

# **Student Life Survey: Student Involvement & Belonging**

Center for the Study of Student Life

July 2015

## INTRODUCTION

This report explores student involvement, sense of belonging, student satisfaction and plans to persist at the Ohio State University. Higher education and student affairs research indicates that being involved and engaged with the campus community is essential for student retention (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993). Involvement with student organizations helps embed students within the campus, increases engagement and bolsters a sense of belonging to the university; having a sense of belonging is critical for college success (Finn, 1989). Findings focus on several components of involvement, including involvement in student organizations, participation in campus events, service learning and community service. In addition, this report examines sense of belonging, which is measured according to students' perceived connection to the university, relationships with others at the university and whether they take part in traditions.

## METHODS

Data come from the 2015 Student Life Survey, which was administered to a random sample of 5,000 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate and professional students at The Ohio State University during January 2015. A total of 1,039 undergraduate students (20.8% response rate) and 282 graduate/professional students (28.2% response rate) completed the survey. This report presents statistically significant differences in each outcome by the following demographic characteristics: gender, race/ethnicity, class rank, citizenship status, military experience, sexual orientation, student employment status and first generation status.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- More than half of students (55.1%) are involved in a student organization, Student Life-sponsored program, or a social fraternity or sorority. Among involved students, 41.3% hold a leadership position.
- Students who work 20 hours a week or more are less likely to be involved in a student organization (28.3%) compared to students who work less than 20 hour a week (55.5%) or students who do not work (52.5%).
- Among involved students, 73.3% are involved in academic, departmental or professional organizations and 58.5% are involved in a community service organization.
- Students report that belonging to a student organization made them feel more connected to the university (83.4%), made them more confident (78.2%), or taught them problem solving skills (67.8%).
- 55.3% of students participate in campus events at least once a month.
- While just over half of students (52.0%) have participated in some type of service in the current academic year, 69.3% anticipate participating in the next six months.
- Almost 73% of students agree or strongly agree that they have relationships with other Ohio State students, while only 37% agree or strongly agree that they have relationships with Ohio State faculty.
- While 73.4% of respondents report they know Ohio State traditions, fewer (63.1%) report they take part in Ohio State traditions.
- Nearly 95% of students report intending to graduate from Ohio State.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Gender	
Female	54.0%
Genderqueer/Gender Non-conforming	0.2%
Male	44.2%
Transgender Male/Transgender Man	0.2%
Transgender Female/Transgender Woman	0.1%
Preferred identity (in addition to or not listed above)	0.4%
Prefer not to state	0.9%

Race/Ethnicity	
African American/Black or African descent	4.4%
Asian American/Asian (East, South, Southeast)	12.6%
Latino(a)/Hispanic American	1.5%
Middle Eastern/Arab American	1.1%
White/European American	71.1%
Other	0.6%
Prefer not to answer	3.2%
Multiple Races/Ethnicities	5.5%

Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual	92.3%
Bisexual	2.1%
Lesbian or gay	2.0%
Questioning	0.5%
Prefer not to answer	3.2%

\*This item was recoded into *Heterosexual* and *LGBQ*.

Citizenship	
International	7.8%
Domestic	92.2%

Rank	
First-year undergraduate	11.1%
Second-year undergraduate	17.1%
Third-year undergraduate	17.5%
Fourth-year undergraduate	32.9%
Graduate	15.5%
Professional	5.8%

Military Experience	
Veteran	4.0%
Civilian	96.0%

First Generation Status	
First Generation	32.2%
Non-First Generation	67.8%

Student Employment	
Not employed/summers only	40.0%
1-20 hours	39.2%
20+ hours	20.8%

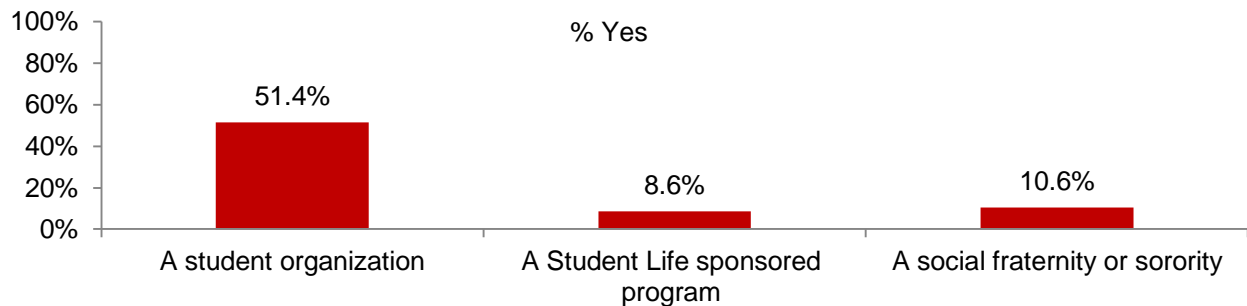


## FINDINGS

### OVERALL INVOLVEMENT

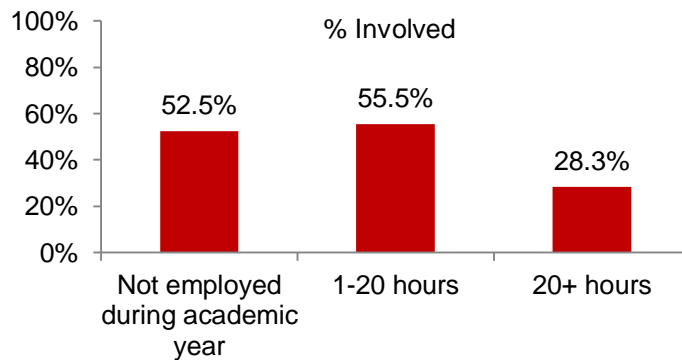
Overall, 55.1% of students are involved in a student organization, Student Life-sponsored program (for example, Buck-i-SERV, Wellness Ambassador) or social fraternity or sorority. Among involved students, 41.3% report they hold a leadership position. More non-first generation students (45.7%) report holding a leadership position than first generation students (33.3%).

