

# STUDENT PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN: HOW CAN WE HELP THEM?

An analysis of the student parent experience at Concordia University

2010-11



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CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY  
STUDENT PARENTS  
CENTRE



This report was commissioned by the Concordia University Dean of Students Office and the Concordia University Student Parents Centre. It is the result of a collaborative effort involving the Concordia University Dean of Students Office, the Concordia University Student Parents Centre, and the Concordia University Institutional Planning Office.

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## FOREWORD

The Concordia University Student Parents Centre (CUSP) officially opened in April, 2009, under the direction and guidance of Elizabeth Morey, Dean of Students, to assist students with dependent children negotiate the often distressing task of balancing family responsibilities with the demands of university. Within two short years, CUSP has become an established service on campus with a robust membership, full-time staff, and a group of dedicated volunteers. Through the many events, programs and services offered through CUSP, student parents have been given the opportunity to come together, voice their concerns, and identify their challenges and needs while studying at Concordia. The instant success and growth of CUSP, however, reflects the urgent necessity for a service which provides student parents with recognition and assistance. It quickly became clear that many of CUSP's student parent members were facing serious and distressing academic, financial, and emotional challenges for which much support was needed.

Frequently, student parents new to CUSP contact the Centre expressing desperation and exasperation about their circumstances. Childcare, or the lack thereof, is the primary inquiry that CUSP receives. Many student parents do not have access to flexible, affordable childcare that would allow them to attend classes, given that subsidized daycare waiting lists can be up to four years, and that private childcare can cost upwards of \$30 a day. Moreover, little childcare is available in the evening, when many student parents either attend class or require time to study or perform school work. The summer semester and exam period are especially difficult, when some exams fall on weekends when daycares are not open, or children's schools are closed but parents continue to take classes. The situation is so dire that student parents frequently report missing class, missing exams, handing in assignments late, and even dropping out because there are simply no timely, safe, flexible, affordable childcare options.

Student parents also frequently contact CUSP expressing deep emotional distress from the isolation, loneliness and stress that they endure. Many do not have the same opportunities as non-parent students to make friends on campus, have time to access student support services, or participate in the social activities that are largely organized by "traditional" students, especially when most lack the funds to pay for temporary childcare. Even more limiting is the sheer exhaustion that student parents often report; between juggling school, family and paid work, most do not have either the time or energy to participate in leisure activities. The emotional burden of sacrificing one's own self interests and enjoyment, but eking out only a satisfactory school performance, is an overwhelming situation to sustain for many.

Another major challenge for student parents is their limited financial resources, despite their higher cost of living than non-parent students. Unable to work full-time, or lacking employability, many student parents rely on financial aid and awards to support their families. Not only is such assistance frequently barely enough to make ends meet, a great deal of student parents are not even eligible because they cannot take enough classes to qualify, or because they are international students. Almost on a daily basis, CUSP staff provides referrals to food banks, emergency food funds, government assistance programs, financial aid and awards, and subsidized housing. What is most distressing for student parents is not the low standard of living which they must endure, but that of their children. Given that most student parents attend class on a part-time basis, sometimes taking 6 credits per semester to fulfill a 120 credit degree, some

cannot face the prospect of having their families live in poverty for such a long period of time. Instead some may opt for a moderately better standard of living by dropping out of university and entering the job market without a degree, rather than enduring years of financial strain in order to have long-term opportunity for upward mobility.

The vast majority of CUSP members are women, and many of those single mothers. This population faces acute challenges when it comes to pursuing an education. Because women tend to be held primarily responsible for performing domestic work and childcare responsibilities, including those in relationships, many women have even less time to focus on school work. Employed student mothers face a “triple shift” of school, domestic work, and paid work. Single mothers often report especially high rates of isolation and depression, stemming from their inability to afford childcare from their single income (if any at all), and no domestic partner to take care of the kids should they want to go out with friends. Being the only person to do all aspects of domestic work, they have even less time to devote to school. It is most often single student mothers that come to CUSP seeking referrals to food banks and financial assistance.

A majority of CUSP members are international students who face unique and severe challenges of their own. Being new to Canada is a major limitation to one’s social network, and many international student parents report a sense of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, they tend to have less friends and family in the city to turn to for childcare or other forms of assistance and support. International students, whose tuition is many times greater than that of Quebec residents, are also subject to restrictions on their employment opportunities as part of their study visas, and are furthermore not eligible for many forms of financial aid, awards and assistance. However, it is common for international students and their families to have made great sacrifices for them to come to Concordia, and dropping out is simply not an option should their emotional, social or economic conditions be too difficult to endure. These students often go great lengths to finish their degrees and endure hardships that go well beyond the caricature of the “struggling student.”

While CUSP staff have gotten to know student parents and have heard their stories and problems first-hand, little research on student parenthood was available to contextualize and validate the experiences of our members. Until recently, students with children have been all but ignored in the organization and development of universities. In the ‘70s and ‘80s, great progress was made for women on campuses when students, staff, and faculty alike organized together and demanded that universities invest in campus daycares. Since then, however, few gains have been made to combat systemic barriers to women pursuing an education. Only in the last ten years have universities in Canada begun to develop support services for student parents, a vast majority of whom are women, and many of those, single mothers. Many of these support services have been developed through campus women’s centres, while others have been developed at the grassroots level through networks of student parents themselves. Increasingly, university administrations are investing in the support of student parents, recognizing that they face serious obstacles to pursuing an education, and that the population warrants support and services tailored to their unique needs. The Concordia University Student Parents Centre is one such example, and in many ways, is a leader amongst Canadian universities’ investment and support of student parents. Concordia has a long reputation of supporting “non-traditional”

students and developing accessible education by offering more evening classes, part-time class schedules, and investing in support services for groups who face systemic barriers to education, including Aboriginal students, international students, students with disabilities, and now student parents. Its investment in research on student parenthood as well as CUSP demonstrates Concordia University's commitment to understanding the unique challenges of student parents so that their educational obstacles may be overcome through university support. Nevertheless, this is a burgeoning area of awareness for many universities, and requires ongoing research to learn more about the particular situation of students with dependent children as well as appropriate services to overcome these challenges.

In May, 2010, CUSP embarked upon this research project to learn more about the demographics and experiences of student parents. We are very grateful for Malene Bodington, who worked tirelessly in the face of numerous challenges to produce this incredibly important research on Concordia's student parent population. We are very happy with the results, which, in large part, verify what we already knew about student parenthood from our members, yet had no concrete evidence with which to substantiate our knowledge. The findings very clearly speak for themselves: student parents face unique, serious and vast barriers and challenges when pursuing their education, and these are particularly acute for certain student populations such as women and international students. We believe that this research is a major step forward in the increasing understanding and inclusion of student parents at Concordia University. We hope that all universities, including Concordia, will benefit from the recommendations that emerged from the research by investing and committing to the advancement of student parents, which will encourage parents to attend university, stay in university, and succeed as they otherwise might with adequate support. Such an investment not only benefits student parents today, but it's a long-term investment for future generations, since the children of parents who attend post-secondary education are more likely to pursue such an education themselves.

Kristy Heeren  
Coordinator of the Concordia University Student Parents Centre  
May, 2011

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This report has drawn on the support, advice, and insights of many individuals. We would like to thank everyone who has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the research and analysis reflected here.

First, we would like to thank all the students—parents and non-parents—who participated in this research project. Particularly, we are grateful to the 22 parents that took time out of their busy schedule to sit with us and share their experiences. It is our hope that our analysis and conclusions do their experiences justice.

We are indebted to Elizabeth Morey, Dean of Students at Concordia University, who championed the project and the Student Parents Centre.

Special thanks go to our faculty liaison, Bill Reimer. He played a valuable role in guiding the research and supporting the project.

