Student Engagement at Swinburne University of Technology, Lilydale

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Acknowledgements:

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Introduction

Due to an increasing focus on university performance and the observed impact of student engagement upon student outcomes (DEST 2004), research into student engagement at SUTL has been considered a priority for some time.

The present project was developed collaboratively by Sociology staff and the Centre for Regional Development as a pilot project to be undertaken over three years. It also provided students an opportunity to reflect upon issues related to engagement and their own degree of engagement, while also applying their learning in a real research project.

The students' research and their reflections are assisting the university to build a picture of major factors influencing student participation in university life at Lilydale.

Background

In the context of a deregulated educational industry, students are increasingly considered to be consumers within a marketplace that tailors educational services to fit the needs of its client base. Students increasingly expect the University to fit with their lives rather than vice-versa (McInnis, 2001:3). Yet a number of concerning trends have emerged with regard to the nature of student engagement with the educational/learning process.

Research suggests that students are less involved with their Universities, and are performing poorly compared with previous generations. Students are spending less time on campus and more time in paid employment. Overall, an increasing number of activities and priorities are competing with the demands of University. Students have indicated that they find it difficult to find the motivation to study, are less likely to study on weekends, find the study workload difficult to manage, miss classes and increasingly rely on friends or on-line facilities for course materials (McInnis, 2001:4).

McInnes, James, and Hartley (2000:xii) suggested that research findings indicated a trend of decreasing attachment and commitment to a range of aspects of university life and academic work on the part of those who work long hours in paid employment. McInnis and Hartley (2002:15) found that paid work is the only or main source of income for 75% of respondents and a minor source for a further 23% of respondents; 26% rely on Youth Allowance or Austudy as their only or main source of income; and roughly 24% of students rely heavily on income from parents or other family members.

What is not clear in the research is whether the pattern of student engagement with University life, whereby increasing numbers of students are combining work and study, is a response to changing social norms and the associated structural changes (e.g. privatisation and casualisation of work), or whether reduced funding of University places has created financial barriers to study resulting in students supplementing any financial support received with paid work.

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee report *Paving Their Way: A Survey of Australian Undergraduate Student Finances, 2000*, found that there are a several significant barriers to accessing higher education in Australia. For many students, a major problem is the degree of financial hardship they experience in order to continue studying. The Vice-Chancellors' report found that 38.7% of students surveyed received some sort of government income

support that allows them to continue studying. However there are concerns that the level of support is too low and that access to the scheme is too restrictive. The report also found that the proportion of students in paid employment has increased in the last two decades. In 2000, more than 70% of students surveyed were employed during the semester, with full-time students working on average 14.5 hours per week. It was stated in this report that the increase in paid employment takes its toll on studies. The report indicated that 7% of students who are employed stated that they 'frequently' miss class because of work, and a further 21.3% miss class 'sometimes' because of their paid employment. Also 15% of students in paid employment said that the amount of hours spent in paid work adversely affects their study 'a great deal', and a further 43.5% are adversely affected 'somewhat'. The conclusion was that the more hours of work, the greater the adverse effect on study (Long & Hayden, 2001:14).

For some students transport emerged as a reason affecting the decision to combine work and study. McInnis and Hartley (2002:36) stated time spent traveling to and from work and university can be an important factor in balancing study and work commitments. For some students, car travel was the only way to travel, which meant pressure to earn more in order to maintain a car.

Current trends in combining work and study place additional demands on students' ability to manage and organise their lives. McInnis and Hartley (2002:37&44) found that a substantial proportion of students (41%) agree that paid work gets in the way of their academic studies. Some students only feel the pressure when assignments are due; however the pattern of continuous assessment often means that the pressure is constant. Motivation and time management become urgent issues under such pressure and McInnis and Hartley found that while 46% of students considered they had good time management skills, 58% of students found it difficult to get motivated to study.

Interestingly 71% of students ranked University as a top priority, but at the same time 63% of students felt overwhelmed by all they were required to do, and 47% believed they did not have enough leisure time. Yet students spend less time on campus and are less involved in University activities. McInnis and Hartley (2002:43&51) found that 57% of students do not spend much time on campus other than to go to classes and 70% of students said that their social life was mainly off campus and not university related. Consequently university culture and a sense of community spirit is not dynamically developing within universities as less common free time has an impact on the cultural life of the campus.