#### Are you currently involved in the following?



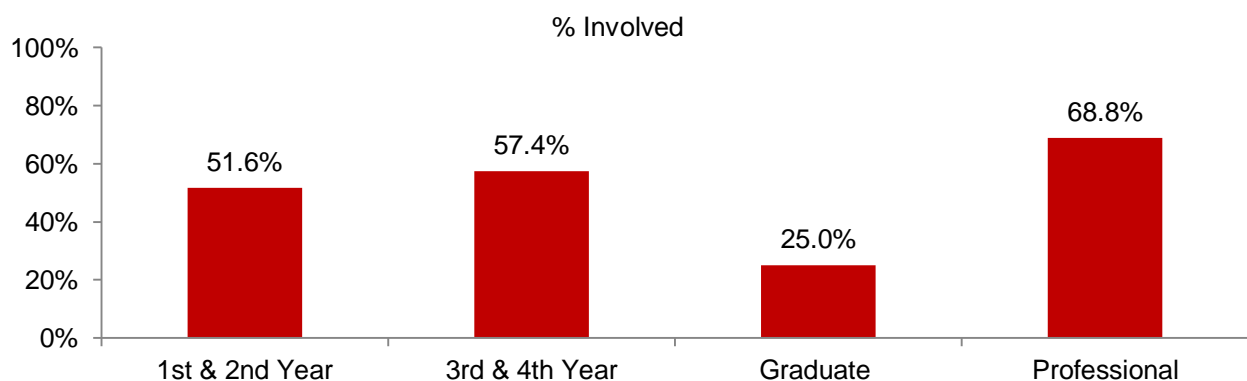
### STUDENT ORGANIZATION INVOLVEMENT

#### Student Organization Involvement by Employment Status\*\*\*



Females (52.7%) are more likely to join a student organization than males (43.7%). Approximately 30% of students with current or previous military experience (30.2%) are involved in student organizations on campus, compared with 53.3% of civilian students. Domestic students (50.5%) are more likely to join a student organization than international students (27.7%). There were also statistically significant differences in involvement by student employment (left) and academic level (below).

#### Student Organization Involvement by Academic Level\*\*\*



\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## Type of Student Organization

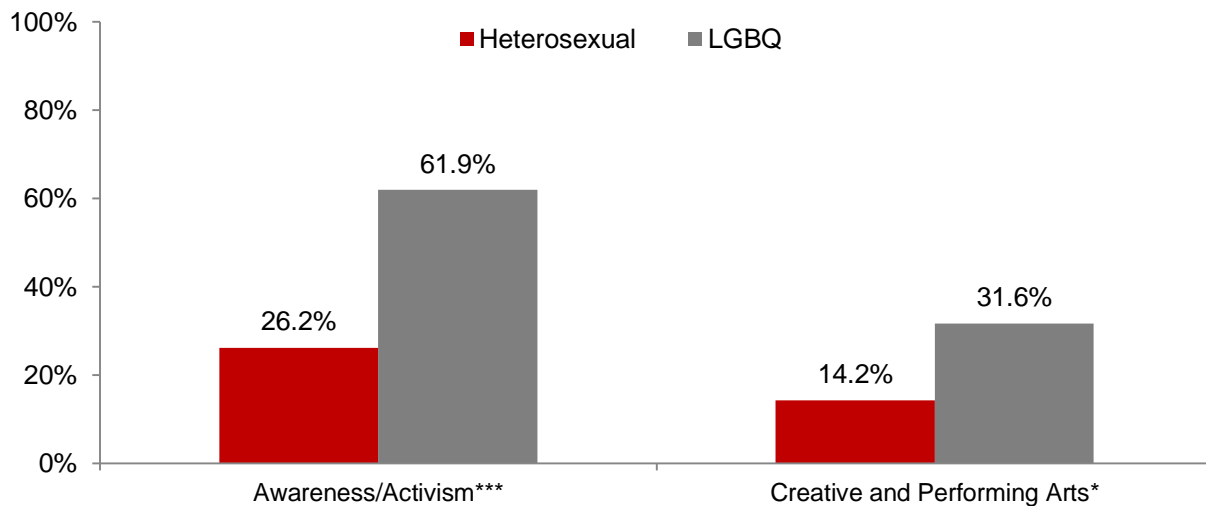
Just over half of students (51.4%) reported that they were involved in student organizations. The chart to the right lists the five most popular types of student organizations.

