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# Supporting Bereaved Students: What Do Campus Communities Do?

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# SUPPORTING BEREAVED STUDENTS: WHAT DO CAMPUS COMMUNITIES DO?

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# MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH

- Field Practicum in hospice agency
- Personal experiences of grief and loss
- Opportunity for Undergraduate Research at La Salle University
  - Program that provides students the opportunity to work with professors to conduct research as part of a three credit independent study course.

# Literature Review

- How Many students are within 1 year of grieving the death of a family member or friend?
    - 22%-33% of Students are within 1 year of grieving the death of a family member or friend.
  - How many students are within 2 years of grieving the death of a family member or friend?
    - 35%-48% of students are within 2 years of grieving the death of a family member or friend.
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# METHODOLOGY

- Applied to La Salle University Undergraduate Research Program
- Developed survey adapted from David Fajgenbaum's survey
- Completed an application to the Institutional Review Board
- Sent survey to individuals in five (5) administrative roles at 30 colleges with social work programs accredited by CSWE in the state of Pennsylvania
  - Administrators included:
    - Deans of Students
    - Directors of Residential Life
    - Directors of Counseling Centers
    - Social Work Program Directors
    - Campus Ministers

# FINDINGS

## Respondents

- Of the 140 potential respondents, 40 administrators responded including:
  - 11 Deans of Students
  - 6 Directors of Residential Life
  - 11 Directors of Counseling Centers
  - 4 Social Work Program Directors
  - 6 Directors of Campus Life
  - 2 Other Discipline (s)

