



DSC Report on the
2010-2011
Student Wellness and
Student Insurance Survey

Health Issues Committee
Doctoral Students' Council
Email: dsc@cunydisc.org
cunydisc.org

Background

From November 2010 to March 2011, the Health Issues Committee of the Doctoral Students' Council (DSC) conducted an online survey of all Graduate Center students regarding utilization of Student Health Services and Student Counseling Services offered at the Graduate Center, as well as student experiences with the NYSHIP Student Employment Health Plan (NYSHIP). The survey was administered online using the DSC's Opinio software. Students were recruited to participate in the survey via emails sent to program and student listservs at the Graduate Center.

This survey follows up on the 2009-2010 Student Health Insurance Survey administered by the DSC. Last year's survey was designed to identify specific problems regarding student experiences with NYSHIP, and propose recommendations for improving student health protections under NYSHIP. The most common difficulties with NYSHIP reported by students in 2009-2010 include: finding a provider that accepts NYSHIP, finding information on plan benefits, finding someone at the Graduate Center who can answer questions about NYSHIP, and getting billed for services they believed would be covered under NYSHIP. To access a report on the full results of last year's survey, including a description of the NYSHIP plan, please visit the DSC website at [cunydisc.org](http://www.cunydisc.org) and click on "Resolutions and Reports" (<http://www.cunydisc.org/resolutions>).

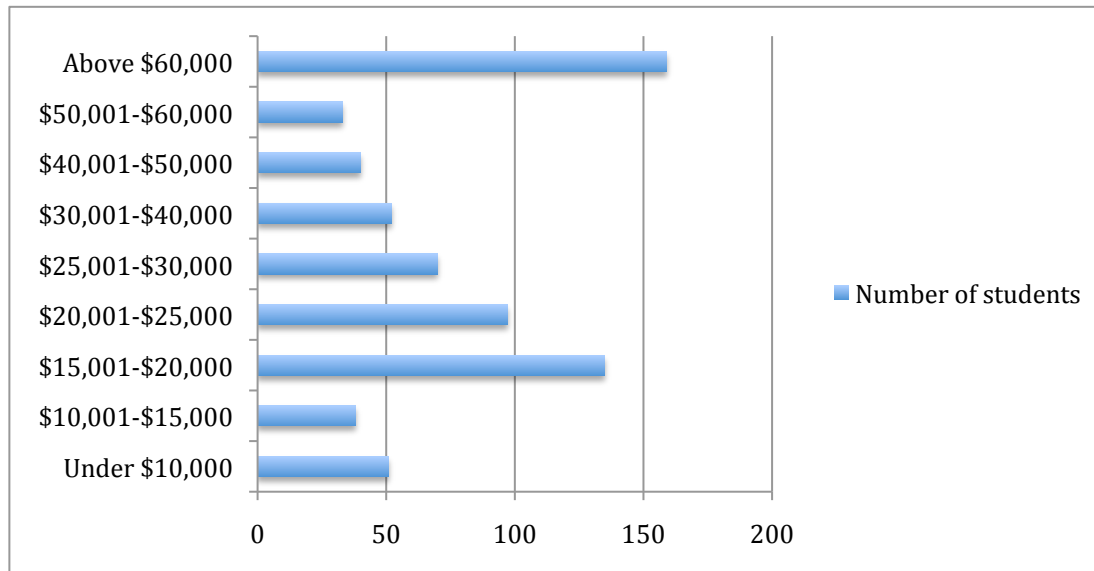
What follows is a report detailing the findings of the 2010-2011 Student Wellness and Student Insurance Survey. This report re-evaluates student satisfaction with NYSHIP, as well as student usage and satisfaction with health and counseling services offered through the Wellness Center at the Graduate Center. We hope the results and recommendations compiled in this report will continue to inform efforts to improve the health and wellness of Graduate Center students.

Survey Respondent Characteristics

Approximately 20% of students matriculated at the Graduate Center as of Fall 2010 responded to the survey (714 students). The majority of respondents (72%) indicate they spend most of their time at the Graduate Center. Many student respondents are employed as Graduate Assistant Bs (25%) or employed as a teaching adjunct at a senior college (17%). When

asked to indicate their annual household income, most respondents fell into two categories: 32% of student households earn between \$15,000 and \$25,000 a year, with another 22% of student households earning \$60,000 or above.

