Assessing the Relationship between Student Involvement and Academic Performance in Higher Education

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ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

By
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August 2010
ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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The study examined the relationship between the degree of involvement in co-curricular activities and academic performance, as measured by Grade Point Average (GPA) among college students enrolled at Western Kentucky University (WKU). Three hundred thirty-six sophomores were surveyed via TOPNET, an electronic registration management system, regarding their level of involvement in campus organizations and other factors, including employment status and gender. The cumulative GPAs and the number of credit hours in which the survey participants were enrolled during Fall Semester 2005 were obtained through a survey using TOPNET. Pearson product-moment correlations revealed statistically significant relationships between GPA and the number of student organizations in which they participated, officer status within student organizations, and the length of time of participation in student organization(s). The relationships were considered too weak to be of any practical significance. A statistically significant relationship was also found between number of credit hours enrolled and GPA.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Students’ involvement in extracurricular activities is generally considered advantageous to their overall educational experience (Astin, 2001). Through students’ involvement with the Campus Activities Board at Western Kentucky University (WKU), for example, students learn not only about programming but also about communication skills, professional development issues, and group dynamics (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The notion that a happy student is a retained student is not farfetched (Lau, 2003). When students feel connected to their university or college through involvement, they feel better about their experience and tend to stay through to graduation (Astin, 2001). However a problem can arise when students get overly involved and lose sight of the primary purpose of higher education: academic preparation for a more fulfilled life and career (King, 2006).

Evidence suggests that participating in extracurricular activities integrates students and has a positive impact for “persistence and degree competition” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 391). Pascarella and Terenzini found that students who interact with faculty, staff, and their peers outside of the classroom form educated opinions, attitudes, values, and aspirations based on those interactions. Students create their identity and become autonomous when they become engaged and involved in out of class activities (Astin, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

American college students face an ever-popular question: Should I go out and have fun or should I stay in my room and study? Unknown to many students, it is
possible to have it both ways. Students can see a movie, listen to a lecture, or jam at a concert, all the while keeping academics in mind. Events and organizations are prevalent on campuses that engage students in their learning. Lectures can teach the importance of communication in dating and dealing with rape awareness. Some clubs educate in the value of recycling. These activities can allow students to possibly have fun and potentially learn at the same time (King, 2006).

Student involvement has become a powerful concept in higher education and is considered crucial to retention rates, although it is seldom seen as needing limits (House, 2000). If student involvement is indeed essential to educational life, then its worth should have a positive impact on students (Kayatin, 2005). The dilemma becomes to what extent students can be involved in extra-curricular activities without those activities becoming detrimental to the students’ GPA (Kiger & Lorentzen, 1988).

Determining the optimal amount of involvement in student organizations has implications for educators and student affairs professionals (Keeling, 2004). The extent to which students are actively engaged in the college experience can have either a positive or a negative effect on academic success (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008; Holland & Andre, 1987). To determine this, one must understand how involvement affects students both in and out of the classroom. Student Affairs departments such as Student Activities, Intramurals and Recreation, and Diversity Programs all request funding to create programs for student participation on campus (Keeling, 2004). Programming opportunities like ethnic celebrations, concerts, comedians, lecturers, and novelty entertainment are all part of the campus activities schedule of events in the hopes of entertaining and educating students, all while keeping
students involved in the campus community. Educators must understand the point at which students participate too much (House, 2000).

According to Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998), institutions have the responsibility to assist students in their overall growth and development. A developed student is one who grows, stays involved, and is academically educated as a result of the institution he or she attends (Astin, 2001). Individuals need to make better choices when deciding what activities to participate in while attending college. At some point, students must learn to limit the number of organizations they join (Doherty, 2007; King, 2006). It is also the responsibility of those programming for students to provide accurate, up-to-date information on recognized organizations so students can wisely choose which they should join during the course of their college careers (Fry, 2006). The decision to join organizations has a positive impact on a student’s collegiate career, but may have negative results as well (McCluskey-Titus, 2003).

Significance of the Study

The information gained from the study should assist campuses in determining the limitations to set or place on students’ extra-curricular activities. It is important to find out how much involvement, as indicated via involvement in student organizations, is ideal and how much is too much (Holland & Andre, 1987). Along with data collected during the course of this study, additional information was obtained through the researcher’s former position as a programming board advisor, individual discussions with peers and mentors in higher education, and literature reviews.

Research Questions

The following research questions framed the study:
1. What is the relationship between the number of student organizations in which a student participates and GPA?

