Chapter 7: STUDENT INTERVIEW PROJECT

Who takes it?
Volunteers from a random sample of undergraduates complete the Student Interview Project. The University Assessment Committee selects one or more class levels (e.g., first year students, seniors) from which the sample is drawn.

When is it administered?
The Interview Project is administered during the first half of the spring semester.

How long does it take for the student to complete the interview?
The interview plus accompanying questionnaires require about 30 minutes.

What office administers it?
The Interview Project is administered by the University Assessment Committee and the Chair of the Student Interview Project, plus additional volunteers, including students, faculty, and University administrators. Interviews are conducted by a faculty member or administrator plus a student co-interviewer.

Who originates the questions?
The University Assessment Committee and the Chair of the Student Interview Project write and assemble the project materials.

When are results typically available?
Results are usually available at the end of the summer following data collection.

What type of information is sought?
The University Assessment Committee selects questions based on current curricular or cocurricular topics of interest to the University. In 2011, interviewees discussed the academic stress they experience as students at Truman State University.

From whom are the results available?
Results of the Interview Project are available from the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs Office and the Chair of the Interview Project.

To whom are the results typically available?
Results are available to the Assessment Committee and the University community through University-wide conferences and this Almanac.

Are the results available by division or department?
Results are not broken down by division or department.

Are the results comparable to data of other universities?
The results are not directly comparable with other institutions.

Student Interview Project 2011

Topic: Academic Stress

Truman State University

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Student Interview Project 2011
Executive Summary

The 2011 Student Interview Project focused on student academic stress. The 2009 and 2010 Quality of Life studies had found that mood and emotions ranked lowest among nine quality of life domains, that mood and emotions had a strong negative correlation with overall student well-being, and that the majority of interviewees with poor mood and emotions attributed them to a stressful, demanding academic workload. In addition, national surveys show that students experience high levels of stress, as is the case across the country. High levels of stress, if not dealt with effectively, are known to contribute to negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, health and well-being, and retention. The 2011 Student Interview Project was therefore designed to: (1) measure the extent of self-reported general and academic stress at Truman, (2) identify the domains of academic life that students experience as most and least stressful, and (3) find out how students explain the levels of stress they experience across different academic domains. Participants completed a survey that included perceived general stress levels, perceived academic stress, academic control, and quality of student-faculty relationships. In the interviews, individual students talked about the two highest and the two lowest sources of academic stress they identified on the survey, and explained why each category is or is not a major source of stress for them. They were also asked for suggestions for reducing academic and coping with stress.

While many students express concern about the levels of stress they are dealing with, most students recognize that hard work and some degree of stress are part of academic life. Areas of academic life that are most often identified as creating high levels of stress for students are multiple back-to-back assignments, the amount of work required in classes, grade concerns, studying for tests, and getting into classes. The explanations students offer for why these areas are highly stressful generally fall into two groups – those that emphasize faculty responsibility (open communication, clarity of expectations, and flexibility), and those that emphasize student responsibility. For the most part, Truman students are willing to take responsibility for engaging in stress management by making good use of their time, being well organized and having a good attitude, and by finding outlets for their stress through exercise, social activities, etc. However, participants suggest that students who are making their best effort to manage their academic stress can only balance the multiple demands they face if their professors are willing to work with them by communicating clear expectations and requirements, being open and available to answer questions, being flexible in response to overlapping test schedules and due dates, and providing adequate materials and study resources. Areas frequently associated with low stress levels include effectiveness of teaching, participating in class discussions, faculty communication, advising, feedback, and faculty availability. Student attributions for low levels of stress in these domains also cluster in two groups: those that emphasize individual self-confidence and a sense of academic control (or perceived ability to achieve positive outcomes with hard work), and those that emphasize positive interactions with faculty. In other words, self-confidence and academic control and good relationships with faculty seem to play particularly important roles in reducing student stress. Reducing academic stress may therefore call for finding ways of increasing students' perception of choice and control over their academic lives and building confidence in their ability to work hard and succeed, as well as fostering mentoring and advising relationships between faculty and students.

Background and Rationale

The annual Student Interview Project addresses issues relevant to Truman State University students' experiences. Past years' interview topics have included costs and benefits of students' leadership and service learning participation (Vittengl, Wessel, & Wooldridge, 2006), faculty and staff influences on students' engagement in college life (Vittengl, Bozeman, & Schmidt, 2008) and students' quality of life (Vittengl, Bozeman, & Constance, 2009; McDuff, Beuke, & Lesher, 2010).

The 2011 Student Interview Project focused on student academic stress, in response to the 2009 and 2010 Quality of Life studies, which found that mood and emotions ranked lowest among nine quality of life domains, that mood and emotions had a strong negative correlation with overall student well-being, and that the majority of interviewees with poor mood and emotions attributed it to a stressful, demanding academic workload. In fact, about one-fifth of the entire combined sample of students participating in the 2009 and 2010 interviews (not just students with poor mood and emotions) said directly that prospective students should be told about the stressful academic life at Truman State University, and nearly one-third of all interviewees phrased similar ideas more positively by commenting that prospective students should be told about the strong academic quality and high expectations of the University. Further, almost one-fourth of students who experienced health as a low point in quality of life saw their health concerns as the result of academic stress.

On the other hand, interviewees in both 2009 and 2010 with good mood and emotions frequently attributed their high quality of life to strong interpersonal relationships. Students with a positive social life often attributed their success to involvement in campus organizations and associated friendships, and students whose quality of life was positive in regard to academic

achievement identified rewarding interactions with faculty/staff as the second most common cause (after personal challenges and accomplishments). One interpretation of this pattern of results is that positive social relationships, including relationships with faculty, may facilitate well-being (or at least buffer stress) in a rigorous academic environment. Further, students who identified academics as a high point in their quality of life often mentioned having some choice and control in the academic realm. Almost a third of students in 2010 for whom academics were a high point made positive comments about the quality and variety of available courses from which they could choose. On the other hand, half of the interviewees for whom academics were a low point in 2010 mentioned lack of support from faculty and staff (difficulty getting overrides, problems with advisors and the registration office, or a lack of research opportunities) reflecting a perception of limited choice or control.

Student stress levels are not uniquely high at Truman. Recent studies have shown that stress is increasing on college campuses across the country (Freshman Study 2010; ACHA 2010; MCHBS 2010). The Higher Education Research Institute's 2010 Freshman Study, which includes responses from 200,000 first-time, first-year, full-time students at 4-year schools, found the lowest self-reported emotional health in 25 years. On the American College Health Association's 2010 national research survey, 51.4% of students reported more than average stress in the last 12 months, and 25.4% of students reported that stress impacts their academic performance. On the 2010 Missouri College Health and Behavior Survey (MCHBS), 82.4% of students indicated feeling stressed during the past two weeks, with 28.4% saying they felt extremely stressed. And 39% of MCHBS respondents reported that stress has substantially impacted or interfered with their academic lives. Truman students reported similarly high or higher levels of stress on each of these instruments.

High levels of stress, if not dealt with effectively, are known to contribute to a variety of negative outcomes. In a university setting, these can include academic performance, health and well-being, and retention (Kohn and Frazer, 1986; Campbell and Svenson, 1992; Abougerie, 1994; Misra, McKean, West, and Russo, 2000; Struthers, Perry and Menec, 2000; Zajacova, Lynch and Espenshade, 2005). Given the potential for serious problems related to student stress, and existing indicators of high stress levels among Truman students, the 2011 Student Interview Project was designed to: (1) measure the extent of self-reported general and academic stress at Truman, (2) identify the domains of academic life that students experience as most and least stressful, and (3) find out how students explain the levels of stress they experience across different academic domains. Participants were asked to complete a survey instrument that included measures of: (1) perceived general stress levels, and (2) perceived academic stress. In the interviews, individual students were asked to talk about the two highest and the two lowest sources of academic stress they identified on the survey, and to explain why each category is or is not a major source of stress for them. They were also asked for suggestions for reducing academic stress, and for helping students cope with stress. The following are the 15 categories or domains of academic stressors included in the survey instrument (as identified by Truman students in a series of focus groups in fall semester 2010):

- multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different classes
- amount of work required in classes
- keeping a high enough GPA
- group projects
- studying for tests
- getting into required/desired classes
- co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement
- balancing work and classes
- effectiveness of teaching
- participating in class discussions
- consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors
- communication by faculty about expectations and due dates of assignments

- academic advising
- getting timely feedback on homework and tests
- faculty availability

In keeping with findings from the 2009 and 2010 interview projects at Truman, several studies have found that positive associations between students and faculty can serve as a stress buffer for students. Pascarella (1980) found significant positive associations between extent and quality of student-faculty informal contact outside of the classroom and students' educational aspirations, their academic achievement, intellectual and personal development, and their institutional persistence. Wilson et al. (1975) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1976) found that frequency of informal non-class contacts for advising, career counseling, and intellectual discussion are significantly and positively associated with student satisfaction with academic and nonacademic college experiences. In addition, studies have found that students who build social support networks over time with both faculty and peers have greater resources for managing stress and the anxiety of demanding school work (Allen and Hiebert, 1991; Rawson, Bloomer and Kendall, 1994). Further, Clifton, Perry, Stubbs, and Roberts (2004) find that students who have more interaction with professors develop a stronger sense of academic control and better coping strategies, which in turn contributes to academic achievement.

Another finding of the 2009 and 2010 quality of life interviews which is supported by studies of academic stress is that student stress can be reduced through effective time management and/or student perceptions that they have control of their academic time schedules and performance levels (Brown, 1991; Macan, Shahani, Dipboye, and Phillips, 1990; Peacock and Wong, 1990). Nonis, Hudson, Logan and Ford (1998) found that students who perceive high levels of control over their time experience lower levels of stress, and higher levels of academic performance, problem-solving ability, and health, relative to students who perceive

low levels of academic control, regardless of actual time management behaviors.   Thus, it is not time management per se but the perception that a student has control over time and task management that has the most significant impact on stress and stress-related outcomes (Nonis et al., 1998).   Zajacova, Lynch, and Epenshade (2005) conclude that academic self-efficacy and academic control serve to moderate the effect of stressors on perceived stress for college students, and increase academic success and persistence.   Similarly, Macan et al. (1990) find that students who feel that they are in control of their academic work are more confident about their academic performance and experience lower levels of stress.

