Sleep Savvy Student Solutions Blog

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Abstract

This service-learning capstone project, Sleep Savvy Student Solutions Blog, addressed the prevalent issue of insufficient quality sleep among college students. Through this blog, the goal is to educate students about the importance of quality sleep and its direct impact on academic success. By providing valuable insights into the connection between sleep and academic performance, practical recommendations and strategies are offered to help college students achieve better sleep. The project is aimed to empower students with knowledge and tools to optimize their sleep patterns, ultimately contributing to improved overall well-being and academic achievements. A follow-up survey was sent to the blog readers, who reported successful implementation of the recommendations offered.

Keywords: quality sleep, college student, academic performance, sleep tips, caffeine, service learning, better grades

Introduction to my Capstone Project

As a non-traditional college student, I experienced the transformative effects of quality sleep on my academic performance. My journey inspired me to recognize the widespread issue of sleep deprivation among college students, and I embarked on a mission to create the blog Sleep Savvy Student Solutions. This service-learning capstone project addresses the pressing challenges college students face in obtaining adequate and restful sleep while providing valuable insights into the connection between sleep and academic success.

Around a decade ago, I encountered an article highlighting the critical link between quality sleep and academic success for college students, and it struck a chord with me. I vowed that if I ever returned to school, I would prioritize my sleep to maximize my learning potential. When I eventually pursued higher education, I sought information on how non-traditional college students could optimize their sleep, but my search yielded disappointing results. I embarked on
a journey of trial and error, ultimately developing a system that significantly improved my sleep quality. Believing that my discoveries could benefit others, I created a blog to reach a wider audience and have the flexibility to continue expanding it even after graduation.

**Elements coming together**

The first step in forming Sleep Savvy Student Solutions was to design a comprehensive survey and send it to college students. This survey inquired about their lifestyle choices and sleep habits, providing essential data to shape the content of my blog posts. Beginning with the "About Me" section, I candidly shared my sleep journey and the positive impact quality sleep had on my academic achievements. Drawing from research, my experiences, and the survey results, I carefully crafted a series of informative blog posts. These posts offered evidence-based recommendations and practical strategies, empowering college students to prioritize their sleep and ultimately enhance their academic performance.

I shared the initial version of Sleep Savvy Student Solutions with the survey participants, encouraging them to read and provide feedback. The interactive approach of the blog played a pivotal role in its development. Their valuable insights and perspectives allowed me to refine and adjust the blog posts to better cater to college students’ specific needs and concerns. The revised version of the blog was then made available to them for their reference, creating a resource accessible to all. I shared Sleep Savvy Student Solutions with my network and college students through social media, especially Facebook, to maximize reach and impact. By providing a convenient and accessible platform for them to access valuable information, this blog aims to alleviate the challenges of sleep deprivation and promote healthier sleep practices. With a strong focus on accessibility, Sleep Savvy Student Solutions is a free, convenient, and accessible platform available to anyone with internet access, and it aspires to make a meaningful difference in the lives of college students worldwide.

Unlike existing blogs filled with complex data from sleep studies, I present information in a readable and accessible manner. Focusing on educating college students about the benefits
of quality sleep and offering practical recommendations, I surveyed them to gather insights into their sleep habits and daily practices that might influence their sleep quality. By utilizing my innovative approach and combining my personal experiences with evidence-backed insights, I aspire to empower college students to prioritize their sleep, enhance their academic performance, and achieve greater well-being.

By creating Sleep Savvy Solutions, I have become an advocate for college students seeking to improve their sleep quality and, consequently, their academic performance. My blog is a valuable resource, providing helpful information and tips, including links to guided meditations that have proven effective in my journey. Embracing the notion that there is space for my unique ideas and experiences has inspired me to continue my creative endeavors, ensuring that my blog remains a growing repository of invaluable sleep-related insights. As my project directly benefits the stakeholders, college students, by imparting knowledge on the importance of quality sleep and offering techniques for improvement, I anticipate positive changes in their sleep habits, caffeine intake, and overall well-being. This, in turn, is expected to lead to enhanced academic performance and a boost in self-confidence, ultimately contributing to an improved quality of life. My personal growth throughout this project has been profound, exceeding my initial expectations, and my commitment to continuous learning and research is evident in the depth of knowledge I have gained about sleep and its importance. I have a sense of purpose and fulfillment knowing I have contributed to a healthier and more prosperous college community.

Results

The benefits and positive impact of the Sleep Savvy Student Solutions project on stakeholders, defined as college students in this project, are evident in the capstone results. With 28 participants initially surveyed, the blog’s content was thoughtfully curated to address the gaps between college students and achieving quality sleep. The blog posts I have created have
been based on the valuable information gathered from the survey, my trials, and my research in the field.

The second installment of the survey, completed by 10 participants, revealed encouraging outcomes. After implementing the blog's recommendations, 10% of participants reported better sleep quality. The blog is influential in positively influencing sleep habits and overall well-being. The survey also indicated that 40% of the participants enjoyed the post that offered recommendations on decreasing caffeine intake, suggesting the content was engaging and impactful.

