

# Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership: Relationships between a Leadership Studies Course and Student Leadership Development

Center for the Study of Student Life &  
Student Leadership Development

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## INTRODUCTION

The Ohio State University offers an undergraduate minor in Leadership Studies, an interdisciplinary minor of 15 credit hours. The minor, according to program information, is designed to “build the 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and leadership skills required for today’s professionals.” This report compares students who have taken a Leadership Studies course (Leadership Studies sample) to a general Ohio State sample on measures of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale, of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). It will also compare these two samples in terms of leadership efficacy, leadership participation, and social change behaviors. The MSL was administered in February 2012 to a random sample of 4,000 undergraduate students at The Ohio State University Columbus campus, and to an additional 1,000 currently-enrolled students who participated in a Leadership Studies course at Ohio State. Nineteen students fell into both categories. The response rate for the MSL was 21.3%, with 1,067 students completing the survey.

	Sample Size	Responses	Response Rate
General Ohio State Sample	4,000	858	21.5%
Leadership Studies Sample	1,000	228	22.7%
Total	5,000	1,067 (unique)	21.3%

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Students in the Leadership Studies sample scored higher on all Social Leadership Responsibility Scale in comparison with the general Ohio State sample, as well as with the national sample.
- Students who had taken a Leadership Studies course outscored the general Ohio State sample most dramatically in the area of *Citizenship* than in any other area on the Social Leadership Responsibility Scale.
- Students in the Leadership Studies sample were more likely to report that they were confident in leading others successfully than the general Ohio State sample (**86.4%** compared to **73.0%**).
- Students in the Leadership Studies sample were 61% more likely to be an involved member of a student organization than the general Ohio State sample.
- Students in the Leadership Studies sample were more likely to engage in a social change behavior such as community service than the general Ohio State sample.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Class Rank	OSU Random Sample (%)	Leadership Studies Sample (%)
First Year	16.1	3.1
Second Year	19.3	21.3
Junior	30.2	31.6
Senior	34.4	44.0

The following charts show the demographics of the survey-takers from the Ohio State random sample compared with the demographics of the students in the leadership studies sample. Major demographic differences between the two groups include a higher percentage of seniors, African American students, and students earning above a 3.0 GPA in the comparison group.

Average GPA	OSU Random Sample (%)	Leadership Studies Sample (%)
3.5-4.0	41.5	42.2
3-3.49	34.9	39.7
2.5-2.99	18.7	14.2
2-2.49	3.4	2.9
0-1.99	1.5	1.0

Race	OSU Random Sample (%)	Leadership Studies Sample (%)
White	77.4	74.3
Black	3.3	9.9
Asian/Asian American	8.9	6.9
Latino/a	2.2	1.5
Multi-racial	7.3	7.4

Student Demographics	OSU Random Sample (%)	Leadership Studies Sample (%)
Live on campus	26.7	26.7
Live off campus	72.8	73.3
Female students	56.8	54.9
Male students	43.2	45.1

## FINDINGS

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development (SCM) serves as the foundation of the Socially Responsible Leadership Scale (SRLS), which is at the core of the MSL instrument. This model approaches leadership as a purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change. The SLRS measures the core values of the SCM, also known as the “7 C’s”: consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship. The following chart shows comparisons on the SLRS.

Students who took a Leadership Studies course had higher scores on each area of the SLRS. This group was also higher than the national sample in all these areas.