There were significant differences in types of student organizations joined by certain demographic

groups. For example, international students were significantly more likely to join ethnic/cultural organizations (50.0%) compared to domestic students (19.3%). As seen below, LGBQ students were more likely to join awareness/activism or creative and performing arts organizations.

What type of student organizations are you involved in?	% Yes
Community Service	58.5%
Special Interest (e.g. Chess Club)	32.2%
Awareness/Activism	30.5%
Sports and Recreation (e.g. Skydiving)	30.3%
Academic/ Departmental/ Professional Organizations	26.7%

### Differences in Organization Type by Sexual Orientation

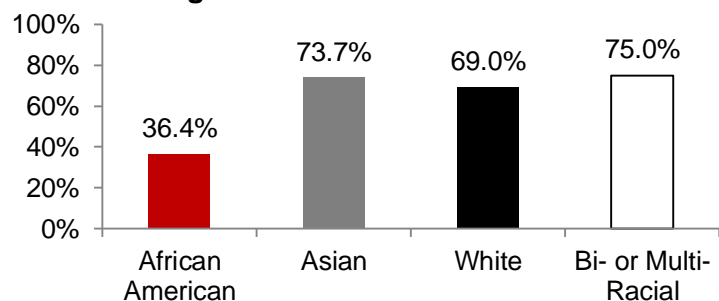


## Reasons for Joining a Student Organization

Students report that they joined student organizations to build connections, network and gain leadership skills and abilities. African American students were significantly less likely to join a student organization to build a resume compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

Why have you chosen to join a student organization?	%
It matched my interests	83.1%
To make new friends	74.5%
To build a resume	66.3%
To gain leadership skills and abilities	63.6%
Professional networking	42.4%

### Reason for Joining a Student Organization: To Build a Resume\*\*

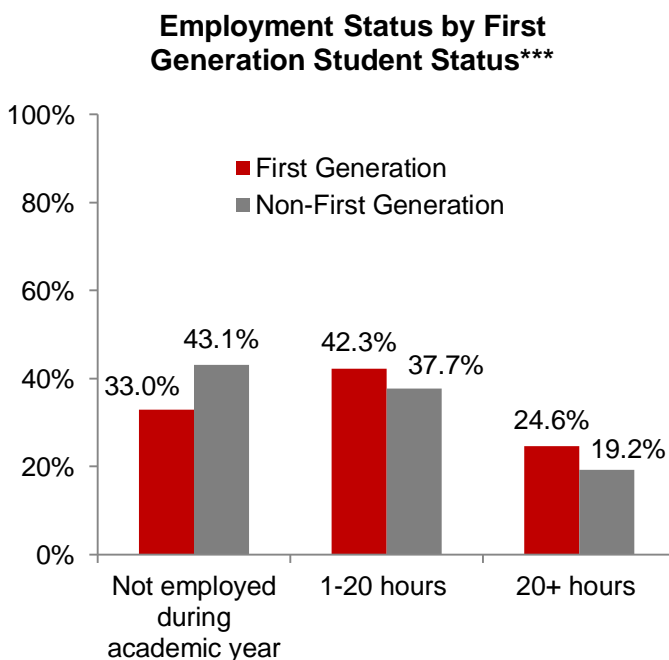
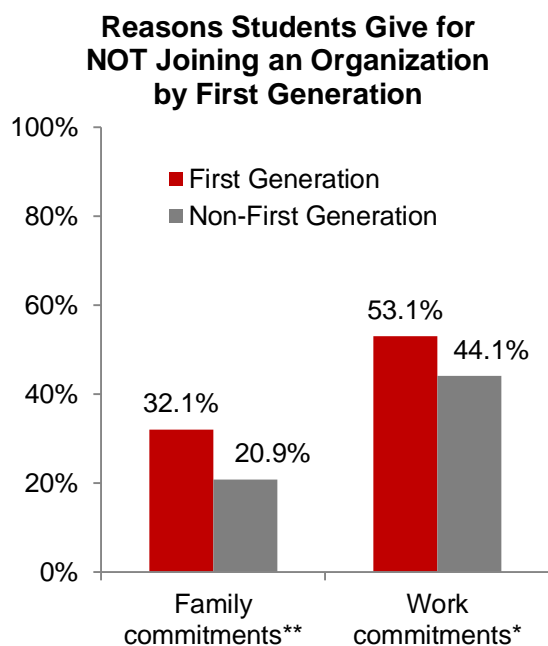