Figure 1. Household income distribution of survey respondents



NYSHIP

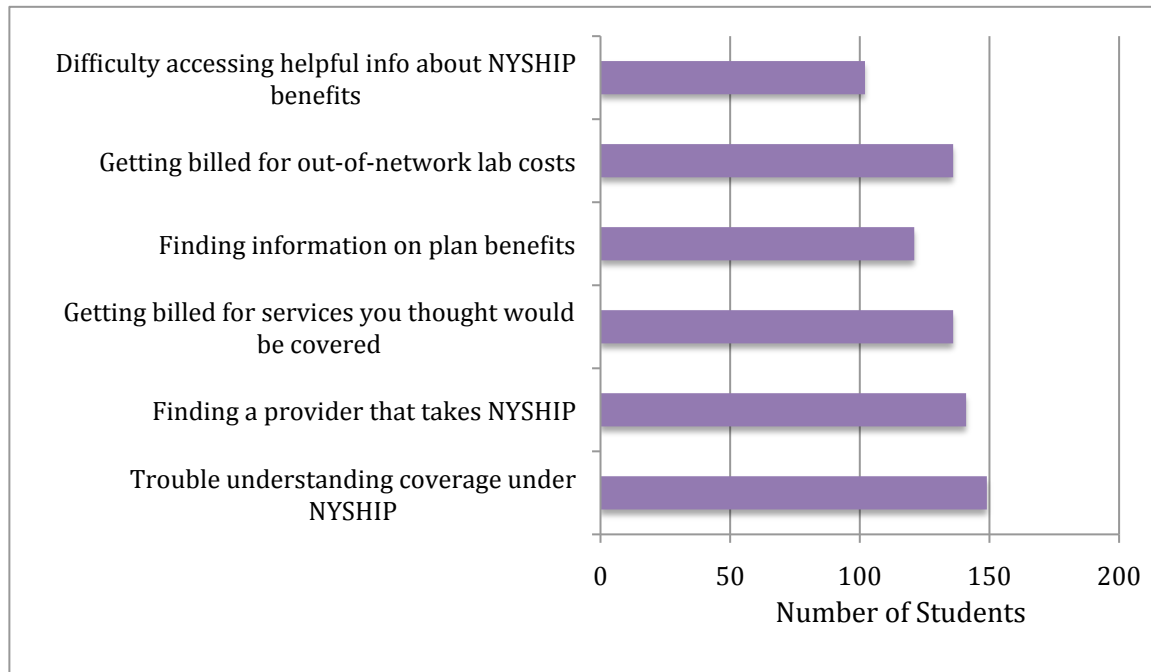
Of students who responded to the survey, 60% (377 students) indicate they are currently enrolled in NYSHIP. The majority of students (82%) had read the plan description of benefits, and most students obtained a copy of the plan description on a website (37%) or in a home mailing (36%). Overall, students appear to have mixed views regarding their satisfaction with the NYSHIP plan.

- 36% of students (133) indicate they are unsure regarding their satisfaction with NYSHIP
- 27% of respondents indicate they are satisfied with the plan
- 16% of students indicate they are unsatisfied or very unsatisfied with the plan

Students were asked to indicate what they have had difficulty with regarding the NYSHIP plan. Almost 150 students (14%) report having trouble understanding coverage under NYSHIP, and 14% of respondents indicate they have trouble finding a doctor or other health service provider

that accepts NYSHIP coverage. Thirteen percent of respondents report getting billed for health services they believed would be covered under NYSHIP. Other common difficulties reported by students include delays in receiving the NYSHIP insurance card and difficulty using the card.

