



Student Complaints Do Not Equal Student Satisfaction

Penelope Keough, Psy. D

National University

San Diego, California, USA

National University, San Diego, Administrative Office

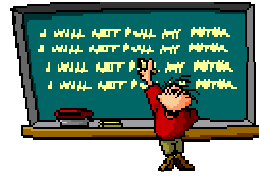
- National University is the second-largest private, non-profit institution of higher learning in California.



Abstract

The purpose of the presentation is to synthesize a research connection between student complaints originating as grade appeals and student satisfaction so students can reach their ultimate learning potential. A synthesis of the School of Education's online course development and review checklist for online pedagogy will also be reviewed as an intervention for increased student satisfaction.

Rationale

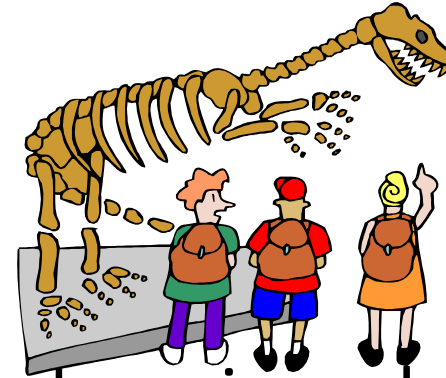


- There is more to assigning a letter grade or score to the assignment
- Grades can engender various reactions in students:
 - anger, euphoria (good grade), confusion, displeasure
 - Ultimately, one hopes “resignation” that the instructor posted a valid grade!

Historical Overview

- Institutional Review Board approval was granted and past grade appeals from the School of Education, National University was reviewed for trends (Pacis, Keough, Sytsma, Wheeler, 2013).
- Key terms were developed based on generational characteristics tied to personality characteristics (cont.)

Historical Overview (continued)



- Approx. 250 student grade appeals reviewed and results tallied in data collection.
- Two distinct personality traits emerged: narcissism and external locus of control
- In essences the majority of students filing grade appeals: “a sense they deserve what they want because they want it” (Keough, et al., 2013)
- unwanted grade was either they didn’t know policy or for some reason outside their sphere of control, didn’t follow policy