2. What is the relationship between participating as an officer within student organization(s) and GPA?

3. What is the relationship between the length of time a student participates in student organization(s) and GPA?

Definition of Terms

Co-curricular Education (as related to Student Activities) – refers to presenting entertainment and social activities that further education (Fry, 2005);

Higher Education - the formal education received beyond the secondary level, education received at colleges, universities, and community colleges;

Retention - the act of retaining students until graduation;

Student Involvement - students’ participation in co-curricular campus activities;

Student Organization - a group of students who come together for a common purpose and are recognized by the university as an established collective;

Grade Point Average (GPA) - the number of grade points earned divided by the total credits attempted; GPA ranges from 0.0 to 4.0;

Organization Officer - an individual serving in a leadership role within an organization;

Fraternity/Sorority Involvement - belonging to a fraternal organization;

Part-time Employment - working less than 37 hours per week;

Full-Time Employment - working 37.5 hours or more per week;
For the purpose of the ACT report, the following terms were defined:

(a) academic goals - level of commitment to obtain a college degree; (b) achievement motivation - level of motivation to achieve success; (c) academic self-confidence - level of academic self-confidence; (d) academic - related skills - time management skills, study skills, and study; (e) study habits (taking notes, meeting deadlines, using information resources); (f) contextual influences - the extent to which students receive financial aid, institution size, and selectivity; (g) general self – concept - level of self - confidence and self – esteem; (h) institutional commitment - level of confidence in and satisfaction with institutional choice; (i) social support - level of social support a student feels the institution provides; (j) social involvement - extent to which a student feels connected to the college environment, peers, faculty, and others in college and is involved in campus activities; (k) ACT Assessment scores - college preparedness measure in English, mathematics, reading, and science; (l) HSGPA (High School Grade Point Average) - cumulative GPA student earned from all high school courses; and (m) SES (Socioeconomic status) - parents’ educational attainment and family income

Organization of the Study

The research questions previously formulated were addressed using a questionnaire administered to sophomore students preparing to register for Winter Term and Spring Semester 2006. According to the Western Kentucky University (WKU) Undergraduate Course Catalogue (2005), students with a minimum of 30 credit hours and a maximum of 59 credit hours qualify for sophomore standing. WKU’s TOPNET system was used to contact students and administer the survey. TOPNET is the university student services system which allows students to register for classes; pay tuition; and view
grades, class schedules, financial aid information, and transcripts. Students must register for classes via TOPNET; therefore, this was the most favorable choice for survey administration.

Eligible students were sent an initial email requesting their participation in the online survey (See Appendix A, B, and D). The survey was available over the course of 10 days during Academic Advising Week. Upon accessing WKU TOPNET for registration, students were prompted to participate in the survey. Students self-selected participation in the survey; however, GPA and registered credit hours were confirmed using Banner. Participation in student organizations was broken into 0, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, or 10+ organizations. Participants were separated into students with an average of 12-15 credit hours per semester and 16 or more credit hours per semester. Full-time, part-time, or no employment was also considered. A review of relevant literature follows in Chapter II.

In summary, American students find themselves involved in a number of extracurricular activities (Armentrout, 1978). Involvement includes attending organization meetings and events. Some students choose to become leaders within their organizations. Leadership ranges from active participation, chairing specific projects or committees, to acting as president or vice-president (McGrath, 2002). Students must balance course responsibilities, extracurricular activity, along with home, family, and friends (Astin, 2001). In addition to school and activities, many students find themselves working part-time or even full-time jobs (House, 2000). Student officer status within an organization promotes even greater duties and time commitment to the already active individual (Holland & Andre, 1987). Assessing ideal involvement, as indicated via
involvement in student organizations, is necessary for the development of holistic students (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Astin’s Student Involvement Theory supports actively engaging students in education (Hutley, 2004). Students become invested in their education through involvement. Astin’s Student Involvement Theory states that students learn more when they are involved in all aspects of college life. Astin describes an involved student as one who devotes “energy to academics, spends a great deal of time on campus, participates in student organizations and activities, and interacts with his or her faculty” (Monroe Community College, 2004). Most student involvement literature goes back to Astin’s Theory of Involvement because it is the most concise and realistic. The theory is simple: an involved student will enjoy his or her experience and, in turn, stay in college (Hutley, 2004).

In the case of Tennessee Tech, orientation leaders have a 90% graduation rate with an average GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (Trevas, 1996). Involvement in some type of campus leadership increases confidence and leadership skills such as communication (House, 2000). Colleges and universities, including Tennessee Tech, are realizing the importance of getting students involved on campus. Due to low graduation rates, Boise State University has adopted initiatives aimed at helping students connect to campus (Anonymous, 2004). New initiatives include developing a strong orientation program; developing strong relationships between students, faculty, and staff; and increasing student involvement in experiences outside of the classroom (Anonymous, 2004). Administrators understand that it does not matter what organization or club the student is involved in, as long as he or she is actively involved. Student involvement in
an extracurricular activity has a positive effect on the student’s probability of graduating (Anonymous, 2004).

Lambert (2004) stated administrators have learned that campus activities and organizations are a necessary part of the campus community. Faculty members embrace activities as a way of educating their students in settings other than the traditional classroom (Fry, 2005). Student activities officials learn to present educational programs in addition to the standard concerts and free giveaways (Lambert, 2004).