Figure 2. Most common difficulties with NYSHIP

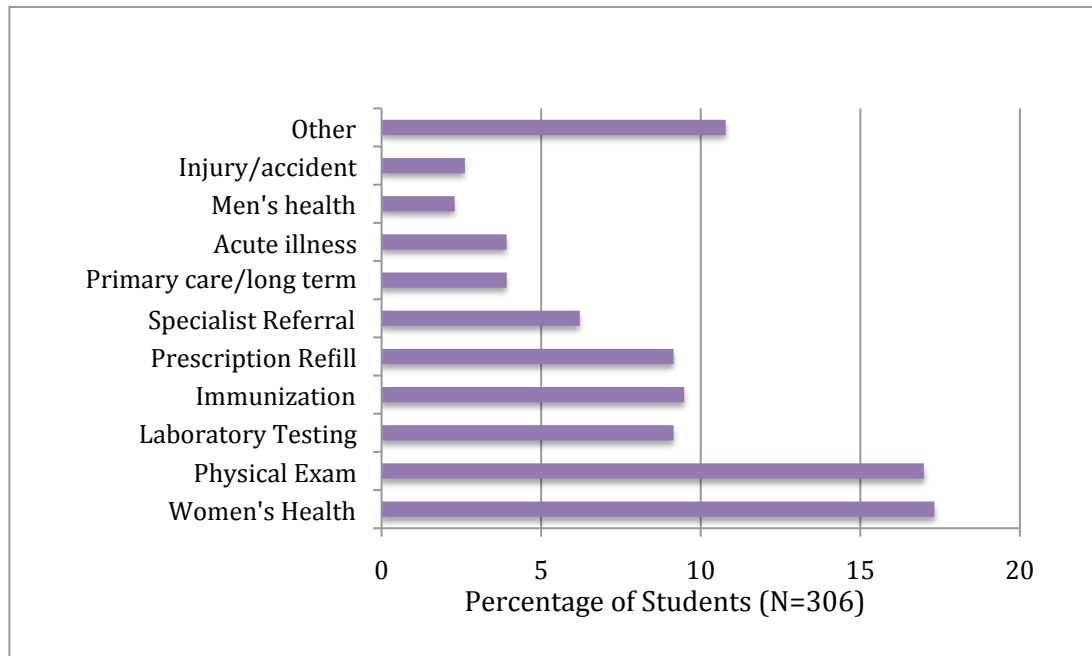


Student Health Services

Twenty-two percent of respondents (191 students) indicate they have used Student Health Services (SHS) within the past year. Most respondents view their experience with SHS favorably, with 60% indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received.

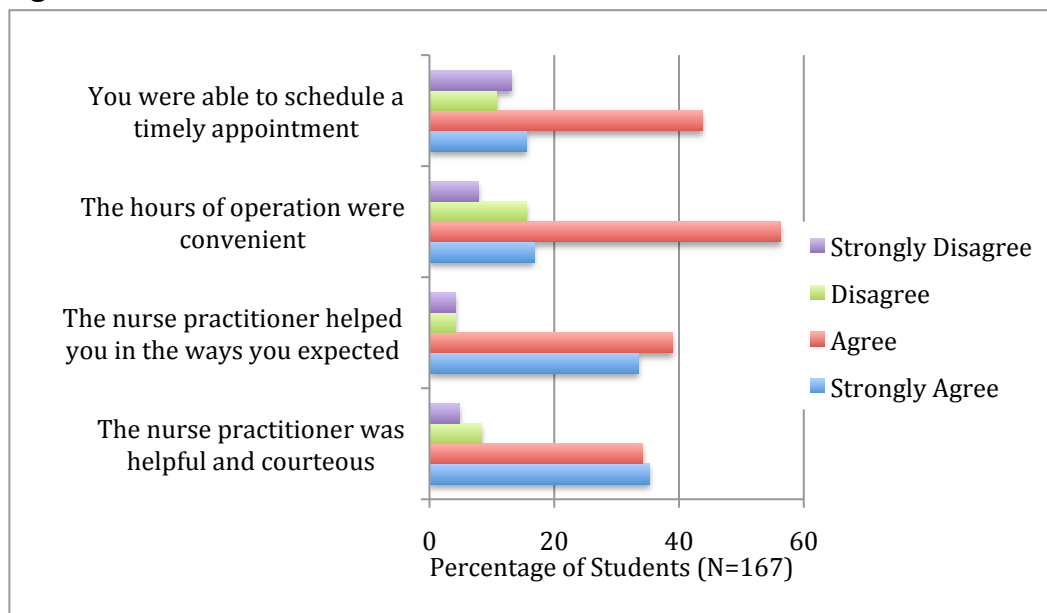
Students used SHS for a variety of reasons. The most common services utilized by respondents include women's health (17%), physical examination (17%), immunizations (10%), and laboratory testing (9%).

Figure 3. Most common SHS services utilized



Overall, student respondents appear pleased with the quality of service at SHS. Sixty-nine percent of students agreed or strongly agreed that the nurse practitioner at SHS was helpful and courteous, and 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the nurse practitioner helped them in the ways they expected.