Given the evidence of a connection between faculty relationships and academic control (Clifton et. al, 2004), and support for a significant impact of both on student academic stress and academic achievement (Zajacova et al., 2005; Nonis et al., 1998; Pascarella, 1980), it was expected that faculty-student relationships and academic control would be positively correlated for students at Truman, and that each would have a significant association with student stress and its outcomes.   Measures of academic control and quality of student-faculty relationships were therefore included along with the two stress measures in the questionnaire in hopes of gathering information that could inform university efforts to reduce and/or help students manage their academic stress at Truman.

Methodology

Focus Groups

In the fall 2010 semester, 8 focus groups met and discussed major sources of academic stress at Truman.   In order to encourage open sharing on a potentially sensitive topic, groups were led by trained student moderators, along with a student assistant who took notes and recorded the session.   Each focus group session lasted approximately one hour, and a full

transcript of each discussion was later entered into a database by student workers. There were five or six participants in most sessions, with one group of ten participants. Discussions in the focus groups centered around responses to the question, "What are some of the main areas in which you experience stress in your classes and in regard to your schoolwork?" The main themes that emerged from the sessions in response to the central question were identified and used to create an academic stress scale for use in the Student Interview Project. Student participants in the focus groups were recruited from a random sample of 200 Truman students, with the exception of one focus group which was made up entirely of African-American students, in order to be sure to include diverse perspectives on sources of academic stress at Truman.

Student Interviews

Participants

Participants (N = 114) were undergraduates at Truman State University. Most participants (63%) were women and 37% were men; 5% were African American or black; 10% Asian American, Asian, or Pacific Islanders; 83% Caucasian or white non-Hispanic; and 1% reported other ethnicities. Participants were of traditional college age (mean = 20.0 years, range 18-23); 28.1% described themselves as first-year students, 25.4% sophomores, 23.7% juniors, and 22.8% seniors. These percentages are comparable to the overall demographics of the student body, suggesting that the sample is reasonably representative of students at Truman.

Participants were recruited from a university-wide random sample of 450 undergraduates with introductory letters from the University President's Office and email contacts by student Interview Project team members (a 25% response rate). Students were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their names would not be reported with their interview or questionnaire data.

Procedure

Each participant attended one assessment session, and completed a short battery of questionnaires (about 10 minutes). Interview project staff reviewed each participant's academic stress questionnaire immediately after it was completed to select the two lowest and two highest sources of academic stress to discuss during the interview (see Appendices A-C). High stress in regard to an item was defined as a rating of 4 to 7 on a 7-point scale, and low stress was defined as a rating of 1 to 3. In the case of ties (e.g. three or more 7s), a random number table was used to select items for discussion. Instructions used for both the academic stress questionnaire and the interview mentioned that "the potential academic stressors on the questionnaire are ones that were identified in student-led focus group discussions of academic stress at Truman in the fall of 2010." This information was included in order to inform participants that the potential stressors being discussed represent areas of academic life that many students experience as stressful. Participants then completed an interview (roughly 10-20 minutes) conducted jointly by a volunteer faculty or staff member (N = 44) paired with a volunteer student co-interviewer (N = 40).

Measures

General Stress. The Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein, 1983) was used to measure general stress, which is the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. The Perceived Stress Scale is a 10-item, widely used and validated inventory (Cohen et al., 1983) which asks participants to rate items on a 5-point scale of agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A total score is derived by summing the item ratings. Alpha internal consistency reliability for the well-being scale was acceptable (.82) in the current sample.

Academic Stress. Participants rated their level of academic stress in relation to each of 15 domains of academic stressors identified by approximately 50 Truman students participating in focus groups in fall 2010 (see Appendix A). Participants rated domains on a 7-point scale from not stressful (1) to highly stressful (7). Item ratings on the academic stress screening questionnaire were summed to provide a total measure of academic stress, and also served as the basis for selecting interview questions (see Appendix A). Alpha internal consistency reliability for the academic stress scale was .79 for the student sample.

Academic Control. Perceived academic control was measured with eight items from a widely used questionnaire assessing the extent to which students believe they can influence their desired level of academic achievement, and monitor and adjust their goal-striving efforts (Perry, Hladkyj, Pekrun, and Pelletier, 1998). Participants rated items on a 5-point scale of agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A total measure of academic control was derived from summing the item ratings, and the alpha internal consistency reliability for the sample was .71.

Quality of Student-Faculty Relationships. Quality of student-faculty relationships was measured with two items: "I am comfortable talking with one or more of my professors at Truman about questions or concerns I have regarding class assignments, and/or expectations in a particular course," and "I am comfortable talking with one or more of my professors at Truman about questions or concerns I have regarding requirements and other issues related to work in my major." Students rated each item on a 5-point scale of agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Overall quality of relationships with faculty was measured for each student by summing responses to the two items.

Interview

The semi-structured interview contained five questions about sources of students' academic stress (see Appendix C). Interviewers were instructed to ask the questions as written and to avoid follow-up questions and prompts unless an interviewee clearly misunderstood a question. Co-interviewers recorded responses independently, focusing on key words and phrases. At the conclusion of the interview, the co-interviewers compared their notes and made corrections to a designated master copy, as needed. The master copies were transcribed verbatim into a computer spreadsheet for coding.

Project co-coordinators coded dichotomous (present=1, absent=0) response categories (see Appendix D for categories and sample responses). Separate sets of 3-10 response categories were developed and utilized for each of the fifteen academic stress domains as high points and as low points (30 sets covering interview questions 1-4), as well as for participants' summary comments (1 set for question 5). Eight sets of categories had insufficient data to be included in the analysis. For the 8 sets of categories applicable to < 19 participants (e.g., 9 interviewees discussed getting into required/desired classes as a relatively low source of academic stress), co-coordinators coded all participants' responses together. For the 12 sets of categories applicable to > 20 participants (e.g., 38 interviewees discussed keeping a high enough GPA for scholarships or graduate school as a relatively high source of academic stress), co-coordinators coded 80% of participants' responses together, and coded 20% of participants' responses independently to check the reliability of the coding system. Coders' agreement was high (93%), and their inter-rater reliability was adequate in a random effects multilevel model (intraclass correlation = .78). Coders discussed and resolved disagreements before further analysis.

Results

Levels of General Stress and Academic Stress reported on Questionnaires

Participants' average general stress level in the sample was 31.9 (M=31.9, SD=3.1) out of a possible total score of 50, which is substantially higher than the norm groups from the general population as reported by Cohen et al. (1983); no comparison data is available for college student samples, but 18-29 year olds in Cohen et al.'s (1983) sample had an average general stress level of 17.8 (M=17.8, SD=6.2).

Perceived academic stress levels varied across the 15 domains, from 91.2% of participants reporting high stress related to multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different classes, to only 14.9% reporting high stress related to faculty availability (mean stress levels in each domain are reported in Table 1).   All domains except for group projects and participating in class discussions were significantly correlated with perceived general stress levels.   Multiple back-to-back assignments and tests, amount of work required in classes and studying for tests had a strong and highly significant relationship with general stress; getting into required/desired classes, co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement, balancing work and classes, communication by faculty about expectations and due dates, and getting timely feedback on homework and test had a moderate and highly significant relationship with general stress; and keeping a high enough GPA, consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors, academic advising, and faculty availability had a moderately strong and moderately significant relationship with general stress.   These results suggest variations in the importance of domains for overall student stress.

TABLE 1:   RATINGS OF ACADEMIC STRESS CATEGORIES AND CORRELATIONS WITH OVERALL STRESS (N=114)

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Perceived as High Stress category	Perceived as Low Stress category	Correlation with overall stress
Multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different classes	5.50	1.36	91.2%	8.8%	.451**
Amount of work required in classes	4.51	1.50	73.7%	26.3%	.443**
Keeping a high enough GPA for scholarships and grad school	4.45	2.04	68.4%	31.6%	.228*
Group Projects	4.04	1.61	64%	36%	.172
Studying for Tests	4.32	1.55	60.5%	39.5%	.433**
Getting into Required/Desired Classes	4.10	2.03	58.8%	41.2%	.289**
Co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement	3.17	1.80	41.2%	58.8%	.269**
Balancing work and classes	2.61	2.32	39.5%	60.5%	.253**
Effectiveness of teaching	2.85	1.58	31.6%	68.4%	.289**
Participating in class discussions	2.61	1.57	28.1%	71.9%	.135
Consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors	2.35	1.79	28.1%	71.9%	.194*
Communication by faculty about expectations and due dates of assignments	2.70	1.39	25.4%	74.6%	.298**
Academic Advising	2.40	1.46	23.7%	76.3%	.225*
Getting timely feedback on	2.49	1.42	21.9%	78.1%	.244**

homework and tests					
Faculty Availability	2.08	1.32	14.9%	85.1%	.238*

*p<.05, 2-tailed; **p<.01, 2-tailed

Interviewees' Explanations for High and Low Levels of Academic Stress in regard to each domain

In the interviews, students identified factors that made a particular domain a major source of stress for them (meaning it was rated as highly stressful, very stressful, stressful, or moderately stressful), or factors that helped to limit or buffer stress in relation to that domain (meaning it was rated as mildly stressful, slightly stressful, or not stressful).   Response categories (for factors which were frequently mentioned by students) are listed in the following tables, and examples of specific interview responses fitting each category appear in Appendix D.

Multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different classes. Students who identified multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different classes as a high source of academic stress tended to emphasize problems with (1) the timing of tests and assignments, and faculty communication, coordination, and flexibility, and (2) students' time management skills.   No students discussed this domain as a low source of stress in the interviews.