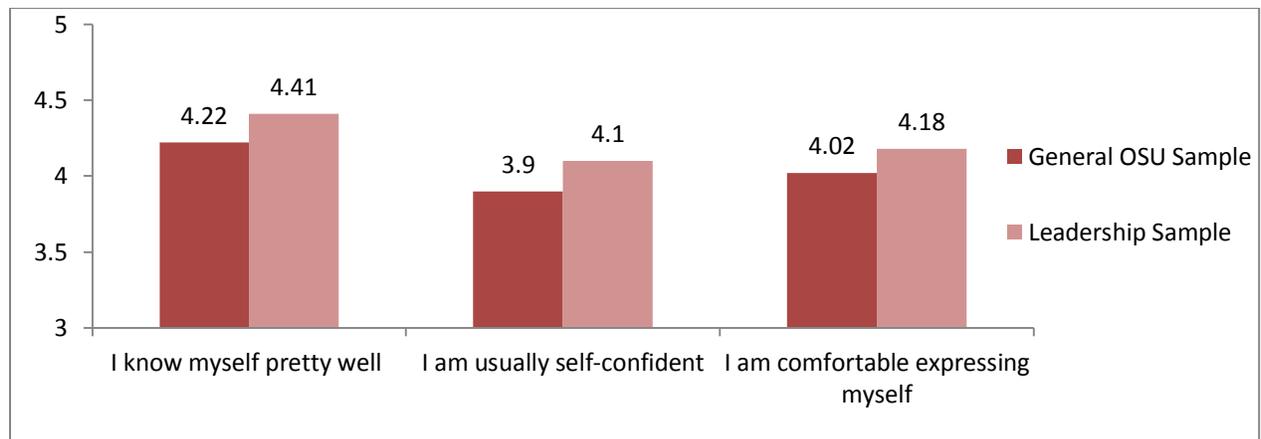
Social Leadership Responsibility Scales (1-5 scales)	OSU Random Sample (N=858)	Leadership Studies	
		Sample (N=228)	National Sample (N=103,868)
Consciousness of self	4.09	<b>4.26</b>	4.12
Congruence	4.27	<b>4.41</b>	4.26
Commitment	4.42	<b>4.52</b>	4.42
Collaboration	4.17	<b>4.32</b>	4.20
Common Purpose	4.20	<b>4.37</b>	4.21
Controversy with civility	4.21	<b>4.37</b>	4.23
Citizenship	3.94	<b>4.20</b>	3.95
Overall SLRS	4.18	<b>4.34</b>	4.19

### SOCIAL LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITY SCALE

In the sections below, we will examine various items that comprise the scale of each of the 7 C’s, described above. We will also discuss details of the Leadership Studies curriculum that may provide insight as to why this sample scored significantly higher on items than the general Ohio State sample. In the charts below, all reported differences are significant ( $p < .01$ ).

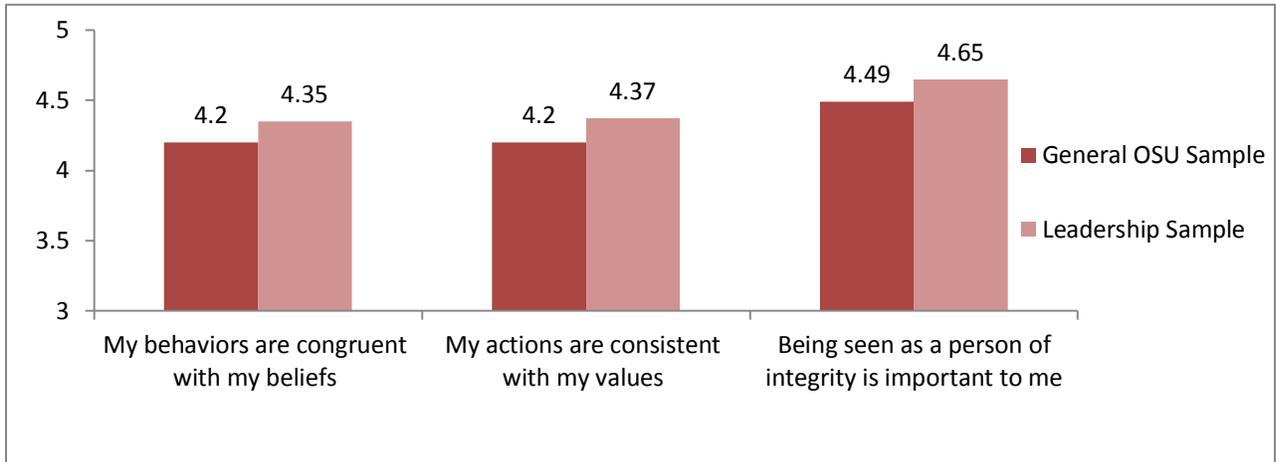
#### Consciousness of Self

Leadership Studies courses are designed to provide an environment for students to explore their personal strengths, limitations, and experiences both in terms of leadership and in general. Certain courses focus specifically on teaching leadership theory through self-assessments that ask students to think critically about their personality and experiences--activities which may contribute to a higher *Consciousness of Self* score among the leadership studies sample, demonstrated in the chart below.