McInnis and Hartley (2002:48) report that academic staff concerns related to students with substantial hours of paid work include:

- coping by doing the minimum amount of study to get by;
- not achieving the standard of work of which they are capable; and
- not able to engage in deep or reflective learning.
  and students indicated that the effect of paid work on study was:
- not enough time to do in-depth work;
- doing limited or minimum required reading;
- scrambling to finish assignments on time; and
- missing classes and focusing mainly on assessments tasks and assignments.

Student Research Project

This research project was undertaken as part of a pilot study conducted by third year Research Approaches (LSS 302) students, under the supervision of Anne Seitz and Ron Aspin. Project management was undertaken by Anne Langworthy and staff from the Centre for Regional Development who also assisted with the ethics application and administrative processes throughout second semester 2003, 2004, and 2005. Interview transcripts were provided to staff at the Centre for Regional Development for consolidation and analysis.

The aim of this research was to explore how Swinburne University at Lilydale might understand current student perspectives towards their studies in relation to other priorities in their lives. Two aspects explored in relation to this aim were:

- Student perceptions of the commitment involved with their studies and their ability to meet this commitment and
- Student expectations about the place their studies should hold in their lives.

A total 287 survey interviews were conducted over the three phases of this research project. The first group of 66 interviews took place in second semester 2003; the second group of 70 interviews took place in second semester 2004; and the third and final group of 151 interviews took place in second semester 2005. The target group was students on campus at Lilydale and convenience sampling was used to recruit participants.

Teams of two students undertook all semi-structured interviews, which were with one student interviewing and the other note taking. The duration of the interviews was approximately 30 minutes.

A variety of qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted. Therefore, where possible results were reported combining both qualitative and quantitative data, so as to convey a greater depth of information. For the purposes of this report, the majority of results for the three cohorts have been combined, as there was no appreciable difference in the pattern of responses. In some instances however, results were reported separately for different cohorts, as some information was not collected across all three years.

Research Results

> **Participant Demographics**

Of the 287 students interviewed, more than half (67%) were female. The majority of the students (84%) were 25 years of age or younger. Many students (45.6%) were aged between 21 and 25 years of age and 38.3% were aged between 17 and 20 years of age. The majority of male students (91.5%) were aged 25 years or younger, whereas only 80% of female students were in this age range. Approximately 11% of female students were aged 35 years or above.

Most students (82%) were single, 15% were in a committed relationship and 3% had been in a previous committed relationship. Most students (87%) did not have dependent children. Of the 37 students who did have children, the number of children ranged from one child to five children. The majority (70. 6%) had either one or two children; however 8% had five children in their care.

> ### Language other than English

The majority of students (74%) do not speak a language other than English. Other languages spoken were Japanese (n=8), Greek (n=8), Italian (n=6) and German (n=6).

> ### Living arrangements during semester

Most students interviewed (93%) had not relocated in order to study at SUTL. The majority students (70%) were living with their parents at the time of the interview, 6% lived with other relatives or with friends, 10% were either solely or partially responsible for the costs of rented accommodation, 11% owned their own homes and 3% were living in the student village.

> ### Family attendance at University

Over half of the students interviewed (61%) did not have a parent who had attended University. For the students participating in Year 1 and Year 2 of the study, 53% reported that they did not have an *older* sibling who had attended University, and approximately 35% were the first in their immediate family to attend university. For the students participating in Year 3 of the study, 59% reported that they did not have any siblings who had attended University, and approximately 29.5% were the first in their immediate family to attend university.

> ### Computer Access

Almost all students interviewed (98%) indicated that they had computers at home and 92% also had Internet access at home.

> ### Priorities in life

Student reports of the four main priorities in life were reasonably consistent throughout the sample. The frequency of responses, weighted and averaged according to rank across the first four priorities in life, revealed the students' main priorities in life as follows:

1. Family (30.7%)
2. University/ Education (21.3%)
3. Socializing/Friends (15.6%)
4. Work/Career (14.3%)
5. Self (7.4%)

Other less common responses related to the importance of recreation, finances, life experiences, religion, home life and balance in life.

