor for why students fail.

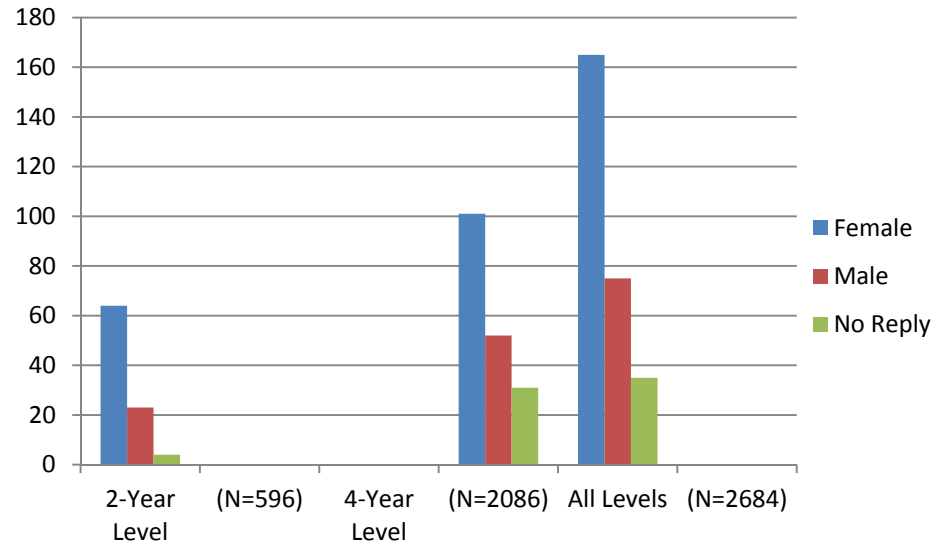


College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	53	9	62	9	1	10	5	77	12.9%
4-Year (N=2086)	26	47	73	30	72	101	32	206	9.9%
All (N=2684)	79	56	135	39	73	111	37	283	10.5%

Detailed Results:

Instruction (275 times – 10% responses)

Instruction and Instructional materials is the category mentioned the sixth most frequently (275 times or 10%) as a contributing factor for the root-cause of students' failure.



College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	56	8	64	20	3	23	4	91	15.3%
4-Year (N=2086)	25	76	101	19	33	52	31	184	8.8%
All (N=2684)	81	84	165	39	36	75	35	275	10.2%

Detailed Results: Instruction (275 times – 10% responses)

However, Instruction and Instructional materials was mentioned:

- The sixth most frequently by male students (**75 times** or **27%**) and students who didn't identify their gender (**35 times** or **13%**).
- The third most frequently by female students (**165 times** or **60%**).
- **120 times (44%)** each by both science and non-science majors.
- But it is the third cause-factor by science majors and the sixth by non-science majors.

College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	56	8	64	20	3	23	4	91	15.3%
4-Year (N=2086)	25	76	101	19	33	52	31	184	8.8%
All (N=2684)	81	84	165	39	36	75	35	275	10.2%

Detailed Results:

Relevancy Issues (119 times – 4% responses)

- Relevancy Issues is the category mentioned the seventh most by students overall. It was mentioned **46** times (**38.7%**) by female students, **51** times (**42.9%**) by male students, and **22** times (**18.5%**) by those students who didn't identify their gender.
- Furthermore, it was mentioned **56** (**47%**) times by non-science majors and **41** (**34.5%**) times by science majors.

College Level	Female			Male			No Reply	Total	
	Science	Non-Sci	Total	Science	Non-Sci	Total			%
2-Year (N=596)	1	-	1	2	0	2	0	3	0.5%
4-Year (N=2086)	18	27	45	20	29	49	22	116	5.6%
All (N=2684)	19	27	46	22	29	51	22	119	4.4%