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## CONTENTS

FOREWORD	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
INTRODUCTION	9
METHODOLOGY	11
FINDINGS	14
BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT PARENTS	14
BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT	15
USE OF UNIVERSITY SERVICES	18
RECOMMENDATIONS BY STUDENT PARENTS	19
CONCLUDING REMARKS	24
SOURCES	25
ANNEXES	26
ANNEX A Table 2: General characteristics of survey sample	26
ANNEX B Table 3: School-work-family balance indicators	27
ANNEX C Table 4: Indicators of emotional impact	29
ANNEX D Table 5: Sources of income	30
Table 6: Distribution of expenses	31
ANNEX E Table 7: Time management	33
ANNEX F Table 8: Concordia University Services Used	35

## INTRODUCTION

In their 2009 Strategic Framework, the Concordia University administration outlined how they intend to build a successful university environment dedicated to academic excellence through the intended support of a vastly diverse student body.<sup>1</sup> Within the context of student diversity, Sweet and Moen (2010) argue that a distinction must be made between traditional and non-traditional students, since the latter are likely to experience a higher degree of role conflict (due to irreconcilable demands) and role strain (the sense of stress caused by the conflict).<sup>2</sup> While traditional students are generally defined as those who continue their academic career without interruption, non-traditional students comprise such varied student populations as, *inter alia*, students with disabilities, Native students, mature students, and student parents.<sup>3</sup> However, while support for non-traditional students is at the heart of the 2009 Strategic Framework, it does not address student parents. Since no research has been carried out with the specific purpose of mapping the student parent population at Concordia University, little is known about the demographics, experiences, and needs of this particular non-traditional, and potentially vulnerable, student group.

The effort to assist student parents in achieving academic success is complicated by two factors: first and foremost, as described in a recent report by the Conférence des Recteurs et des Principaux des Universités du Québec (CRÉPUQ), student parents do not comprise a homogeneous population.<sup>4</sup> A great variation in age is but one factor adding to the heterogeneity of a group whose primary internal cohesion stems solely from the fact that all of its members are parents. Factors such as marital status, gender, level of study (undergraduate/graduate), mode of study (part-time/full-time), immigration background, and the age of the child(ren) all play a major role in determining a student parent's academic experience and accomplishment.

The second complication stems from the fact that, as van Rhijn and Lero assess, "being a parent, in itself, acts to inhibit post-secondary attendance."<sup>5</sup> In their 2008 study of 339 student parents, they describe how comparatively higher levels of stress and "role strain" increase the likelihood that student parents will have to interrupt their studies.<sup>6</sup> This complication may be

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<sup>1</sup> See *Reaching Up, Reaching Out: A Strategic Framework for Concordia University, 2009-2014*.

<sup>2</sup> Sweet and Moen, 2010:232-3.

<sup>3</sup> A 2002 analysis from the National Center for Education Statistics suggests that the designation "non-traditional" should be used to describe any student who fulfils one or more of the following characteristics: (1) delays enrollment (does not enter postsecondary education in the same calendar year that he or she finished high school); (2) attends part time for at least part of the academic year; (3) works full time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled; (4) is considered financially independent for purposes of determining eligibility for financial aid; (5) has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others); (6) is a single parent (either not married or married but separated and has dependents); or (7) does not have a high school diploma (completed high school with a GED or other high school completion certificate or did not finish high school).  
<<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2002/analyses/nontraditional/sa01.asp>>, accessed 03/26/2011.

<sup>4</sup> CRÉPUQ mémoire, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> van Rhijn and Lero, 2009:4.

<sup>6</sup> van Rhijn and Lero, 2009:4; see also Quimby and O'Brien, 2006, and Holmes, 2005.



preventable, and knowledge about the obstacles faced by student parents will allow universities to tailor services to meet the group's needs, thereby decreasing drop-out rates and encouraging student parent enrolment to begin with. Based on a study of non-traditional students<sup>7</sup> in Canada, Holmes (2005) suggests that these difficulties may affect more students than currently estimated: "The fact that women have consistently made up a higher proportion of part-time enrolments than of full-time enrolments at both college and university, and the fact that most part-time female students are over 25, suggests that many female students also care for dependants."<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt, argues Prentice (2010): "It is mothers, more than fathers, whose educational and employment options are shaped through family caregiving responsibilities."<sup>9</sup>

The Concordia University segment of the 2010 Canadian Graduate and Professional Survey (CGPS) indicates that student parents at Concordia do feel a higher degree of conflict between family life and academic responsibilities when compared to non-parent students at the university. When asked whether family obligations represent a major obstacle, a minor obstacle, or no obstacle at all, 81% of graduate and 85% of professional student parents fell within the first two categories, while among non-parents only 61% of professional students and 64% of graduate students answered that family obligations were not an obstacle. While this is a clear indication that student parents at Concordia University do struggle in balancing the two roles, the CGPS does not address specific circumstances within the undergraduate student body, nor does it explicitly state what "family obligations" entail. Since the obstacles could comprise anything from time management issues to social and academic isolation, more information is needed in order to adequately address the needs of student parents.

While the Concordia University Student Parents Centre (CUSP) works to provide services to Concordia University's student parent population, the lack of knowledge about its target population complicates the effort. A better understanding of the composition and needs of student parents at the university is therefore not only helpful, but essential—not only for CUSP to help Concordia University achieve the goal of accessible education and academic excellence, but for the university itself to encourage enrolment and maintain or increase retention rates.

The Student Parents Research Project began in early 2010 with a proposal to create a portrait of student parents at Concordia University so that university services, including the new Student Parents Centre (CUSP), would be better prepared to help student parents achieve academic success. This research project was designed with four main research questions:

- 1) what is the composition of the university's student parent population and their distribution across faculties, academic programs, and levels of study?
- 2) how do the composition and experiences of the student parent population differ from and correspond with the overall student population at Concordia?
- 3) do the experiences of student parents who are members of CUSP reflect the experiences of the wider student parent population at Concordia University?

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- 4) what unique challenges do student parents face when balancing the dual roles of parent and student?

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<sup>7</sup> The study focused on aboriginal students, students with children, and students with disabilities.

<sup>8</sup> Holmes, 2005:23.

<sup>9</sup> Prentice, 2010.

A survey was needed to create this portrait and describe the characteristics of this particular student group as accurately as possible. However, through the design phase two facts became evident: 1) information about non-parents is necessary to be able to pinpoint where student parents' needs differ and coincide with non-parent students; and 2) a deeper exploration of student parents' experiences is needed. In order to achieve all of the goals of the research project, the best course of action was to use a mixed methodology approach, combining a large-scale survey of the entire student population and focus groups with student parents.

Following a brief review of the methodology, this report describes the main findings of the Student Parents Research Project: a profile of the student parents in the sample, an overview of the barriers they face as they strive for an academic degree, an outline of their use of services at the university, and finally a series of recommendations derived from the focus group discussions. Adding to the (regrettably) limited compendium of research on student parents, the Concordia University Student Parents Research Project confirms what other studies have found: student parents in the study struggle with finances and a general lack of resources. Their academic progress is slowed or interrupted because of external factors such as lack of childcare or the need to work. Meanwhile, their university experience is tainted by stigma and isolation from peers. This report ends with a series of recommendations, put forth by student parents participating in the study. Most important of these are the ones that pertain to the lack of recognition of their particular and difficult circumstances by the administration: establishment of a student parent policy at Concordia University, provisions regarding eligibility for financial aid, and implementation of flexible, affordable childcare.

At a very general level, the findings promote our understanding of the challenges faced by students in a rapidly changing knowledge economy and the ways in which services may be tailored to the needs of particular groups. Yet the most important and tangible effect of this research will be to inform CUSP and Concordia University in their efforts to carry out the university's mandate. The hope is that the people who will benefit most from the research are student parents who are struggling to obtain a post-secondary degree.

## METHODOLOGY

Because the intention of the study was to gauge both qualitative and quantitative indicators about student parents at Concordia University, two data sources were combined and, consequently, two methodologies were used: a large-scale survey of students at Concordia University and a focus group series among student parents at the university. The benefit of this approach is that findings can be corroborated and conclusions verified. Furthermore, it allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon as the various data sources shed light on different aspects of the issues and questions being investigated.