\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

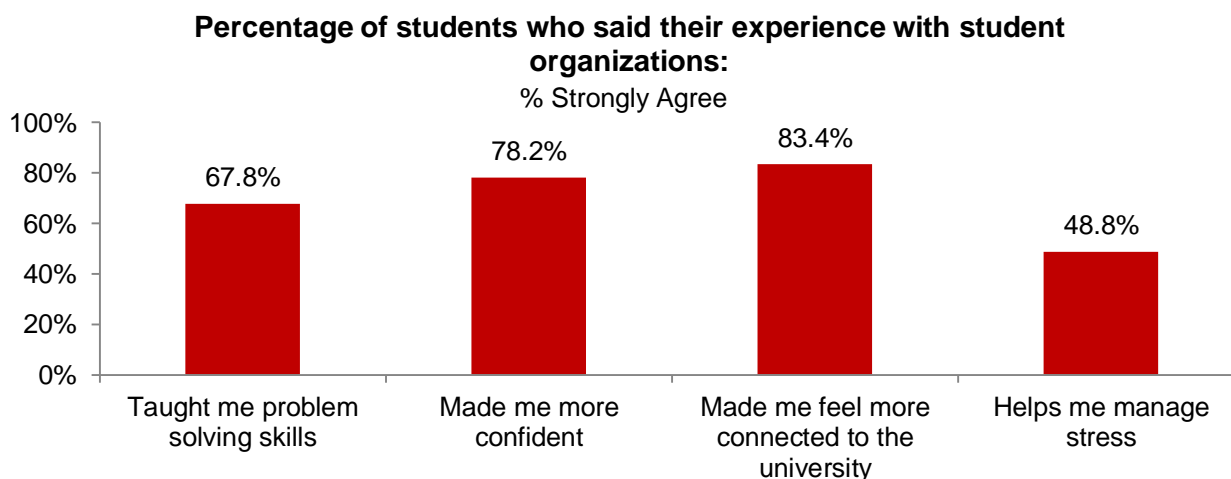
## Reasons for Not Joining a Student Organization

For students who were not involved in a student organization, the most common reasons included: *I don't have enough time; I am too focused on academics; I have work commitments; I commute, so it's not convenient; and I have family commitments.* First generation students reported the main reasons they did not join a student organization were *family commitments* and *work commitments*. First generation students are also more likely to work, in general, and work 20 hours or more per week throughout the academic year than non-first generation students.

Why have you chosen not to join a student organization?	
I don't have enough time	61.3%
I am too focused on academics	48.9%
I have work commitments	48.2%
I commute, so it's not convenient	27.5%
I have family commitments	23.8%



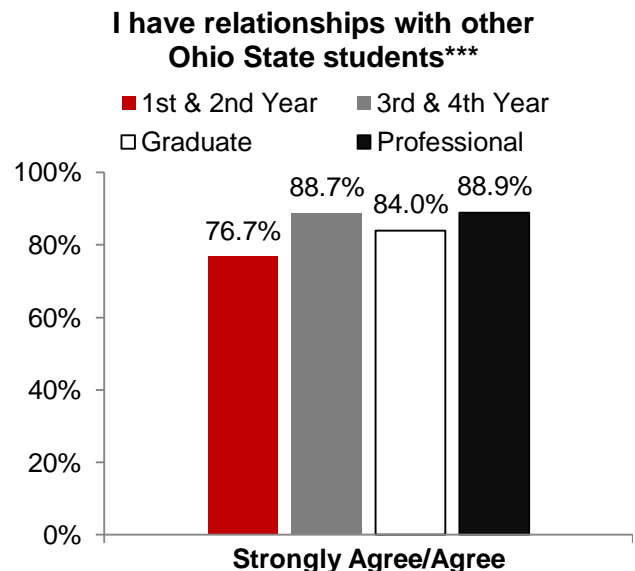
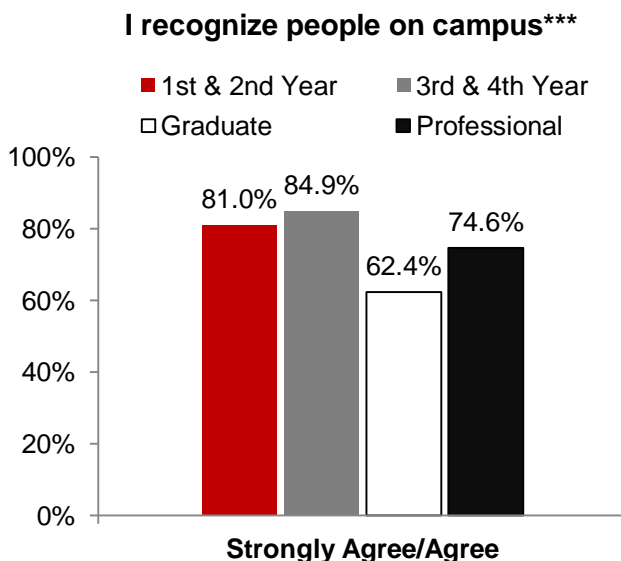
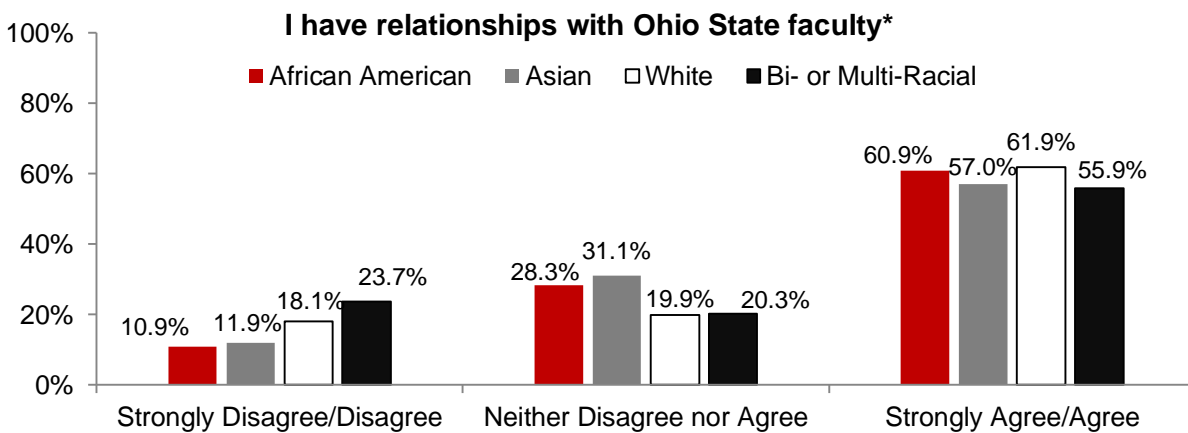
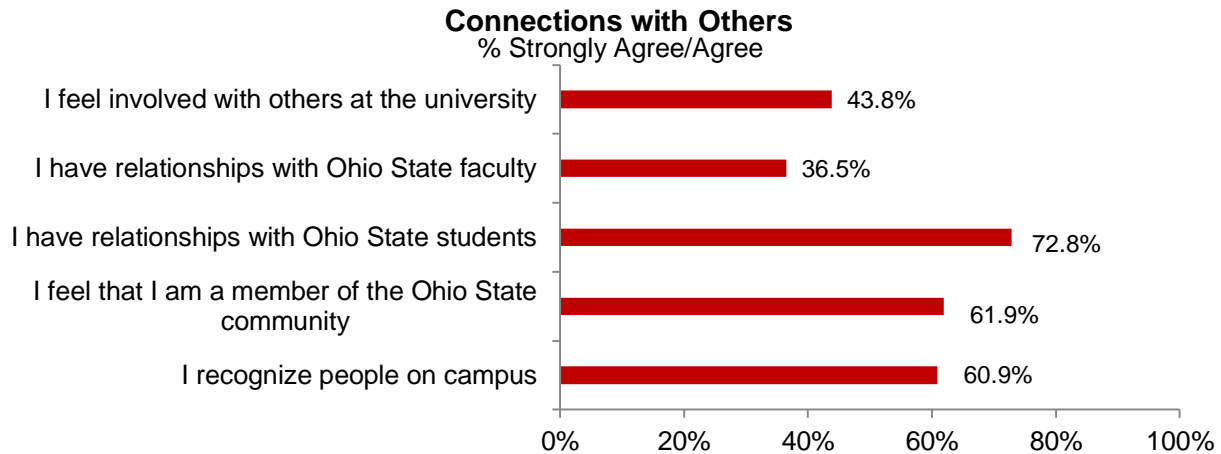
## Student Organization Outcomes



