

# **The Association Between Amount of Time Spent on Campus and The Number of Self-Identified Friendships Made in College**

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## **Abstract**

Social interaction has been found to have an influence on one's well being. Though it is relatively easy for younger children to form relationships with their classmates, college students tend to have more trouble. This shift in ability can likely be attributed to the developed understanding of the difference between having peers and having true friends that many college students have. Through the use of a survey presented to students at The City College of New York, we aimed to identify whether the time students spend on campus has an association with their number of self-identified friendships. Of the 25 students that took part in the study, 100% stated that they believe the number of friends they have is related to the amount of time they spend on campus. However, it is important to note that there are various limitations to the study.

## **Introduction**

The development of social connections is crucial to the overall health of people. For many students, college is a time when their relationships grow deeper in meaning and importance. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was much easier for college students to walk into a classroom and interact with their peers. Unfortunately, the sudden need for social distancing and virtual learning made a simple task such as meeting one's classmates much more difficult (Juvonen J. et al. 2022). Many students lacked the opportunity to cultivate their interpersonal skills during this time, resulting in a decrease in their ability to form friendships.

Studies have shown that friendships made in college are typically characterized by their ability to be retained (Bronkema R. & Bowman N. 2017). However, the temporary hold that the pandemic put on social interactions made it difficult for developing relationships to be

maintained. Now that there has been an overall return to “normal” schooling, relationships that began pre-pandemic are struggling to thrive.

Through the use of a brief survey, we investigated the possible association between time spent on campus and the number of reported friendships made in college. Twenty-five college-aged students at The City College of New York were surveyed to gain an understanding of the amount of time they spend on campus, as well as the number of friendships they feel they have formed.

## **Methods**

First, a problem in the City College of New York community was identified. A survey containing demographic questions such as age, gender, college major, and residential situation, as well as questions pertaining to the friendships students have made, was sent out to several students to maximize the number of participants. Results were analyzed by examining the factors most precisely correlated with the number of friends made on campus. When the survey was created, it was sent out to several Inside groups of college students to do the surveys, and Methodically, The study's goal was to determine the number of close friends that each student considers to be their closest. The survey was conducted during regular hours on the campus, and the participants were not provided with additional prompts or guidelines. A total of 25 participants completed the survey, and the results showed that the average number of close friends reported by participants was 72%. The minimum number of close friends reported was 24%. while the maximum was 4%. The number of close friends that an individual has is subjective, and it can vary depending on their personal characteristics and social environment. More research is needed to analyze the factors that influence this trait. Several measures were taken to ensure the survey results were reliable and accurate. The survey was sent to a diverse

group of students, including those from different academic levels and departments, to minimize the potential for bias. The questions were also designed concisely and clearly, avoiding leading or ambiguous language. Overall, The findings of this study provide valuable information on the nature of friendship and the variation in its number. These findings could influence the development of interventions promoting social connectivity among college students, such as those encouraging well-being.

## Results

Of the respondents, 52% were commuters, and 92.3% of those who did not commute lived in the dorms. All students were between the ages of 18 and 21. 4% of students spent 1-3 hours on campus, 32% spent 3-5 hours on campus, 40% spent 5-7 hours on campus, and 24% spent over 7 hours on campus. “Hours on campus” represents the average number of hours per day.