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The purpose of the qualitative segment of the study is to shed light on the struggles and stressors student parents face, as well as the strategies they employ to cope with whatever difficult situations they encounter. For this reason, focus groups were selected as the best methodological approach to gather this information. In order to assess shared and unique experiences of a group as varied as student parents, focus groups are ideal as they permit an

exchange of experiences and knowledge among participants that can potentially act as a catalyst in helping them describe their experiences.

Three focus groups were carried out, each scheduled for nine participants.<sup>10</sup> It was important to create an intimate and friendly setting, and any larger group would have been counter-productive in encouraging sharing. The subject matter is very emotional for many participants. This meant that there was a risk that the focus group setting would deter some participants from sharing their experiences. However, the opposite was equally likely, and in fact did happen during the focus groups: because some participants readily shared very emotional and personal information, the conversations became very open and participants spoke openly as they found common ground and experiences.<sup>11</sup>

The participants were solicited through two email listservs: the CUSP listserv of parents that have actively sought out the centre and its services, and the Financial Aid and Awards listserv of students who declare dependants as they apply for financial aid for their studies. While these two sources were likely to yield focus group participants that have experienced some degree of obstacles and sought help to overcome them, the inherent bias in the sample does not constitute a problem for the research. Since the purpose of the focus groups was to assess struggles and coping strategies, the participants were likely to be able to shed light on issues of which CUSP or the university administration were unaware. They were also able to offer insight into strategies – personal and institutional – that helped address these issues. We are not attempting to get an accurate reading of the extent of the problem among all student parents at the university with the focus group data, but rather to get a rich and informative cross-section of information.

While the focus groups will thus clearly show us what obstacles student parents *may* face, they will be unable to show us 1) to what extent the overall student parent population face these issues (that is, the distribution of the problems within the student parent population), 2) the demography of the student parent population (that is, whether Concordia University's student parent population is relatively homogeneous or heterogeneous with regards to both demographic indicators and experiences), and 3) the degree to which these experiences are shared with the student population at large. In order to assess the quantitative measures for the study, such as the student population proportions and characteristics, a representative survey of the entire student population was designed in collaboration with the Office for Institutional Planning at Concordia University. The key elements of the survey were (a) income and expenses; (b) time allocation; (c) indicators of respondents' ability to balance work-school-family; (d) indicators of emotional impact of work-school-family balance; (e) assessment of use and satisfaction with various services at and around Concordia University; and (f) several demographic indicators.

Since one purpose of the survey was to assess the differences and similarities between the parent and non-parent students, the random sample was stratified only by faculty, gender, and part-time/full-time status.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the survey was not distributed to students who

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<sup>10</sup> Actual participation was eight, five and nine respectively—an excellent participation rate for the target population compared to past focus group research with student parents.

<sup>11</sup> Because of the sensitive and emotional nature of the subject matter, the participants' names have been removed from all records. The participants are instead numbered R1-R22.

<sup>12</sup> 15% of each sub-group (e.g., female part-time engineering students) were randomly selected to receive the invitation to participate.

had just begun their post-secondary education, since our gauges of stressors, emotional impact, and time management require some experience with the circumstances of student life.

The survey was labelled the Concordia University Student Life survey (CUSL) and billed as a general survey of students at the university, without mention of parental status, in order to lessen over-sampling of parents or under-sampling of non-parents. Since the survey was intended to also give an indication of proportions, it was important to get as representative a sample as possible.

Unfortunately, the effective sample was considerably smaller than the projected sample. Several operational issues coincided, which may have had an impact on the response rate of the survey. The final sample consisted of 895 records, with 86—just under 10% of the sample—being student parents. While the sample size in itself is respectable, the very low response rate (18%<sup>13</sup>) means that we cannot directly deduce that the sample is representative of the Concordia student population as a whole (41,218 students in 2009-2010). However, while the sample is not necessarily representative of the overall student population at Concordia the comparison of the sample and university population on selected indicators in Table 1, below, shows that the two are not substantially different.

		CUSL	CONCORDIA	
1 Student status	Full time	80.1 %	66.0 %	<p>Table 1 Comparison, in percent, of CUSL survey sample and Concordia University student population on selected demographic markers.<sup>14</sup></p>
	Part time	19.9	34.0	
2 Level of studies	Undergraduate	77.2	83.8	
	Graduate	22.8	16.2	
3 Faculty	JMSB	22.4	20.7	
	ENCS	16.2	14.1	
	Fine Arts	10.1	8.9	
	Arts and Sciences	45.8	42.4	
	Independent studies	5.5	14.0	
4 Residence status	Canadian student	82.6	88.6	
	International student	17.4	11.4	

Furthermore, given the national average of 11% student parents at university level,<sup>15</sup> having a 10% proportion of our sample be student parents is indicative that our sample may be very similar to the overall population at the university. Regardless, there is no way to show non-bias in variables that we do not have information about, such as gender, age, marital status, etc.

<sup>13</sup> The response rate may be even lower for individual questions. Since some subjects, such as income and very personal questions, tend to have high rates of non-answers, the decision was made to allow participants to skip questions.

<sup>14</sup> Source for Concordia University data: <<http://concordia.ca/about/fast-facts/>>, accessed 03/10/2011.

<sup>15</sup> Calculated by Lero et al. on the basis of four Statistics Canada data sets (the Labour Force Survey 1976-2005, the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics 1999-2004, the National Graduates Survey 1992, 1997, and 2002, and the Youth in Transition Survey 1999-2003). Lero et al. 2007:8-9.

While the sample and overall university populations may be very similar, it is quite possible that the two populations do differ significantly on any one of these other indicators.<sup>16</sup>

## FINDINGS

In this section, the findings from the research are presented in four sections: 1) basic characteristics of student parents; 2) barriers to academic achievement; 3) use of university services; and 4) recommendations by student parents.

### BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENT PARENTS

So who are the student parents in our sample? According to the data from our survey,<sup>17</sup> two out of three student parents are women. A typical student parent is likely to be older than a non-parent student; the average age for non-parents is 24, while student parents are, on average, 39 years old. Student parents are also significantly more likely to attend school part-time, and while non-parents tend to attend classes during the day or combine day and evening classes, parents tend to attend classes during the daytime or evening only.

Among the student parents in the survey sample, about one quarter (27%) are single parents. Furthermore, 90% of the single parents are women. The same pattern appears among the focus group participants, half of whom are single: every one of the single parent participants was a woman. The focus group composition, with the larger proportion of single parents, suggests that while many student parents may be married, the single student parents may be more likely to use the financial and support services through which participation was solicited.

The student parents in the sample are significantly more likely to be graduate students: fully 40% are in graduate school (compared to 18% of non-parent students). When controlling for age, this effect disappears, indicating that age is the determining factor—student parents are more likely to be in graduate school because they are generally older than non-parents, not because they are parents.

Most parents, 75%, have one or two children, and only one in seven have three or four children.<sup>18</sup> The majority of the children are in the daycare and primary school age range—38% of the parents have children between 19 months and five years, while 35% have children between 6 and 12 years of age. Thirty-one percent of parents have children who are older than 13, while 16% have children who are not yet 18 months.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The sample may be subject to a large self-selection bias. As the response rate decreases, the likelihood increases that the people who completed the survey are characteristically different from the ones who chose not to participate. For example, the decision not to market the survey as a survey about student parents in order to avoid under-sampling of non-parents may inadvertently have led to under-sampling of student parents, simply because they may be more busy than non-parents and thus decide not to participate in a survey that apparently does not particularly relate to their situation and circumstances.

<sup>17</sup> See Table 2 in Annex A.

<sup>18</sup> None of the parents sampled have more than four children. Eight parents did not declare the age group of their children. Based on the wording of the questions—which ask about dependents—it is reasonable to conclude that this is because these eight parents are not the primary caregivers for their children.

