

Campus Involvement and Leadership: A Focus on Gender Differences

Center for the Study of Student Life

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

INTRODUCTION

This report explores campus leadership involvement among students at The Ohio State University, with a focus on gender differences in leadership. This report examines the reasons why individuals get involved as leaders on campus as well as reasons for lack of campus involvement using data from the 2017 Student Life Survey, which includes a random sample of undergraduate and graduate students on the Columbus campus during Spring semester 2017 ($N = 1,288$). Involvement in on-campus activities during college play a critical role in student success, from bolstering a student's sense of belonging to increasing retention and academic success (Tinto, 1993; Finn, 1989). Furthermore, there is some evidence that serving in leadership positions in college is associated with higher scores in social responsibility (Foreman & Retallick, 2012; Cress, Astin, Zimmerman-Oster, & Burkhardt, 2001) and multicultural awareness (Cress et al., 2001), as well as with other outcomes such as institutional pride and relationship development (Miles, 2010).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Out of 1,288 respondents, 402 (31.3%) reported being student leaders.
- Male and female students were equally likely to report being student leaders (i.e., there were not significantly more female student leaders than male student leaders and vice versa).
- Student leaders had significantly higher GPAs (3.39) than non-leaders (3.24).
- Student leaders had significantly higher GPAs (3.39) than students who reported not being involved on campus (3.13).
- There were gender differences in why student leaders were involved on campus and in why those uninvolved on campus remained uninvolved. See below for an infographic summarizing such gender differences.

Compared with females, males were...

- 2.3x ...more likely to **become involved** on campus because they were bored or had nothing better to do.
- 1.7x ...more likely to **stay uninvolved** because they were too focused on academics.
- 2.1x ...more likely to **stay uninvolved** because they were not interested in campus activities.

Compared with males, females were...

- 1.7x ...more likely to **become involved** on campus to make Ohio State seem smaller.
- 2.2x ...more likely to **stay uninvolved** because of work commitments.
- 2.5x ...more likely to **stay uninvolved** because their commute made involvement inconvenient.



METHODS

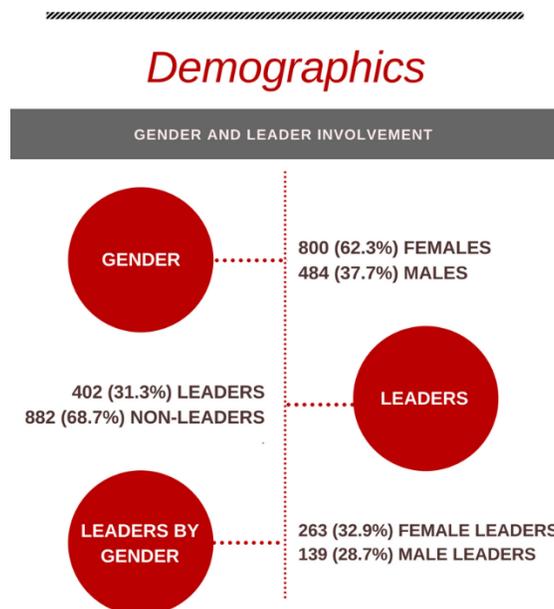
The Student Life Survey is administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life to examine trends in student involvement and sense of belonging as well as to improve institutional practices and, in the process, address issues affecting students at Ohio State.

The 2017 Student Life Survey was administered to random samples of 4,000 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate and professional students respectively on the Columbus campus. A total of 1,288 students responded to the survey, for an overall response rate of 25.8%. The response rate was 24.1% among undergraduate students and 32.4% among graduate and professional students. This report focuses on both undergraduate and graduate/professional students.