Average Number of Perceived Close Friends vs. Hours Spent on Campus

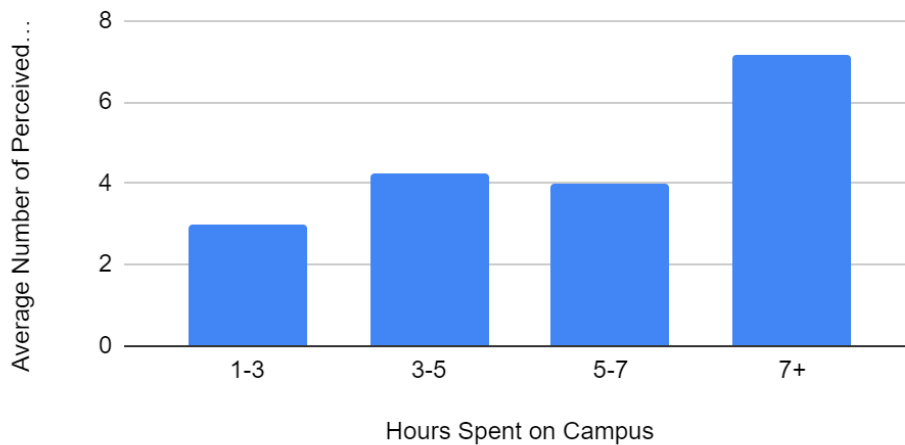


Figure 1: How the average number of hours students spend on campus correlates with the number of close friends students feel they have at CCNY

### Average Number of Perceived Close Friends vs. Commuting Status

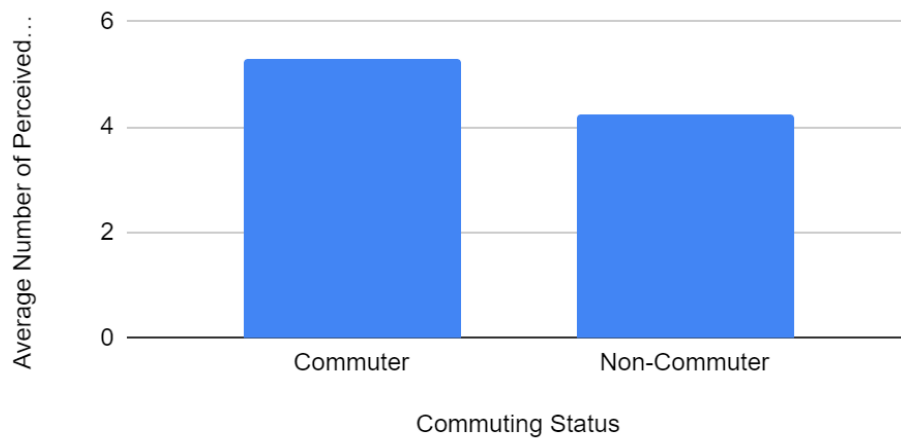


Figure 2: How the commuting status of students correlates with the number of close friends students feel they have at CCNY

### Average Number of Perceived Close Friends vs. Number of Out-of-School Commitments

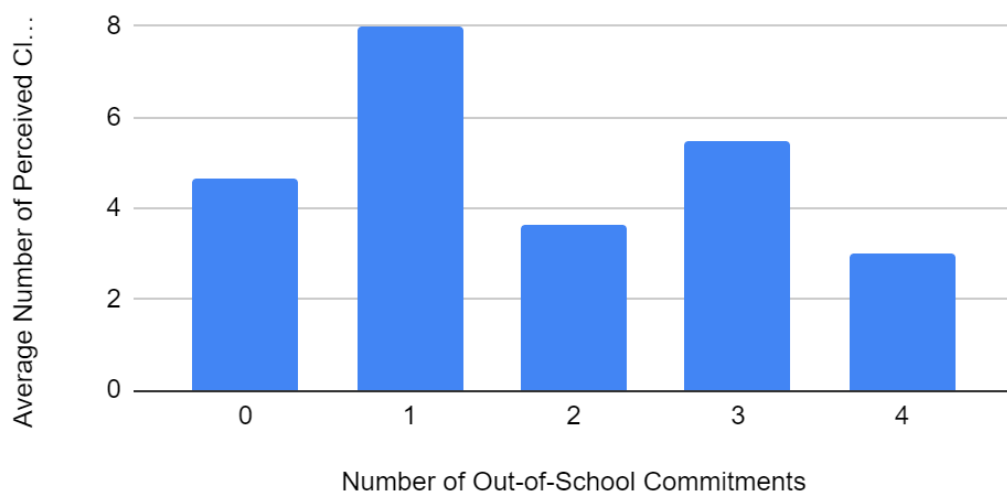


Figure 3: How the number of out-of-school commitments students have correlated with the number of close friends students feel they have at CCNY

Do you believe being on campus makes it easier to make friends?