<sup>19</sup> Note that the percentages do not add up to 100 because some parents have children in multiple age groups.

According to our data, student parents are significantly more likely to be local (from Montreal or Quebec) than non-parents. The numbers in the sample are too small to make any conclusions about patterns—a significant finding in itself—as only 4% of student parents in the survey sample are international students, and another 1% out-of-province students.

## BARRIERS TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

On the issue of balancing work, school, and family obligations, some interesting similarities appear. Parents and non-parents alike find that they are generally able to balance the three, with one fifth of both groups stating that they are *always* able to balance academic responsibilities with family and work obligation.<sup>20</sup> The two groups also overwhelmingly agree that they are able to finish course work in spite of work obligations; in other words, paid work is generally not considered a disruptive element in the academic pursuits of either group.

When turning to the elements of work-school-family balance where parents and non-parents differ significantly, the two key elements of student parents' lives—academia and parenthood—are not reported in the survey data to be conflicting. This is a surprising finding, in light of the past research that describes the academic struggles of student parents (see pages 9-10, above). The parents in our focus groups shed some light on this, making it clear that large sacrifices are made in order to achieve some semblance of balance between family, work, and academic responsibilities:

It's term by term – every term changes your life because your schedule changes, your work schedule changes ... innovating as you go and a lot has to do with prioritizing. Sometimes things won't get paid, won't get done and get put off. Then you're always playing catch-up with those things. Forget things that don't penalize me, like cleaning the house. Social life, forget it. Anything that immediately affects you has your attention. (R13)

In other words, for student parents the balance of academic and family responsibilities comes at a high cost. Bills go unpaid, chores are not done, and the person's social life suffers. Adding to that burden, Table 3 shows that student parents are also significantly less likely than non-parents in our sample to feel that they have the support of their friends and family when they need them; indicating that student parents must often carry these additional burdens with less help from friends, family, or community.

The finding that over 65% of student parents feel their grades accurately reflect their potential is likely explained by lowered expectations:

For me, my attitude toward school now with children is, I just want to do enough to pass. I don't want to repeat a class ... [when I have] the children because their daycare [is] closed for three weeks during the summer, I read my book and now just do enough to pass. Goals have changed – I'm never giving 100% to anything because I don't have it to give. (R11)

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<sup>20</sup> See Table 3 in Annex B.

The sacrifices do carry rewards for the student parents: while the overall patterns of school-work-family balance are similar for the two groups, student parents are more likely than non-parents to finish course work on time in spite of family obligations; they are more likely to live up to family obligations in spite of academic responsibilities; and they are much more likely to feel that their grades accurately reflect their potential. However, this is clearly achieved by sacrificing other priorities, by enduring greater levels of stress and exhaustion, and by lowered expectations with reference to academic success.

Aside from these enormous personal sacrifices, Table 4 (in Annex C) shows that student parents in our sample are also significantly more likely to be stressed and exhausted than non-parent students. These survey findings are confirmed by the focus group participants, whose discussions of issues faced by student parents revealed a nexus of stressors (Figure 1, below) that collectively contribute to exhaustion, delayed and deferred studies, and lower academic performance. The central elements in the nexus are, as may be expected, finances, time issues, emotional impact, and various structural and practical issues relating to the university.

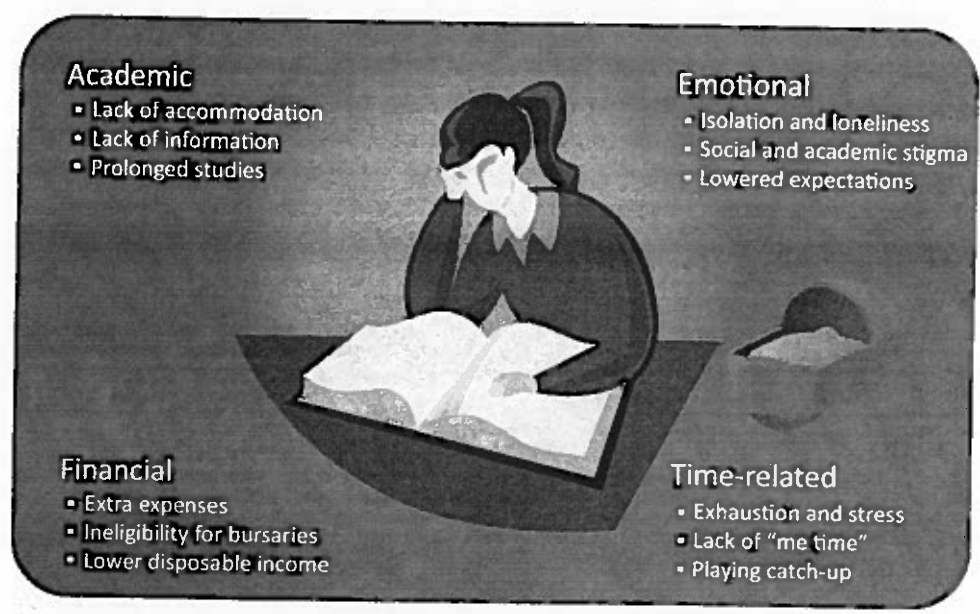


Figure 1  
The nexus of stressors described by focus group participants

Finances and time management were the two main themes that permeated all discussion in the three focus groups. Participants shared stories of losing the financial contribution towards children from their bursary because the children had their twelfth birthday – "It's like he turned twelve and vanished" (R13) – or going weeks without proper nutrition because the children have to eat.

In the survey, the question was broken down into two components: income sources and expenses.<sup>21</sup> Respondents were asked to estimate the proportion of income from each source, and similarly the proportion of their income spent on each major expense. As can be seen from Tables 5 and 6 (Annex D), some distinct differences exist between the two groups. Student

<sup>21</sup> This was done in order to prevent non-response on the questions regarding the respondents' financial situation, and in order to better capture financial *need* (rather than financial *irresponsibility*).

parents are less likely than non-parents to rely on support from friends and family and income from part-time or summer work. On the other hand, they get a larger proportion of their income from bursaries and full-time work. When controlling for age, full-time work remains significant, implying that student parents are more likely to rely on full-time work regardless of age.<sup>22</sup>

While the findings in Table 3 indicate that work is not a disruptive element when attempting to balance work, school and family obligations, the fact that student parents rely on full-time work to a larger extent than non-parents implies that student parents exercise a large degree of time management to fulfil their various obligations. However, it is also important to bear in mind that this reliance on full-time work adds to the nexus of stressors and the feeling described by R13 above (page 15) that “you’re always playing catch-up.”

When turning to the question of expenses (Table 6, Annex D), it is quickly evident that student parents subsist on a tighter budget than non-parents. While parents spend a smaller proportion of their income on tuition fees, they spend significantly more on rent, groceries, recurring monthly expenses, health care, and various other expenses. Furthermore, they put a significantly smaller amount of their income toward savings.

The financial burden was the first thing mentioned by several focus group participants in response to questions regarding the biggest barriers to their academic success. Not only do they struggle with low income, but trying to budget their expenses is also a major stressor:

[The barrier] is just more the finances. ... You’re tired of wondering if there’s money. How am I going to pay the rent? How am I going to pay the bills? How am I going to pay the heat? Then you don’t have money for groceries, you don’t have enough money for books. I’ve gone two or three weeks without eating so much so my child can have enough. Then you apply for financial aid and they go, “Oh well, you don’t need so much” ... You know, financial aid is wonderful for parents but you have to show your budget, you have to work more hours, so for me it’s finances that tie into my energy levels and time management. (R3)

Given the high level of stress among the student parents in our focus groups, and the way the various factors compound it, the series on time management in the survey was particularly enlightening.<sup>23</sup> Among our surveyed students, the parents spend a significantly smaller proportion of their waking hours on school work. It is not surprising that they spend a larger proportion of their time on child care but significantly more parents than non-parents also spend time on the care of family members aside from their own children. The additional time spent caring for sick or elderly family members may very well exacerbate the burden (in terms of time and energy spent) of care created by parenthood. It is quite likely that this additional burden is felt more acutely for female student parents who, as Prentice pointed out (page 10, above), are more likely to be shouldering the majority of the caregiving burden. Furthermore, one in five student parents spend between 41-60% of their waking hours on paid

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<sup>22</sup> It is important to note here that while age is the determining factor regarding student parents’ reliance on bursaries, we cannot dismiss the discovery because it is not directly determined by parenthood. Since we cannot make student parents younger, we must take their reliance on bursaries into account in its own right.