Leadership involvement was measured as one having held or currently holding a leadership position on campus in one or more of the following activities; overall involvement was measured by students reporting being involved in one or more of the following activities:

- Student organization
- Student Life sponsored program
- Social fraternity or sorority
- Community service or service-learning
- Undergraduate research
- Intramural sports
- On-campus student employment

The report examines differences between only male and female students as there were not enough students identifying as other gender identities to be included in the analysis. Gender was coded based on data from the Student Information System (i.e., from students' educational records). In the Student Information System, 4 out of 1,288 students who took the survey did not disclose their gender. These individuals were not included in the analyses. As a note, the number of leaders did not differ by gender (i.e., there were not significantly more female student leaders than male student leaders and vice versa). Gender differences in leadership involvement and relationships between involvement and students' outcomes were tested using chi-square tests of independence and *t*-tests to determine if there were statistically significant relationships.



FINDINGS

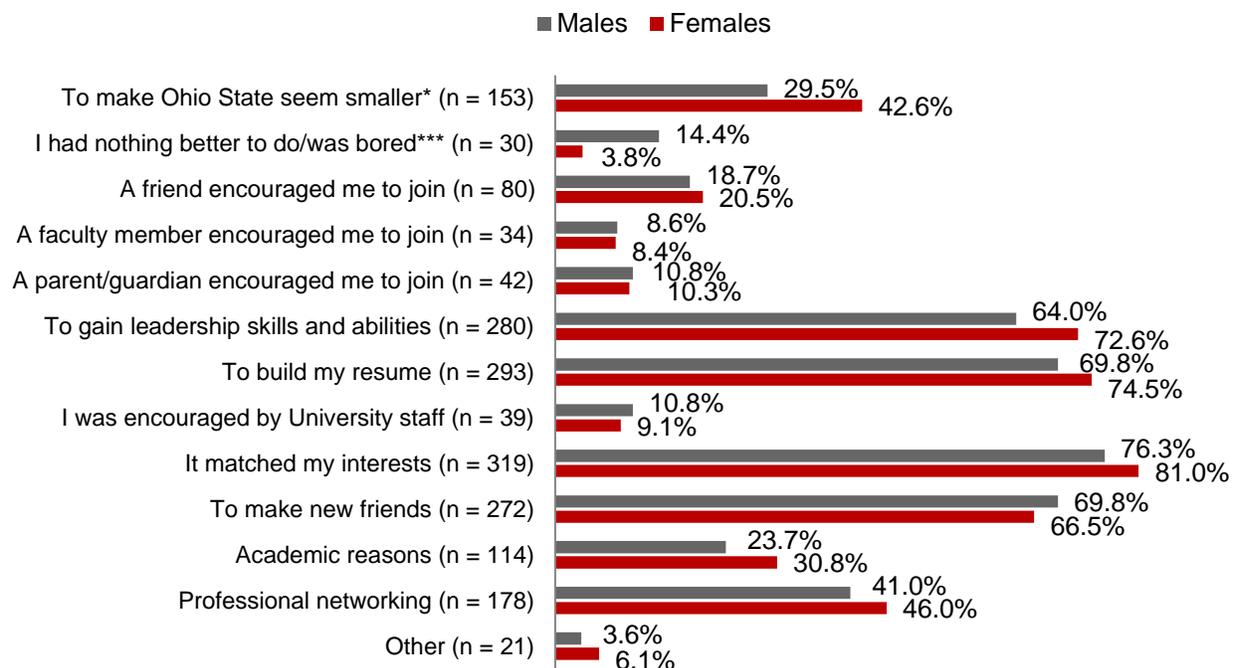
LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT

Out of 964 undergraduate students, 299 (31.0%) were involved in on-campus leadership positions. Out of 248 graduate students, 65 (26.2%) were involved in on-campus leadership positions. Out of 76 professional students, 38 (50.0%) were involved in on-campus leadership positions. There was only one gender difference in the type of student organization in which leaders on campus became involved. Male student leaders (29.2%) were 2.65 times more likely to become involved in Sports and Recreation organizations than female student leaders (14.7%).

The following chart summarizes why leaders report being involved on campus. The chart separates the responses by gender (i.e., male and female). The most frequently reported reason student leaders got involved in on-campus activities was that the activities matched their interests (81.0%) and the second most frequently reported reason was to build résumés (74.5%). The least frequently reported reason for student leaders to get involved in on-campus activities was boredom (3.8%).