Figure 4. Student satisfaction with SHS services

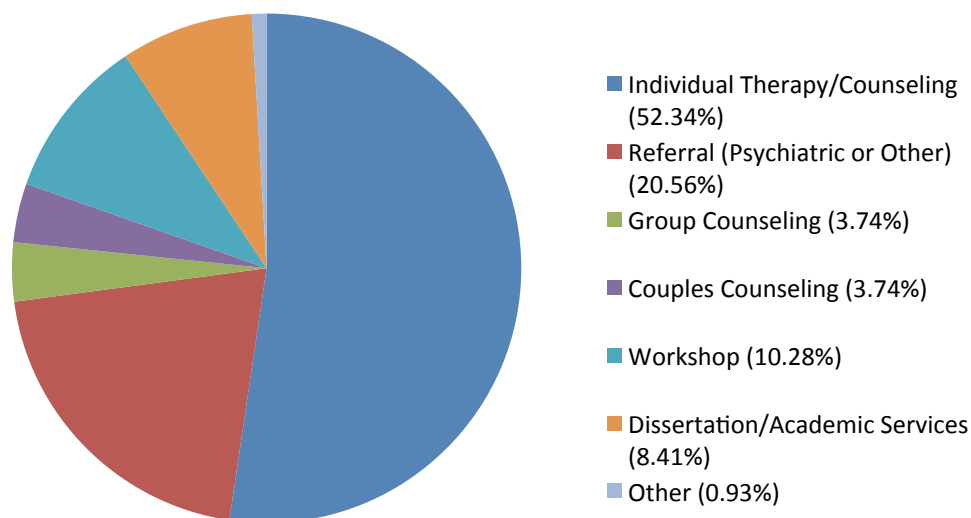


Student Counseling Services

Of those who responded, almost 12% (76 students) have made use of the Graduate Center's Student Counseling Services (SCS) in the past year. Overall, students appear to view the SCS very favorably, with almost 84% indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received, and none reporting they were very dissatisfied.

Many respondents used more than one SCS service. Individual counseling sessions were the most popular, accounting for over half of the SCS services provided to respondents. Referrals to an outside mental health practitioner constituted 20% of SCS services reported. Smaller numbers of students also made use of the SCS workshops, dissertation/academic counseling services, and group and couples counseling.

Figure 5. Frequency of reasons for Student Counseling Services use



The vast majority of students (over 90%) who report using SCS agreed or strongly agreed that the hours of operation were convenient, and that they were able to schedule a convenient appointment time. Almost 95% of respondents found the SCS counselors helpful and courteous, and over 86% said they had been helped in the ways they expected by the counselor who saw them.