> ### Degree Demographics

Of the 287 students interviewed, 37.6% were enrolled in degrees related to Business and 3.5% related to Technology; 44.7% were enrolled in Social Science Degrees; 3.2 % were enrolled in Applied Science Degrees; 6.4% were enrolled in double degrees combining Business, Social Science or Applied Science; and 4.6% were enrolled in dual award courses combining Business, Tourism, Hospitality or Social Science/Welfare.

In this sample there was a significant relationship between gender and course [$x^2(2)= 8.22$, $p= .016$]. Male students (45%) were significantly more likely to be enrolled in a business course than females (34%), who were more likely to be enrolled in a social science than males (51% and 33% respectively).

Many students (56%) were third year students. A further 24% were second year students; 11.5% were first year students; and 8% were in their fourth year of study. The majority of students (88.7%) were studying full time.

The majority of students (93%) reported spending between five and 19 contact hours at university each week. Approximately half of the students (45%) allocated less than 10 hours each week to study, and a further 38% allocated between 10 and 20 hours each week. While students from various disciplines reported similar contact hours [x2(4)= 3.80, p= .43], there was a significant relationship between course enrollment and hours spent studying each week [x2(6)= 15.09, p= .02]. Business students were more likely (54%) to estimate spending less than 10 hours per week studying compared to social science (41%) and other students (35%).

The availability of a position in their course was a major influence on why students chose to study at SUTL, with 39% of students citing this response. A similar proportion of students (43%) reported location and convenience as the main reasons for studying at SUTL. A further 12% chose SUTL because it offered the course in which they were interested.

Why did you choose to study at SUTL?
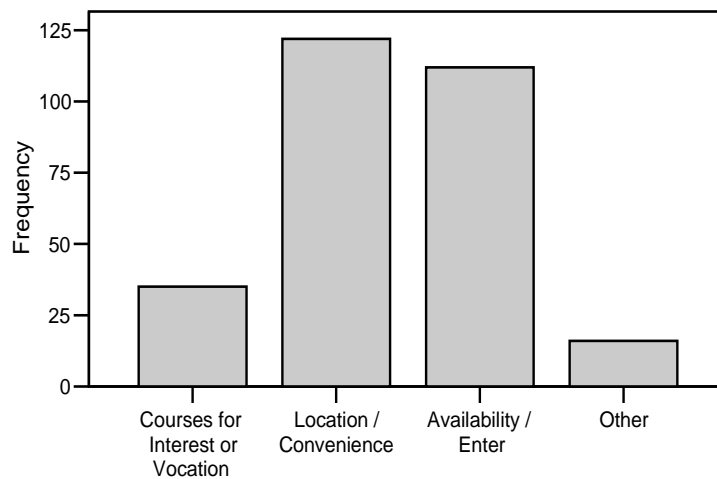
The majority of students (86%) indicated that they chose the course they were currently studying because it matched their personal or vocational interests. Course availability (13%) was somewhat less of an influence on course selection compared to choice of institution. A further 2% of students reported selecting their course based on the convenience of SUTL's location.

➢ **Engagement with University**

With regard to the most enjoyable aspects of being a university student, the flexible and social lifestyle was the most frequently reported aspect (67%). Becoming more educated and the learning process itself were reported by 23% of students as the most enjoyable aspect of being a student. A further 3.4% were looking forward to the outcome of their university education, such as "*getting a good job".*

What do you enjoy the most about university?
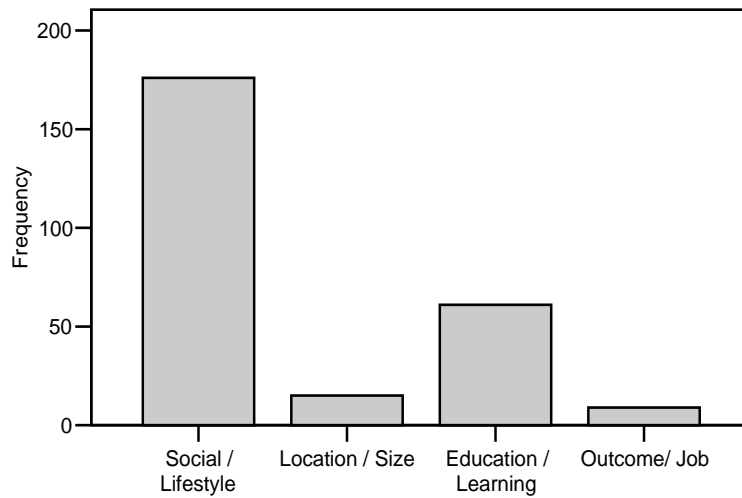
However, the majority (86%) of students were at least sometimes overwhelmed by their university studies. The feeling of being overwhelmed by study was significantly related to students' study load [$x^2(1)=5.42$, $p=.02$]. Full-time students were significantly more likely (88%) to report being overwhelmed by study than were part-time students (73%). Generally, students felt overwhelmed nearing the exam period and during the semester when many assignment tasks are due within a short period of time.