<sup>23</sup> See Table 7 in Annex E for the results of this series.



work, adding to the complicated time management balancing act student parents struggle with in general.

The cost in terms of social interaction and relaxing activities is apparent. Almost 40% of parents spend no time at all on social leisure activities, while one in ten spend no time on solitary leisure activities. This is also evident among the focus groups participants. Student parents do not have the time to nurture relationships, to explore interests and hobbies, or to recharge their batteries. One parent described how this lack of 'down time' affects her:

[The barriers that impact my academic career are] everything together. It's a combination of finances, time management, isolation, but these things are secondary. I think that the primary thing for me is getting into this negative mindset and thinking "oh my god, I'm so tired." And you are tired. It is really a lack of energy because if you're tired, it doesn't matter how many hours you have, you're tired. So when my daughter goes to sleep at nine or ten, even if I have those two hours for study, I'm just not going to work and study. ... You're stuck in this negative pattern of negative thinking and that you're tired all the time. I think that would mean I could care less about academics ... To me the primary thing is having the support to be able to somehow, yourself, cultivate ... a higher level of energy. (R1)

The need for a support network is a large element in most participants' discussion of their experiences. Many of the participants struggle with loneliness, as their world is very solitary and centres on child care and school work (often done at night, after the children are in bed). Particularly the non-local students struggle with this; when time is already limited, it can take years to cultivate friendships and create a network. In that situation, several parents pointed out, you are not only missing friendly interaction, but also the resources to find help when you are in an urgent difficult situation. As the survey findings showed, student parents are more likely than non-parents to be missing this type of support network. When faced with the inflexibility of class assignments or exams, for example, several parents described getting lower grades because of a sick child or a lack of childcare.

The nexus of financial strain, isolation, stress and sheer exhaustion reported may discourage student parents from staying in school, and is likely to be a factor in drop-out rates. When student parents go to school part-time, they can expect to face these challenges for years to come and may very well be discouraged. This situation is more than likely more strenuous for women who tend to be held responsible for the majority of childcare, whether they are single or not—as such, the nexus of stressors may be particularly unforgiving for female students. Single parents are balancing these responsibilities and burdens without another domestic partner to assist them.

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## USE OF UNIVERSITY SERVICES

Returning once more to Table 3 (Annex B), we see that, unfortunately, a large proportion of both student populations are unable to find services to support them in their academic career. Just under half of the students can rarely or never find university services for

this purpose, while roughly 60% cannot find community services for that purpose. Both groups in our sample are generally aware of the various services offered by the university.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from the problem that some services are not widely known in the student population at large, an entirely bigger issue is what services students use (Table 8, Annex F). Some services that could have a direct impact on students' academic success are only used by 10-20% of students. These include Counselling and Development, Tutoring Services, Student Learning Services, the Student Success Centre, Counselling and Psychological Services, and Career and Placement Services. Even the various departments' academic advising services are frequented by less than half of the respondents, parents and non-parents alike.

Information from the focus groups indicates that the problem entails two factors: 1) what the services can offer to the individual student; and 2) student access to the services, whether practical (determined by location, opening hours, and issues of staffing vs. demand) or structural (e.g., inability to qualify for the service). Several participants not only expressed uncertainty about what services are offered where, but also frustration about a lack of information:

It took me almost two years to figure out how things worked [at Concordia]. Bad advice. I think that many of the administrators are not informed themselves. Things are so parcelled that if it's not their area [you're] just sent around and around in circles. .. The people who you're supposed to get the information from are not informed either. (R13)

Because of the time constraints student parents face, many are unable to wait in long queues to see advisors or staff at the various university offices. If it takes too long to wait for help, then they simply have to choose to go without, because, for example, they may have to get to the daycare or school in time to pick up their children.

## RECOMMENDATIONS BY STUDENT PARENTS

During the course of the focus groups, several suggestions and recommendations were made by the participants. These suggestions not only offer a direction for other parents, but also for the administration and the Student Parents Centre. They are an expression of *what student parents feel they need in order to be able to succeed to their maximum academic potential and finish their studies, rather than settling for low grades and prolonged studies*. This section presents the many voices, concerns, and suggestions in a structured manner.

### 1. **A clear student parent policy at Concordia.**

It is clear from the focus group data that student parents lack a university-wide policy aimed at their particular needs. This policy will not only help student parents determine what rights and responsibilities they have as students, but also what recourses they have when mistreated by faculty or staff members. Several participants described inflexibility or outright discrimination on the basis of their parental status, but felt that they had nowhere to turn to determine whether the faculty or staff member in question overstepped any

<sup>24</sup> Notable exceptions are the Ombuds Office, the Office for Rights and Responsibilities, The Advocacy and Support Services, the Student Success Centre, and the Student Parents Centre.

bounds. A concise inventory of protocols and provisions relating specifically to student parents is deeply desired by nearly all participants.

Several participants have had to circumvent the system when they were unable to register for courses at times that permitted them to fulfil their other obligations. Some mentioned auditing the class at other, more convenient times while others described semesters of not attending class and doing exams on the basis of course literature only. One parent told how she received an F on an exam because she had to be in court to testify in her child custody case after having to flee to a shelter.

Almost all participants had experienced odd exam hours that required extra planning for childcare. Some had been in the unfortunate situation of having a child fall sick on an exam day. When unable to bring the child to daycare but uncertain if the child's sickness warranted a make-up exam, parents found themselves scrambling to find solutions while stressing about the consequences of this ill-timed virus. Child sickness was generally a large stressor, since student parents do not know if they are permitted to miss class for the sickness of a dependent.

The lack of information about parents' rights and responsibilities as students becomes a source of stress. When you cannot find out if you will be allowed to provide a pediatrician's note for a sick child as an explanation for an absence, then you have to make a decision about whether to stay home, which may result in a failed course and repercussions that could prolong your studies. Since the child can obviously not go to daycare sick (or stay home alone), the student does not have a choice, but experiences an inordinate amount of stress about missed classes or assignments.

A student parent policy would also serve an emotional purpose: since student parents *do* have particular circumstances that impact their studies, such as the sickness of a child or the fixed hours of most childcare services, all participants in the focus groups wish for an official policy which addresses these possibilities.

## **2. Provisions for funding for student parents.**

As clearly evidenced by the data, financial strain is a major burden for student parents. Aside from extra expenses to cover food, clothing, and other needs of their dependents, student parents often find themselves in a bind when looking to apply for funding. Government-based funding for dependents is limited; however, the many student parents who study part-time are often ineligible for non-government funding (which almost always requires full-time status). Adding to that, there are very few bursaries or scholarships for student parents the way there are for a large number of other significant sub-groups in the student population. Scholarships are generally geared towards traditional students—particularly those that combine academic achievement with extra-curricular activities. This makes it very difficult for student parents to compete for these scholarships.

Any attempt to help student parents accomplish their academic goals must address the financial issues faced by this population.

## **3. University-based, flexible and affordable childcare.**

This point covers two issues: (i) student parents need flexible care since class scheduling does not follow regular work hours. Prentice (2010) warns that female student parents on campuses without easily accessible and reliable childcare struggle to complete their education. In general, flexible care is hard to find and often costs much more than childcare

during regular daytime hours. (ii) Student parents need childcare, period. A quarter of the survey respondents, those who have access to it, rely on private, unpaid care (e.g., babysitting by a friend or family member) and only two in five have access to subsidized daycare.