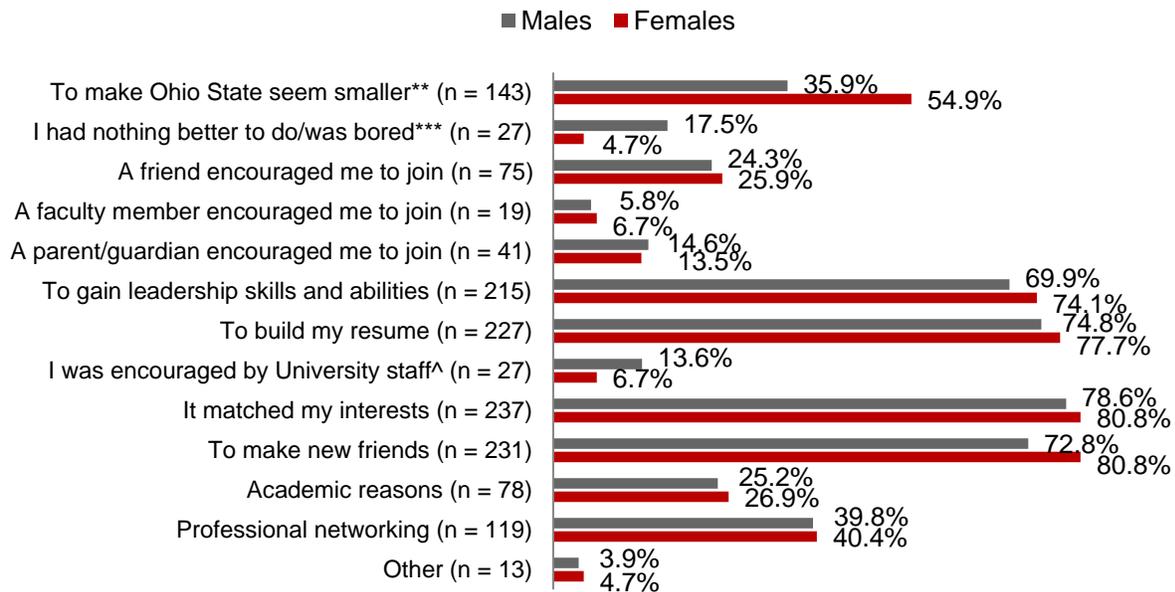
There were gender differences in reported reasoning for becoming involved. Female student leaders were 1.7 times more likely than male student leaders to report getting involved in on-campus activities to make Ohio State seem smaller. Male student leaders were 2.3 times more likely than female student leaders to report getting involved because they were bored and/or had nothing better to do.

Reasons for Student Leaders to Be Involved By Gender



The following charts are the same analyses (i.e., student leadership involvement by gender) by academic level. The first chart summarizes reported reasons for involvement by undergraduate student leaders only. The only difference in results between the undergraduate-only sample and the full sample was the difference between genders in involvement due to encouragement from University staff. Male student leaders at the undergraduate level were 2.05 times more likely to report involvement due to encouragement from University staff than female student leaders at the undergraduate level ($p = .05$).