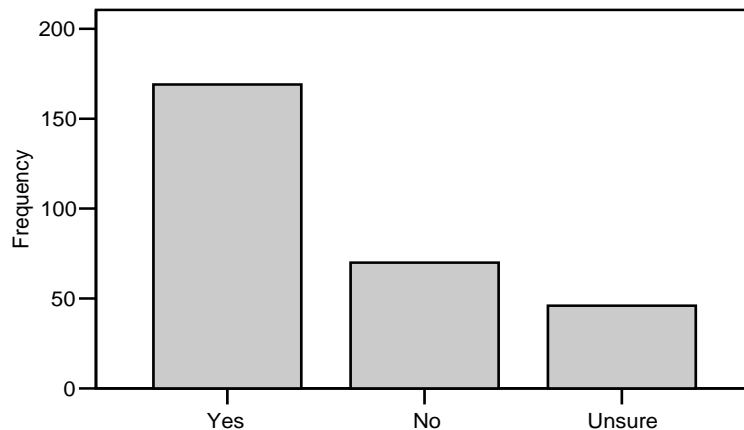## Overwhelmed by university study?
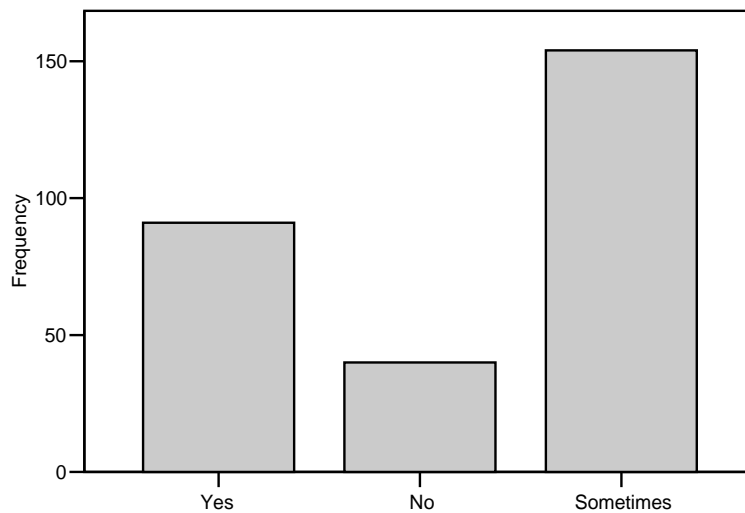

➤ **Satisfaction with SUTL**

In order to determine students' general satisfaction with their experiences at SUTL, they were asked if, given the opportunity to start over, they would choose to study at SUTL again.

Would you choose to study at SUTL again?

Approximately half (59%) of students indicated that they would. Where specified (*n*=106), the main reasons given for choosing SUTL again were that the campus was close to home (38%) and that it was a nice campus with good facilities (30%). Other responses related to having the right course (6%), good friendships (7%) or a combination of reasons (19%).

Why would you choose SUTL again?
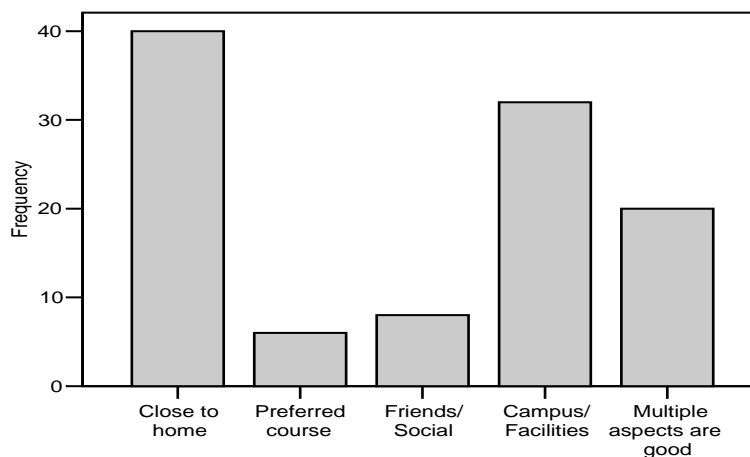
However, approximately 25% of students responded that, if given the opportunity, they would not choose SUTL again. A further 16% were unsure. Where specified (*n*=73), the main reasons for not choosing SUTL again were that it was too far from home (34%), the isolation of the campus (26%), that it doesn't have the preferred courses (15%), and some students (25%) reported a combination of deterrents.