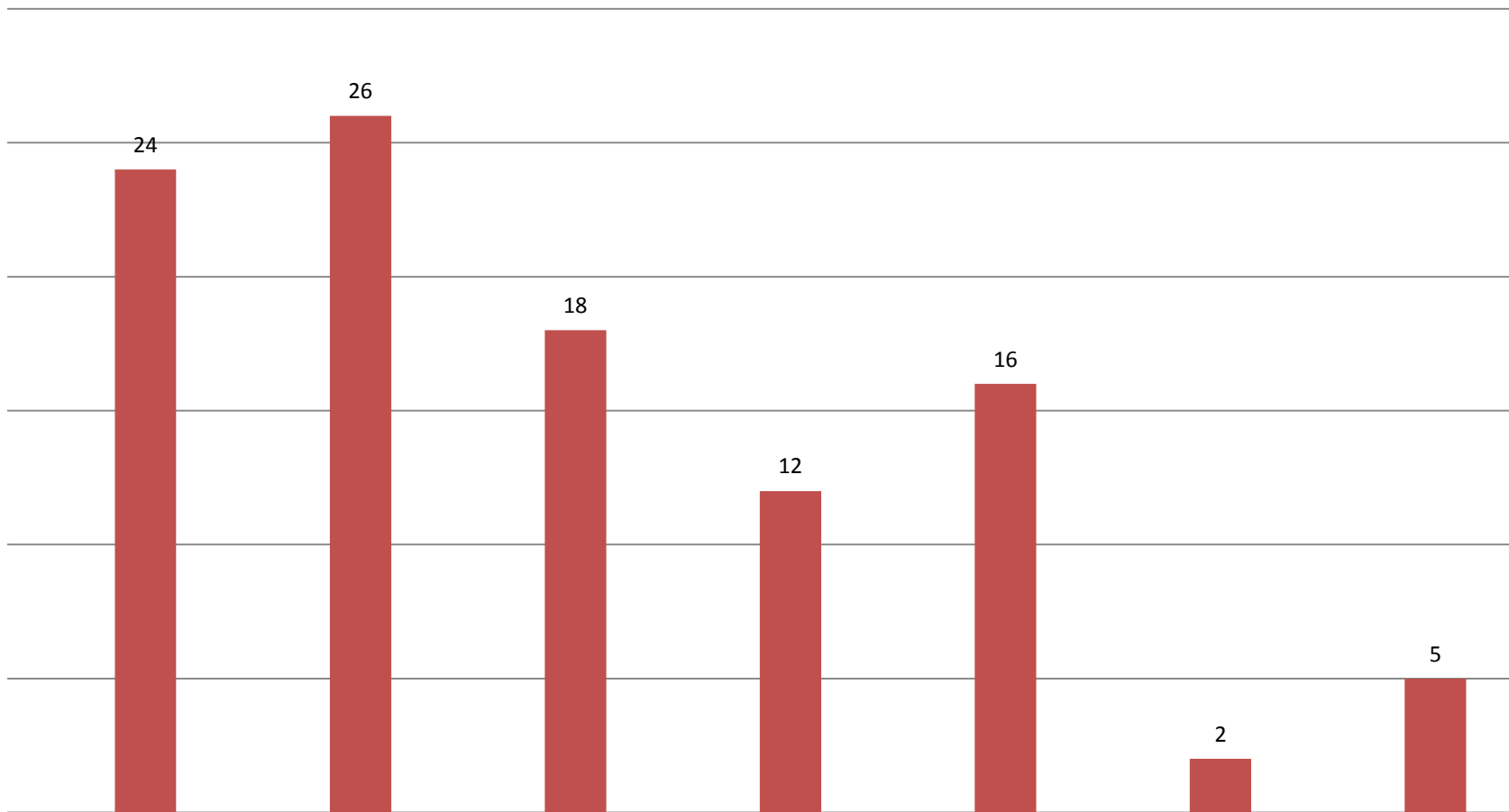
Student Satisfaction and Hypothesis



- What do the above results have to do with student satisfaction and grade appeals?
- January 15, 2012 published Student Satisfaction Survey Report (School of Education, 2011), showing positive and negative results: 76% of National University students said they would attend again and 79% said they would recommend National University to others.

Student Satisfaction Results(positive)

convenient(26),online(24),faculty(18),fast(16),flexibility(12),other(5),cred(2)



Review of Literature

- The concept of entitlement and the perception of privilege may well be in conflict across generations”
(Pacis, Sytsma, Keough, Weegar, Wheeler, Bustillos, 2012, p.62).
- Bates & Waldrup (2010), noted: assigning grades is not a universal right by faculty and administrators can change grades based on appeals that follow published policy.
- Grayson (2004):The results of 4yr. study suggests that underlying personality characteristics likely are more responsible for expressions of program satisfaction than either GPA or professor performance (p.1).

Review of Literature (cont.)

- University of Denver, Sturm College of Law: one professor encourages grade appeals and attaches a handout of the grade appeal policy to the students' midterm exam (Corrada, 2013).
- Gynnild (2011) contend that stakeholders arrive at the core of the matter before a formal appeal is filed (examined frequencies, outcomes, and policies between Univ. of CA & Univ. of Oslo, Norway)

Review of Literature

- Nesbit & Burton (2006) discovered injustice played a role in the negative perception of student satisfaction after comparing negative/positive student perceptions(grades)
- Michelle Oja: (2006) Students with lower grades were less satisfied with matters that they deemed important based on Student Satisfaction Inventories (SSIs).
- Svanum & Aigner, 2011:Course satisfaction, then, can be substantially influenced by factors loosely or unrelated to course or teacher effectiveness (p.679).

Matching Research to Hypothesis

- Review of previous key study:
 - graduate level students would recommend National University to others due to convenience and online format.
 - would not recommend National University because of poor instruction by faculty.

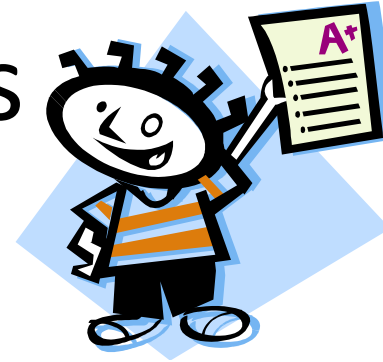
Do lower grades equate students' perception that they have received poor instruction by faculty?

Further research needed!

Additional Key Research based on NU Student Satisfaction Survey

- Hand in hand with the student satisfaction results was the study by Keough et al. (2013) that presented trend analysis linked to key personality trait when each researcher reviewed 50 individual student grade appeals in the School of Education. A narcissistic trend emerged which equated to “entitlement” or the student expressing they deserve what they want when they want it (2013).

Interventions Leading to Fewer Grade Appeals



- Stringent Online Course Development (36 points for NU course development)
- Consistency in following course outlines by instructors
- Transparency of grade appeal process and publication of late student work policy, paper format, assignment due dates, accommodations/modifications for students disabled.

Conclusion

- What is the connection between personality traits, student satisfaction and grade appeals?
- This paper has made an attempt to explore the connection between students' perception, based a key personality trait, narcissism, a negative student satisfaction perception based on poor instruction and ultimately the choice to file a grade appeal.
- The personality trait that evidenced the most was entitlement which is connected with professor's instruction, level of transparency and communication.
- The grade appeal is filed to show that either the professor or the university is at fault.
- Additionally, the literature review supported personality characteristics as a source when lack of student satisfaction!