Learning communities are another place students can become involved on campus (Banta, 2001). Instead of students attending organization meetings and finding clubs to join on campus, the learning community is right outside students’ front doors. Learning is enhanced when interaction between new students and their peers, faculty, and staff increases (Banta, 2001). Northern Arizona University (NAU) is convinced that involvement equals retention (Nason-Saltonstall, 2004). The Student Affairs division at NAU has created a “Datamart.” The Datamart is a set of data that examines whether students who were involved in Student Affairs programs and services were more successful at NAU than those who were not involved in programs. The eight services included in the study were (a) Residence Life, living on campus, which raised retention by 69.6%; (b) LACs, being tutored in one of the Learning Assistance Centers - increased retention by 71.2%; (c) Health Center, utilizing healthcare services - increased retention by 72.3%; (d) Afterhours, attending late night social activities - increased retention by 72.7%; (e) Campus Recreation, participating in recreational activities - increased retention by 74.9%; (f) Career Services, attending a career fair or participating in a one-on-one career counseling session - increased retention by 76.5%; or (g) participation in
any number of other career planning activities increased retention by an undetermined amount; and (h) Student Clubs, belonging to a student club or organization - increased retention by 86.3%. Freshmen who participated in one of the seven Student Affairs services had a 67.4% higher first-year retention rate than the overall NAU cohort (Nason-Saltonstall, 2004).

According to a recent ACT Policy Report (2004), there are several factors, both academic and nonacademic, which contribute to the success of university and college students. The results from the ACT assessment, as well as other performance measures such as those defined in the study, contribute to the success of students. These factors work together to assist in student success. One specific factor, student involvement, seems to affect student retention and GPA when it is combined with other factors; i.e., not necessarily on its own (Roman, 2007; Thomas, 2005). Thomas further asserts that engagement is fostered by participation in group activities. Teamwork teaches collaboration, cooperation, and accountability. A positive relationship between engagement and achievement has been found in previous research, yet student involvement does not always equal engagement (Kayatin, 2005). For example, a student may be involved in a group that requires too much time commitment or one that does not support the overall mission of the university (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). The student is involved, but he or she is not engaged with the college. The students are engaged in the negative activities sponsored by the affiliated organization.

Student affairs divisions must have a joint relationship with academic affairs to enable students to receive education from both sides of the university community (Fry, 2005). The collaborative effort to improve activity involvement will create an experience
much like an internship in life (Kayatin, 2005). Interpersonal skills and leadership abilities increased with student involvement. Student satisfaction also improved with student involvement in student life functions (Astin, 2001). Research has not shown the point at which students spend too much time with extra-curricular activities and neglect their academics (Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2008). Higher education officials have not determined how much student involvement is too much (Bloom, 2006). Rather than having students slow down and adjust to campus, colleges who are finding themselves adjusting to the students. Questions remain: When is too much activity the downfall of students? Are 10 hours too many, or are 20 hours too many? Other factors like course load and employment may play a role in student involvement and retention.

Students who feel connected to their college campus appear to feel better about their experience and, in turn, stay through graduation (Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, 2007; Astin, 2001). Research has provided some insight into the relation between student involvement on campus and retention rates, but is unclear if an adverse effect to involvement exists (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Pascarella and Terenzini discussed their findings on the impact college has on students. Such information provides a guide to better understand what students gain from college above and beyond what is learned in the classroom. Students need to get involved on campus, no matter what they may be interested in doing professionally (Holland & Andre, 1987). Involvement teaches communication skills, professional development issues, and group dynamics (Trevas, 1996).
Professionals create the environment necessary for students to learn as well as get involved, which in turn will enable a student to reach his or her individual potential (Papanikolaou, 2003). Institutional leadership needs to understand the importance of balancing student involvement and education to improve retention (Hutley, 2004). Educators must understand that a relationship exists between involvement, over-involvement, and a student’s GPA. Geocaris and Goad (2004) reported that activities offices must be in partnership with others for learning. Once administrators, both academic and student affairs, understand the significance and impact of student involvement, they will be more supportive (physically, mentally, emotionally, and financially) of campus programs and will pay more attention to the time spent on these activities (Geocaris & Goad, 2004).

There are several implications for students, faculty, and student affairs professionals. Educators, as a whole, need to step back and realize that many traditional students come to college for reasons other than just a piece of paper with the name of their degree on it. Traditional students come to feel the warmth of the sun on their faces at football games, share a laugh or two at a comedian, and dance the night away at a concert. An involved student is a retained student because student involvement increases a student’s desire to stay in school and ultimately graduate, as long as he or she does not over-involve himself or herself in extracurricular activities (Ravitch, 2003). Administrators must continue to understand that some students take their involvement too far and need help remembering that college is about education first (Johnson & Renwick, 1983). A holistic student is, primarily, a student.
Armentrout (1978) said it best over 25 years ago: “Activities have great educational values. We should revamp and reorganize them so that they make a more positive contribution to the objectives of college education” (p. 1). To some extent, activities have been revamped and reorganized; but, in light of the newer, faster-paced millennial students, college officials must return to the basics and implement quality programming that fosters positive engagement and educational experiences (Armentrout, 1978). Not all activities and involvement must be centered on entertainment. Nontraditional students find it best to minimize their involvement in “traditional” activities and engage themselves in activities and organizations that include their family members (Rizer, 2005). Departments can sponsor events like Family Nights or Mom’s Days Out for nearly the same cost, if not cheaper, than bringing a band or novelty act to campus. Academic departments could offer study sessions and collaborate with a philanthropic organization to offer free babysitting during the session, which would allow the nontraditional students a great opportunity to attend (Kayatin, 2005).