In this sample of students, there was a significant relationship between students' initial reason for studying at SUTL and whether they would choose the same campus again if given the opportunity to start over [x^2(6)= 39.47, *p*<.001].

Most students who were currently studying at SUTL because it either had their preferred course or was conveniently located indicated they *would* choose SUTL again (66% and 76% respectively). In contrast, of the students who were studying at SUTL primarily because the

lower ENTER made their course available, 40% indicated that they *would not* choose SUTL again and a further 21% were unsure.

There was also a significant relationship between the course in which students were enrolled and whether they would choose to study at SUTL if given the opportunity to start over [x^2 (4)= 12.24, p=.02]. Social science students (50%) were significantly less likely to indicate that they would choose SUTL again than were business (68%) or other (64%) students.

However, there was a trend for social science students (46%) to be studying at SUTL primarily because the lower ENTER made their course available compared business students (37%) and those in other courses (28%), [x^2 (2)= 5.49, p=.06]. Therefore, it is possible that social science students were less likely to indicate that they would choose SUTL again if given the opportunity to start over because, for many, SUTL was not their preferred institution/campus initially.

> **Social Atmosphere**

The aspect of SUTL that students found the most appealing related to the size and atmosphere (50%), such as the *friendly* and *easy going* nature of the university, the *environment and people*, the *small size* of the campus, and the *natural surroundings*.

Student responses indicated that their relationships with academic staff and other students at SUTL tend to be mostly positive. Overall, 67% described academics as "approachable", 56% described them as "helpful". Fewer students 8.7% described them as "remote", and 3.5% described them as "unsympathetic". A further 22% of the time, academic staff members were described with other terms, which also tended to be positive.

Relationship with Academics
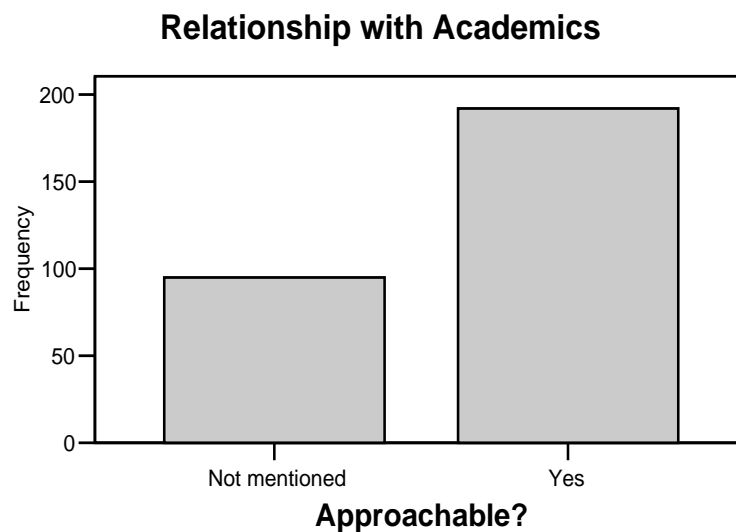
Almost all students (90%) described their relationships with other students as friendly and supportive. Only 5% described their relationships in terms of their competitiveness, and 2% described other students as indifferent.

> **Learning and Support Services**

Another aspect of SUTL that strongly appealed to students was related to the learning resources (27.5%), including the ease of access to different disciplines; the ease of access

to teachers; flexible hours and online facilities; independence; and the ability to control your own learning (for example, via virtual lectures) and IBL.

In contrast, some students' (16%) primary dissatisfaction concerned the learning resources at SUTL, such as not enough computers; inadequate library facilities and the limited space for quiet study within the library; lack of flexibility in timetabling; high workload; and assessments due all at once.