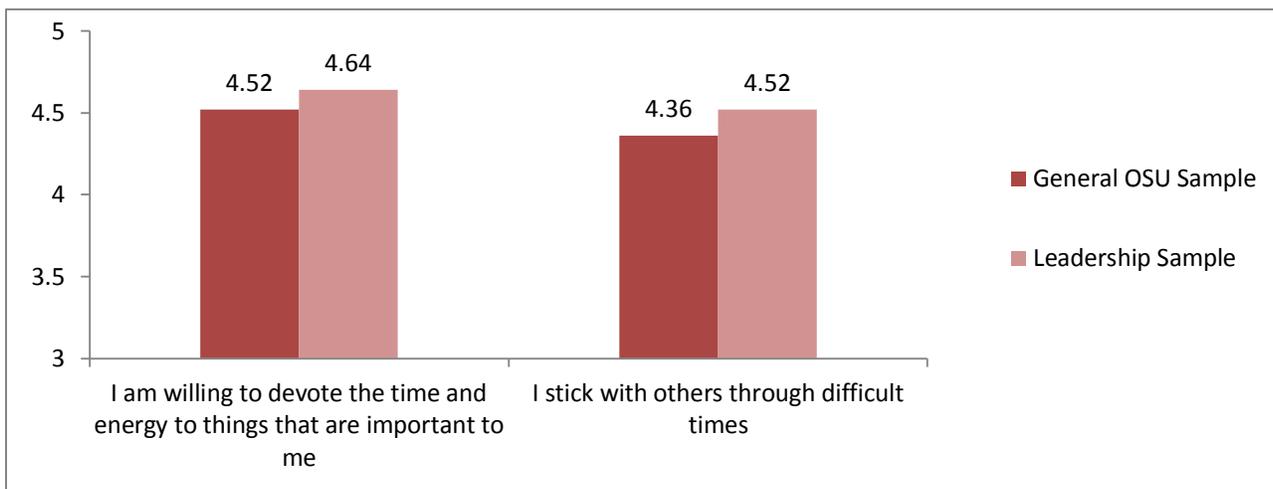
## Congruence

Leadership Studies courses use a number of theories and models that include components related to ethics, morality, positive intent, and authenticity. Course activities may also include exercises around personal and organizational values exploration, and conversations that explicitly focus on the concepts of values, congruency, and integrity. With the opportunity to identify what they believe and value, plus the opportunity to discuss how acting in accordance with those beliefs and values translates to positive leadership, students in leadership courses may be more likely to identify, exhibit, and value congruent behavior. The higher scores of these students in *Congruence*, as seen below, may be better understood because of this.



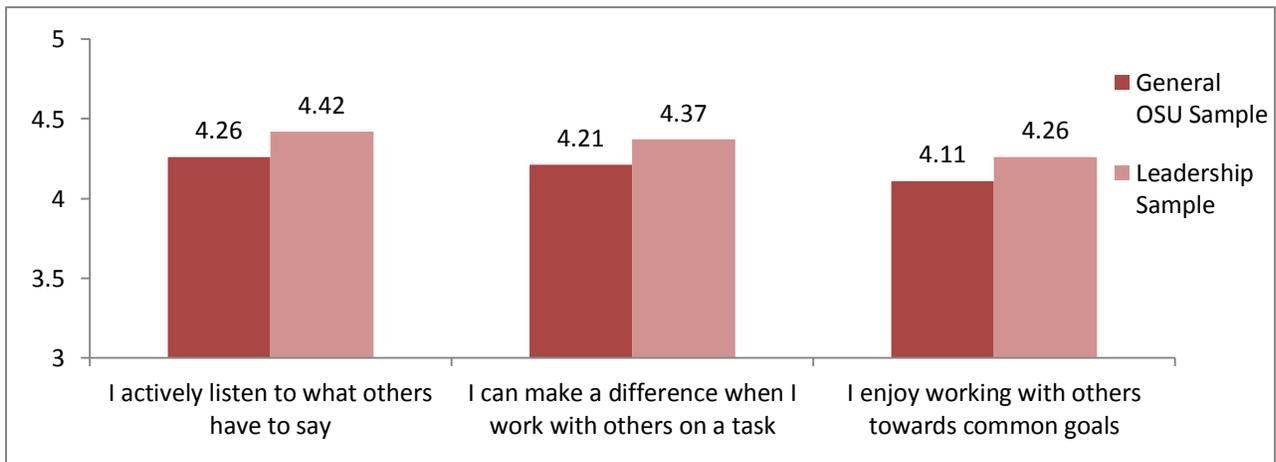
## Commitment

The opportunity in leadership courses to explore and understand personal values may contribute to a student's sense of commitment. With a greater understanding of what is important to them, students are able to make more informed decisions about how to spend their time in a way that is most fulfilling and meaningful, leading to a greater degree of commitment to those endeavors, and a higher score on the *Commitment* scale, illustrated in the items below.