Understanding the point at which students participate too much is crucial; thereby, efforts to minimize programming and maximize results could be obtained (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Instead of students attending five different events for the same purpose, event sponsors could collaborate on one to two major activities where students would be effectively engaged and costs would be dispersed among multiple departments (Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005). Institutions have the responsibility to assist students in their overall growth (McGrath, 2002). McGrath explained that if a student is over-involved and does not attend classes or pass his/her exams, then the institution has failed. A holistic student is one who is both involved and academically
educated (Hutley, 2004). To achieve this type of student, college officials must learn how much is too much and when departments should present one large program instead of multiple smaller programs (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). This information will improve institutional effectiveness and efficiency when it relates to student programming and encouraged student involvement.

Collegiate professionals are looking for ways to create synergy among academic affairs and student affairs components (Lambert, 2004). Departments must come together to engage students in a variety of learning experiences to develop holistic students prepared for their future endeavors (House, 2000).
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine how much involvement in co-curricular activities, as indicated via participation in student organizations, is optimal for today’s college students.

Working Hypotheses

This study examined the relationship between degree of involvement in co-curricular activities and achievement, as measured by GPA among college students enrolled at WKU. The working hypotheses were 1) Students who participate more extensively in student organizations, as indicated by the number of student organizations they are involved with, will exhibit lower GPAs than students who participate less extensively in student organizations. 2) A student officer in an organization will exhibit lower GPAs than students who participate less extensively in student organizations. 3) The longer students are involved with an organization; his or her GPA will be lower than students who participate less extensively in student organizations.

Research Hypotheses: Testable Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: The number of student organization(s) participated in correlates with GPA.

Hypothesis 2: Officer status within student organization(s) correlates with GPA.

Hypothesis 3. The length of time a student participates in student organizations(s) correlates with GPA.
Population

According to the 2008 *Western Kentucky University Fact Book*, WKU’s full-time undergraduate enrollment was 13,053 (p. 19). Total enrollment for Fall 2005 including full and part-time undergraduates and graduates was 18,645 (p. 19). Four of five undergraduates attend WKU fulltime (p. 19). Forty-two percent of the undergraduate population were male and 58% were female (p. 27). In 2005, 3150 students were first-time, first-year learners (p. 22) and 3148 were sophomores (p. 21). Traditional, those undergraduates under the age of 25, consisted of 80.2% of the population. Non-traditional students accounted for 19.8% (p. 26). During the 2005/2006 academic year, 340 students participated in one of 83 study abroad opportunities (p. 50). Retention rates for 2005/2006 were 72.1% for baccalaureate degrees and 55.6% for associate degrees (p. 56).

Sample

The research population consisted of full-time students preparing to register for Winter Term and Spring Semester 2006 at WKU’s main campus in Bowling Green, Kentucky, during the priority registration period in Fall Semester 2005. For the purpose of this study, a full-time student is one who is registered in 12 or more credit hours per semester. Eligible students received an email asking them to participate in the survey prior to registration. The students self-selected their participation in this survey. Three hundred forty-three students participated in the self-response survey. Of these, 336 provided sufficient information to be included in analyses. The number of credit hours for these students was collected from WKU Academic Technology. GPAs were collected from each student’s official transcript. Students electronically signed consent for participation, retrieval of credit hours, and GPA.
Results

One hundred twelve (33.3%) of the respondents were male, while 223 (66.4%) were female. One respondent (0.3%) did not provide this information. Fifty-nine (18.5%) of the respondents were employed fulltime, while 158 (47.6%) were employed part-time. One hundred eighteen (33.6%) of the respondents indicated they were not employed. One respondent (0.3%) did not respond to this item. For those who indicated they were employed either fulltime or part-time, a determination was not made as to whether the employment was on campus or in the surrounding community. Table 1 contains the sample means, standard deviations, and ranges for several of the study variables.

Table 1

*Sample Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges for Study Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Organizations(^a)</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in the Organization</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Credit Hours Enrolled</td>
<td>13.62</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Value Descriptions: 0 = no response; 1 = involved in 1-3 organizations; 2 = involved in 4-6 organizations; 3 = involved in 7-9 organizations; 4 = involved in 10+ organizations; 5 = no participation.

Table 2 contains data regarding the number of student organizations in which respondents reported they were participating to some extent. As indicated, 217 (64.6%) of the sophomores surveyed were actively involved in one to three recognized student
organizations. These organizations were not specified by type or by the amount of participation required for involvement.

Table 2

*Number of Organizations Participated in to Some Extent*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value (^a)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Value Descriptions: 0 = no response; 1 = involved in 1-3 organizations; 2 = involved in 4-6 organizations; 3 = involved in 7-9 organizations; 4 = involved in 10+ organizations; 5 = no participation.