Furthermore, the project successfully encouraged positive changes in sleep-related practices among the participants. For instance, 30% decreased their exposure to blue light in the evening, recognizing the importance of limiting blue light's impact on circadian rhythms and sleep patterns. Additionally, 80% of the participants started using white noise to aid their sleep, and 40% reported that tidying their rooms before sleep positively affected their sleep quality. These changes reflect the blog's success in providing practical and effective strategies for improving sleep habits.

The positive feedback from participants further illustrates the blog's impact on college students' well-being and academic success. Seven participants mentioned finding the recommendations helpful and expressed excitement about applying more of the tips in the future, particularly when the fall semester begins. Six individuals have subscribed to the blog, indicating an ongoing interest in its content and potential long-term benefits. The Sleep Savvy Student Solutions project has proven to be a valuable resource for college students by offering practical recommendations, data-backed insights, and actionable strategies.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Sleep Savvy Solutions project, encompassing the creation of the blog "Sleep Savvy Student Solutions," has been a transformative and fulfilling journey. Creating a blog was the most effective and accessible means to reach and benefit college students
seeking to improve their sleep quality and academic performance. Bridging the gap between sleep and college students’ academic success has inspired me to take the initiative and create a solution instead of merely acknowledging the problem. As a result, I have honed essential hard skills, such as utilizing Google Forms for surveys and creating a blog, which has expanded my understanding of creativity. I now perceive creativity as not limited to artistic abilities but encompassing problem-solving, communication, and making meaningful connections. By taking the initiative to find a solution, I discovered the value of determination and effort in making a meaningful impact.

Initially, I expected the blog posts focusing on enhancing sleep quality to be more popular among students. However, to my surprise, the post centered around reducing caffeine intake garnered the most interest. Reflecting on this outcome, I believe that for future projects, enhancing innovation would involve revising the survey with different questions and reaching out to a broader audience, including non-college students, to compare sleep and lifestyle habits. This approach would provide valuable insights and steer the direction of my posts more effectively. Additionally, sending out the survey earlier would offer ample time to gather feedback, re-engage with the original participants, and make necessary adjustments to cater to their needs in the blog content. Such modifications would undoubtedly elevate the project's innovation and impact.

Still, witnessing the potential to contribute to a healthier and more successful college community fills me with gratitude for this project and the realizations it has given me. The journey of Sleep Savvy Student Solutions has reaffirmed the power of initiative, creativity, and determination in creating positive change. I look forward to its continued growth and impact in the lives of college students everywhere.
References


Appendix

Sleep Study Survey Results

1. Are you a traditional or non-traditional student?
27 responses

- Traditional (18-25 years old, pursuing my education immediately after graduating from high school): 66.7%
- Non (25 years in age or have taken time off from pursuing higher education): 33.3%

2. How many credits per semester do you take on average?
27 responses

- 1-6: 51.9%
- 7-12: 22.2%
- 13 or more: 25.9%

3. Are you employed?
27 responses

- No: 40.7%
- Part time: 37%
- Full time: 22.2%
4. How many hours of sleep do you get each night, on average?
27 responses

- 0-3 hours: 37%
- 4-6 hours: 63%

5. How physically active are you?
27 responses

- Sedentary: 11.1%
- Lightly Active: 29.6%
- Moderately Active: 11.1%
- Very Active: 48.1%

6. How often do you lose sleep to study or meet due dates?
26 responses

- Never: 34.6%
- 1-2 times per week: 38.5%
- 3-4 times per week: 26.9%
- 5 or more times per week: 11.1%
7a. If you answered **YES** to previous question- what is your routine?

If you answered **NO** to previous question, please skip.

14 responses

Shower, oils and some “fun” reading
i have a skincare routine & read a chapter of a whatever book i’m currently reading
Read
Put kids to bed, sit in the hot tub and watch tv with my husband. (This is our only time of the day together just the two of us)
Change into pjs clean my face brush my teeth get in bed and watch youtube till I pass out
Magnesium, and then audible on a timer
I tend to visit with my husband and watch a little tv. My phone changes to black and white 1/2 hour before I go to bed. It encourages me to put it away and start to wind down.
Do skin care and watch TV
1- set my alarms and put my phone down for the night 2 - brush my teeth and do my night skin care 3 - clean my room without stopping for a minimum of 3 minutes 4 - read or journal in bed 5 - go to bed
I listen to audiobooks with headphones to fall asleep at night.
I usually do homework in the evening. After I finish, wash face, brush teeth, etc., then try to read something scripturally based before I turn off the light. If I feel too tired to read I will either just turn off the light and snuggle in with my dogs or turn on instrumental (piano is my favorite) music with a 30 minute sleep timer and drift off to that.
Take my magnesium, brush teeth, use my melatonin nighttime lotion, face washing/moisturizing routine, spray bed with lavender linen spray, turn on fan and air purifier, put my puppies in their kennel and go to sleep.
Shower, brush my teeth, kick back with my book (enjoyment reading, not schoolwork)
Cup of Sleepytime tea with milk & honey.
8. Do you rely on caffeine to wake up or stay awake throughout the day?
27 responses