Table 2: Explanations for MULTIPLE BACK-TO-BACK ASSIGNMENTS AND TESTS IN DIFFERENT CLASSES as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=56)	
Multiple assignments at the same time	41.1%
Personal time management issues	41.1%
Multiple tests at the same time	33.3%
Need better inter-departmental and intra-departmental communication	23.2%
Professors could be more flexible	19.6%

Need better communication of requirements and due dates	17.9%
Major/graduation requirements make it difficult to avoid taking multiple difficult classes	14.3%
Hard to prioritize	12.5%
Extracurricular commitments	10.7%
Low Stress Codes (N=0)	
Insufficient data	

Amount of work required in classes.   Students who find the amount of work required in classes at Truman to be a relatively high source of stress commented primarily on the challenges of multiple difficult assignments, feeling overwhelmed with the amount of reading, and a need for clearer faculty expectations.   A substantial number of students, however, mentioned that students need to learn better time management skills, and acknowledged that extracurricular activities can interfere with the time required for class work.   Only one student discussed this domain as a low source of stress in an interview, providing insufficient data for analysis.

Table 3: Explanations for AMOUNT OF WORK REQUIRED IN CLASSES as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=24)	
Hard to balance work in multiple classes	45.8%
Students need better time management	37.5%
Difficult tests and papers	37.5%
Too many assignments	33.3%
Too much reading	29.2%
Need clearer expectations	25%
Requirements are stressful (labs, LSPs, etc.)	25%

Extracurriculars interfere with classes	12.5%
Low Stress Codes (N=1)	
Insufficient data	

Keeping a high enough GPA for scholarships and grad school. The majority of students who discussed keeping a high GPA as a high source of stress commented on the high GPA requirement at Truman for keeping student scholarships. Other important factors that students mentioned were grad school admission requirements and scholarships, and the high academic expectations Truman students have for themselves. Participants suggested that the most challenging and stressful period for making good grades is the initial period of transition from high school, until they learn better time management and how to meet faculty expectations. Students who experience low stress in relation to their GPA either tend to find it easy to earn good grades, or they feel confident that with hard work they can be successful. Others mentioned the benefits of getting off to a good start as freshmen, and of having a relatively laid-back attitude about grades.

Table 4: Explanations for KEEPING A HIGH ENOUGH GPA FOR SCHOLARSHIPS OR GRADUATE SCHOOL as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=38)	
Truman scholarships/need a lower GPA requirement	68.5%
Grad school admission and scholarships	39.5%
Important for post-undergraduate success	28.9%
Challenging class requirements	28.9%
Internal pressures to make good grades	23.7%
Feel a need to work harder/time management	15.8%

Difficult transition from high school	13.2%
Need more faculty/advisor communication	13.2%
Other sources of grade pressure	7.9%
Low Stress Codes (N=8)	
Not hard to get good grades	37.5%
Work very hard	37.5%
Started off well as a freshman	37.5%
Confident/laid back attitude toward grades	25%
Focus on learning, not grades	25%
No grad school plans	25%

Group Projects. A majority of participants who find group projects to be highly stressful attribute their stress to a lack of choice of members of the group, and an inability to trust group members to make equal contributions to the project.   Almost half would prefer individual grades to shared grades, and more than a third find it difficult to coordinate schedules, especially with people they don't know.   About a fourth of participants attribute the problems of group work to conflicts among students due to different working styles or communication problems, and 15% would always prefer an individual option for projects.   Only two students discussed this domain as a low source of stress in the interviews, providing insufficient data for analysis.

Table 5: Explanations for GROUP PROJECTS as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=20)	
Want to pick groups, not be assigned	55%
Unequal input from group members	50%
Don't like sharing a grade	45%

Difficult to coordinate schedules	35%
Better to work with people you know	35%
Students have working style differences	25%
Contact/communication problems	20%
Would prefer an individual work option	15%
Low Stress Codes (N=2)	
Insufficient data	

Studying for tests. A majority of participants who discussed studying for tests as a high source of academic stress believe that much of their stress comes from not having study guides that can organize and direct their test preparation. More than a fourth of students find studying for tests to be stressful because it takes so much time, because tests count for such a high percentage of course grades, because tests cover so much material (especially midterms or finals), and because they demand memorization of facts and figures. About 20% find it hard to balance studying for tests with their other work, and would like professors to offer more review sessions. None of the participants discussed studying for tests as a low source of academic stress in the interviews.

Table 6: Explanations for STUDYING FOR TESTS as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress.

High Stress Codes (N=11)	
Need study guides	54.5%
Time consuming	27.3%
Tests worth a lot	27.3%
Too much material	27.3%
Emphasis on memorizing	27.3%

Hard to balance with other work	18.2%
Need reviews	18.2%
Low Stress Codes (N=0)	
Insufficient data	

Getting into required/desired classes. Many of the students who experience high levels of

stress because of problems getting into required/desired classes expressed concern about

inadequate information about the registration process, or technical difficulties with computer

registration.   Others mentioned problems due to late registration schedules, and an inability to

get overrides. Students who did not find getting into classes to be a source of stress attributed the

lack of problems to their ability to get overrides, helpful advisors, a major that offers several

options for classes, or familiarity with the registration process.

**Table 7: Explanations for GETTING INTO REQUIRED/DESIRED CLASSES as a relatively
HIGH or LOW source of academic   stress**

High Stress Codes (N=25)	
Getting into required classes	40%
Need information about the process	36%
Technical difficulties with registration	32%
Getting into desired classes	28%
Lacks credits to register early	24%
Problems with overrides	20%
Don't like 5 pm registration	12%
Low Stress Codes (N=9)	
Can get overrides	33.3%
Helpful advisor	22.2%

Personal flexibility about classes	22.2%
Helpful major	22.2%
Experienced with the process	11.1%
General classes are easily available	11.1%

Co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement. Both the group of students who experience co-curricular/extra-curricular involvement as a relatively high source of stress, and those who experience such involvement as a relatively low source of stress, tend to be active in clubs, sports, and other organizations, but they experience that involvement differently.   Those who find their involvement to be stressful talked about feeling overwhelmed by high expectations for time commitment and engagement; this was especially the case for activities perceived as necessary for grad school or careers.   Also, some students involved in sports expressed concern about conflicts between the expectations of teachers and coaches.   On the other hand, students who experience little stress related to co-curricular or extra-curricular involvements mentioned not being involved in very many activities, or a perception of those activities as stress-reducers rather than stress-creators.

Table 8:   Explanations for CO-CURRICULAR OR EXTRA-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress.

High Stress Codes (N=12)	
Conflict with academics	50%
Time commitment: clubs and organizations	41.7%
Hard to balance activities	33.3%
Time commitment: sports	25%
Teacher/coach lack of cooperation	16.7%

Personal time management issue	16.7%
Activities required for graduate school	8.3%
Other	25%
Low Stress Codes (N=10)	
Not involved in too many activities	40%
Good stress outlet	40%
Personal benefits of involvement	40%
Activities are fun	30%
Activities aren't too demanding	30%
Offer a good break from academics	30%
Good for resume	30%

Balancing work and classes. Most students who discussed having a difficult time
balancing work and classes mentioned financial needs that make it extremely difficult to avoid
the stress of competing time demands; apparently jobs that pay reasonably well are not very
student-friendly when it comes to managing work/school conflicts.   The students who don't find
their work to be problematic generally talked about having found a job that IS student-friendly,
or not needing to work.

Table 9: Explanations for BALANCING WORK AND CLASSES as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress.

High Stress Codes (N=8)	
Work conflicts with academics	100%
Need the money	62.5%
Need more scholarships/jobs through school	50%
Low Stress Codes (N=7)	

Job is easy	42.9%
Can do homework at work	28.6%
Good time management	28.6%
Don't have a job	28.6%

Effectiveness of teaching. None of the interviews focused on effectiveness of classroom teaching as a high source of stress. Students who talked about effectiveness of classroom teaching as a low source of stress frequently mentioned knowledgeable professors who communicate clearly and effectively with students, who have positive teaching styles, and who are approachable. They also suggested that effective teaching and learning is the responsibility of BOTH faculty and students.

Table 10: Explanations for EFFECTIVENESS OF CLASSROOM TEACHING as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=0)	
Insufficient data	
Low Stress Codes (N=20)	
Good professors – clear/knowledgeable teachers	45%
Student responsibility to learn	35%
Like or can adapt to teaching styles of most profs	25%
Profs are approachable	20%
No problems with profs	20%
Have good class notes	15%
Provide study guides	15%

Participating in class discussions. Most of the students who talked about participating

in class discussions as a high source of stress acknowledged that they are shy and uncomfortable with speaking in public, especially in front of people they know.   Students who talked about experiencing little stress when participating in class discussions perceive themselves as confident and well-prepared, and feel that most faculty are supportive and helpful in encouraging student contributions.

Table 11:   Explanations for PARTICIPATING IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress.

High Stress Codes (N=7)	
Shy	71.4%
Necessary in smaller classes	42.9%
Need more practice	28.6%
Would prefer that less be required	28.6%
Can't speak/communicate thoughts well	14.3%
Need more professor prompting	14.3%
More difficult when know other students	14.3%
Low Stress Codes (N=27)	
Confident	59.3%
Encouraging professors	25.9%
Experienced	22.2%
Less stress in small classes	22.2%
Well-prepared	18.5%
Enjoyable	18.5%
Responsibility of students	11.1%

Consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors.   Most of the students

who consider consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors to be problematic emphasized lack of clarity in regard to curricular requirements, or suggested that some LSP requirements are unnecessary and irrelevant.   Those who did not consider this domain to be problematic commented that curricular requirements are clear and reasonable (in their major), and that their advisors have helped them develop a reasonable 4-year plan.

Table 12: Explanations for CONSISTENCY OF BA/BS AND CURRICULAR REQUIREMENTS ACROSS MAJORS as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=8)	
Need more clarity of communication/requirements	62.5%
Some LSP courses are irrelevant	50%
LSP courses can be too difficult	25%
Too many curricular requirements	25%
Want to graduate in 4 years	12.5%
Other	12.5%
Low Stress Codes (N=20)	
Requirements are clear	35%
Good advisors	25%
Students know what is expected	25%
Major is reasonable	20%
Have a 4-year plan	10%
Other	30%

Communication by faculty about expectations and due dates of assignments.   Only one student discussed communication by faculty as a high source of stress.   Students who did not indicate having problems related to faculty communication commented that they receive regular

and consistent communication from their professors, either in class or electronically (e.g.