Students who serve as officers are expected to spend more time working for their organization. Thirty-eight (11.3%) of the respondents indicated they were involved in at least one student organization as an officer (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, etc.), while 298 (88.7%) indicated they were not serving in such a capacity. Moreover, 36 (10.7%) of the respondents indicated they were involved in a fraternity or sorority, while 300 (89.3%) reported they were not associated with any Greek organization. This item was intended to identify students in social fraternities and sororities, typically those under
the Interfraternity (IFC), Panhellenic (PH), and National PanHellenic Council (NPHC) umbrella.

Table 3 contains information about the length of time (number of years) students were involved in a student organization. One possible interpretation of the results is that the student respondents who participated more than two years in organizations were possibly nontraditional students, multiple-year freshmen, or sophomores, or could have added participation in all activities and listed it as one. However, further investigation is needed before definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Table 3

*Number of Years Involved in Student Organizations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value $^a$</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^a$Value Descriptions: 0 = no response; 1 = 1 year; 2 = 2 years; 3 = 3 years; 4 = 4 years; 5 = not involved in an organization.
To answer the three hypotheses, Pearson Product-Moment Coefficients were calculated. Table 4 contains the correlation coefficients, as well as the level of statistical significance for those coefficients.

Table 4

*Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients Between Study Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( r )</th>
<th>( P )</th>
<th>strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizations and GPA</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>weak inverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Officer and GPA</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>weak inverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in the Organization and GPA</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>weak inverse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted, a weak inverse correlation was found between the number of organizations and GPA, serving as an officer in an organization and GPA, and years in the organization and GPA. Moreover, whether or not a student reported being an officer in an organization correlated with their GPA.

Research Hypotheses

**H\(_1\)**. The current study found a statistically significant correlation between the number of organizations in which a student participates and GPA at the level of significance employed for the current study (\( r=-.12; \ p<.03 \)). Therefore, \( H_1 \) is accepted. However, this correlation is too weak to have any practical implications.

**H\(_2\)**. The current study revealed a statistically significant correlation between participation in student organization(s) as an officer and GPA at the level of significance employed for the study (\( r=-.13; \ p<.02 \)). Therefore, \( H_2 \) is accepted, but this correlation is too weak to have any practical implications.
H₃. The current study revealed a statistically significant correlation between the number of years of participation in student organization(s) as an officer and GPA at the level of significance employed for the study ($r = -0.13; p < 0.02$). Therefore, H₃ is accepted. Again, the correlation is too weak to have any practical implications.
Chapter IV

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Regarding the three hypotheses, a weak inverse correlation was found between the number of organizations and GPA, serving as an officer in an organization and GPA, and years in the organization and GPA. Moreover, whether or not a student reported being an officer in an organization correlated with their GPA. The remaining variables demonstrated no significance, which could also have policy implications. From the data obtained in the survey, the number of organizations in which a student is involved (whether a fraternity/sorority or other organizations) is related to the number of courses a student takes, which could, in turn, affect his or her GPA as well as graduation rate.

Implications for Students

Students change throughout the college experience (Pritchard, 2003). Every higher education professional has a responsibility to nurture the student’s transformation process. Time Bank UK (2006) explained that, through involvement in volunteerism and activities, individuals develop their self-esteem, self-concept, interpersonal communication skills, and intellect.

Students spend numerous amounts of hours attending meetings, classes, and social events (Lau, 2003). College students need to understand the relationship their involvement, and sometimes over-involvement, has to their grades (House, 2000). Masters (2005) offered seven tips for students who are challenged with balancing a heavy course load and a full extracurricular schedule. 1) Do not let your schedule control you; time management skills are essential to college and career life. Learn how to schedule your time appropriately and stick to that schedule. 2) Ask for help; everyone has
resources available to him or her. A student simply has to learn to ask where those resources are and how they can utilize such services. 3) Prioritize; academics must always come first while in college. The point of higher education is to receive an education, which means course work must come first. 4) Stop procrastinating early; first year students should start practicing goal setting and creating to-do lists. Stick to set deadlines and do what needs to be done before the last minute. 5) Attend class, this is where attendance is taken, homework is assigned, and learning occurs. If you are not present, then you will not benefit from the in-class experience. 6) Find a mentor; everyone needs someone else to look up to and to be able to call for advice. 7) Have fun; college is about more than just what is in the classroom, but balance is the key. Effective use of time is essential; work now and play later.

Students must limit the number of organizations participant in on a regular basis. From the organizations a student chooses to affiliate, he or she must decide where to focus his or her leadership. Once he or she has chosen an organization and dedicated time to actively participate, the student should maintain that participation throughout his or her college career.

Implications for Faculty

Students grow and learn personally, professionally, and intellectually from a wide range of activities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Engagement in organizations that contribute to classroom success is important (Leenhouts, 2004). One such way of learning is called a teachable moment, where educators utilize a spontaneous moment that would not normally be considered educational and tie that moment into something students can learn. Faculty can sponsor educational clubs as a way to promote their
department (Leenhouts, 2004). Faculty must support responsible choices about the amount of involvement and leadership a student participates within an organization (Fry, 2006; King, 2006).

Implications for Student Affairs Professionals

Involvement in activities and organizations teaches transferable skills that could benefit students after graduation and into their careers (McCluskey-Titus, 2003). One could argue that, although students who participate in numerous activities may have lower GPAs, they are learning just as much outside the classroom as they are inside the classroom (Fry, 2006; Holland & Andre, 1987). Student Affairs departments can encourage students to get involved in a limited number of organizations and stay in those organizations until graduation.