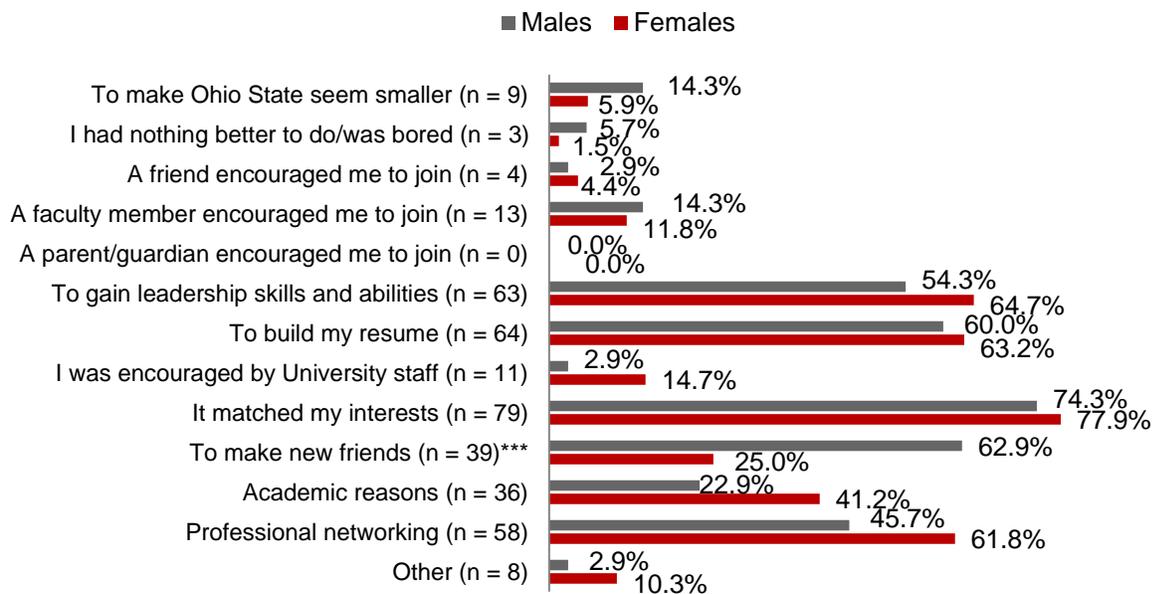
Reasons for Student Leaders to Be Involved By Gender: Undergraduate Career-Level Only



^ $p = .05$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The following chart summarizes reported reasons for involvement for graduate and professional student leaders only. Due to the small sample sizes of graduate student leaders and professional student leaders respectively, reasons for involvement were analyzed for both graduate and professional student leaders combined. The only gender difference between graduate/professional student leaders was that male graduate/professional student leaders were 5.64 more likely than female graduate/professional student leaders to report becoming involved on campus to make new friends. Given the small sample size of graduate/professional students selecting specific reasons for being involved (for example, only 9 students selected “To make Ohio State seem smaller”), it is possible that gender differences are meaningful but fail to achieve statistical significance.

Reasons for Student Leaders to Be Involved By Gender: Graduate and Professional Career-Level Only