\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## CONNECTIONS WITH OTHERS AT OHIO STATE

Almost 73% of students agree or strongly agree that they have relationships with other Ohio State students, while only 37% agree or strongly agree that they have relationships with Ohio State faculty. Connections with other individuals at Ohio State varied significantly by rank and race/ethnicity.

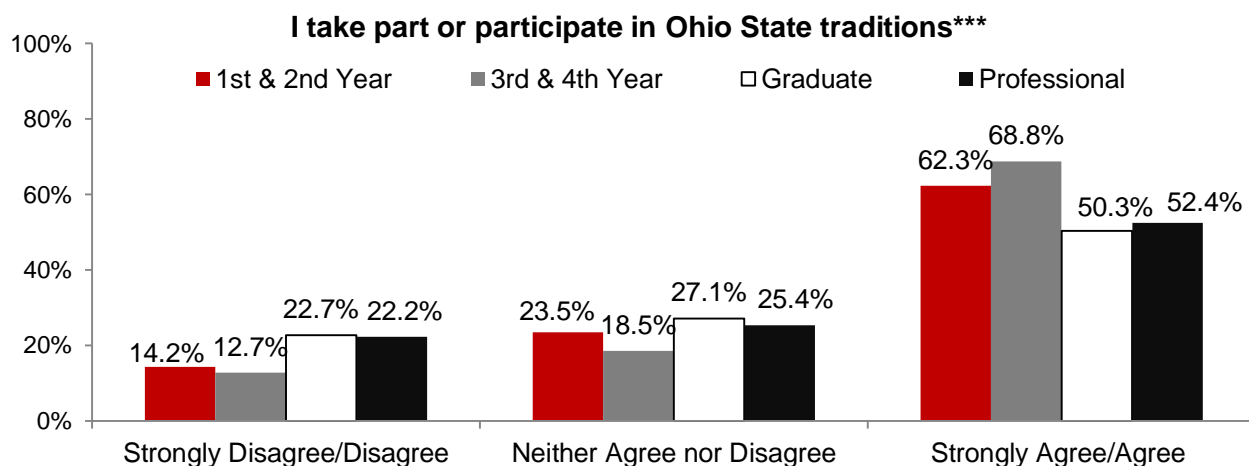
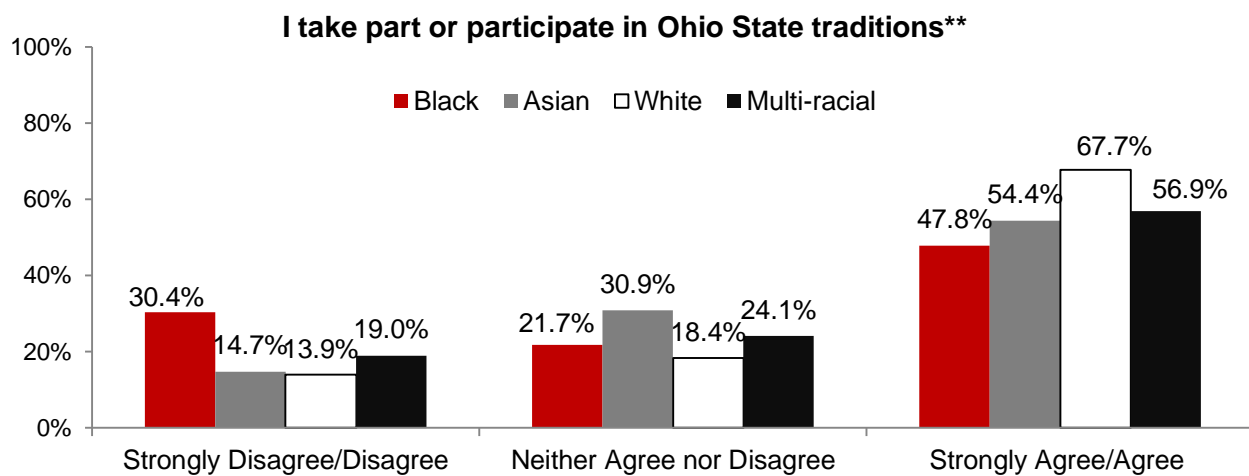