Blackboard), and that most professors are approachable and available.

Table 13: Explanations for COMMUNICATION BY FACULTY ABOUT EXPECTATIONS AND DATES OF ASSIGNMENTS as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=1)	
Insufficient data	
Low Stress Codes (N=21)	
Consistent communication	57.1%
Continual communication/reminders/updates	42.9%
Use of blackboard	38.1%
Approachable/available	28.6%
Other	19%

Academic Advising.   Again, only one student discussed academic advising as a high

stress domain, providing insufficient data for analysis.   Most students who considered academic

advising to be a low source of stress commented on the friendliness, knowledge, accessibility,

and helpfulness of most academic advisors.   Other students said that they get most of their

advice from other teachers or students, rather than from an academic advisor.

Table 14: Explanations for ACADEMIC ADVISING as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=1)	
Insufficient data	
Low Stress Codes (N=34)	
Friendly/approachable	44.1%
Knowledgeable/good resource	38.2%
Available/accessible	35.3%
Generally helpful	23.5%

Get advice from other teachers or students	20.6%
Able to receive nonacademic advice	17.6%
Don't need an advisor	14.7%
Clear communication	11.8%

Getting timely feedback on homework and tests. With only two students commenting on feedback as a high source of stress, no analysis was possible. A majority of participants who discussed feedback as a low source of stress indicated that they are satisfied with the timeliness and quality of feedback they receive from professors, or commented on reasons why they don't feel a need for formal feedback. Some also mentioned their ability to be patient, even if feedback is slow, since they are aware of the demanding workload of faculty.

Table 15: Explanations for GETTING TIMELY FEEDBACK ON HOMEWORK AND TESTS as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=2)	
Insufficient data	
Low Stress Codes (N=26)	
Generally get timely feedback from profs	65.4%
Not concerned about feedback/can be patient	34.6%
Student already knows how he/she did	26.9%
Student can take initiative to get feedback	19.2%
Feedback received is good/helpful	15.4%
Student understands professional workload	15.4%
Student works hard regardless	11.5%

Faculty Availability. None of the interviewees discussed faculty availability as a high source of stress. Most interviewees who consider faculty availability to be a low source of

stress commented on quick email responses, a general willingness of faculty to meet during office hours, and faculty flexibility in making appointments.

Table 16: Explanations for FACULTY AVAILABILITY DURING OFFICE HOURS AND BY EMAIL as a relatively HIGH or LOW source of academic stress

High Stress Codes (N=0)	
Insufficient data	
Low Stress Codes (N=43)	
Quick email responses	53.5%
Generally willing to help/meet	41.9%
Flexible in making appointments	34.9%
Clear about office hours	11.6%
No need to meet with professors	11.6%

Correlations between perceived academic control, faculty-student relationships, and student stress levels

A sense of confidence, self-efficacy, and control over academic outcomes, and generally positive interactions with faculty both inside and outside of the classroom are themes that appear frequently in student explanations for low stress levels across the various domains, as well as in previous research.   It is therefore not surprising that the summary measures of academic control and quality of relationships with faculty are positively associated with each other, and that both are significantly negatively correlated with academic stress.   In other words, students with a high sense of academic control also tend to have positive relationships with their professors and feel comfortable talking to them and asking for help or advice, and in turn experience lower levels of academic stress.

Table 17.   Correlations between perceived academic control, faculty relationships, and student

stress (N=114).

		Overall Stress	Academic Stress	Academic Control	Faculty Relationships
Overall Stress	**Pearson correlation**	1	.539**	-.222*	-.136
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.018	.149
Academic Stress	**Pearson correlation**	.539**	1	-.291**	-.214*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.002	.022
Academic Control	**Pearson correlation**	-.222*	-.291**	1	.344**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	.002		.000
Faculty Relationships	**Pearson correlation**	-.136	-.214*	.344**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.149	.022	.000	

Summary Comments and Suggestions for Dealing with Academic Stress at Truman

When asked for their suggestions for "reducing levels of academic stress at Truman without compromising the quality of a Truman education," and ways to help students cope with stress more effectively, more than half of the students participating in the interviews commented that it is largely the responsibility of students to take advantage of existing resources for help and support – to improve their time management and organizational skills, and to have a good attitude about their academic work.   More than a third of participants encouraged students who feel stressed and overwhelmed to exercise or get involved in social activities or clubs that offer opportunities to relax and reduce their stress levels.   This does not mean getting over-extended,

but getting involved in activities while maintaining a positive balance between the academic and

non-academic parts of college life.   Interviewees even mentioned the need for students to get

enough sleep!   A fourth to a third of participants also suggested that professors should be more

open and available to talk with students, clearly communicate their expectations, cooperate with

other faculty in regard to test scheduling, offer a more reasonable set of assignments, and provide

students with more study resources.   Almost a fourth encouraged Truman faculty and

administrators to offer more mentoring, grad school help, transparent and reasonable policies

related to the LSP and academic scheduling, and an improved registration process and

scholarship system.   Some students also mentioned a need for better parking, longer rec center

and library hours, better housing, less crowded dining halls, better advising, and more effective

mechanisms for orienting freshman to the Truman community.

Table 18.   STUDENT SUGGESTIONS FOR REDUCING LEVELS OF ACADEMIC STRESS AND/OR HELPING STUDENTS COPE WITH STRESS MORE EFFECTIVELY (N=114)

Students have ability/responsibility to limit their own stress by having good time management, organization, and a good attitude; students also need to take the initiative in and out of class, using resources and being prepared	50.9%
Students should find a stress outlet through exercise, social activities, campus activities, etc. Get involved in extracurriculars but make sure you have a good balance (between school, social, organizations, and work), and get enough sleep.	36%
Professors should be open and available to talk with students, have and communicate clear expectations and requirements, and cooperate with other faculty regarding test scheduling and flexibility.	33.3%
Professors need to be organized and effective in providing students with materials and study resources, while holding students accountable. There should be less busy work and more productive smaller assignments/quizzes, with big assignments spaced out.	23.7%

Truman as an institution could do more to improve its relationship with students through transparency, accommodation, mentoring, grad school help, and two-way communication.	22.8%
Re-evaluation of administrative policy in regard to LSP, academic year , scheduling, alcohol policy, etc. Also improve registration process and scholarship system.	19.3%
More/better facilities/services including parking, library hours and resources, more rec center hours and classes, better housing facilities, and less crowded dining halls.	11.5%
Advisors need to be more effective in helping students plan out their years at Truman, make informed decisions, and be aware of all of the their academic options and opportunities .	7.9%
Need to create more support for freshman, in regard to finding appropriate activities, making social connections, and facilitating faculty interaction, but in a low-stress environment. Freshman should be discouraged from biting off more than they can chew.	7.0%

Summary and Conclusions

Clearly students experience high levels of stress at Truman, as is the case at campuses across the country.   While many students express concern about the levels of stress they are dealing with, most students recognize that hard work and some degree of stress are part and parcel of academic life.   Areas of academic life that are most often identified as creating high levels of stress for students are multiple back-to-back assignments, the amount of work required in classes, grade concerns, studying for tests, and getting into classes. The explanations students offer for why these areas are highly stressful generally fall into two groups – those that emphasize faculty responsibility (open communication, clarity of expectations, and flexibility), and those that emphasize student responsibility.   For the most part, Truman students are willing to take responsibility for engaging in stress management by making good use of their time, being well organized and having a good attitude, and by finding outlets for their stress through

exercise, social activities, etc. However, participant comments suggest that students who are making their best effort to manage their academic stress can only balance the multiple demands they face if their professors are willing to work with them by communicating clear expectations and requirements, being open and available to answer questions, being flexible in response to overlapping test schedules and due dates, and providing adequate materials and study resources.

Areas frequently associated with low stress levels include effectiveness of teaching, participating in class discussions, faculty communication, advising, feedback, and faculty availability. Student attributions for low levels of stress in these domains, as well as explanations for why keeping a high GPA and studying for tests create little stress for some participants, also tend to cluster in two groups: those that emphasize individual self-confidence and a sense of academic control (or perceived ability to achieve positive outcomes with hard work), and those that emphasize positive interactions with faculty. In other words, self-confidence and academic control and good relationships with faculty seem to play particularly important roles in reducing student stress. This is supported by the significant negative correlations found between academic control, positive faculty-student relationships, and academic stress (see Table 16). Reducing academic stress may therefore call for finding ways of increasing students' perception of choice and control over their academic lives and building confidence in their ability to work hard and succeed, as well as fostering mentoring and advising relationships between faculty and students both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition, faculty may need to take a closer look at assignments like group projects and re-think how to accomplish desired goals without creating so much stress for students. Beyond the contributions of faculty and students, staff and administration may need to consider student concerns about registration, scholarship renewal requirements, scholarship jobs, recreation center and library

hours, and academic advising, especially for freshmen (see Table 18), if the goal is to reduce

student stress levels and improve academic performance and retention.

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Appendix A

Academic Stress Screening Questionnaire

Instructions: Indicate the degree of stress you typically experience in regard to each of the following potential stressors by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. The items included are ones that were frequently mentioned by Truman students who participated in focus group discussions on academic stress in Fall 2010.   Please be open and honest in your responses.

0=not applicable, 1=not stressful, 2=slightly stressful, 3=mildly stressful, 4=moderately stressful, 5=stressful, 6=very stressful, 7=highly stressful

_____1. Academic advising

_____2. Communication by faculty about expectations and due dates of assignments

_____3. Faculty availability during office hours and by email

_____ 4. Amount of work required in classes

_____5. Effectiveness of classroom teaching

_____6. Getting timely feedback on homework and tests

_____7. Keeping a high enough GPA for scholarships or graduate school

_____8. Getting into required/desired classes

_____9. Group projects

_____10. Multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different classes

_____11. Consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors

_____12. Co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement (sports, clubs and organizations, etc.)

_____13. Balancing work and classes

_____14. Participating in class discussions

_____15. Studying for tests

_____16. Other (specify) _____

Appendix B

Process for Identifying High Stress and Low Stress categories from the Questionnaire for the Interview

1. A member of the Interview Project team collects the questionnaire from the student and identifies the high and low stress areas for use in the interview.