Overall however, the majority of students had not taken advantage of the range of student services available at SUTL. In ranked order the use of student services was as follows:

1. Library (91%)
2. Careers & Employment (30%)
3. Counseling (11%)
4. Sport & Recreation clubs (7.7%)
5. Study support (7.7%)
6. Health Services (7.3%)
7. Student Finance (5.2%)
8. Child Care (2.4%)
9. Disability Services (2.2%)
10. Housing Services (2.1%)

Most students indicated that they have used the library services extensively. Despite this, some students remain dissatisfied with the limited library services and, in particular, highlighted the need for longer opening hours.

With regard to the use of support services, 45% of students interviewed indicated that they would contact someone on campus if they had a problem. Approximately 29% indicated that they would not contact on campus support, and a further 25.5 % were unsure.

Of the 126 students who indicated who they would choose to contact on campus support, the most common responses were:

1. A Counsellor (20%)
2. A faculty staff member (15%)
3. Student administration/Student union (9%)
4. Vicki Nash (6.4%)
5. Career Advisor (6.4%)

Several students indicated that the person they would contact would depend on the problem (19%), or that they were unsure of who they would contact (12.7%).
Of those students who indicated they would not contact someone on campus if they had a problem, the main reasons given were:

1. Other support available outside of SUTL (41%)
2. Not interested because able to deal with own problems (18.3%)
3. Would feel uncomfortable and unsure of confidentiality (9.6%)
4. Unsure of the services available (9.6%)

➢ **Location**

For some students (22%), the convenience of the location was what they liked most about SUTL. On the other hand however, student dissatisfaction primarily concerned the inconvenience of access to SUTL (42%), such as the poor public transport, lack of parking and long travel times because of the location. Thus it appears that location and transport are major factors influencing students' satisfaction with SUTL.

Business students (23%) were significant more likely to be dissatisfied with the location of the campus compared to social science students (13%) and those enrolled in other courses (5%), [x^2 (12)= 22.47, p=.03].

> ➢ **Travel Arrangements**

When the aspects of SUTL that students were dissatisfied with were categorised according to whether they related to *lack of parking/public transport*, *inconvenience of location* or *other aspects*, a relationship between travel arrangements and aspects of dissatisfaction was revealed.

The majority of students interviewed (86%) travelled by car to SUTL. A further 7% travelled by train, 2% travelled by bus, 3% used a combination of public and private transport, and 2% walked. Of the 243 students (86%) interviewed who indicated that they used a car to get to SUTL, 49% owned their car, 19% were paying it off, 17% were given a car and 3% shared the family car. A further 13% did not specify their car ownership status.

The travel time to SUTL for many students (53%) was less than 30 minutes. A further 41% of students reported travel times between 30 and 59 minutes, and 6% of students reported travel times of 60 minutes or more.

Not surprisingly, there was a significant relationship between mode of transport and travel time to SUTL [x^2(4)= 28.94, p<.001]. Of the 243 students who travelled by car to SUTL, only 45% reported travel times of 30 minutes or more. Students who travelled by public transport were more likely (86%) to report travel time to be 30 minutes or more, with 23% travelling for more than an hour to get to SUTL. All of the students who walked to SUTL reported travel time to be 15 minutes or less. Travelling to SUTL by public transport appears to be the most time consuming.

In this sample, mode of transport did not have a significant relationship with aspects of dissatisfaction [x^2 (4)= 2.26, p=.69]. However, there was a significant relationship between *travel time* to SUTL and aspects of dissatisfaction [x^2 (4)= 13.47, p<.01]. Students who had the longest travel times (60 minutes or more) were more likely (33%) to primarily dislike the location of SUTL than students who travelled between 30 and 59 minutes (22%) and those who travelled less than 30 minutes (8.5%).

There was also a trend for students (66%) who had shorter travel times (less than 30 minutes) to indicate that they would choose to study at SUTL again if given the opportunity to start again compared to those with travel times of 30 to 59 minutes (51%) and those travelling more than 60 minutes (53%), [x^2(4)=9.32, p=.05].

> ➢ **Increasing engagement**

With regard to other aspects of SUTL that students were most dissatisfied with, a further 21% of students indicated the lack of social and recreational facilities (such as a bar or gym) and the limited opportunity to be involved with social or sporting activities within the University. Some students also mentioned the lack of academic and study clubs. It was noted by students that such activities and facilities were generally available at other university campuses.