\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## OHIO STATE TRADITIONS

Overall, 73.4% of respondents report they know Ohio State traditions and 63.1% report they take part in Ohio State traditions. Participation in traditions varied significantly by a number of demographics (see table right and charts below).

I take part in Ohio State Traditions	% Strongly Agree /Agree	Statistical Significance
First Generation	54.9%	***
Non-First Generation	67.4%	
Current/previous military experience	41.9%	**
Civilian	64.5%	
International	52.4%	**
Domestic	64.5%	
Do not work during academic year	63.7%	*
Work 1-20 hours per week	65.9%	
Work 20 or more hours per week	57.8%	



\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

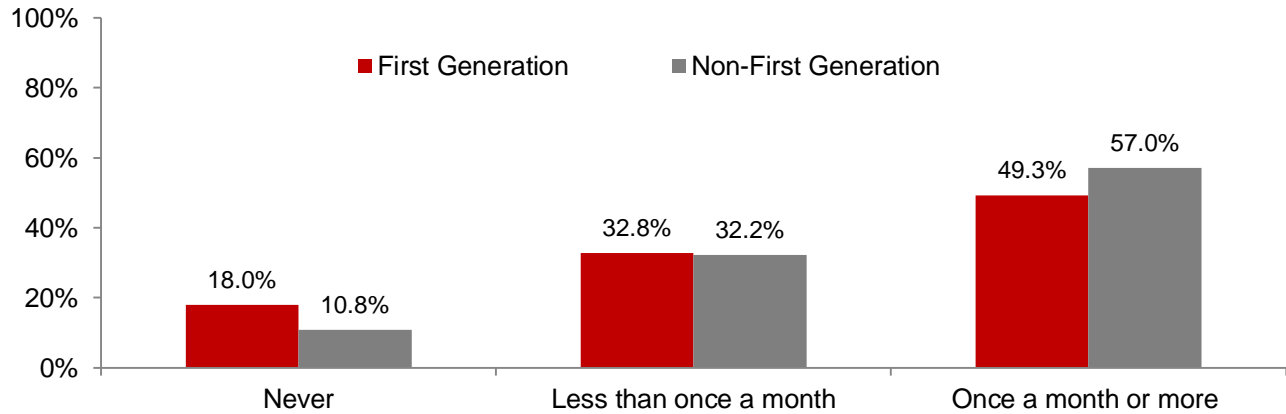


## PARTICIPATION IN CAMPUS EVENTS

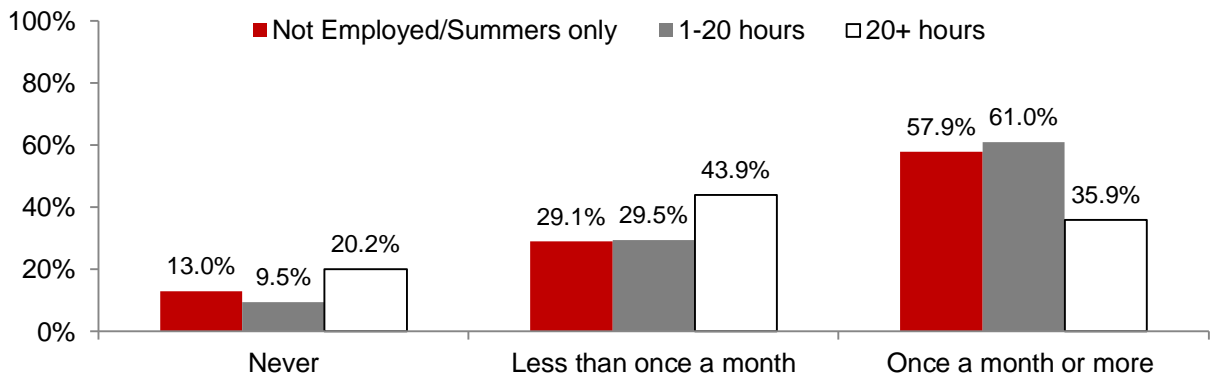
Over half of students (55.3%) participate in campus events at least once a month. The charts below illustrate the differences in campus event participation by first generation student status, academic level and employment.