During the focus groups, three main possibilities were discussed:

- reorganizing the current daycares at Concordia to better serve the student parent population (e.g., by placing children of students higher on the waiting list or by creating additional spaces);
- collaboration between the Concordia daycares and CUSP, in the form of shared premises or activities, use of daycare premises after hours, or similar solutions; and
- student-funded childcare for students, where a fee levy would be collected to fund a student-only childcare centre.

These three options reflect various solutions the focus groups participants have seen in use at other Canadian universities. Université de Montréal was mentioned as an example of a university that is doing more for its student parents; a fee levy is collected each semester to fund drop-in daycare for students. UQAM was similarly touted, as their student parent office facilitates access to part-time care for the university's students' children.

Naturally, the needs of the student parents must not be satisfied at the cost of quality care. While part-time childcare does not inherently entail reduced quality of care, the subject must be at the forefront when considering the possibility of creating a part-time daycare at Concordia. A child who only attends daycare twice a week, for example, will need a much longer adjustment period than one who attends the daycare every day. Furthermore, more resources will be needed to carry out the scheduling, whether weekly, once a semester or annually, of the parents' preferred time slots. However, considering the current situation at Concordia—the two CPEs have approximately 130 full-time slots available for students, faculty and staff, with waiting lists of up to four years and faculty members often getting priority—the implementation of a flexible, part-time daycare at the university would be a large step in the right direction. It is clear from the findings in this study that student parents at Concordia stand to benefit immensely from this type of daycare—practically, in terms of course scheduling, study time and finances, and in more subtle ways; a large emotional burden would be lifted from the shoulders of the many student parents who currently struggle to pay their bills, pass their courses, and find quality care for their children.

The three options put forth by the focus group participants all require the collaboration of the university administration, student organizations (CSU and GSA primarily), CUSP, and the university daycares, and they are long-term solutions that offer no immediate relief for student parents who are struggling with these issues right now, but it is clear that the university must urgently consider and meet this need.

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#### **4. An "information hub" that lists university information and resources for student parents.**

As described above (pages 18-19), the focus group participants lamented the inability to easily navigate the various university services and find, first of all, what offices exist that may aid them in their studies and, secondly, the services offered by those offices that are tailored to student parents. Between complaints about the website and frustration about

many staff members' lack of knowledge about services at the university, it is clear that student parents would benefit from a central "information hub" for student parents. CUSP is very well situated to fill this need. Because student parents often lack the time to visit various university offices, the ideal tool is the CUSP website. Some participants also suggested that the myconcordia portal would be a suitable vehicle to communicate this information to students.

Two elements are important: First of all, a listing of services will help users find out what services are available (in the cases where they are unaware of certain services) and who offers services for student parents. Secondly, a description of student parents' rights, services, and responsibilities will go a long way towards filling the need for an official policy until the administration can draft and actualize it. While the website will not be able to address all the issues faced by student parents, it *will* be able to inform them, for example, about what is currently required of them and faculty members in the case of a dispute.

**5. Premises for student parents and their children during evenings and weekends.**

Because childcare is generally available only during the daytime on weekdays, several parents expressed a need for a location where they can congregate and study where their children can play (such as CUSP currently offers from 10am-6pm) outside regular daytime hours.

This is not a request for care, but rather for premises that facilitate study time while the children are playing. As such, the location must be large enough that the play does not disrupt the studying, while at the same time permitting the parents to keep an eye on the children. A possible solution would be to provide the funding for the CUSP office to have extended hours, since the premises are already available and suitable for students with children.

**6. Tutoring for the children of students.**

While the student parents are focused on performing well in their own classes, they often lack the time or ability to help their children do well; "I would be studying and she will be failing her courses" (R9). Some participants expressed interest in combining this service with recommendation 5 above, so that the children will be meeting with a tutor in one end of the room while the parents study at the other end.

**7. Mentoring by other student parents.**

Most participants described how the first year as a student parent was particularly difficult and stressful. Having someone who has gone through it and knows what services are available guide the new student parents would be invaluable in ensuring a less stressful academic career.

**8. Outreach to pregnant students and alumni student parents.**

While discussing the initial shock of becoming a student parent and the sense of loneliness and isolation within the university, several parents suggested that it is possible to reach out to pregnant student parents and prepare them for the potential stress and inform them about services. Similarly, some participants suggested that many alumni parents struggle with the same issues and could benefit from access to services such as CUSP.

**9. Activities for children of students outside regular school time.**

While children are in school, parents are most often able to organize their weekdays to find some time for their studies. When the schools are out for the summer and during after-school hours throughout the semesters, on the other hand, student parents find themselves trying to study in a house with children who demand their attention. One participant suggested the university offer activities such as field trips, summer camps, or after-school programs. As student parents often already take very long to complete their studies (due to part-time status, deferred classes, missed exams, etc.), the ability to participate in summer classes would provide a big boost toward *timely* academic success.

When discussing who might plan such affairs, the most widely supported suggestion was to permit the newly founded Student Parent Association Concordia (SPAC) to carry out these events.

**10. A semi-formal network of student parents.**

The SPAC would also be the ideal vehicle for the last recommendation made by the focus group participants: to structure a semi-formal network of student parents. The purpose of the network would be to counteract the loneliness and stigma student parents feel within the university setting.

[It is important to find] a sense of community, like having friends, because there's not one person in life who does not go through challenges. Challenges are good because they make us grow and they make us more skilful, but when you are going through this alone, you don't see that. You feel that life is tough and you aren't optimistic. But even if there are challenges and you have family around you're able to smile more, you are able to laugh more, so for me it's the lack of community that is really the toughest. (R1)

Of course there is no reason to create and improve services to student parents if they do not use them. Several focus group participants suggested that some of the burden rests with student parents themselves. While it is easy to become overwhelmed and feel lonely and stressed, each person can develop strategies to cope or reach out when they cannot cope. Supported by the general statements of the group, which suggested the participants generally are afraid of disclosing their parental status for fear of being stigmatized, one participant suggested that student parents need to "put themselves out there" and to ask for help when they need it (R16). The few that had participated in the various CUSP events (such as the cook-outs or the Life Skills Workshop Series) praised the affairs and encouraged the other focus group participants to try it, while also requesting that these events take place more often. It is clear that, for the student parents who use the CUSP services and programs, CUSP goes a long way towards filling some of the needs expressed by the participants. However, as the survey shows that only 35% of student parents are aware of the centre's existence, it is clear that even CUSP must become more visible to the student population.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Student parents are a vulnerable group within Concordia University; that is obvious from the findings of this research project. While striving to complete a post-secondary degree and improve their circumstances—and their children's future—many of these students struggle with an enormous pressure that touches every aspect of their lives. In order to carry out their studies, they must make sacrifices, not only academically, as their circumstances cause them to lower their expectations and accept mediocre results, but also financially and emotionally. In their struggle to balance the various elements of their lives, they ignore or cut out everything that is not urgent, including their own emotional well-being, which is further distressed by a sense of isolation in their academic environment.

Student parents *want* to complete their studies and obtain a post-secondary degree. If not, as one focus group participant pointed out, they would not be putting themselves through this experience. On the basis of the focus group series, ten recommendations were made that student parents have put forth, in one form or another, as suggestions to improve their circumstances. With these recommendations, Concordia University and its Student Parents Centre have tangible suggestions to help student parents at the university attain academic success, as the university administration promises them in its framework.