Other student complaints included *the heat and coldness of the atrium*, with students highlighting the need for a more socially friendly space than the Atrium in which students can relax. Students also complained about the *poor quality of café food.* Interestingly, when asked what would be the thing they would change at SUTL, only 6% of students responded that they would improve the quality and variety of the food available on campus.

When students were asked what would help them become more involved at SUTL, many (40%) suggestions related to the desire for more social facilities, activities and clubs. This suggestion was reported consistently when comparing business students (41%), social science students (39%) and students enrolled in other courses (40%), [x^2(8)= 6.83, p= .56].

A further 12% of students indicated a desire for more sport and recreation facilities, activities and clubs. Approximately 28% of students were either unwilling to become more involved or were unsure as to how this could be achieved.

Other students suggested that *better communication* and *advertising of such events and activities*, and *encouragement from academic staff* would help them and other students become more involved in university life at SUTL.

For some students however, lack of engagement in the university lifestyle had little to do with the campus itself, but rather their personal situation. Approximately 12% of students indicated that other commitments and a lack of effort on their own part was restricting them from becoming more involved at SUTL.

Social science students (16%) were slightly more likely to cite this response compared to business students (8%) or those undertaking other courses (9%). However, the relationship was not significant [x^2(8)= 6.83, p= .56].

> **Barriers to Engagement**

In order to determine some of the additional commitments that were competing with the demands of university, students were asked to list the three main barriers to studying. The frequency of responses, weighted and averaged according to rank across the first the first three barriers to study, revealed the students' main barriers as follows:

1. Work (29%)
2. Socialising (21.5%)
3. Motivation (13.6%)
4. Family (5%)
5. Tiredness (4.6%)
6. Time (4.4%)

Therefore, paid employment was the primary commitment competing with the demands of university. In addition to those listed above, other less common responses related to recreation, partners, television and recreational Internet use. Though cited by a few students, financial and transport issues ranked very low as barriers to study.

> **Main source of income**

Of the 287 students, most students (74%) stated that their main source of income was from paid employment, with 70% working part-time or casual and 5% working full-time. Only 11.3% of students relied solely on government income support, with a further 7% subsidizing government support with paid employment. Family was the main source of income for 7.4% of students.

Of the 287 responding students, 20% reported working 10 hours or less each week, 36% reported working between 11 and 20 hours, 25% reported working between 21 and 30 hours, 8% worked 30+ hours. Few students (11%) reported not being in paid employment.

There was a significant relationship between time in paid employment and course type [x^2(8)= 17.05, p= .03]. Business students (14%) were more likely to report not being in paid employment compared to social science (10%) or other students (8%). However, they were also more likely (13%) to report working 30 or more hours each week compared to social science (4%) or other students (4%).

There was a significant relationship between students' main source of income and the number of subjects in which they were enrolled [F(6,216)= 4.29, p<.001]. On average, students who were employed full-time were enrolled in significantly fewer subjects (M=2.60, SD=1.08) than those employed part-time (M=3.56, SD=.78) or who rely on other sources of income, such as their family (M=3.25, SD=.87) or government student allowances (M=3.60, SD=.63), [t(210)=3.23, p=.001].

A similar pattern of results was revealed for students who relied on government parenting allowances. On average, these students were also enrolled in significantly fewer subjects (M=2.40, SD=.55) than students relying on part-time employment, government student allowances or their family [t(210)= 2.90, p=.004]. Such findings suggest that caring for dependant children is a commitment that competes with the demands of university to a similar extent as full time employment.

> **Work, study and the relationship between work and study.**

Generally, more students seemed to be overwhelmed by university study than by work.

While 32% of students reported that they felt overwhelmed by study, only 16% stated that they were overwhelmed by work. A further 54% of students indicated that they were sometimes overwhelmed by study and 44% indicated that they were sometimes overwhelmed by work.

Therefore, many students (60%) felt overwhelmed by work at least some of the time.

In this sample there was a significant relationship between the time spent in paid employment and feeling overwhelmed by work [x^2(8)= 54.03, p<.001]. On average, students working 10 hours or less per week were less likely (40%) to report feeling overwhelmed by work than students working 11-20 hours per week (67%), 21 to 30 hours per week (81%) and those working more than 31 hours per week (64%).