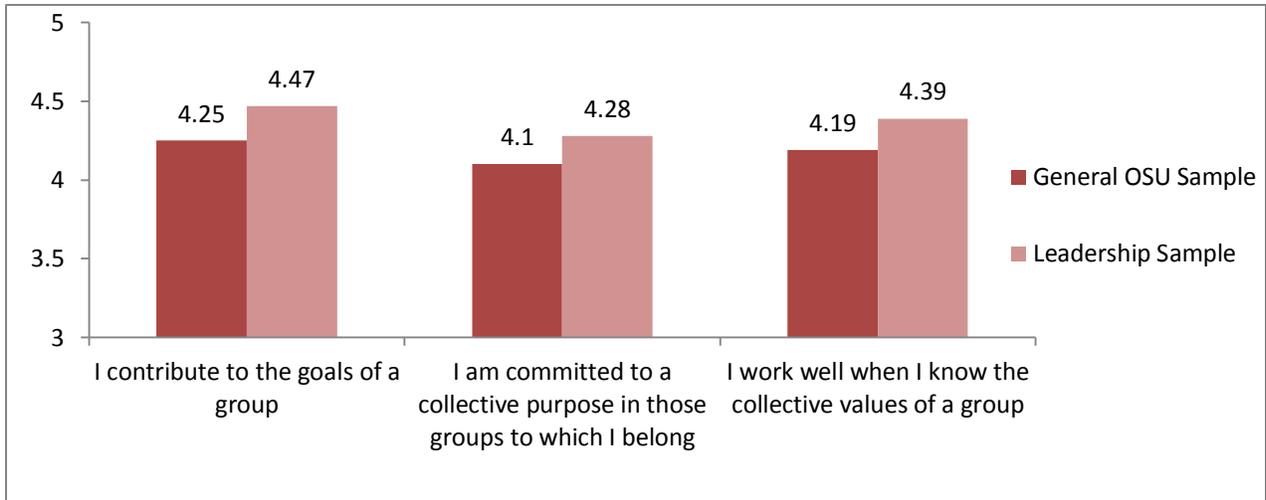
## Collaboration

“Team development” is a major component of most Leadership Studies courses at Ohio State both through discussion of theories around group dynamics as well as through requiring commitment to a group through team activities, assignments, and projects. Most Leadership Studies courses engage students in conversations around empathy and relationship-building, which involve connection and responsibility to others. Courses that specifically utilize the Social Change Model of Leadership Development may also prime students to think more about commitment to a greater cause. Leadership Studies courses are designed with the assumption that leadership is a process, not a position, and therefore students are challenged to think of the value of everyone’s contributions to leadership rather than a single individual being able to lead without input from others. These aspects of the course may help explain why the Leadership Studies sample scored higher than the general Ohio State sample on items of the *Collaboration* scale, depicted in the chart below.