Implications for Future Studies

During the course of this investigation, a few changes were made to the original study. Originally, the objective was to examine the average number of hours in relation to the amount a student actively engages in recognized student organizations each week during the course of a semester. After the survey, it was determined that many students considered Greek-letter service or Greek-letter academic organizations the same as traditional social based fraternities and sororities. Many students held officer positions or had leadership roles but did not include them on the survey because they did not serve on their organization’s executive council. Students also need to be identified as traditional versus nontraditional, since both classifications have unique circumstances. Finally, participants should select only one organization on which to base all their responses instead of considering all organizations at once. Students could choose the organization
that requires the most time commitment and respond based on that particular organization.

During the age of engagement, students are bombarded with invitations to join and participate in various campus organizations (House, 2000). It is important to understand how student involvement affects students both in and out of the classroom because departments such as Student Activities and Organizations, Intramurals and Recreation, and the Office of Diversity Programs all pull for student’s time, effort, and energy (Trevas, 1996).

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Limit student involvement to 3-4 student organizations from academic, professional, religious, social, or service groups. Of the students who cited being involved in numerous organizations, many had GPAs lower than 3.0. Participating in activities takes time, which many students do not have, when they factor in class attendance, homework, social time, possible employment, and down time for relaxation or exercise (House, 2000). Allowing students to participate in three or four organizations would allow students the opportunity to be in a leadership position while focusing on specific responsibilities.

Recommendation 2

Limit student involvement in leadership positions within student organizations. By limiting the number of leadership positions within a given number of organizations, administrators can help prevent over-extended students.

Recommendation 3
Encourage students to choose a limited number of organizations and stay in those organizations until graduation. Each year, the university can award individuals who continue to contribute to an organization’s success. Service pins for 1-5 years can be distributed for organizations to give members.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study may have affected the results. Sophomore students self-selected participation, meaning the students accessed TOPNET and chose to participate in the questionnaire. Instead of using TOPNET, the survey could have been administered directly to sophomores in sophomore-level courses. Direct contact with students may have encouraged increased participation. Only students registering during Academic Advising Week were surveyed which limited the number of possible participants to those who were ready to register and those who had appointments to register. Students were emailed and asked to complete the survey; however, the survey was only available during the 10-day advising week. Students registering before or after advising week were unable to participate in the survey. Another option for survey administration would have been to prompt every sophomore to participate in the survey upon registering for classes. These recommendations for improving the study might affect the results if recreated.

Conclusion

Campuses are filled with departments, organizations, and professional staff who engage students in their learning (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Educational, entertainment, and culturally enhancing events take place any time of the day, year-
round. Administration must remain vigilant in the effort to educate well-rounded students who are involved, but not over extended in campus activities (King, 2006).
References


in secondary school: What is known, what needs to be known. *Iowa State University.* p. 117-146. (ED 290 804)


Experimental Education. 1(124).


APPENDIX A

TEXT VERSION

Involvement Questionnaire (instrument)
by Azurdee M. Garland

*All answers will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

Name: _______________________________ WKU ID: ________________

How many organizations are you actively involved with
1-3  4-6  7-9  10+

Officer in any organization  Yes  No

Fraternity or Sorority member    Yes  No

Number of years in organization 1  2  3  4+

Number of Course Credits part-time 12-15  16+

Grade Point Average (GPA)* 1.5 or below  1.6-2.0  2.1- 2.5  2.6-3.0

Employed  Yes  No

If Employed,  Part-time  Full-time

Gender    Male  Female

Comments about personal extra-curricular activities, work, or classes (please respond)

*GPA will be confirmed using TOPNET.
APPENDIX B

Each sophomore was sent the following email:

Western Kentucky University

Dear Student:

You have been selected to take part in an on-line survey thru TOPNET. The nature and purpose of the Project is to determine if the number of hours a student participates in extra-curricular activities (in hours) directly relates to his or her GPA. All answers will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

Instructions:

Sign on to TOPNET

Click Personal Information

Click Answer a Survey

Click Sophomore Involvement Survey

Follow instructions listed.

Thank you for answering the survey.
APPENDIX C

Involvement Waiver

I ______________________, do hereby give permission to Azurdee Garland to utilize the information provided in the questionnaire and my GPA (as listed on Topnet) for her research project. I understand that all information will be kept confidential and that I may see the project results when the study is complete.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: _____________

Print Name: __________________________

Email Address: _______________________

Phone Number: _______________________

WKU ID: ____________________________
APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Relationship between campus involvement and GPA

Investigator: Azurdee M. Garland; SAO; 745-5809

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of the Project**: to determine if the number of hours a student participates in extra-curricular activities (in hours) directly relates to his or her GPA.

2. **Explanation of Procedures**: self reported questionnaire and GPA confirmation from Topnet

3. **Discomfort and Risks**: Only minimal risk is associated with this study.

4. **Benefits**: Understanding at what point students are too involved in co-curricular activities

5. **Confidentiality**: Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in Dr. Hughey’s office.