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## ANNEXES

ANNEX A Table 2: General characteristics of survey sample

		Parent		Non-parent		p.
		n	%	n	%	
1 Gender	Male	30	34.9	340	42.2	.188
	Female	56	65.1	465	57.8	
2 Age	-20	0	0	205	25.6	.000
	21-30	17	19.8	518	64.8	
	31-40	43	50	59	7.4	
	41+	26	30.2	18	2.3	
3 Student status	Full-time	50	58.1	664	82.4	.000
	Part-time	36	41.9	142	17.6	
4 Course scheduling a)	Daytime classes	37	46.8	373	47.9	.000
	Evening classes	26	32.9	103	13.2	
	Both daytime and evening	16	20.3	303	38.9	
5 Level of studies	Undergraduate	45	59.2	644	81.7	.000
	Graduate	31	40.8	144	18.3	
6 Residence status b)	From Qc. (Montreal)	61	70.9	476	58.9	.000
	From Qc. (not Montreal)	21	24.4	120	14.9	
	Out-of-province/International	4	4.7	212	24.2	
7 Faculty c)	JMSB	12	15.6	188	24.5	.245
	ENCS	12	15.6	133	17.4	
	Fine Arts	11	14.3	78	10.2	
	A&S: Sciences	9	11.7	82	10.7	
	A&S: Humanities	16	20.8	101	13.2	
	A&S: Soc. Sci.	17	22.1	184	24	

a) Value excluded due to insufficient cases: 'No longer attend classes'

b) Values collapsed due to insufficient cases: 'Out-of-province Canadian' and 'International student'

c) Value excluded due to insufficient cases: 'Independent student'

ANNEX B Table 3: School-work-family balance indicators

		Parent		Non-parent		p.
		n	%	n	%	
<b>1 Balance family and work responsibilities</b>	All of the time	7	10.0	111	15.7	.213
	Most of the time	43	61.4	342	48.4	
	Some of the time	14	20.0	177	25.1	
	Rarely/never	6	8.6	76	10.8	
<b>2 Finish course work in spite of family obligations</b>	All of the time	44	53.7	276	37.1	.020
	Most of the time	22	26.8	318	42.8	
	Some of the time	11	13.4	106	14.3	
	Rarely/never	5	6.1	43	5.8	
<b>3 Finish course work in spite of work obligations</b>	All of the time	28	50.0	273	40.4	.495
	Most of the time	16	28.6	255	37.8	
	Some of the time	8	14.3	103	15.3	
	Rarely/never	4	7.1	44	6.5	
<b>4 Find CU services to support studies</b>	All of the time	5	7.2	48	6.9	.949
	Most of the time	14	20.3	128	18.5	
	Some of the time	18	26.1	203	29.3	
	Rarely/never	32	46.4	314	45.3	
<b>5 Balance family and academic responsibilities</b>	All of the time	15	17.9	141	18.8	.989
	Most of the time	40	47.6	345	45.9	
	Some of the time	20	23.8	187	24.9	
	Rarely/never	9	10.7	79	10.5	
<b>6 Live up to family obligations despite academic pressure</b>	All of the time	16	20.0	111	15.3	.016
	Most of the time	41	51.3	300	41.4	
	Some of the time	20	25.0	196	27.0	
	Rarely/never	3	3.8	118	16.3	
<b>7 Balance work and academic responsibilities</b>	All of the time	13	24.1	150	22.8	.646
	Most of the time	26	48.1	286	43.5	
	Some of the time	13	24.1	166	25.3	
	Rarely/never	2	3.7	55	8.4	
<b>8 Find community services to support studies</b>	All of the time	4	6.3	26	3.9	.612
	Most of the time	6	9.4	89	13.5	
	Some of the time	14	21.9	160	24.2	
	Rarely/never	40	62.5	385	58.3	

<b>9 Grades accurately reflect my potential</b>	All of the time	14	16.7	81	10.3	.012
	Most of the time	42	50.0	297	37.8	
	Some of the time	17	20.2	240	30.6	
	Rarely/never	11	13.1	167	21.3	
<b>10 Have support from family and friends when in need</b>	All of the time	19	23.8	313	39.7	.048
	Most of the time	33	41.3	252	31.9	
	Some of the time	17	21.3	142	18.0	
	Rarely/never	11	13.8	82	10.4	

ANNEX C Table 4: Indicators of emotional impact

		Parent		Non-parent		p.
		n	%	n	%	
<b>1 Included-isolated</b>	<b>Included</b>	8	9.6	100	12.7	.200
	2	14	16.9	172	21.8	
	3	16	19.3	142	18.0	
	4	9	10.8	135	17.1	
	5	16	19.3	110	13.9	
	6	12	14.5	92	11.7	
	<b>Isolated</b>	8	9.6	38	4.8	
	<b>2 Relaxed-stressed</b>	<b>Relaxed</b>	1	1.2	41	
2		6	7.1	57	7.2	
3		8	9.5	103	12.9	
4		8	9.5	138	17.3	
5		18	21.4	187	23.5	
6		28	33.3	165	20.7	
<b>Stressed</b>		15	17.9	105	13.2	
<b>3 Energetic-exhausted</b>		<b>Energetic</b>	1	1.2	34	4.3
	2	11	13.3	62	7.8	
	3	10	12.0	130	16.4	
	4	15	18.1	188	23.6	
	5	15	18.1	188	23.6	
	6	20	21.4	117	14.7	
	<b>Exhausted</b>	11	13.3	76	9.6	
	<b>4 In control-out of control</b>	<b>In control</b>	7	8.4	72	9.1
2		18	21.7	176	22.1	
3		22	26.5	196	24.7	
4		20	24.1	187	23.5	
5		11	13.3	95	11.9	
6		4	4.8	43	5.4	
<b>Out of control</b>		1	1.2	26	3.3	
<b>5 Confident-unsure</b>		<b>Confident</b>	9	10.7	84	10.6
	2	22	26.2	159	20.1	
	3	21	25.0	182	23.0	
	4	15	17.9	168	21.2	
	5	12	14.3	119	15.0	
	6	2	2.4	43	5.4	
	<b>Unsure</b>	3	3.6	38	4.8	

ANNEX D

Table 5: Sources of income

		Parent		Non-parent		p.	
		n	%	n	%		
1	Student loans	0%	37	57.8	484	72.1	.188
		1-20%	11	17.2	75	11.2	
		21-40%	6	9.4	48	7.2	
		41-60%	5	7.8	29	4.3	
		61-100%	5	7.8	35	5.2	
2	Private loans	0%	45	88.2	555	88.0	.231
		1-20%	3	5.9	46	7.3	
		21-40%	3	5.9	11	1.7	
		41-60%	0	0.0	11	1.7	
		61-100%	0	0.0	8	1.3	
3	Friends and family	0%	40	69.0	233	33.7	.000
		1-20%	6	10.3	133	19.2	
		21-40%	2	3.4	62	9.0	
		41-60%	4	6.9	63	9.1	
		61-100%	6	10.3	200	28.9	
4	Bursary	0%	35	62.5	502	79.3	.002
		1-20%	8	14.3	64	10.1	
		21-40%	9	16.1	26	4.1	
		41-60%	3	5.4	27	4.3	
		61-100%	1	1.8	14	2.2	
5	Scholarship	0%	40	80.0	546	87.6	.302
		1-20%	4	8.0	42	6.7	
		21-40%	4	8.0	18	2.9	
		41-60%	1	2.0	5	0.8	
		61-100%	1	2.0	12	1.9	
6	Savings	0%	31	60.8	335	52.4	.674
		1-20%	11	21.6	202	31.6	
		21-40%	4	7.8	49	7.7	
		41-60%	3	5.9	34	5.3	
		61-100%	2	3.9	19	3.0	
7	Summer job	0%	38	88.4	340	53.1	.000
		1-20%	3	7.0	179	28.0	
		21-40%	1	2.3	69	10.8	
		41-60%	1	2.3	36	5.6	
		61-100%	0	0.0	16	2.5	

8	Part-time work	0%	31	64.6	310	46.2	.037
		1-20%	6	12.5	171	25.5	
		21-40%	7	14.6	67	10.0	
		41-60%	3	6.3	60	8.9	
		61-100%	1	2.1	63	9.4	
9	Full-time work	0%	26	50.0	498	82.7	.000
		1-20%	0	0.0	10	1.7	
		21-40%	0	0.0	10	1.7	
		41-60%	4	7.7	11	1.8	
		61-100%	22	42.3	73	12.1	
10	Other	0%	22	43.1	502	88.8	.000
		1-20%	7	13.7	32	5.7	
		21-40%	5	9.8	4	0.7	
		41-60%	4	7.8	10	1.8	
		61-100%	13	25.5	17	3.0	