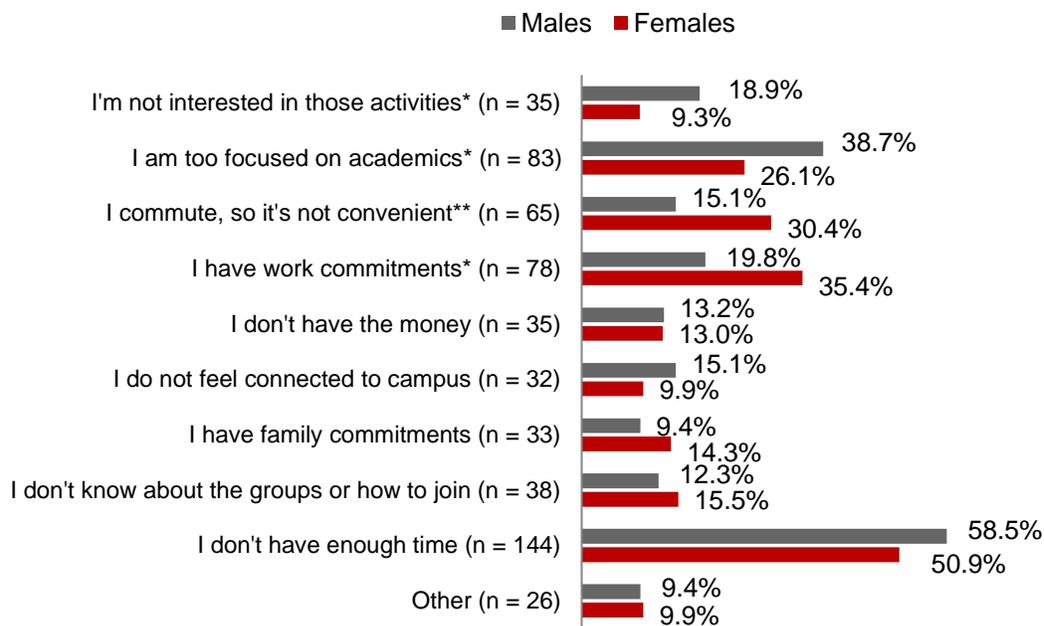


^p = .05, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Not all students are involved on campus. The following chart summarizes why those not involved at all on campus ($n = 267$) report not being involved on campus. The chart separates the responses by gender (i.e., male and female). The most frequently reported reason for students not to get involved in on-campus activities was that students did not have enough time (53.9%), and the second most frequently reported reason was students' focus on academics (31.0%). Very few students reported a lack of involvement due to not feeling connected to campus (12.0%).

Males were 2.1 times more likely than females to report staying uninvolved because they were not interested in those campus activities and 1.7 times more likely than females to report staying uninvolved because they were too focused on academics. Females were 2.2 times more likely than males to report staying uninvolved because of work commitments and 2.5 times more likely than males to report staying uninvolved because commuting made involvement inconvenient.

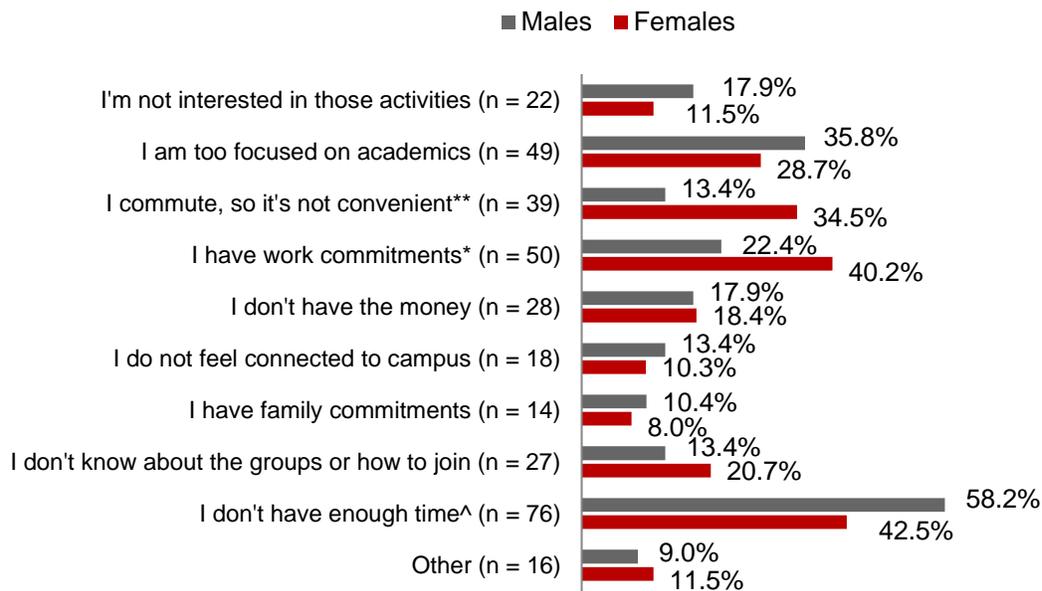
Reasons for Students' Lack of Involvement By Gender



[^] $p = .05$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The following charts are the same analyses (i.e., lack of involvement by gender) by academic level. The first chart summarizes reported reasons for lack of involvement by undergraduate students only. Among undergraduate students, male students were 2.04 times more likely to report a lack of involvement due to not having enough time than female students at the undergraduate level ($p = .05$); in the full sample, there were not statistically significant gender differences on this variable. Unlike in the full sample of students, undergraduate males did not express significantly less interest in campus involvement or a significantly greater focus on academics than undergraduate females.