How often do you participate in campus events?	
Never	12.5%
Less than once a month	32.2%
Once a month or more	55.3%

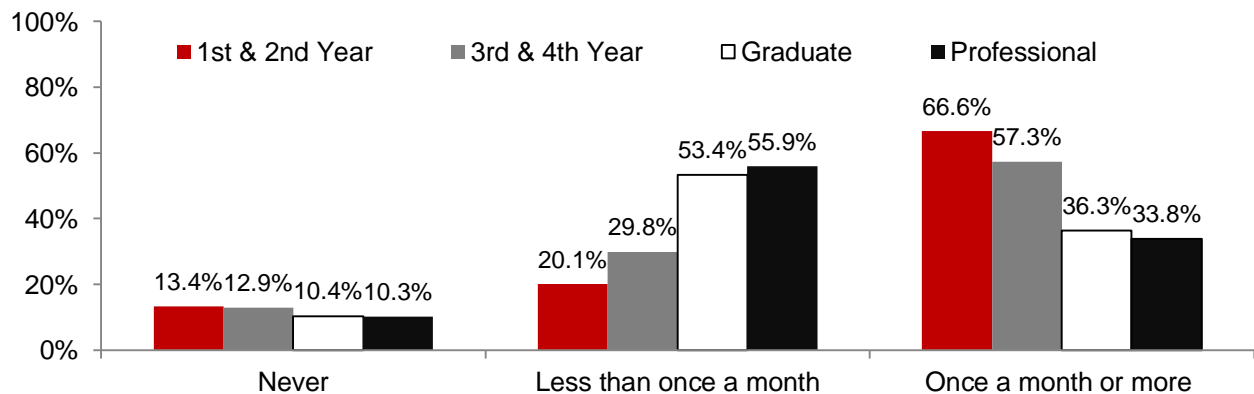
**Participation in campus events by first generation student status\*\***



**Participation in campus events by employment\*\*\***



**Participation in campus events by academic level\*\*\***

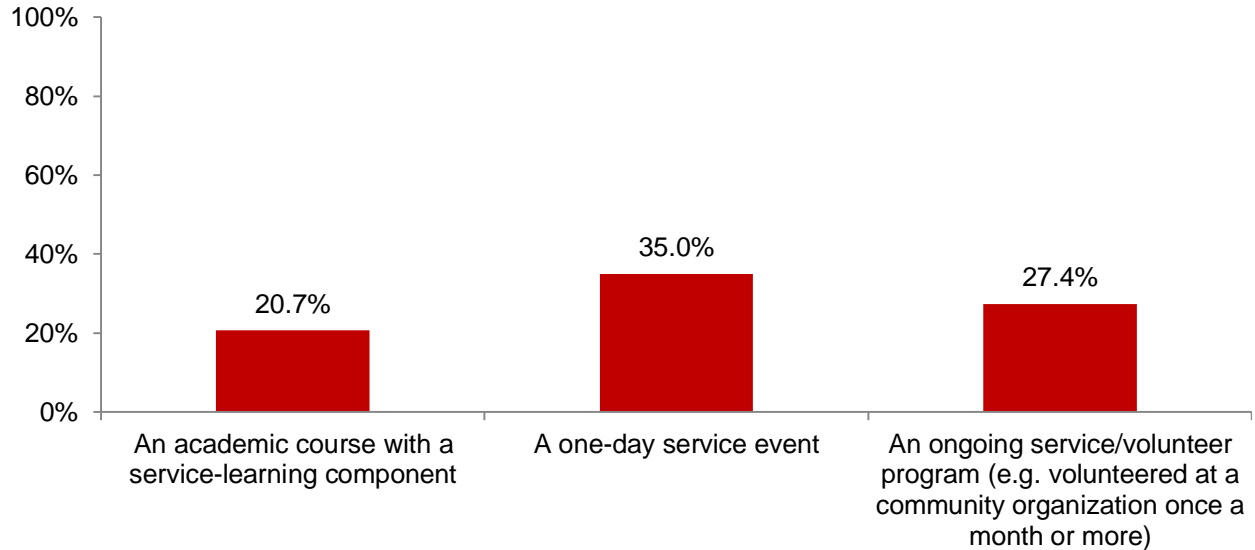


\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## SERVICE AND SERVICE-LEARNING