25 responses

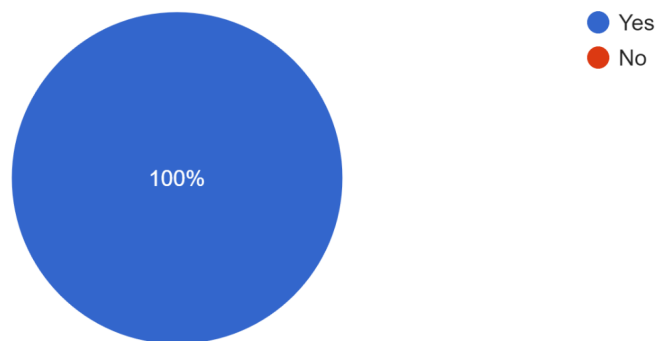


Figure 4: Direct results of the survey question “Do you believe being on campus makes it easier to make friends?”

The number of close friends students had was most influenced by how much time they spent on campus, as seen by the trend present in Figure 1. In Figure 2, both commuters and non-commuters had a similar average number of friends. Commuter students had an average of one more close friend than their non-commuting counterparts (a mean of 5.17 friends for commuter students vs a mean of 4.25 friends for non-commuters). The number of external commitments students had was not correlated with the number of close friendships that they have made, with the most number of close friends made by students who had 1 out-of-school commitment (Figure 3). Figure 4 represents student ideas towards making friends, and shows that all students surveyed, regardless of demographic background, believe that being on campus results in an increased number of close friendships made at CCNY.

## Discussion

Social relationships, specifically friendships, are an important part of the college experience. Our study shows on average that a tendency to spend more time on campus correlates to the amount of friendships and close friendships made and maintained, supporting our initial hypothesis. Though time spent on campus was the main variable focused on, many

other factors could contribute to the amount of friendships a student may make at CUNY.

Another key variable that factored into the amount of friendships a student may make is the commuter status of a student. Being closer to campus or living on campus, means the greater ability to spend time on campus and form connections. Those who live on campus especially get a chance to form close relationships because they live in close proximity to other students from CUNY.

In contrast to other schools, the survey shows the campuses that allow more space and time for students to spend in close proximity to each other will overall yield more connections for students. In non-commuter schools, where the student body lives on campus, students may report more close friendships and friendships on account of spending nearly all their time on campus and in constant closeness to other students. Another way to increase friendships between students and make friendships easier for colleges is to promote clubs and organizations to students. Our survey found that students in clubs and organizations, overall, had more friendships than those who were not.

This same reasoning can be applied to surveying students for how many clubs/organizations they are a part of. Clubs, organization and sport teams allow students into already tight knit groups, often which have already formed strong connections between members, allow more easily for students to make closer friendships with a mass group of other students quickly. Additionally, out of school commitments add another layer of outside responsibility that may push students to spend more time off campus, pulling them away from the site of making new friends and making it harder for them to maintain those friendships.

### **Limitations**

Our study had many limitations. A key limitation of the study was the small sample size. Of thousands of enrolled students at The City College of New York, we had a sample size of

only 25. With such a broad topic, our study would have greatly benefited from a large sample population. A larger population would allow better accuracy when describing how time spent on campus correlates to student body ability in making and maintaining friends with their peers.

A majority of participants were Biomedical majors, a part of the Sophie Davis Biomedical program. This specialized program groups these participants into an already close cohort. Thus, it is possible that many of these students may have easily made friends because of their proximity to a tight-knit group of peers, and not because of the amount of time they spend on campus.

This study was also conducted post-pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the way students participate in campus life and learning. With the introduction of online learning, flexible lecture schedules, and the overall ability for students to take classes without stepping foot on campus, has come to a change in the way students socialize as they have returned to in-person learning. Our study does not cover the effects of COVID-19 on student socialization but the pandemic does skew our data.

## References

Bronkema RH, Bowman NA. 2017. Close Campus Friendships and College Student Success. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*. 21(3):152102511770420. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025117704200>.

Juvonen J, Lessard LM, Kline NG, Graham S. 2022. Young Adult Adaptability to the Social Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Protective Role of Friendships. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 51(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-022-01573-w>.