6. **Refusal/Withdrawal**: you may withdrawal from this project at any time

Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

*You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.*

Signature of Participant __________________________ Date __________________________

Witness __________________________ Date __________________________

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD
Dr. Phillip E. Myers, Human Protections Administrator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-4652
APPENDIX E

FOR HSRB USE ONLY:
Application Number:  HS05-186
Date of Original IRB Approval: 6/1/05
Level of Approval (please check one):  ☐ Exempt  ☑ Expedited  ☐ Full Board
Was the project approved above or below minimum risk?  ☑ Below  ☐ Above

(If "Above" HSRB Chair and one other HSRB reviewer may determine whether the PI needs to appear before the HSRB).
Name of Project: Relationship between campus involvement and GPA
Name of Researcher: Azurdic Garland
Department: SAO

How many total subjects have participated in the study since its inception?  350
How many subjects have participated in the project since the last review?  350

Is your data collection with human subjects complete?  ☑ Yes  ☐ No
(If "Yes", please sign below and return to the Office of Sponsored Programs, Room 106, Foundation Building. If "No", please respond to the questions below, sign and return).

Continuing Review Checklist

1. Has there been any change in the level of risks to human subjects? (If "Yes", please explain changes on a separate sheet).
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

2. Have informed consent procedures changed so as to put subjects above minimal risk? (If "Yes", please describe on a separate sheet).
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

3. Have any subjects withdrawn from the research due to adverse events or any unanticipated risks/problems? (If "Yes", please describe on a separate sheet).
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

4. Have there been any changes to the source(s) of subjects and the Selection criteria? (If "Yes", please describe on a separate sheet).
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

5. Have there been any changes to your research design that were not specified in your application, including the frequency, duration and location of each procedure? (If "Yes", please describe on a separate sheet).
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

6. Has there been any change to the way in which confidentiality of the Data is maintained? (If "Yes", please describe on a separate sheet).
   ☐ Yes  ☐ No

7. On what date do you anticipate data collection with human subjects to be completed? __________

Signature of Principal Investigator: ___________________________  Date: 8/16/06

HSRB Approvals:

Signature of Reviewer: ___________________________  Date: 8/16/06

cc: Human Subject Research File Garland.HS05-186
FOR HSRR USE ONLY:
Application Number:    HS05-186
Date of Original IRB Approval: 6/6/05
Level of Approval (please check one):
□ Exempt □ Expedited □ Full Board
(If "Exempt," HSRR Chair and one other IRB review may determine whether the PI needs to appear before the HSRR).
Name of Project: Relationship between campus involvement and GPA
Name of Researcher: Azurrlee Garland
Department: SAD

How many total subjects have participated in the study since its inception? 40

How many subjects have participated in the project since the last review? 40

Is your data collection with human subjects complete? □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please sign below and return to the Office of Sponsored Programs, Room 106, Foundation Building. If "No," please respond to the questions below, sign and return).

Continuing Review Checklist

1. Has there been any change in the level of risk to human subjects? □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please explain changes on a separate sheet).

2. Have informed consent procedures changed so as to put subjects above minimal risk? □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please describe on a separate sheet).

3. Have any subjects withdrawn from the research due to adverse events or any unanticipated risks/problems? □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please describe on separate sheet).

4. Have there been any changes to the source(s) of subjects and the Selection criteria? □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please describe on a separate sheet).

5. Have there been any changes to your research design that were not specified in your application, including the frequency, duration and location of each procedure. □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please describe on a separate sheet).

6. Has there been any change to the way in which confidentiality of the Data is maintained? □ Yes □ No
(If "Yes," please describe on a separate sheet).

7. On what date do you anticipate data collection with human subjects to be completed? Aug '06

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date: 10/7/05

HSRR Approvals

Signature of Reviewer

Date: 10/7/05

Signature of Reviewer

Date: 10/7/05

cc: Human Subject Research File Garland HS05-186
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF INVESTIGATIONS INVOLVING THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

PLEASE TYPE OR USE A WORD PROCESSOR

Submit to the Office of Sponsored Programs, 106 Foundation Building, by the first working Monday of the month for screening prior to the HSRB meeting. Please add additional space between items as needed to describe your project.

The human subjects application must stand alone. Your informed consent document(s), survey instrument, and site approval letter(s) should be attached to the application and referred to in your write up of the appropriate sections so that reviewers may read them as they read your application. Thesis proposals or other documents that are meant to substitute for completing the sections of the application will not be read and should not be attached.

1. Principal Investigator's Name: Azurdee M. Garland
   Email Address: Azurdee.garland@wku.edu
   Mailing Address: 720 Patton Way, Apt 701D, Bowling Green, KY 42104
   Department: SAO Phone: 782-7797
   Co-Investigator:
   Email Address:
   Mailing Address:
   Department: Phone:

2. If you are a student, provide the following information:
   Faculty Sponsor: Aaron Hughey Department: Counseling & Stu Affairs
   Phone: 745-4953
   Faculty Mailing Address: aaron.hughey@wku.edu
   Student Permanent Address (where you can be reached 12 months from now):
   same as above
   Is this your thesis or dissertation research? Yes ___ No ___ (Specialist Project)

3. Title of project: Relationship between campus involvement and GPA

4. Project Period: Start ___ upon HSRB approval ___ End __10/30/05__
   Note: Your project period may not start until after the HSRB has given final approval.