Figure 6. Student satisfaction with SCS services

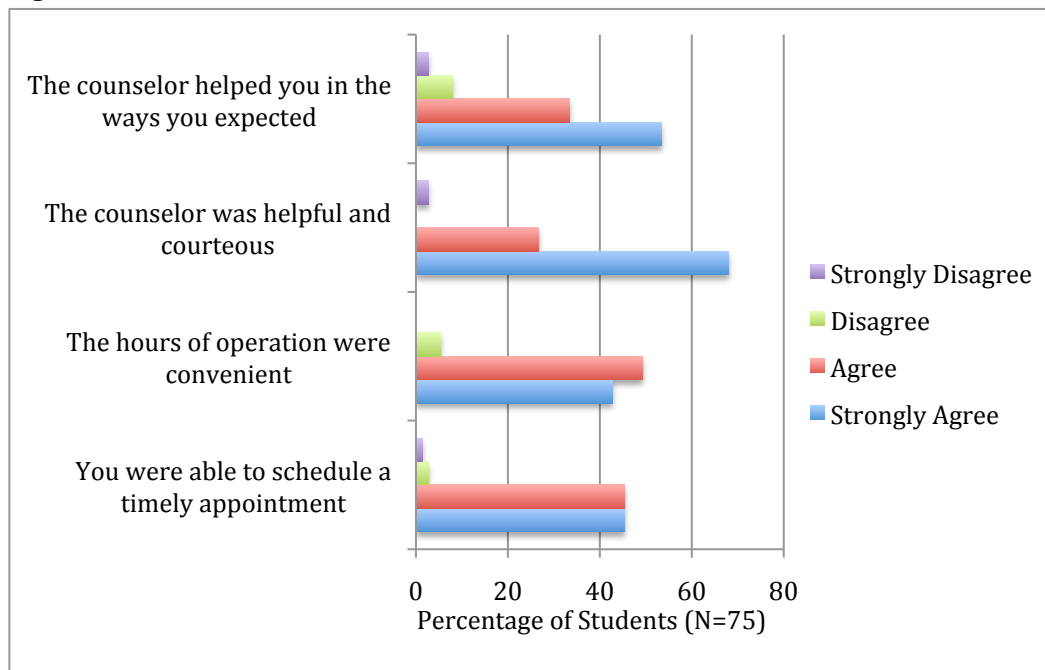
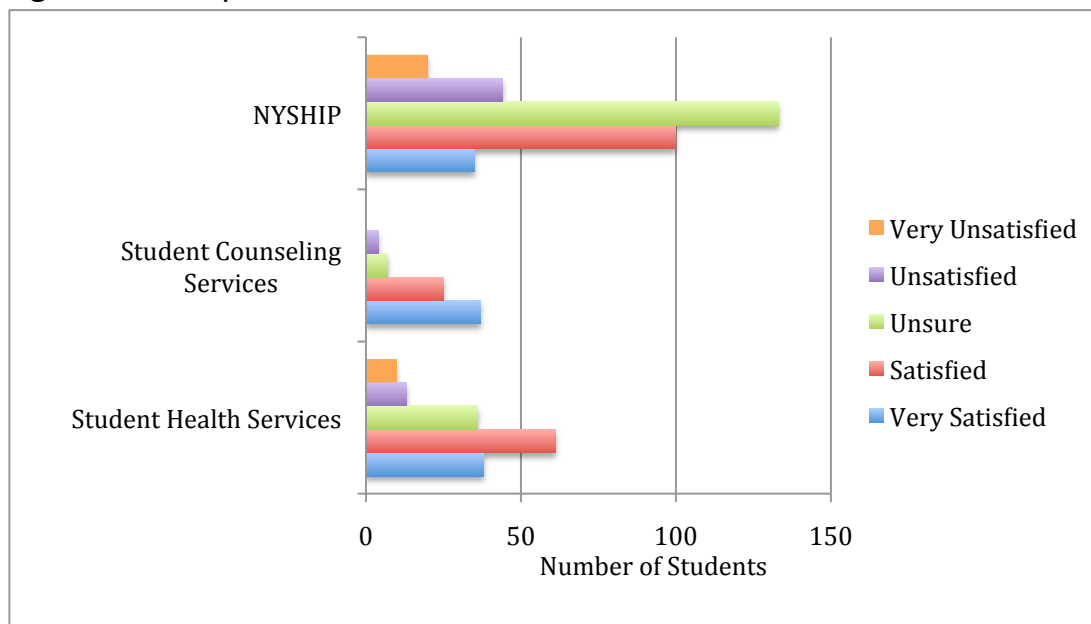


Figure 7. Comparison of overall student satisfaction



Recommendations

1. The Health Issues Committee of the DSC should continue to conduct an annual Student Wellness and Student Insurance survey to track changes in student satisfaction regarding Student Health Services, Student Counseling Services and the NYSHIP insurance plan.
2. The Office of Student Affairs should conduct educational outreach to students enrolling in NYSHIP and to prospective students, so they understand the limitations of the plan and have realistic expectations about this health insurance.
3. It is recommended that fellowship award letters and funding award letters sent to students, who may then qualify for NYSHIP, include some text about the limitations of NYSHIP coverage.
4. The DSC, the Adjunct Project, the Office of Student Affairs and the University Benefits Office should work together to map a campaign of advocacy for making improvements to the NYSHIP health plan. Demands should be made for
 - increasing payment standards for in-network physicians so that more doctors will participate in the plan
 - coverage for preventative services such as STI testing and annual check-ups
 - update the GHI dental plan to include coverage for modern day dentistry, specifically composite fillings
 - streamlining and providing more consistency in billing procedures
 - providing insurance cards that arrive in a timely manner and display all of the information health care providers find necessary to bill for treatment
5. Student Health Services and the Office of Student Affairs should collaborate to create a billing system within our on-site health care facility that would bill NYSHIP for medical services provided to students. This would generate income to support the expansion of

- our current health services. It would also provide a convenient place for students to access care paid for with their insurance without having to fear unexpected bills. The services provided on-site should be tailored to work within the limits of the NYSHIP Student Employment Health Plan while providing the best care possible.
6. The Graduate Center administration should collaborate with the Research Foundation, the 501(c)(3) organization that manages the University's research investments, and other entities to place students paid through grant funding or other non-tax-levy monies on state payroll in NYSHIP-eligible titles meeting minimum earning requirements. This would have the additional benefit of extending to them protections granted under the New York State Public Officers Law for activities conducted in the course of their employment.