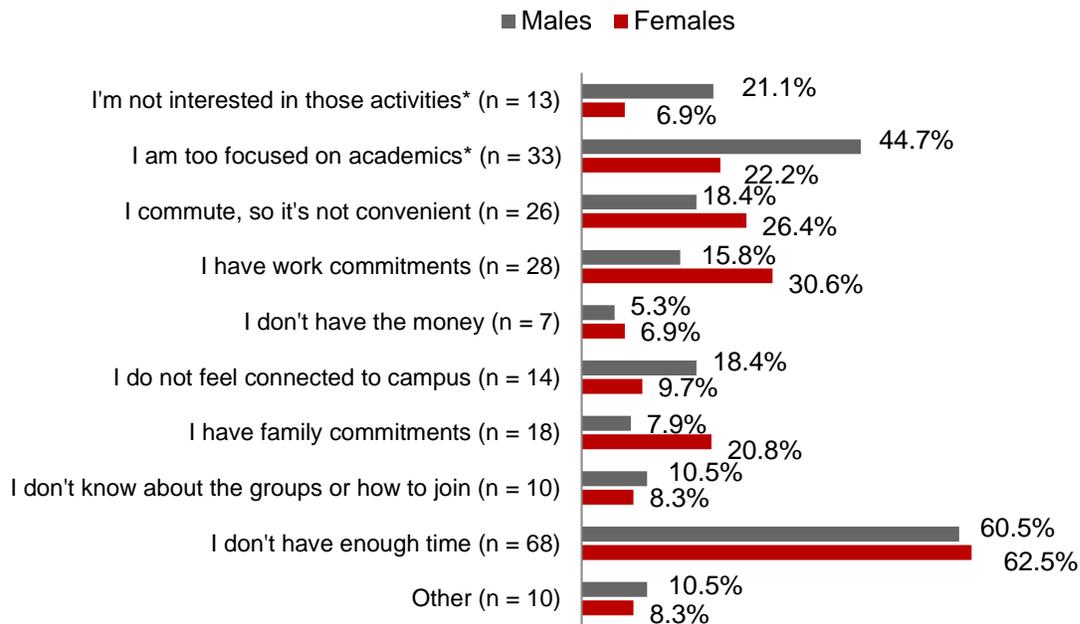
Reasons for Students' Lack of Involvement By Gender: Undergraduate Career-Level Only



^ $p = .05$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The following chart summarizes reported reasons for lack involvement for graduate and professional students only. Similar to when analyzing the full sample, there was a statistically significant gender difference in reasons for students' lack of involvement due to academic focus and in interest. Male graduate/professional students were 2.83 times more likely than female graduate/professional students to report remaining uninvolved due to a focus on academics. Likewise, male graduate/professional students were 3.57 times more likely than female graduate/professional students to express a lack of interest in involvement activities. Unlike in the full sample, graduate/professional male students were not more likely to cite work commitments or commuting as reasons for lack of involvement when compared with graduate/professional female students. Given the small sample size of graduate/professional students selecting specific reasons for not being involved (for example, only 7 students selected "I don't have the money"), it is possible that gender differences are meaningful but fail to achieve statistical significance.

Reasons for Students' Lack of Involvement By Gender



^p = .05, *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT AND GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)

The following infographic examines GPA differences between leaders and non-leaders, as well as those involved and uninvolved. There are statistically significant differences in the GPAs of students who report being leaders on campus versus other involved students who have not taken leadership roles on campus as well as between those who report being involved as leaders on campus versus those who report being completely uninvolved on campus.

GPA Differences

Leaders versus Non-Leaders

*Leaders have a higher GPA among students involved on campus***

Leaders	Non-Leaders
3.39	3.24

Leaders versus Uninvolved

*Leaders have a higher GPA than students not involved on campus****

Leaders	Uninvolved
3.39	3.13

