



Have NSF S-STEM Scholarships Changed SEISMIC Scholar's Work Circumstances?

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Abstract: SEISMIC, Bridgewater State University's NSF S-STEM grant program, provides \$6,000 scholarship for three years to rising sophomore students from diverse backgrounds. While the scholarships defray Scholar's costs, annual program surveys and interviews reveal that many SEISMIC scholars continue to work off-campus jobs while in the program. In this poster presentation, we review quantitative and qualitative evidence collected during the first four years of the S-STEM grant to assess Scholar's financial and work commitments. Preliminary analysis reveals that some students do not take off-campus jobs while in the program, but most do, with some working full-time hours. Analysis of interviews with students graduating the program reveal how Scholars weighed their commitment to the SEISMIC program and STEM education with their off-campus circumstances and responsibilities.

SEISMIC, an NSF S-STEM grant in its 4th year provides Scholarships for low income, academically-talented STEM students at Bridgewater State University, a public, 4-year University of 10,000 students in Southeastern Massachusetts.

- Scholars are recruited from students with high GPA and a B or better in intro BSU STEM classes.
- Selection criteria included answers to questions on financial impact.
- Scholarships last for 3 years, assisting in sophomore through senior years.
- Scholarships are for \$6,000 annually.
- In-state Tuition & Fees = \$10,732
- Total Cost for Resident = \$28,132

"I cut down my work hours and was able to focus more and work with my group study on campus...and also just be able to not stress about money for school."

"The scholarship was very important to my success because it helped with my college financing especially. I am coming from a low-income family where money to pay for college was always an issue."

Research Findings

Finding 1: About two thirds receiving very little financial support from family

Finding 2: Nearly all SEISMIC Scholars taking on student loan debt and off-campus work