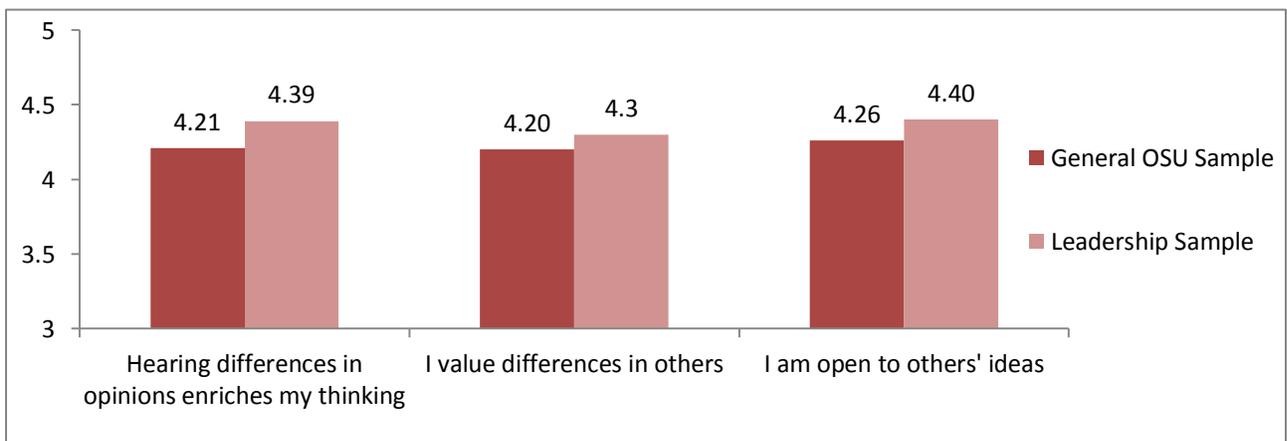
## Common Purpose

The focus on team development in Leadership Studies courses naturally emphasizes the practice of working toward a common purpose. Students may explore the process of developing a shared vision within a group. They may engage in the process of identifying the ways in which individuals contribute to the collective work around an idea, issue, or goal. Some courses provide students with the opportunity to share personal examples of groups that are important to them because of a specific, common purpose that has great meaning to them. They may also discuss readings that highlight initiatives that have failed due to a lack of common purpose, further emphasizing the importance of developing a common purpose in leadership. This may help explain why the Leadership Studies sample may be different than the general Ohio State sample in the area of *Common Purpose*, as seen in the next graph.



### Controversy with Civility

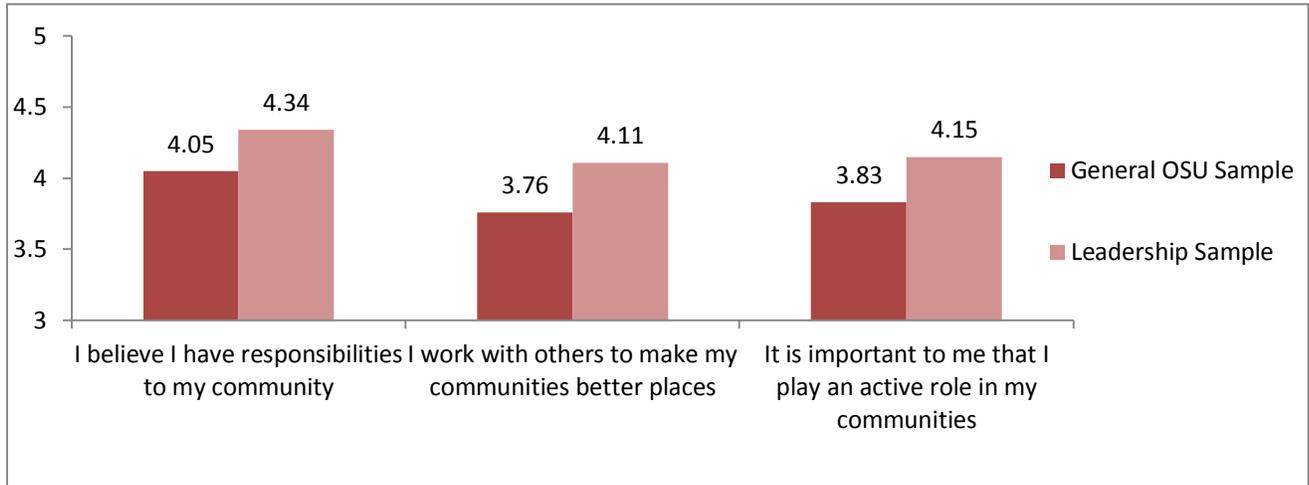
Leadership Studies courses provide students with a “safe space” in which to engage in conversation around controversial topics. The learning in a Leadership Studies course often happens through activities designed to simulate real-world controversy during which students are challenged to explore many solutions as a group. Students encounter conflicting motives, competing ideas, and diverse perspectives during these simulations, giving them opportunities to use knowledge and skills gained around team development, listening, and collaboration. Instructors guide students through reflection on their experience in the simulation, helping them to identify the value in multiple perspectives and to handle controversy in productive and respectful ways. Students understand that positive results are possible when a diverse set of ideas are considered and inclusivity is encouraged. Exposure to such ideas and concepts may help explain why students who have taken these courses scored higher on the measures of the *Controversy with Civility* scale than the general Ohio State sample.