8a. If you answered YES to the above question, how much caffeine do you consume per day, on average. If you answered NO, skip to next question.
13 responses

9. Does drinking alcohol effect your sleep, personally?
27 responses
10. Have you noticed a difference in your quality sleep depending on your daily diet? (For instance, less sleep when you consume a lot of sugar...) 
27 responses

11. Do you take any supplements or medication to help you sleep? 
27 responses

12. How much time do you spend outside each day? 
27 responses
13. Do you track your sleep? 27 responses

No 17
Yes - with a phone 1
Yes - with a watch 6
Yes - with another device 3

14. Do you need white noise to sleep (For instance, a fan, sound machine, noise cancelling headphones) 27 responses

Yes 13
No 14
15. Do you feel as though the people you live with respect your sleep schedule. (Young children or others that require care excluded) 27 responses

Yes  No  Some, but not all 14.8%  77.8%

Yes  21
No  2
Some, but not all  4

16. What is the typical state of your bedroom?  26 responses

Clean and organized  Messy  38.5%  61.5%

Clean and organized  16
Messy  10
17. How do you ensure your sleeping area is free of light? 27 responses

I don't prioritize this 9

Black out curtains/other window coverings 15

Sleep mask 3

18. Do you use electronic devices (Phone, computer, TV...) an hour before going to sleep? 27 responses

Yes 24

No 3

19. If yes to above question, do you wear blue light glasses when using devices an hour before bed? 24 responses

Yes 4

No 17

Sometimes 3

20. What prevents you from achieving quality sleep? (Phone interruptions, people, stress, etc...) 25 responses
Nothing, I sleep well allllll the time
Phone, People
PTSI and shiftwork
Phone interruptions
Phone, but I recently discovered “do not disturb” and have made some setting changes
sometimes if I know I have to be up at a certain time I have a tendency to wake up throughout the
night in worry that I’ve slept through my alarm
Sleeping with our dog
Child interruptions, spouse snoring, mind won’t stop thinking of everything that needs to get done
Kids, phone interruptions
Stress, school, and work
Stress and a regularly changing schedule for my husband. I have always struggled with falling and
staying asleep, even as a child.
I don’t feel that I have trouble with my quality of sleep. I sometimes wake up prematurely. It is usually
when I have a large project and my brain is working on it.
Electronics
Stress over thinking
School
Work schedule
Racing mind
The hours I actually sleep and having a hard time falling asleep earlier.
Phone, if I took my ADHD meds too late in the day
Stress
Mostly just stress.
Having to stay up late for others. I get up at 530 every morning which is 3 hours before anyone else,
so they all stay up and I can’t sleep with everyone being noisy.
Sleep apnea, deviated septum, allergies. Things that make breathing difficult.
Anxiety
Waking up to go to the bathroom once or twice a night. I have RA, so joint pain sometimes wakes
me. I also have vivid dreams that sometimes wake me. I don’t get good quality sleep.
21. What information would benefit you regarding getting quality sleep as a college student? 19 responses

- healthy eating habits and a routine
- Not sure.
- Function of the bedroom. Sleeping space.
- Not sure
- Reading tips from experts
- Importance of routine and simplistic examples that are easy to implement.
- What are the best hours during the day to study? If I study later in the evening, am I likely to retain the information better than earlier than the day? (And vice versa)
- Don't procrastinate and set time aside for projects and school work
- I find having a regular time I go to sleep and wake up.
- I'm not sure
- I feel productive at night and stress about how much sleep I will get
- I feel finding what works best for you routine wise and committing to it.
- What are the most (latest) beneficial hours of sleep and the most quality melatonin supplement available?
- Less homework
- When I prioritize school work and stay a bit ahead, I sleep better because my stress level is lessened significantly.
- I don't understand this question.
- Don't read my textbooks before bed because I start fretting about assignments and my brain won't relax.
- identifying causes, how to develop a routine
- Opportunity for sleep studies.

22. Is there anything you would like to add? 12 responses

- No
- n/a
- Having an option to also chose sleep mask is would have been nice.
- I've been a night owl my whole life (even as a child), so getting quality sleep is on my mind every day.
- I worked a rotation of early mornings/graves/swings for 6 years, up until last year. I still don't think I've been able to sort out a normal rhythm.
- I find myself feeling less anxious about the amount of sleep I get when I don't track it. When I track it I obsess and then I'm turn become more stressed about it
- Being in a medicine program at BSU is so hard. I am in the ultrasound program while talking 5 classes and going to clinical sites is exhausting.
- Congratulations on your upcoming graduation.
- Thank you for the opportunity to take this survey. Sleep is SO important & I struggle with quality sleep.

23. Are you willing to read my sleep blog and retake this survey in a few weeks? 26 responses