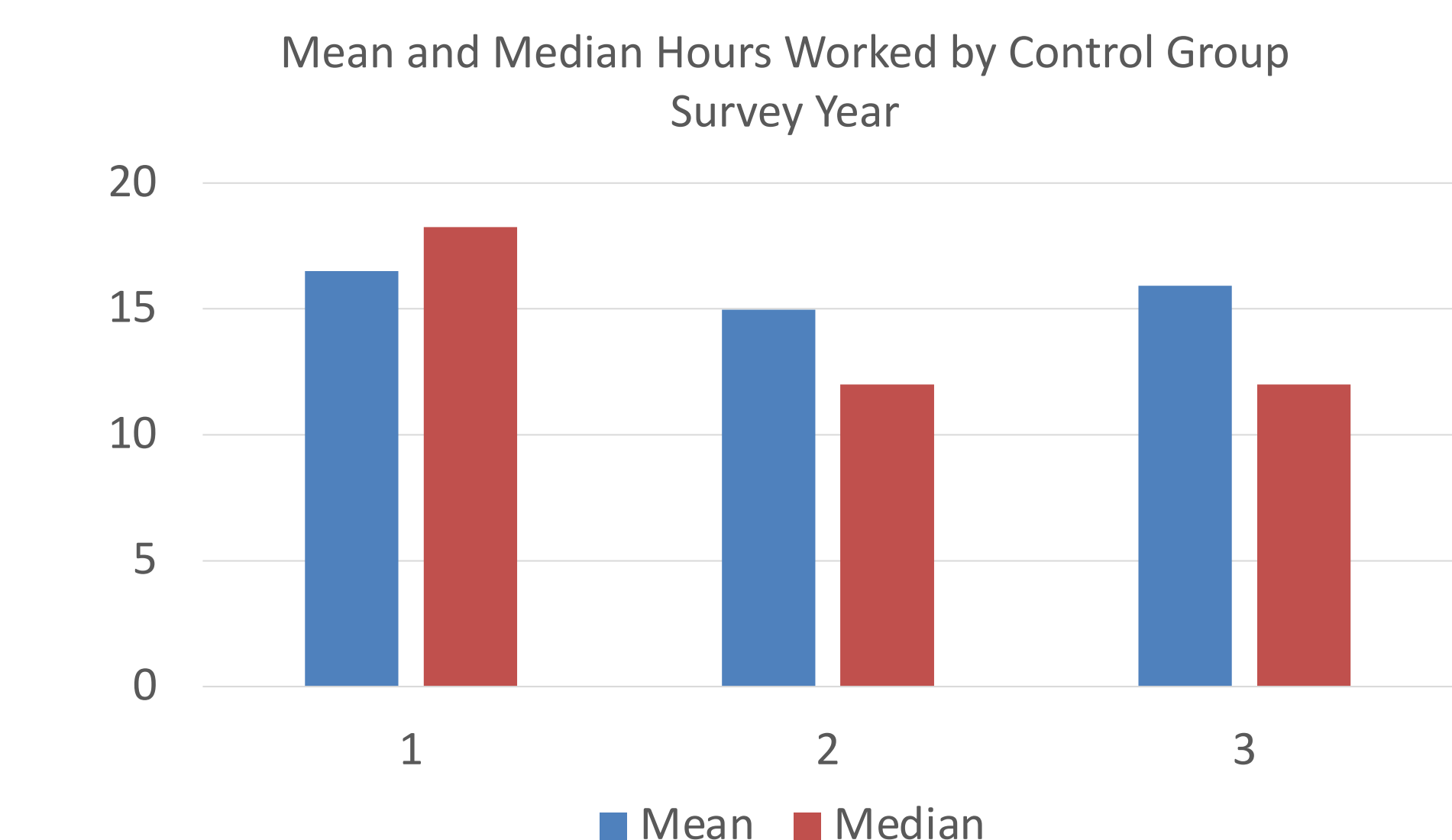
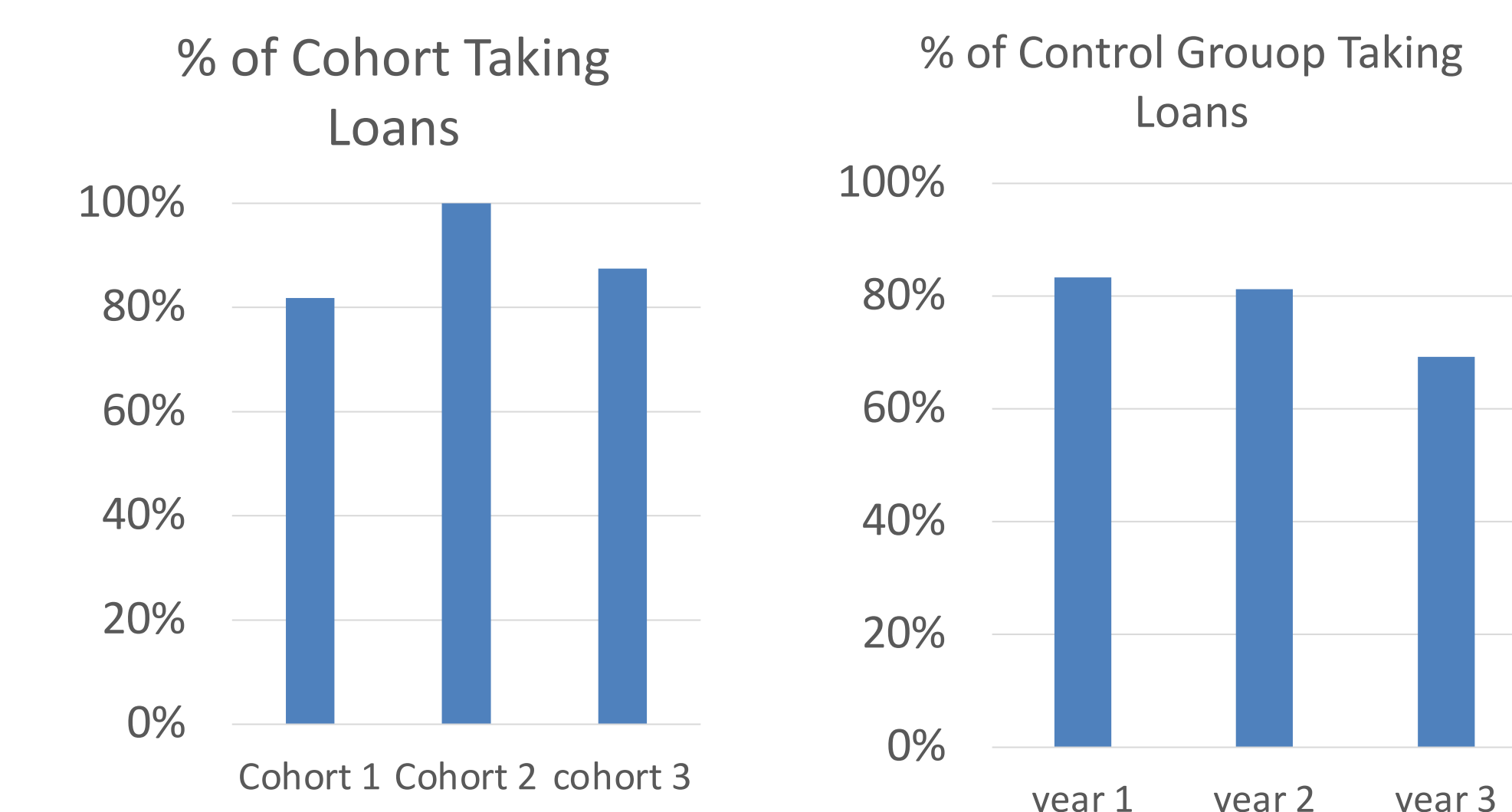
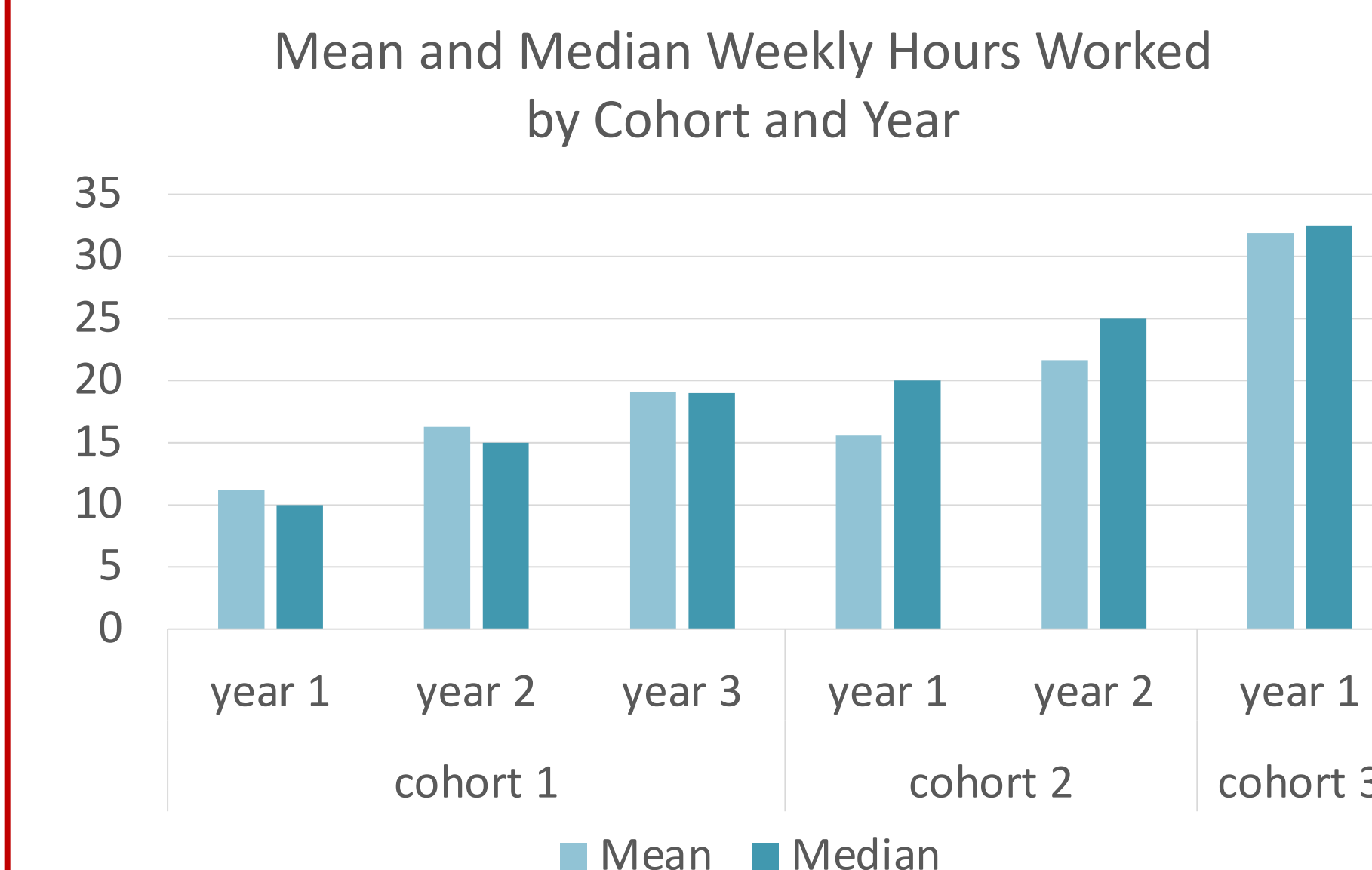
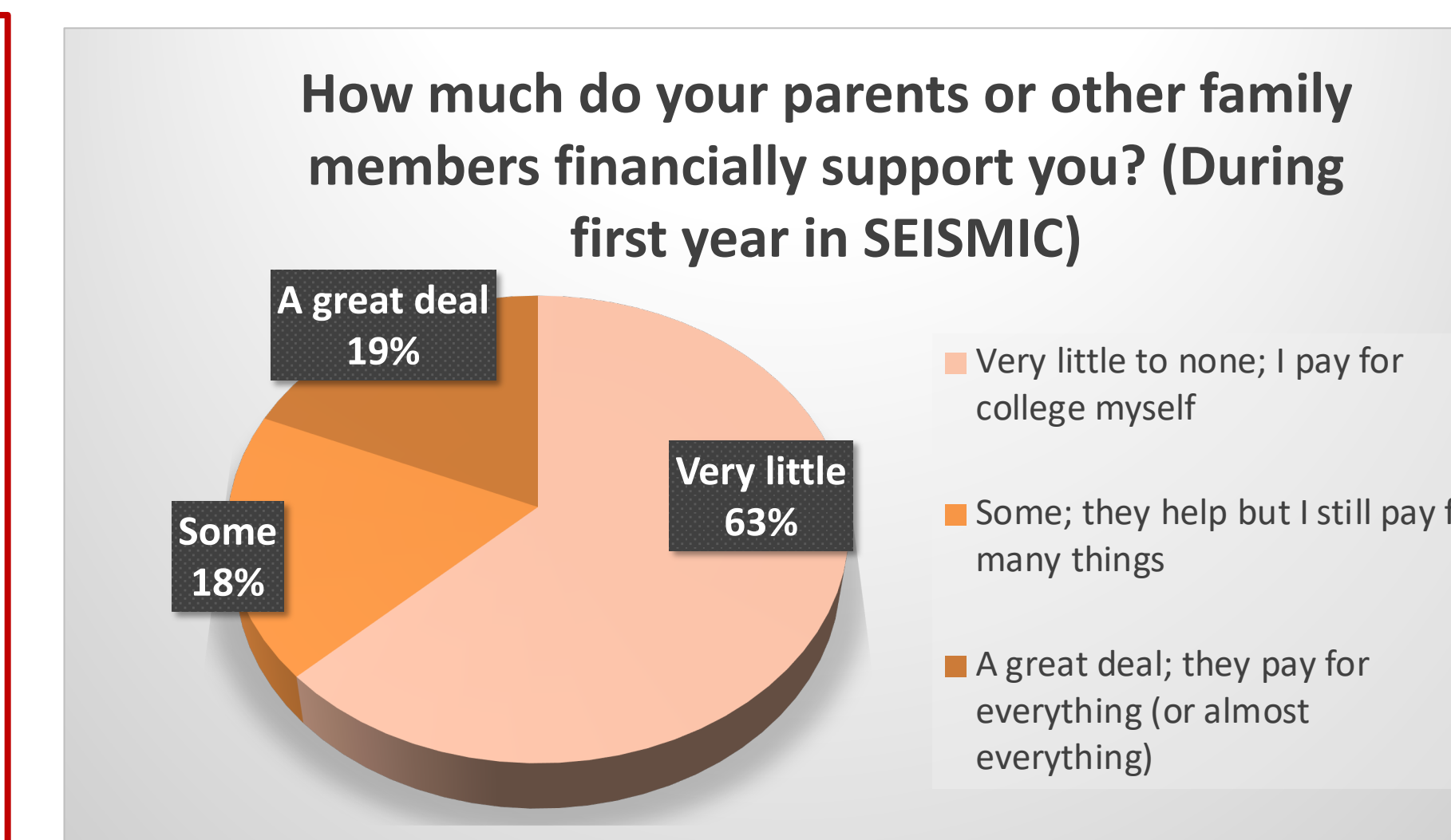
Finding 3: Many working off campus. Mean and median hours increasing from each year for returning cohorts. Cohort 3 reported working more hours off campus than either other cohort during any year

Discussion

1. In interviews, many students reported that SEISMIC scholarships decreased financial stress and program allowed them to focus on courses and opportunities
2. Even with substantial financial support, many students reported off-campus work in annual surveys, suggesting unmet financial need
3. Increasing work hours over time suggests that Scholars who were working are taking on opportunities when available, building their connections and capitals

Methodology

- Annual Surveys of all Scholars and control group
- Exit Interviews of Cohort 1 Scholars at graduation with open ended questions related to opportunities and impact of SEISMIC program



SEISMIC Scholars Retention

- Cohort 1: 11 students (10 graduates, 1 active)
- Cohort 2: 8 students (seniors)
- Cohort 3: 8 students (juniors)
- Cohort 4: 11 students (sophomores)
- 21 female, 18 male
- 16 White, 15 Black, 3 Latinx, 2 Asian, 1 American Indian, 1 Unknown