More than half (59%) of students reported that work had an adverse effect on their studies. For these students, the most common descriptions of the adverse effect of work were:

1. Less time for study leading to poorer quality performance (43%)
2. Being too busy leading to limited leisure time (23%)
3. Conflicting commitments (21%)
4. Late nights and tiredness (10%)
5. Stress (3.9%)

For some however, work did not seem to be an issue, with approximately 37% indicating that work had either little or no effect on their study, and a further 2% reporting that work provided a good balance to study.

Observations

The following initial observations have been noted at this stage of this study.

- The students interviewed were either business or social science students; the majority of students (86%) were studying full time; and most (58.5%) were 3rd year students.

- The majority of students interviewed (69.9%) were female; most of the students interviewed (84.5%) were 25 years of age or younger; most of the students interviewed (84.6%) were single and had no children; and most of the students interviewed (73.3%) were living with their parents during the semester period

- The majority of students interviewed (61%) did not have parents who attended University and 52.8% of students did not have an older sibling who had attended University.

- Most students (86%) travel to the University by car.

- Most students (98.5%) had computers at home.

- Students list priorities in life as: family, study, socializing/friends, work/career and self

- Students list barriers to study as: work, socialising/friends, motivation, family, and tiredness.

➤ **Comparison to other Australian Studies**

	SUTL	OTHER STUDY (QUOTED IN BACKGROUND SECTION)
Paid work main source of income	74%	75%
Paid work minor source of Income	7%	23%
Receive Austudy	11.3%	26%
Parental/family financial support	7.4%	24%
Time spent in paid work	11-20 hours	14.5 hours
Paid work gets in the way of study	59%	41%
Top priority for students	Family (University second)	University
Overwhelmed by study	86%	63%

McInnis and Hartley (2002) found that students spent less time on campus other than to go to classes and concluded that spending less common free time on campus impacts upon the cultural life of the campus and student engagement. This also appears to be true at SUTL (several students reported going home between classes if those classes were scheduled at either end of the day). Forty-five percent of SUTL students surveyed indicated that they spent less than 10 hours a week on study which would impact on time to engage deep or reflective learning or in depth work which were key concerns of academics and students in the McInnis and Hartley study looking at the impact of substantial hours of paid work. However, at least a third of SUTL students in the sample did not find paid work to have negative impact. The perception of the negative impact of paid work on study appeared to directly relate to the number of hours worked.

It is interesting to note that the SUTL students appreciated the aspects of studying at Lilydale such as flexible hours, online facilities; independence; and the ability to control their own learning (for example, via virtual lectures) that can mean less time on campus or interacting directly with other students.

When asked what would help them engage with life on the campus, students tended to suggest social and recreational facilities and activities. However almost a third of the sample were either unwilling to become more involved or were unsure as to how this could be achieved.

Although socializing ranked higher as a barrier to study with SUTL students, they ranked motivation, identified as a key barrier by McInnis and Hartley, third. SUTL students reported similar feelings of pressure at exam times or when assignments are due.

> ### ➢ Student Satisfaction

Students consistently report good relationships with staff and other students. Given a choice, most students would choose to study at the campus again. This was particularly true of students who had chosen to study at SUTL because it either had their preferred course or was conveniently located. In contrast, of the students who were studying at SUTL primarily because the lower ENTER made their course available, 40% indicated that they *would not* choose SUTL again and a further 21% were unsure.

Students were more likely to indicate they would not choose SUTL again if their travel time to the campus was 30 minutes or more. and students who had .

Limitations

Whilst a sizeable number of students have been interviewed, the sample is a convenience sample, therefore students were either "captured" or asked to participate as a friend of the LSS302 student.

In order to involve the students at each stage of the project development, the initial framework for the questions was developed collaboratively within the class. Undertaking the surveys has demonstrated some shortcomings in the questions (for example the categorisation of *hours of work* and *age ranges* were not directly compatible across all years). Whilst additional questions have clarified responses in the second year, this information cannot be used in any analysis of trend data.

At this stage of the research the observations are largely descriptive and there is an opportunity to further interrogate the data.

However, the information gained already from this project and the learning reflections from some participating students indicate the value of the project.

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