2. Items with ratings of *4, 5, 6 or 7* qualify as high stress areas. The two items with the highest ratings serve as high stress categories. If fewer than two items have ratings of *5, 6, or 7*, then the interview will include one or no high stress areas. In the event of a tie among high stress items, items are chosen randomly to break the tie (see step 4 below).

3. Items with ratings of *1, 2, or 3* qualify as low stress areas. The two items with the lowest satisfaction ratings serve as low points. If fewer than two items have ratings of *very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral/unsure*, then the interview will include one or no low points. In the event of a tie among items as low points, items are chosen randomly to break the tie (see step 4 below).

4. Resolving ties: Read the digits from left to right in the random number table below. (Cross out digits as you read them so that they are not used more than once.) Select the item or items whose numbers first match the random digits.

Random Digits

2039 2993 4362 6363 2914 4955 6364 5237 6456 5561
0176 2425 2968 3834 6077 4302 3499 9938 7231 2136
2161 1365 2764 7836 1584 2421 4247 2930 0783 9989
0407 1760 7048 1929 9034 0242 0753 4851 9465 0791
0055 7981 7760 2215 3323 4727 8884 8066 7965 3939
0726 2104 9164 6275 5464 4073 1715 3215 7883 8087
2475 9583 8713 1445 2702 4952 4307 5796 2913 0589
0686 1266 4341 9760 9608 5773 7394 9333 4752 8395
4223 4033 3734 8221 2055 5131 0065 1626 7742 5806
9596 5241 3230 3269 4836 9776 2894 5740 1557 2515
1581 5007 6906 8933 9981 3175 4979 4525 5334 6038
6558 6350 1273 6164 7125 1481 3084 1517 4748 0956
1974 7635 1129 0593 7963 3817 0148 1377 5165 6568
8671 4147 7231 3509 9032 4233 9087 3328 9044 3152
0979 6984 8428 7697 8859 5363 2984 2649 9244 7035
0635 0334 7219 7422 9571 1053 5954 4040 5777 2440

Interview Instructions and Questions

Instructions Read by Interviewers to Interviewees

[Co-interviewers alternate reading the paragraphs below.]

We would like to learn about students' experiences at Truman State University. In particular, we would like to better understand what contributes to academic stress for students at Truman State. You just completed a questionnaire about academic stress. The potential academic stressors included on the questionnaire were identified in student-led focus group discussions of academic stress at Truman in the Fall of 2010. Based on your responses, we will ask you about areas of high and low academic stress for you at Truman. Specific answers will help us identify areas that are frequently problematic for students and need to be addressed, as well as helpful strategies for managing potential stressors.

The Interview Project team will combine many students' answers in reports to the University administration, faculty, and staff. Interview reports will not include your name, so you may speak freely. You are not required to share information that you prefer to keep private or feel uncomfortable discussing.

What questions do you have before we begin?

[Clarify and reassure, as needed.]

2011 Student Interview Project Questions

Academic Stress: High Stress Area A

Questionnaire Item Number _____   Stress Category _____

1. On the questionnaire, [category] *was an area you identified as a relatively* **high** *source of academic stress.   Why is* [category] *a major source of stress for you?   What would make it less stressful? Please give specific examples.*

Academic Stress: High Stress Area B

Questionnaire Item Number _____   Stress Category _____

2. On the questionnaire, [category] *was an area you identified as a relatively **high** source of academic stress.   Why is* [category] *a major source of stress for you?   What would make it less stressful? Please give specific examples.*

Academic Stress: Low Stress Area A

Questionnaire Item Number _____   Stress Category _____

3. On the questionnaire, [category] *was an area you identified as a relatively **low** source of academic stress.   What helps to limit or buffer the potential for stress related to* [category] *for you?   Please give specific examples.*

Academic Stress: Low Stress Area B

Questionnaire Item Number _____   Stress Category _____

4. On the questionnaire, [category] *was an area you identified as a relatively **low** source of academic stress.   What helps to limit or buffer the potential for stress related to* [category] *for you?   Please give specific examples.*

Final Question

5. What overall suggestions do you have for reducing levels of academic stress at Truman without compromising the quality of a Truman education, and what would help you cope with your current stress more effectively?

Appendix D

Interview Question Coding Categories and Examples

Contributors to High Points in Academic Stress (Questions 1 and 2)

I.   Multiple back-to-back assignments and tests in different class

   A.   Multiple assignments at the same time

      1. "Multiple back to back assignments are something you have to deal with"
      2. "When many different classes have things due on one day causes stress"
      3. "English class has 4 papers due and tests in same day"
      4. "Multiple assignments on one day doesn't allow me to dedicate time to assignments"
      5. "History classes have big papers for each class and usually due at the same time"

   B. Personal time management issues

      1. "Time management is an issue -- personal time management and studying
         earlier would help lower stress"
      2. "It's difficult to study weeks ahead of time, cramming for a test 4-5 days before"
      3. "Need   to schedule gaps between classes and keep up with work so no cramming the night
      before"

   C. Multiple tests at the same time

      1. "One test per day is hard enough- more than one doesn't allow enough time to review
         notes"
      2. "Snow days made for more exams and assignments in fewer days (4 exams in 5 days
         instead 2 each week)"
      3. "Test in every class this week"

   D. Need better inter-departmental and intra-departmental communication

      1. "Pre-MAE for special education doesn't commmunicate well with major"
      2. "Smaller departments could coordinate tests"
      3. "Poor communication between professors in science department"
      4. "Need better communication between chemistry and math departments"

   E. Professors could be more flexible

      1. "Professors need to be clear about when things are due and be flexible"
      2. "When you talk to professors, they should be understanding"

   F. Need better communication of requirements and due dates

      1. "Knowing details ahead of time would make things less stressful"
      2. "There were misunderstandings that couldn't be clarified right after lecture"
      3. "Knowing when assignments are due well in advance would help"

   G. Major/graduation requirements make it difficult to avoid taking multiple difficult classes

      1. "Taking fewer science classes- makes it less stressful but not realistic to graduate in time"
      2. "Department scheduling - hard to take required courses"

   H. Hard to prioritize

1. "Have trouble planning ahead sometimes"
2. "Sometimes you have to choose where you concentrate"
3. "Hard to make time for everything- like to keep a good balance"

E. Extracurricular commitments

1. "Lots of time in organizations outside of school"
2. "17 hours a week for Ultimate Frisbee team"
3. "Hard to balance school and extracurriculars (cross country and track)"

II. Amount of work required in classes

A. Hard to balance work in multiple classes

1. "Hard to balance with other work, like adding the pre-MAE (which adds more studio classes - up to 60 hrs a week)"
2. "Every professor seems to think their class is the only one"
3. "Teachers assign stuff without consideration of how much work you have in other classes"

B. Students need better time management

1. "Trying to do more than reasonable- pre-med"
2. "Sometimes it's hard to find enough time to excel in all – need time management"
3. "Need time management skills"
4. "Taking 17 hours, hard to balance; classes equally hard and equally important"

C. Difficult tests and papers

1. "Upper level math- a lot of homework, difficult, tests are stressful"
2. "Have a HUGE research project due worth a lot of points and that is causing stress"
3. "Daily write-ups are stressful"

D. Too many assignments

1. "A large course load for the viscom major, including class work and projects that can be up to 30 hrs a week"
2. "Upper level math- a lot of homework"
3. "Feels overloaded- too many assignments at once"

E. Too much reading

1. "English classes require more reading than possible"
2. "Professors should have fewer books for a class to accurately understand the material"
3. "Two to three readings by next class - impossible to read"
4. "Most classes have excessive requirements (3 chapters for one class, 3 for another)"

F. Need clearer expectations

1. "Expectations are often not clearly given by professors ahead of time; disorganization is common"
2. "Often cover too many topics that are not understood easily"
3. "Language barrier - sometimes teachers talk too fast"

G. Requirements are stressful (labs, LSPs, etc.)

1. "The department could decrease some unnecessary required classes"
2. "Taking high class volume- 17 hours (science), 3 labs- which don't match credit hours"
3. "Tutoring for language- one extra hour is stressful"
4. "Take 16 credit hours- needed to graduate in 4.5 years with a double major"
5. "LSPs may not be inherently difficult, but adding on work makes it harder"

H. Extracurriculars interfere with classes

1. "Participating in several extracurricular activities- also, want to take care of myself.
2. "Involved with 5 organizations – hard to balance"

III. Keeping a high enough GPA for scholarships and grad school

A. Truman scholarships need a lower GPA requirement

1. "Keeping scholarships will always be stressful"
2. "If GPA requirement were lower, it would help"
3. "Wish a 3.25 GPA didn't matter so much"
4. "Make full scholarship renewal a 3.0 instead of a 3.25; science courses can tank your GPA"

B. Grad school admission

1. "The big issue is graduate school: getting a high enough GPA"
2. "Grad school is expected for my major (health and ex science) so the pressure is up"
3. "Can't do much with my major unless I go to grad school"
4. "Depend on good GPA to get into grad program at Truman"

C. Important for post-undergraduate success

1. "Your GPA decides your future"
2. "Students feel that other schools and grad schools won't recognize the difficulty of Truman's workload and how it affects GPA"

D. Challenging class requirements

1. "Classes aren't easy so stress comes from keeping grades up"
2. "Bio 108 requires a lot of studying"

E. Internal pressures to make good grades

1. "Aspire for a 4.0 because I know I'm capable"
2. "Truman students have pretty high expectations for themselves"

F. Feel a need to work harder/time management

1. "Competition – feel I'm falling behind"
2. "Motivated to do well because there are not a lot of scholarships out there"

G. Difficult transition from high school

1. "Keeping good grades in high school was easy, but it was hard to transition from high school to college because I have to work a lot harder to keep my GPA up here"
2. "HS was easy, didn't even have finals! Then Lindenwood, then transitioned poorly"
3. "First semester was hard - homesick. Adjusting to college life is hard"