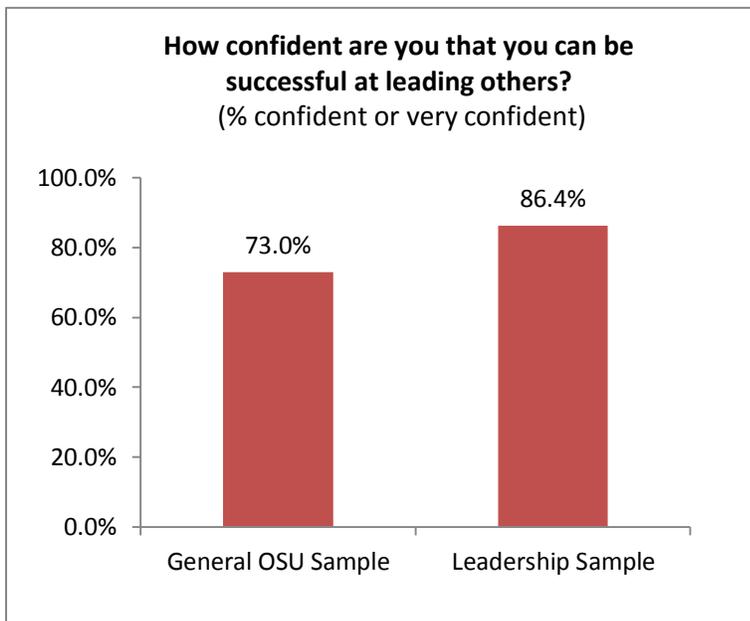
### Citizenship

Students in the Leadership Studies sample outscored the general Ohio State sample on the Citizenship scale more dramatically than on any other core value scale. A possible explanation for the large difference may be that the idea of community is discussed and analyzed in many Leadership Studies courses. Students are asked to identify the communities to which they belong, communities they feel

are successful or unsuccessful, and communities that show the potential for change. Students are also asked to explore what makes them feel part of a community or fosters a sense of belonging. Some focus on leadership models and theories that include citizenship as a main value or component, such as the SCM and the Relational Leadership Model. Some courses also have service-learning requirements which engage students in a variety of community-based learning experiences. This focus may explain the large differences on the *Citizenship* scale between students in the Leadership Studies sample and the general Ohio State sample.



### LEADERSHIP EFFICACY SCALE



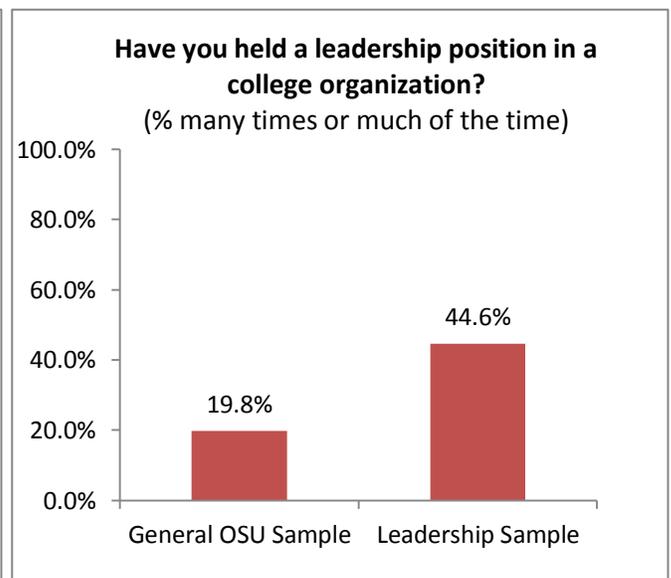
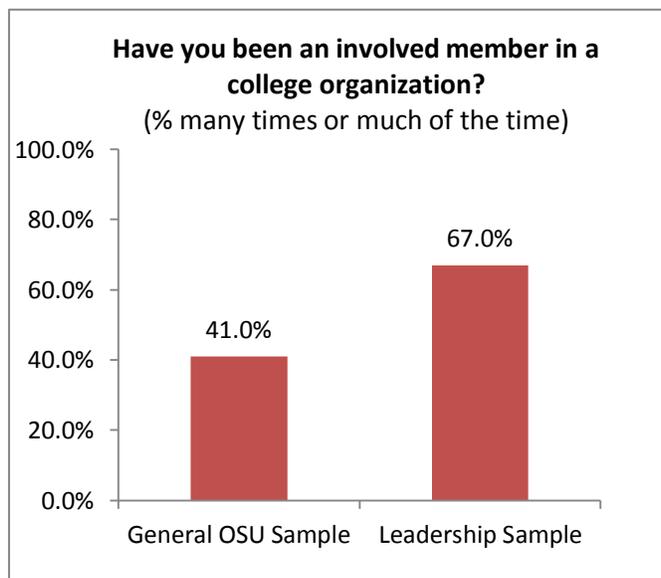
Leadership Studies courses engage students in learning about models and theories of leadership and leadership development, providing them a vocabulary that allows them to better identify and discuss leadership-related ideas and behaviors. The experiential nature of activities and assignments in these courses provides students with numerous opportunities to test various leadership concepts, knowledge, and skills, likely contributing to their leadership efficacy. These reasons may help explain why students from this sample scored 13 percentage points higher in Leadership Efficacy than the general Ohio State sample.