Table 6: Distribution of expenses

		Parent		Non-parent		p.	
		n	%	n	%		
1	Rent	0%	4	5.3	254	35.4	.000
		1-20%	14	18.4	143	19.9	
		21-40%	46	60.5	225	31.3	
		41-60%	10	13.2	87	12.1	
		61-100%	2	2.6	9	1.3	
2	Tuition	0%	7	9.5	148	20.4	.000
		1-20%	58	78.4	222	30.6	
		21-40%	6	8.1	159	21.9	
		41-60%	3	4.1	117	16.1	
		61-100%	0	0.0	79	10.9	
3	Groceries	0%	0	0.0	134	18.8	.000
		1-20%	48	64.0	490	68.6	
		21-40%	26	34.7	75	10.5	
		41-60%	1	1.3	13	1.8	
		61-100%	0	0.0	2	0.3	
4	Regular monthly bills	0%	0	0.0	90	12.4	.001
		1-20%	48	63.2	486	66.9	
		21-40%	21	27.6	111	15.3	
		41-60%	5	6.6	30	4.1	
		61-100%	2	2.6	10	1.4	

5	Clothing	0%	9	12.9	134	19.7	.152
		1-20%	59	84.3	482	70.9	
		21-40%	2	2.9	38	5.6	
		41-60%	0	0.0	18	2.6	
		61-100%	0	0.0	8	1.2	
6	Health care	0%	18	27.3	368	58.3	.000
		1-20%	48	72.7	259	41.0	
		21-40%	0	0.0	3	0.5	
		41-60%	0	0.0	1	0.2	
		61-100%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
7	Savings	0%	32	51.6	289	45.8	.049
		1-20%	29	46.8	241	38.2	
		21-40%	1	1.6	51	8.1	
		41-60%	0	0.0	25	4.0	
		61-100%	0	0.0	25	4.0	
8	Other	0%	15	31.3	311	55.1	.015
		1-20%	27	56.3	182	32.3	
		21-40%	4	8.3	44	7.8	
		41-60%	1	2.1	17	3.0	
		61-100%	1	2.1	10	1.8	

ANNEX E

Table 7: Time management

Proportion of hours spent:	Parent		Non-parent		p.	
	n	%	n	%		
1 School work	0%	1	1.2	3	0.4	.000
	1-20%	32	38.6	123	16.0	
	21-40%	28	33.7	266	34.6	
	41-60%	17	20.5	255	33.2	
	61-100%	5	6.0	122	15.9	
2 Work for pay	0%	32	43.2	236	33.2	.000
	1-20%	10	13.5	252	35.5	
	21-40%	17	23.0	158	22.3	
	41-60%	13	17.6	53	7.5	
	61-100%	2	2.7	11	1.5	
3 Volunteer work	0%	46	69.7	451	70.6	.825
	1-20%	19	28.8	183	28.6	
	21-40%	1	1.5	5	0.8	
	41-60%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	61-100%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
4 Social activities	0%	28	38.5	125	17.6	.000
	1-20%	44	61.1	530	74.5	
	21-40%	0	0.0	53	7.5	
	41-60%	0	0.0	2	0.3	
	61-100%	0	0.0	1	0.1	
5 Solitary activities	0%	8	10.7	37	5.1	.025
	1-20%	64	85.3	572	79.0	
	21-40%	2	2.7	100	13.8	
	41-60%	1	1.3	11	1.5	
	61-100%	0	0.0	4	0.6	
6 Sport and exercise	0%	25	34.2	158	23.1	.175
	1-20%	47	64.4	503	73.6	
	21-40%	1	1.4	19	2.8	
	41-60%	0	0.0	3	0.4	
	61-100%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
7 Caring for children	0%	4	5.4	590	99.2	.000
	1-20%	40	54.1	5	0.8	
	21-40%	22	29.7	0	0.0	
	41-60%	5	6.8	0	0.0	
	61-100%	3	4.1	0	0.0	



8 Caring for other family members (not children)	0%	33	51.6	419	68.0	
	1-20%	30	46.9	191	31.0	
	21-40%	1	1.6	6	1.0	
	41-60%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
	61-100%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
9 Chores and housework	0%	0	0.0	71	9.7	
	1-20%	70	89.7	644	88.2	
	21-40%	6	7.7	14	1.9	
	41-60%	2	2.6	1	0.1	
	61-100%	0	0.0	0	0.0	
10 Other	0%	22	71.0	361	74.4	
	1-20%	8	25.8	107	22.1	
	21-40%	1	3.2	11	2.3	
	41-60%	0	0.0	5	1.0	
	61-100%	0	0.0	1	0.2	

ANNEX F Table 8: Concordia University services used

		Parents		Non-parents		p.
		n	%	n	%	
1 Financial Aid and Awards	Yes	39	52.0	247	32.6	.001
	No	36	48.0	511	67.4	
2 Counselling and Psychological Services	Yes	9	12.7	91	12.3	.929
	No	62	87.3	648	87.7	
3 P'tit Profs (Loyola campus) Daycare	Yes	1	1.5	0	0.0	.001
	No	66	98.5	695	100.0	
4 Concordia (SGW campus) Daycare	Yes	2	3.1	5	0.7	.058
	No	63	96.9	688	99.3	
5 Career and Placement Services	Yes	8	11.1	99	13.6	.560
	No	64	88.9	631	86.4	
6 Counselling and Development	Yes	21	29.2	148	20.3	.078
	No	51	70.8	582	79.7	
7 University Residences	Yes	0	0.0	39	5.3	.049
	No	69	100	692	94.7	
8 Academic Advising	Yes	37	48.7	346	46.8	.748
	No	39	51.3	394	53.2	
9 Tutoring Services	Yes	8	10.8	115	15.7	.266
	No	66	89.2	618	84.3	
10 Health Services	Yes	20	27.0	259	35.1	.164
	No	54	73.0	479	64.9	
11 Multi-Faith Chaplaincy	Yes	4	5.8	23	3.2	.263
	No	65	94.2	691	96.8	
12 Centre for Native Education	Yes	4	5.9	4	0.6	.000
	No	64	94.1	696	99.4	
13 Access Centre for Students with Disabilities	Yes	3	4.3	13	1.8	.160
	No	67	95.7	707	98.2	
14 International Students Office	Yes	7	10.0	159	21.9	.019
	No	63	90.0	568	78.1	
15 Recreation and Athletics	Yes	11	14.5	197	26.9	.018
	No	65	85.5	534	73.1	
16 Student Learning Services	Yes	14	19.2	88	12.4	.099
	No	59	80.8	624	87.6	

17	Ombuds Office	Yes	5	7.2	15	2.1	.010
		No	64	92.8	694	97.9	
18	Office for Rights and Responsibilities	Yes	1	1.5	9	1.3	.894
		No	67	98.5	695	98.7	
19	Q2 Ally Network	Yes	0	0.0	4	0.6	.538
		No	65	100.0	685	99.4	
20	Student Success Centre	Yes	9	12.9	62	8.8	.263
		No	61	87.1	642	91.2	
21	Student Parent Centre	Yes	7	10.3	2	0.3	.000
		No	61	89.7	686	99.7	
22	Advocacy and Support Services	Yes	4	5.6	28	4.0	.536
		No	68	94.4	668	96.0	
23	Applied Psychology Centre	Yes	2	3.0	10	1.5	.351
		No	65	97.0	666	98.5	
24	Shuttle Bus Services	Yes	45	59.2	488	65.2	.295
		No	31	40.8	260	34.8	
25	Concordia Libraries	Yes	64	84.2	699	92.7	.010
		No	12	15.8	55	7.3	