H. Need more faculty/advisor communication

1. "More faculty interaction would help"
2. "Feel guilty talking to professors about all this - it's not their job!"
3. "Would be helpful after freshman year to continue with non-academic advisor"
4. "Wish someone would sit down and talk to me about grad school"

I. Other sources of grade pressure

1. "Parental pressures"
2. "Parents give me stress about my grades"
3. "Hard to take so many classes to graduate"
4. "Raised to do my best, so a mindset to do my best"

IV. Group Projects

A. Want to pick groups, not be assigned

1. "Assigned partners are stressful"
2. "In my major, would prefer to choose partners"
3. "Should let students choose who you work with in groups so I can choose someone I am comfortable with, who is intelligent and hardworking"
4. "Choosing your own groups would make it less stressful"

B. Unequal input from group members

1. "A lot of the time I get partnered with someone who doesn't care as much"
2. "Don't like to depend on others who have questionable effort"
3. "You can't control other individuals work output"

C. Don't like sharing a grade
1. "Don't like not being able to control contributions of others and having it affect grade"
2. "Grade/group - so if someone slacks off, others take the lower grade"
3. "Stress and anxiety from my grade being dependent on work of others"

D. Difficult to coordinate schedules

1. "Organizing meeting times is difficult"
2. "Need more group meetings (but there is no time)"
3. "Hard to coordinate 5-6 people multiple times per week"

D. Better to work with people you know

1. "Self-chosen group; better if choose people with good work ethic"
2. "You don't know if partners are reliable or will do their part"

E. Students have working style differences

1. "Cultural differences cause problems"
2. "Study differently than others"
3. "Doesn't like taking breaks like other student s- get it all done at once"
4. "Particular about how I want things done - working in groups doesn't allow me to utilize my own work ethic"

F.   Contact/communication problems

          1. "Partner's sleeping habits are different which makes him hard to contact"
          2. "Meeting coordination difficult at times"
         3. "Communication is most stressful"

    H. Would prefer an individual work option

          1. "Not being in a group would make it less stressful"
          2. "Solution: don't do group projects"
          3. "Like my own ideas, don't like to compromise ideas"
          4. "I am an independent worker"
          5. "Sometimes allowing individual options would be helpful"

V.   Studying for Tests

    A.   Need study guides

          1. "[Some] professors provide incorrect/incomplete topics for what's on the test"
          2. "To decrease stress professors could produce better study guides"
          3. "Better idea of what to expect on tests would help"

    B.   Time consuming

          1. "Studying is very time consuming"
          2. "When trying to master lots of areas of content, not just memorize, it takes more time"

    C.   Tests worth a lot

          1. "Tests are worth majority of grade"
          2. "Would prefer smaller tests/quizzes"

    D.   Too much material

          1. "Only 3 tests per course- a lot of material on each one"
          2. "Tests cover too much material"

    E.   Emphasis on memorizing

          1. "Theorems and proofs- lots of memorization"
          2. "Hard to memorize material and study for tests"

    F.   Hard to balance tests with other work

          1. "Cut the class workloads around test times"
          2. "Can get extensions on other assignments- would help if more flexibility on due dates"
          3. "Multiple tests at the same time (3 in a week, 2 back to back), not possible to study adequately for both, causes poor performance"

    G.   Need reviews

          1. "Feel as if some questions come out of nowhere"
          2. "Prefer study sessions organized by teachers"
          3. "Would be helpful if professors said 'you should know 'x' of chapter 'x' by date/day'"
          4. "Not sure what to study"

VI. Getting into Required/Desired Classes

A. Getting into required classes

1. "Getting into LSP classes is difficult because they fill up fast (especially the good sections, with the best professors)"
2. "Trying to follow 4 year plan- not enough open spots"
3. "Was unable to enroll in major required courses"
4. "There could be more sections of required courses that have large numbers interested in taking them"

B. Need information about the process

1. "Classes with codes – students don't always understand the process"
2. "We should go in and have advisor help us register; need new advising system"
3. "It was my first year and I wasn't familiar with the process- afraid I wouldn't get what I needed"
4. "Should have students who've been here longer help freshmen and sophomores register"

C. Technical difficulties with registration

1. "Everyone is always trying to get on at the same time; slow internet"
2. "Was studying abroad in England and then I wasn't approved for registering because my hours were all off, which took a long time to fix"
3. "It would help if they gave more notice to the student if something was wrong"
4. "Need more technical efficiency to prepare for influx of students"
5. "My computer froze this semester when I attempted to register for calculus"

D. Getting into desired classes

1. "Time restraints due to sports"
2. "Couldn't get into two classes because professor said he would email me and didn't"
3. "As a freshman, I register last, so less likely to get desired classes"
4. "A lot of people want the same classes"

E. Lacks credits to register early

1. "Classes full before you can register; no open spots"
2. "Because of low credits coming in as freshman had to register the very last day"

F. Problems with overrides

1. "Not good communication by professors about overrides"
2. "When classes are full, overrides are a hassle"
3. "Last year there was one section of 25 of one required course and the professor didn't give an override (I was number 6 on the list); it got me off track"

G. Don't like 5pm registration

1. "Have to get on at 5pm exactly, but sports practices end after that"
2. "Very much dislikes the registration process"
3. "I want to get good professors, good courses; 7am is a good change to registration"
4. "Hard to be online at 5pm"
5. "Big problem doing registration at 5pm on a certain day"

VII. Co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement

A. Conflict with academics

    1. "Lots of extra time - taking away from homework and classwork"
    2. "Hard to do homework on buses, take tests before and after games"
    3. "Hard to practice until 6 pm and then go to the library"

B. Time commitment: clubs and organizations

    1. "Very time consuming"
    2. "University Swingers, time consuming"
    3. "ROTC environment - big course load with leadership is like a full-time job"

C. Hard to balance activities

    1. "Could always do less stuff - be more flexible with time"
    2. "Over-involved"
    3. "Individual spreads self too thin; common experience of TSU student"
    4. "Hard to balance - choose one or the other"

D. Time commitment: sports

    1. "A lot of time required for athletics"
    2. "Takes away energy from studying"
    3. "Stressful since I'm in softball, and practice 6 times a week for 3 to 4 hours"
    4. "Varsity soccer - major commitment (15 hours a week minimum, 30 hours a week while in season.)"

E. Teacher/coach lack of cooperation

    1."Have heard of others [teachers] who haven't been cooperative about sports"

F. Personal time management issues

    1. "Unnecessary activities for sorority; not a lot getting done - not enough time"
    2. "Not enough hours in the day"
    3. "Fall asleep doing homework, couldn't finish class load"

G. Activities required for graduate school

    1. "Psychology/pre-MAE. A lot of outside experience expected"
    2. "[Outside experience] not counted in curriculum"
    3. "Expected to have internship/research (psych) but difficult with class schedule"
    4. "Difficult to be active in outside groups and still maintain GPA and participate in the field experiences grad schools and employers would like to see"

H. Other

    1. "Residence-life involves more responsibilities and less compensation than other schools would give for the same job"
    2. "Involvement is good, but not too much"

VIII. Balancing work and classes

A. Work conflicts with academics

       1. "Work on weekends - not enough time to do school work"
       2. "Overwhelming schedule affects homework and academic studies"
       3. "Working a lot cuts study time"
       4. "Can't finish assignments if have to go to work"

  B. Need the money

       1. "Need money to stay in school, so have to work, but the school work is what's important"
       2. "Had to work to earn more money for study abroad"
       3. "Will need to continue to work to live next year"
       4. "Work 55 hours a week to pay for college - it's a rough balance, overwhelming"

  C. Need more scholarships/jobs through school

       1. "Would be less stressful with more scholarships; wouldn't need to work as much"
       2. "Helps to have more scholarships or a closer job"

IX. Participating in class discussions

  A. Shy

       1. "In bigger classes, feel uncomfortable to ask questions or volunteer answers"
       2. "I'm shy, I don't like talking in front of people"
       3. "Don't like to talk, nervous in front of other students or people"
       4. "Dislikes having everyone's attention at once"

  B. Necessary to participate in smaller classes

       1. "When class numbers are low, under pressure to talk"
       2. "Have to talk in WACT class- smaller, sit in circles"

  C. Need more practice

       1. "It takes me longer to think about things, I don't want to say something just to say something; that's not useful"
       2. "It's a personal thing.   Public speaking doesn't come easily.   The more you do it the easier it gets"

  D. Would prefer that less would be required

       1. "In upper level classes, it's not needed because there are enough people who will participate anyway, without it being graded"
       2. "Make it less a part of grade"

  E. Can't speak/communicate thoughts well

       1. "I do not speak well in public"
       2. "Feel that it is hard to communicate my thoughts"

  F. Need more professor prompting

       1. "If professors don't specifically ask for questions, it's harder to ask"
       2. "When I do ask questions, it is after a professor asks for questions- otherwise hard to know when to speak up

X. Consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements across majors

    A. Need more clarity of communication/ requirements

        1. "My academic advisor was not very helpful"
        2. "Requirements for majors aren't very straight forward"
        3. "Stressful not knowing if you have all you need"
        4. "General advisor isn't as helpful as a major advisor would have been (hasn't been assigned one)"
        5. "Came into Truman unaware of liberal arts requirements"

    B. Some LSP courses are irrelevant

        1. "I don't like wasting time with classes that don't have to do with my major"
        2. "I don't have an interest, so it's hard to be motivated in them"
        3. "Feel there are unnecessary curricular requirements"

    C. LSP courses can be too difficult

        1. "100-level courses were hard (most of them for modes); BIO 107 was brutal"
        2. "LSP requirements are stressful"

    D. Too many curricular requirements

        1. "Most of classes where I've studied hard are LSP courses"
        2. "Making sure you get all requirements is stressful"
        3. "Would like requirements changed- fewer of them"

    E. Want to graduate in 4 years

        1. "Having 2 majors and trying to get done in 4 years is difficult personally and financially"
        2. "Stressful to get an email that you haven't completed classes for graduation"
        3. "Never heard back about intent to graduate; had to contact registrar"

    F. Other

        1. "When I came, my father wanted me to have a major that leads to have a steady job."
        2. "Want to be able to focus on science but have to spend a lot of time on English"