## PARTICIPATION IN LEADERSHIP TRAINING



The MSL data showed that those in the Leadership Studies sample participated more often in leadership retreats, leadership lectures and workshops, positional leader training, and living-learning leadership programs. A leadership studies course can often be the gateway experience for students to engage in further leadership training or education. On the other hand, some students have a heightened interest to take leadership studies courses because they have already had exposure to leadership training, retreats, workshops, or conferences focused on developing leadership skills. Co-curricular leadership training experiences are also a targeted student audience for recruitment efforts by Leadership Studies course instructors, and vice versa. Involvement in both Leadership Studies courses as well as involvement in co-curricular leadership training may be contributing factors to higher scores on the SLR Scale illustrated above.

## STUDENT ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT



Involvement in student organizations, regardless of the nature of the organization, is one of the most common ways for students to experience leadership development and education, if only at an informal and basic level. Student organizations also provide an audience for the marketing of leadership courses and co-curricular leadership programs alike. Through Leadership Studies courses, students gain experience with teamwork, collaboration, and relationship-building, as described in earlier portions of this report. Thus, experience in a Leadership Studies course would likely add to the knowledge and skills

a student needs to feel confident enough to become involved with, and take a leadership position in a student organization. It makes sense that the Leadership Studies sample is also more involved in and holds more leadership positions in student organizations. Students with Leadership Studies course experience may also be seen by their peers as more capable of taking on a leadership position in a student organization, prompting peers to choose those students for leadership roles. Of course, this relationship between taking a leadership course and having a leadership position in a student organization may work the other way as well, as students who have leadership positions are more compelled to take a leadership course. The table below highlights student organizations at Ohio State that show a large difference in involvement between the general Ohio State sample and the leadership studies sample.

<b>Have you been involved in the following kinds of student groups during college?</b>	<b>General OSU Sample % Yes</b>	<b>Leadership Studies Sample %Yes</b>
Academic/Departmental/Professional (ex. Engineering Club)	41.7%	50.7%
Service (ex. Circle K, Habitat for Humanity)	25.8%	43.3%
Religious (ex. Fellowship of Christian Athletes)	19.0%	27.4%
Campus-Wide Programming (ex. multicultural programming committee)	10.6%	26.5%
New Student Transitions (ex. admissions ambassador, orientation advisor)	13.2%	22.3%
Resident Assistants	4.3%	21.0%
Student Governance (ex. Student Government Association)	9.8%	19.1%

## **SOCIAL CHANGE BEHAVIORS**

Contemporary theories and models of leadership, including the SCM, focus on the idea that we should engage in leadership for the sake of change, greater purpose, or the betterment of a collective whole. These theories and models serve as the foundation for Leadership Studies courses at Ohio State, which may help explain why the leadership course sample were more likely to participate in the social change behaviors listed in the chart below. The long-term and more formal structure of a Leadership Studies course provides an environment for students to think critically about the social change outcomes of leadership and the role leaders play in society.

<b>How often have you engaged in the following activities? (% Sometimes and % Often, combined)</b>	<b>General OSU Sample</b>	<b>Leadership Studies Sample</b>
Performed community service	60.6%	77.0%
Worked with others to make the campus or community a better place	48.0%	70.0%
Acted to benefit the common good or protect the environment	63.5%	73.8%
Been actively involved with an organization that addresses a social or environmental problem	35.7%	55.5%
Acted to raise awareness about a campus, community, or global problem	32.6%	53.7%
Been actively involved with an organization that addresses the concerns of a specific community (ex. Academic council, neighborhood association)	36.4%	53.2%
Took action in the community to address a social or environmental problem	20.1%	45.9%
Communicated with campus or community leaders about a pressing concern	24.4%	45.4%
Worked with others to address social inequality	24.0%	42.6%