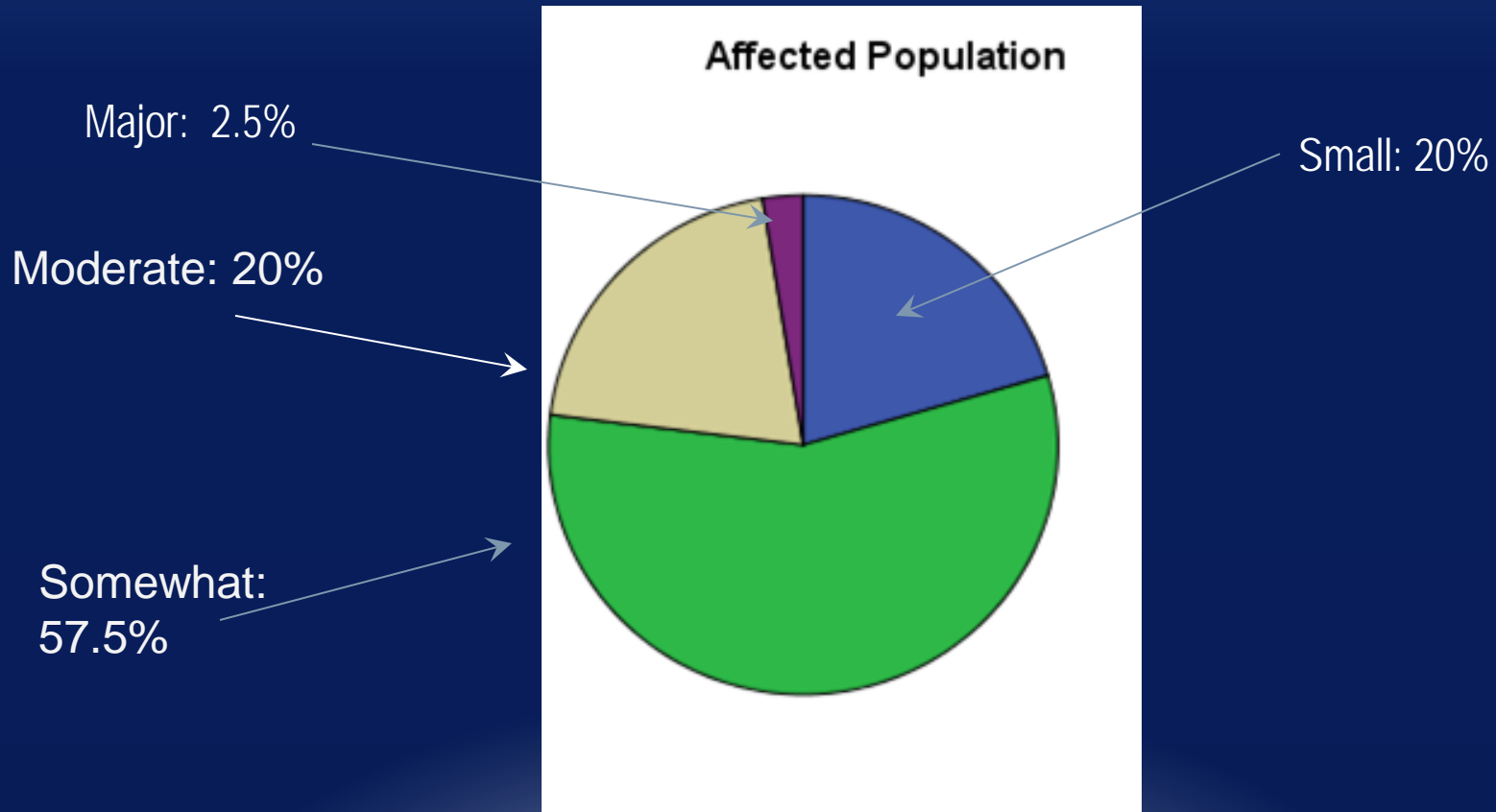
## Location and Affiliation

- Affiliation
  - 9 from Public Institutions
  - 9 from Private non-sectarian institutions
  - 22 from Private-sectarian
- Location:
  - 12 urban campuses
  - 19 suburban campuses
  - 9 rural campuses

# MAJOR FINDINGS

- Administrators indicated that issues related to bereavement affect their campus community.
  - Little is known about the academic support that is provided to bereaved students.
  - The discrepancy between the role of friends and peers in providing support to bereaving students.
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# TO WHAT DEGREE IS THE STUDENT POPULATION AFFECTED AS PERCEIVED BY ADMINISTRATORS?





# ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT

Different ways that grief impact students academic performance according to respondents:

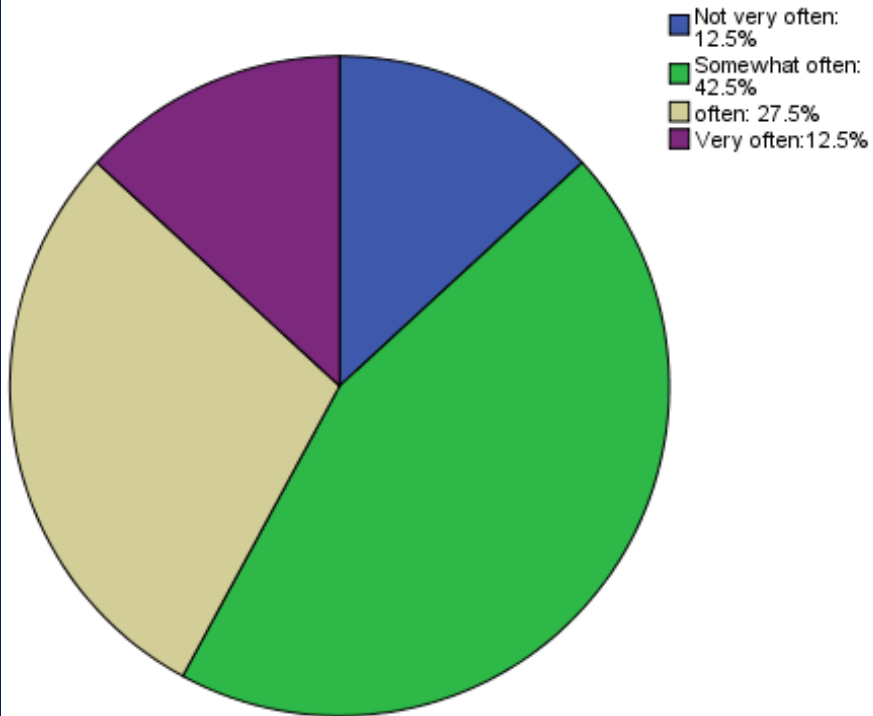
- 70% of Respondent's stated that students experience a drop in GPA.
- 80% of Respondent's stated that students experience negative change in study habits.
- 45% of Respondent's stated that student's desire to take semester off.