Contributors to Low Points in Academic Stress (Questions 3 and 4)

I. Getting into Required/Desired Classes

    A. Can get overrides

        1. "Faculty are usually open to overrides if you need into a class"
        2. "Got an override easily when asked for"
        3. "Easy to get overrides into desired classes"

    B. Helpful advisor

        1. "Speaking to advisor in advance helped, especially walking through how registration works."
        2. "Does help to have information about faculty ahead of time, especially for first year student"

C. Personal flexibility about classes

    1. "If a class is required, know I will eventually take it"
    2. "Had alternative classes picked out"

D. Helpful major

    1. "Not too many people have a physics major so it's easy"
    2. "Not stressful because sequence not as important for my major"

E. Experienced with the process

    1. "Now has experience with process"
    2. "Not stressful as an upperclassman (registration by credit hour)"
    3. "Came into Truman with a lot of credits so it wasn't stressful"
    4. "As a fifth year, I have no problem getting into desired classes"

F. General classes are easily available

    1. "Not an upperclassman yet, so more general classes are easier to get into (set aside for freshmen and sophomores)"

II. Keeping a high enough GPA for scholarships and grad school

A. Not hard to get good grades

    1. "Hasn't had to try very hard in the English department"
    2. "It's been easy to get desired grades"
    3. "Only non-A's have been math classes (math minor); I could have put in more effort"
    4. "I have never been in danger of losing my scholarships"

B. Work very hard

    1. "I have a 4.0, and as long as work ethic is maintained, I'm not worried about it changing"
    2. "If I tried hard and got a C, I wouldn't be upset"

C. Started off well as a freshman

    1. "Started off strong"
    2. "I have always gotten good grades"
    3. "Due to a good start I have a 3.9- so lots of wiggle room for keeping 100% of the money"
    4. "Brought in a lot of 4.0 credits"

D. Confident/laid back attitude toward grades

    1. "Getting good grades is "normal"; no problems with scholarships"
    2. "I know it is stressful for those on the edge, but this isn't a concern for me"
    3. "Very comfortable with my GPA, confident in my ability"

E. Focus on learning/not on grades

    1. "If GPA did drop, I wouldn't be stressed"
    2. "Effort level is more important"
    3. "Focus on assignments instead of GPA helps"

G. No grad school plans

       1. "No plans for graduate school"
       2. "Not interested in grad school; not necessary for journalism"

III.   Co-curricular or extra-curricular involvement

    A.   Not involved in too many activities

       1. "Cut down how many involvements from past semesters, now only in two or three"
       2. "2 activities - AMSA and Presomed"

    B.   Good stress outlet

       1. "Extra-curriculars are more of an outlet for stress"
       2. "Helps with grad school stress"
       3. "Able to meet good people and de-stress"

    C.   Personal benefits of involvement

       1. "You can meet new friends and vent, increasing networking"
       2. "With CCF can find a person to can express feelings with"
       3. "Same interests and can ask questions"

    D.   Activities are fun

       1. "Actually fun- so is a de-stressor"
       2. "Playing sports helps me relieve stress. I go into a different world when I'm playing sports - stress free"
       3. "Go to the rec for fun, feel good and can go on my own time"

    E.   Activities aren't too demanding

       1. "When I don't have time I just don't do them"
       2. "And all the involvements are pre-MAE (pre-professional) which don't have very much of a time commitment"
       3. "Two groups- Rotary and Habitat for Humanity which do not take too much time. Meetings are spaced out, easy to attend"

    F.   Offer a good break from academics

       1. "Studying is not emotionally healthy; clubs, sports, etc., help you grow emotionally and relieve stress"
       2. "There is a sense of pride in helping people: it's fun to do and it de-stresses after studying"
       3. "Studying alone is only intellectual; one needs emotional growth too"
       4. "Taking a break from all of academic stressors"
       5. "When I'm studying and doing math- when I get frustrated- I take a break and go to the gym- and when I come back I'm not frustrated.

    G.   Good for resume

       1. "Concerns about putting things on a resume"

IV.   Effectiveness of classroom teaching

    A.   Good professors-clear-knowledgeable teachers

       1. "Hearing things explained in class helps me to understand"
       2. "Has had 10 instructors and no problems with them"

3. "Had some profs several times in major- know I can go in to talk to them"
4. "Prof don't try to talk above you, they make it understandable"
5. "Professors know the material"

B. Student responsibility to learn

1. "If I have a poor teacher, teach myself material- not stressful"
3. "Students' responsibility to learn"
4. "Being prepared allows the lectures to be easy to follow"

C. Like or can adapt to teaching styles of most profs

1. "Don't see teacher as preventing success"
2. "Visual learner so examples are crucial to learning"
3. "Always try to take certain profs- like the way they lecture"
4. "I've had many of the teachers in the major already, so I know their teaching style"

D. Profs are approachable

1. "Friendliness of faculty"
2. "Very approachable"
3. "Profs don't mind answering questions in class"

E. No problems with profs

1. "Quality classroom teaching. EX: provide lots of examples, real-life scenarios (tie between what's going in the course and also what's going on in the world)
2. "I've had excellent teachers"
3. "Individual feels professors are generally good and keep students up to date"

F. Have good class notes

1. "Professors get their points across; outlines help for note taking"
2. "Comm classes- notes on powerpoints online so it is always there if you need more help"
3. "Does well in lecture classes- can sit and take notes well"
4. "Studying for tests from lectures and notes is easy for me- I excel in a lecture format"

G. Provide study guides
1. "Not as stressed if visual information is provided and don't have to go search for information not gotten within classroom during lectures"
2. "Teachers have study guides and identify areas to cover"

V.   Participating in class discussions

A. Confident

1. "It's pretty easy, when I am confident enough to speak out in class"
2. "Personally comfortable speaking   in a group"
3. "Not worried about looking stupid"
4. "Never felt intimidated by class discussion; not called out during class"
5. "I like to hear myself talk – want to be a teacher"

B. Encouraging professors

1. "Teachers help a lot with participation- encourage all to participate"
2. "Most profs are reasonable"
3. "Finds profs encouraging and supportive"
4. "Professors tend to think well of me"

C. Experienced

1. "Predisposed to being comfortable"
2. "Lots of experience, not new to class discussions"
3. "Has experience in group discussions in the military – not a big deal"

D. Less stress in small classes

1. "Small number of students in classes helps"
2. "It's less stressful with a smaller class size, fewer people in classroom"
3. "Small class size, creates chance of interacting"

E. Well-prepared

1. "It's pretty easy when you are prepared for class"
2. "Good at reading and analyzing material"
3. "Stressful if not prepared, but usually I'm ready"

F. Enjoyable

1. "Enjoy class discussion"
2. "Quite comfortable talking in front of others- helps pass the time"
3. "I enjoy taking in class, so it comes naturally to me"

G. Responsibility of students

1. "Important to contribute - need to be involved in class community"
2. "It's there for my benefit, so I might as well put my ideas out there and see what others think"

VI. Consistency of BA/BS and curricular requirements   across majors

A. Requirements are clear

1. "Catalog spells it out fairly well, info is readily available"
2. "Seem consistent with each other (BS/BA)"
3. "Everything is clear cut"

B. Good advisors

1. "Academic advisors helpful to relieve stress regarding this topic"
2. "Advisors pointing in the right direction help reduce stress"
3. "Good communication on faculty's part"

C. Students know what to expect

1. "Finds degree works helpful"
2. "Already knew requirements before Truman. No surprises, knew what she needed to do, and what to expect"
5. "I knew what I wanted to do when I came here"

D. Major is reasonable

        1. "Less structured majors easier to finish on time"
        2. "Not really an issue - major is more demanding than some others but that's ok"

  E. Have a 4-year plan

        1. "Spent time constructing a 4 year plan and looking on open course list"
        2. "Advisor made the 4 year plan"

  F. Other

        1. "Personal responsibility (being proactive)"
        2. "Major requirements prepare for career"
        3. "Electives seem to be easy for me - it won't affect career as much as major classes; elective classes- break from science and more fun"

VII.   Communication by faculty about explanations and due dates of assignments

  A. Consistent communication

        1. "Good communication about assignments and due dates in syllabi by physics professors; clear and consistent"
        2. "Know when things are due on day 1"

  B. Continual communication/reminders/updates

        1. "Usually multiple sources for deadlines"
        2. "Attend class regularly- receive reminders"
        3. "You can always see due dates, either online, oron   the syllabus and if they change you're often notified of those changes"

  C. Use of blackboard

        1. "If syllabus doesn't provide answer, can usually call, email, or check blackboard"
        2. "Blackboard is an excellent resource"

  D. Approachable/ available

        1. "Faculty are helpful and flexible if needed"
        2. "All of the teachers are so approachable and available"
        3. "Getting appointments and talking has eliminated stress"

  E. Other

        1. "Have gotten extensions if needed"
        2. "Helps to talk with other students- remind each other"

VIII.   Academic Advising

  A. Friendly/approachable

        1. "Advisors are approachable and easy to talk to"
        2. "Advisors are open, friendly and helpful"
        3. "Major advisor - easy to approach and willing to do what needs to be done"
        4. "Professors are approachable here (compared to other schools)"
        5. "Really cares about me and wants me to do well"

B. Knowledgeable/good resource

    1. "Advisors give good foundation for what to do"
    2. "Comfortable with advisor in major and had advisor as professor"
    3. "My advisor is a fantastic educator"
    4. "Rarely a question she can't answer"

C. Available/accessible

    1. "No problems contacting advisors"
    2. "Very accessible, he's in his office when he says he'll be"
    3. "Keeps updated with email"
    4. "Always there when I need him"

D. Generally helpful

    1. "I can talk to him regarding career choices, etc."
    2. "Advisors have all been helpful with school/athletics/etc."
    3. "Great advisors, cool, helpful, always available"

E. Get advice from other teachers or students

    1. "Got to know Education Department professors well early and I go to them"
    2. "Many teachers have advised her"
    3. "Asking other students is helpful, upperclassmen helpful in answering questions as well"
    5. "Can network through organizations"

F. Able to receive nonacademic advice

    1. "Will talk about all problems"
    2. "Goes to advisor to talk about sources of stress, so that de-stresses her"
    3. "My advisor is great- like my best friend - young, outgoing, Truman grad."