5. Has this project previously been considered by the HSRB? Yes ___ No ___
   If yes, give approximate date of review:

inform.rdf (revised January 2005) Download this application at http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Sponsor/Proj/Grants/polchrb.htm
WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
Human Subjects of Research Review Board
Continuing Review Report
(Revised and Approved February 16, 2001)

NOTE: This completed, signed report must be returned to the Office of Sponsored Programs no later than October 18, 2005. If not, the approval for this project may terminate and a new application must be approved before data collection may continue.

The Office for Human Subjects of Research Protection (OHRP) Reports, Number 95-01, January 10, 1995, Human Subject Protections reminds institutional officials and IRB Chairs of their responsibilities in continuing review of research activities under Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Regulations, Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 (45 CFR 46). Section 46.109(e) of 45 CFR 46 states that “an IRB shall conduct continuing review covered by this policy at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year . . .”

Continuing review must be substantive and meaningful. Review by the convened IRB, with recorded vote, is required unless the research is otherwise appropriate for expedited review under Section 46.110. Ordinarily, if your research did not qualify for expedited review at the time of initial review, it does not qualify for expedited review at the time of continuing review. It is also possible that research activities that were previously judged as exempt in accordance with Section 46.101(b), or were qualified for expedited review in accordance with Section 46.110, have changed or will change, such that other than expedited IRB review is now required.

OHRP interprets “not less than once per year” review to mean on or before the 1-year anniversary date of the previous IRB review required by 45 CFR 46, even though the research activity may not begin until some time after the IRB has given approval.

To comply with the above-referenced policy, the WKU IRB has prepared the following report format on the back of this sheet to facilitate your annual continuing review report. Please complete the report and attach any information you think is needed to define any planned changes in the conduct of your study, since these may affect the protection of human subjects. The WKU IRB will review your minor proposed changes for your previously approved research in an expedited manner prior to the scheduled continuing review date in accordance with Section 46.110. When you propose a change in your research study that is not minor, then the IRB must review and approve changes at its monthly meeting before your changes can be implemented. The only exception is the rare circumstance in which a change is necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the research subjects. If this happens to your research study, please promptly inform the IRB of the change you made following its implementation. The IRB will review the change to determine that it is consistent with protection of human subjects. Unanticipated risks to subjects or new information that may affect the risk/benefit assessment you
defined in your approved application must be promptly reported to, and reviewed by, the IRB to ensure adequate protection of human subjects.

The WKU IRB wants to know if your information is still accurate and complete. You may do this by completing the information below and on the back and attach any additional information you think suitable to explain changes in your study. If this is your third Continuing Review Request, please complete a new application. Please return this document with any attachments you may have to the Office of Sponsored Programs, 106 Foundation Building. If you have questions please call 4652.

FOR HSRB USE ONLY:
Application Number:  HS05-186
Date of Original IRB Approval: 6/8/05
Level of Approval (please check one):  ☐ Exempt  ☑ Expedited  ☐ Full Board
Was the project approved above or below minimum risk?  ☑ Below  ☐ Above
(If “Above” HSRB Chair and one other HSRB reviewer may determine whether the PI needs to appear before the HSRB).
Name of Project:  Relationship between campus involvement and GPA
Name of Researcher:  Azurdee Garland
Department:  SAO

How many total subjects have participated in the study since its inception?  #0_____

How many subjects have participated in the project since the last review?  #0_____

Is your data collection with human subjects complete?  ☐ Yes  ☑ No
(If “Yes”, please sign below and return to the Office of Sponsored Programs, Room 106, Foundation Building. If “No”, please respond to the questions below, sign and return).

Continuing Review Checklist

1. Has there been any change in the level of risks to human subjects?  ☒ Yes  ☐ No 
   (If “Yes”, please explain changes on a separate sheet).

2. Have informed consent procedures changed so as to put subjects above minimal risk?  ☐ Yes  ☒ No
   (If “Yes”, please describe on a separate sheet).

3. Have any subjects withdrawn from the research due to adverse events or any unanticipated risks/problems?  ☐ Yes  ☒ No
   (If “Yes”, please describe on a separate sheet).

Have there been any changes to the source(s) of subjects and the Selection criteria?  ☒ Yes  ☐ No
   (If “Yes”, please describe on a separate sheet).

Have there been any changes to your research design that were not specified in your application, including the frequency, duration and location of each procedure.  ☒ Yes  ☐ No
   (If “Yes”, please describe on a separate sheet).

Has there been any change to the way in which confidentiality of the Data is maintained?  ☐ Yes  ☒ No
4. On what date do you anticipate data collection with human subjects to be completed? Aug 2006

______________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

HSRB Approvals:

______________________________
Signature of Reviewer

______________________________
Signature of Reviewer  Date

cc: Human Subject Research File Garland HS05-186