Administrator's Awareness of Academic Supports:

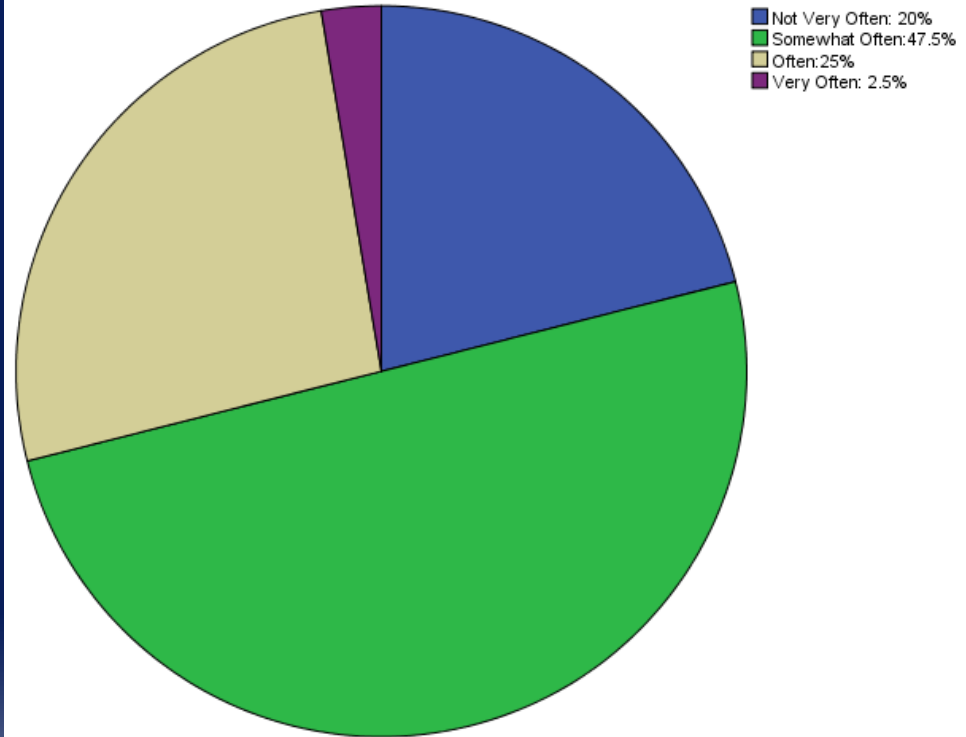
- 35% of Respondent's are unaware of services provided to support student's academic needs.
- 10% stated that their campus community did not have any support system established for academic supports.
- When asked in what departments do students most likely seek support only 2.5% responded an academic department.

# ROLE OF FRIENDS

## Frequency of sharing with friends



## Frequency of College Counseling Services Used



# ADMINISTRATORS' PERCEPTION OF ROLE OF FRIENDS

- 70% of respondents stated that one of the issues that separates college bereavement from other bereavement is that peers and friends don't know what to say or how to help.
- 80% of respondents stated that students tend to withdraw from social interactions.
- 45% say they notice an increase in conflict with peers.
- 52.5% of respondents stated that there was no formal grief counseling training for students.
- 10% of respondents stated that their college or university offered peer counseling services.

# IMPLICATIONS

- Bereavement impacts college campuses
- Necessity for collaboration between student life and academic services.
- More training for friends and peers
- Need for further research into students' perspective of grief and loss programs compared to administrators' perspective.

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