G. Don't need an advisor

    1. "Helps to have access to change major or minor on internet. Likes DegreeWorks"
    2. "More independent, okay to figure out things on own"
    3. "Didn't need advising"
    4. "DegreeWorks and Truview allow monitoring and control I like"

H. Clear communication

    1. "Clear on requirements from the beginning"
    2. "Will find out answers to questions if it is difficult"
    3. "There is clear communication"

IX. Getting timely feedback on homework and tests

A. Generally get timely feedback from profs

    1. "Professors seem to be prompt, getting things back in a timely fashion"
    2. "Teachers good about getting homework and labs back in a reasonable amount of time"
    3. "Helpful getting them back on time to study for tests and find out what was wrong"

4. "Get hw back next class period"

B. Not concerned about feedback/can be patient

1. "I personally do not get bothered with worrying over waiting"
2. "Not very concerned with getting things back on time"
3. "It's not the end of the world when things are not given back ASAP"

C. Student already knows how he/she did

1. "It's easy to know how well you did on an exam after completing it, even without getting it back"
2. "If   professor tells the grade, within context of class, generally grades were better than I was expecting"
3. "I know how I performed"
4. "After a test, have gut feeling of results"
5. "Normally I know how well I've done"

D. Students can take initiative to get feedback

1. "For feedback, I go to office hours"
2. "I have to take the initiative to get the feedback I want"
3. "If I have a question, I'll ask, not wait for feedback"

E. Feedback received is good/helpful

1. "Can judge where you are in the class - can judge how things went after test or paper is finished"
2. "Professors email promptly/ helpfully"

F. Students understand professional workload

1. "Sometimes takes a while, but professor will explain why"
2. "Acknowledges that faculty are busy, wishes they would take their time instead of rushing"
3. "Worrying isn't going to get them graded quickly- teachers need time to grade"

G. Students work hard regardless

1. "I usually just try my hardest regardless of what I'm getting; try not to pay attention to grade"
2. "Don't expect professor to grade it in less time than I had to do it"
3. "Give it my best, no matter what. Is annoying when don't get assignments back, but still do your best"

X. Faculty Availability

A. Quick email response

1. "Professors are very responsive and get back to you fast"
2. "Professors tend to be good about responding to emails"
3. "Quick to respond to students' email"
4. "Physics faculty always available"
5. "Have doors open and respond to emails quickly (when I don't want to walk in the cold)"

B. Generally willing to help/meet

    1. "The nursing professors have particularly good availability"
    2. "They want to make it manageable for students"
    3. "Very open, encourage us to visit for any reason (help w/ recommendation letters or just to talk)"

C. Flexible in making appointments

    1. "Willing to make time for you, even outside of office hours"
    2. "Have office hours on syllabus, but say they can make availability outside too if a person has conflicts"
    3. "When teachers stay after class, that helps a lot"
    4. "Truman faculty usually have a lot of time open to meet and talk with you and are fairly flexible"
    5. "In exercise science, can schedule meeting outside of office hours"

D. Clear about office hours

    1. "They have a good amount of office hours and you can make an appointment"
    2. "Always there during office hours, which were clear in the syllabus"
    3. "Helps when there are multiple days available- set hours"
    4. "Office hours listed on syllabus"

E. No need to meet with professors

    1. "Can get advice from peers
    2. "Doesn't really take advantage of faculty hours"
    3. "Doesn't generally need to meet with professors, has usually had a good relationship with professors"

XI.   Balancing work and classes

A. Job is easy

    1. "Have scholarship job and a regular job- but I chose to do it so it makes that job more fun and less stressful"
    2. "Easy job"
    3. "Don't work outside of scholarship job, work as DJ which is fun (for scholarship"
    4. "Only job I have is a scholarship job- only 4 hours"

B. Can do homework at work

    1. "Can do homework during work"
    2. "Works in library, night shifts, get a lot of hw done then"

C. Good time management

    1. "Structured hours"
    2. "Having a lot going on in my life, helps me prioritize and stay focused"

D. Don't have a job

    1. "No job besides scholarships"
    2. "No job on campus and work only when I go home for holidays"

Responses to Question 5

A. **Professors should be open and available to talk with students, have and communicate expectations and requirements and cooperate with other faculty regarding test scheduling and flexibility.**

1. "Professors could give out more structured syllabi"
2. "Reminders of upcoming deadlines, etc."
3. "Emphasize deadlines"
4. "Would be helpful if teachers would coordinate test schedules"
5. "Professors being more open - easier access, help with scheduling issues - would help"
6. "Give students a set schedule, expectations at the beginning"
7. "We want to see that Truman cares about us as more than the academic side- ex: professors verbalizing that"
8. "Better/more office hours so profs more available"
9. "Communication: answer emails, openness of professors, professors interested in your future, openness of office hours"
10. "If profs are more open or just say they are, open to some flexibility, so it doesn't feel like teacher is 'against' students"
11. "Would be helpful if more professors used blackboard, grading portion specifically; having syllabi and assignments on it helpful for managing workload"
12. "Teachers need to consider the students' workload (3 tests in one day - 1 teacher should move test)

B. **Professors need to be organized and effective in providing students with materials and study resources while holding students accountable. There should be less busy work and more productive smaller assignments/quizzes with a focus on learning material, with big assignments spaced out.**

1. "The amount of work required for classes should be reduced in order to spend more time on topics."
2. "Busy work is too time consuming- it adds to stress; could teach these things more directly."
3. "Require study groups, or at least make available"
4. "Should have small assignments throughout the week instead of one large assignment"
5. "Professors should give students more notes"

C. **Advisors need to be more effective in helping students plan out their years at Truman, make informed decisions, and be aware of all their academic options and opportunities.**

1. "Advisor should suggest plans for major: 4-year plan/outline"
2. "Academic advising- pushed him to a 5 year plan, which was bad advice"
3. "Try to schedule classes in a non-stressful way- spread modes out over 4 years, work with advisor"
4. "Need someone who actually is an advisor, not just in the major"
5. "Student feedback on advising should be taken into account"

6. "Need more academic advising and more control"
7. "Help students make sound academic decisions"

D. Truman as an institution could do more to improve its relationship with students through transparency, accommodation, mentoring and good two-way communication with students and grad school help.   Although the high level of education at Truman is academically challenging, the competitive environment requires more stress support to safeguard the mental health of its overachieving students.

1. "Dealing with financial aid department is very stressful"
2. "Registration holds can be stressful. Feels that registration is too automated"
3. "People that work in the financial aid office are rude and inefficient"
4. "LSPs are stressful"
5. "No suggestion- just a problem.   Truman environment develops Type A-ness"
6. "Need more transparency about financial situation at Truman"
7. "Need information about portfolio, intent to graduate for transfer students"
8. "Have a course about grad school and provide more guidance on how to methods of applying"

E. Need to create more support for freshmen in regards to creating activities, facilitating faculty interactions, helping make social connections, but in a low-stress environment. Also, freshmen should be encouraged to not bite off more than they can chew.

1. "More service options for freshmen such as community projects"
2. "Find more ways for freshmen to interact with faculty"
3. "Truman week was stressful"
4. "Freshmen should take a lighter course load"
5. "Should be a cap on how many things to do (socially) freshman year (or better advice!)"
6. "Don't have first year students live in West campus suites"
7. "People shouldn't be able to rush a social sorority/frat their first year"
8. "Telling freshman to talk to their professors and have a dialogue helps clear up discrepancies and issues"

F. More/better facilities/services which include parking, library hours and resources, more rec hours and classes, better housing facilities and less crowded dining halls.

1. "Housing not conducive to studying; heat doesn't work"
2. "Needs comfortable space- doesn't like silence in library"
3. "SUB- can be too loud"
4. "Would like to use REC center at hours now closed"
5. "More computers in library"
6. "When dining halls are crowded and it's hard to find a seat, that's an unnecessary stress"
7. "Library hours- if could be open later that would help"
8. "Better swimming hours at Pershing"

G. Re-evaluation of administration policy in regards to LSPs, academic year scheduling, alcohol policy and others. Also, improving the registration process and making a better scholarship system.

1. "Re-assess required courses for some majors, as well as essential skills and LSPs (it doesn't make a lot of sense to require trigonometry for a viscom major, for example)"
2. "Require fewer classes and a three semester system instead of two semesters. LSPs are stressful"
3. "Having to take Chemistry- probably will never use it, worked harder on it than major classes"
4. "More out of state scholarships for lowered out of state tuition"
5. "Would like more choices in majors; mine requires science classes beyond my interest"
6. "Suggestion: four day week"
7. "Count more courses from transfer schools"

H. Students have the ability/responsibility to limit their own stress by having good time management, organization, and a good attitude. Also taking initiative in class and out of class, using resources and being prepared.

1. "Time management would help with [my] current stress"
2. "Find ways to combat procrastination"
3. "Getting enough sleep (8 hrs/night)"
4. "Coping: not procrastinating, having anything other than school to worry about to take stress away"
5. "More tutoring to help with academic situation"
6. "Try to work ahead"
7. "Personal planner helps. Not procrastinating (can be hard)"
8. "Thinking about the payoff makes it easy to cope. The future reward is so high"

I. Find a stress outlet, through exercising, social activities, campus activities, etc. Get involved extracurricularly, but make sure you have a good balance (between school, social, organization and work) and get enough sleep.

1. "Truman offers activities outside academics- good to de-stress"
2. "Clubs help people meet and you can find a place for yourself"
3. "I run to reduce stress"
4. "Exercise when things are getting really stressful. Meditation"
5. "Truman has lots of activities that reduce stress. Fireside Friday. Exercise helps. Checking out for a while- watching TV, etc."
6. "Personally having some free time each day TV or hanging out with people - self-organized"
7. "Get to sleep early (sleep more)"
8. "Important that students also maintain some type of social life"
9. "Let students know they don't have to spend Saturday afternoons in library or belong to so many organizations"
10. "Truman has endless opportunities-joined club, church, job- this semester"
11. "Get exercise. Make time for 'me'"