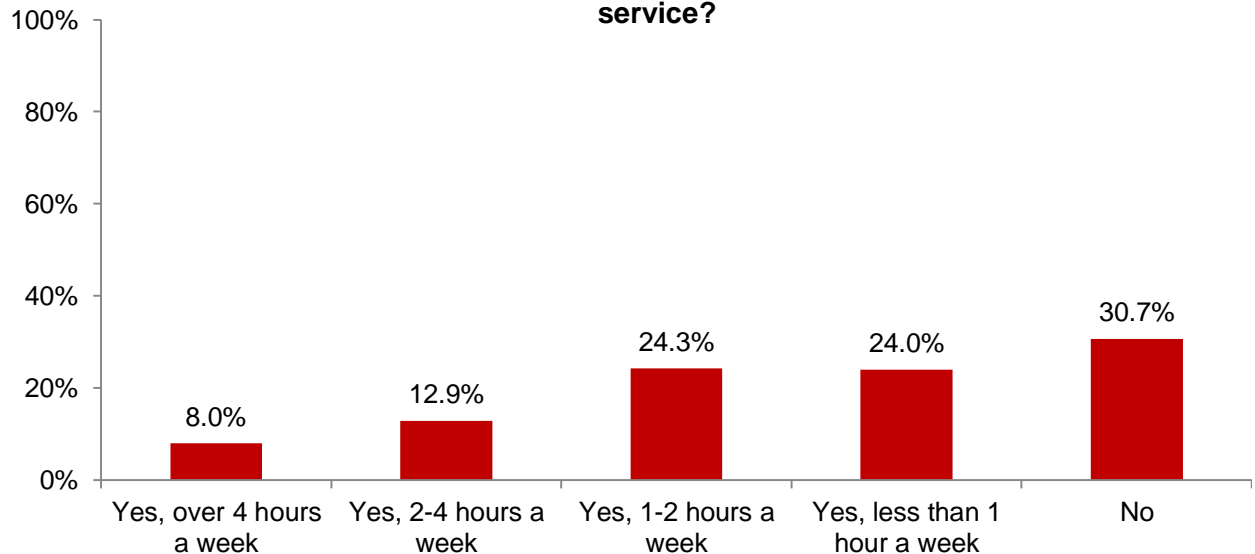
Over half of student respondents (52.0%) have participated in some type of service in the current academic year, with type of participation presented in the chart below.

**In the current academic year, have you participated in any of the following?**



Nearly 70% of student respondents anticipate participating in community service in the next six months.

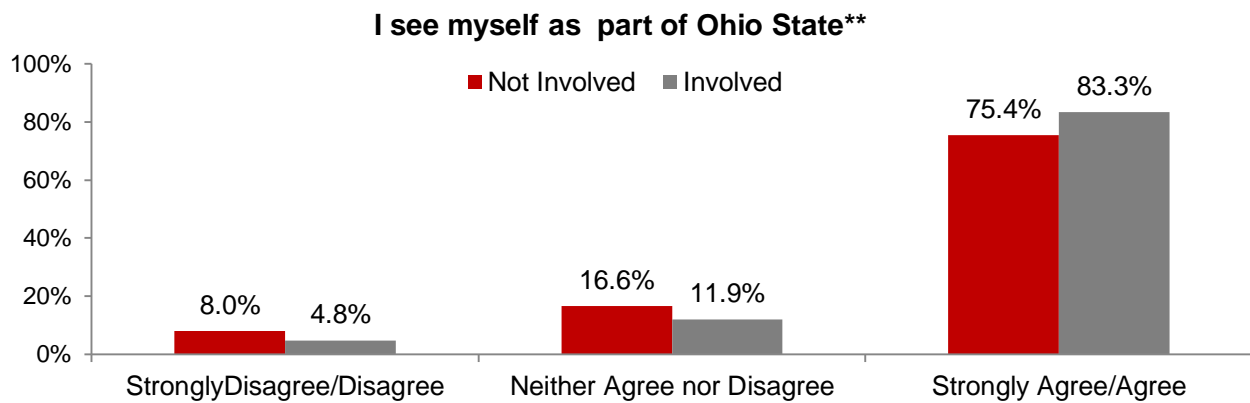
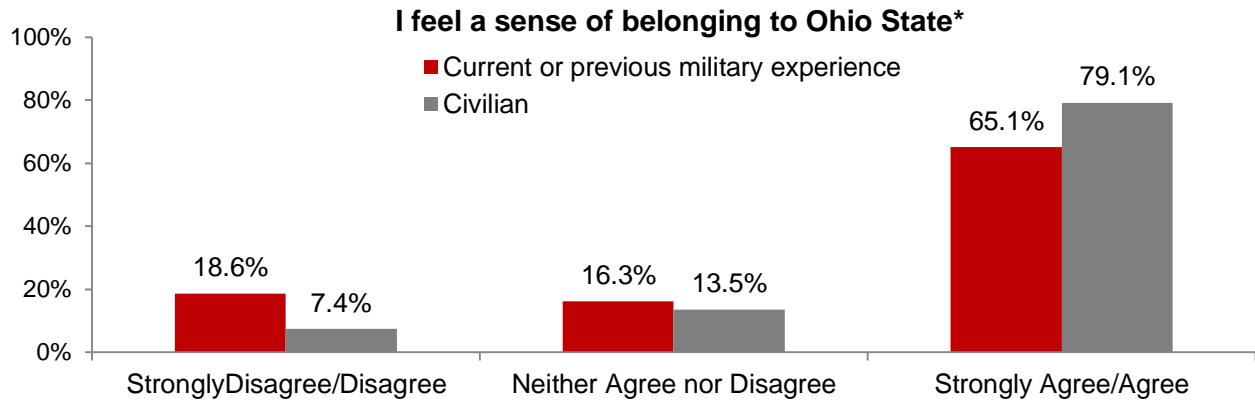
**In the next six months, do you anticipate participating in community service?**



\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

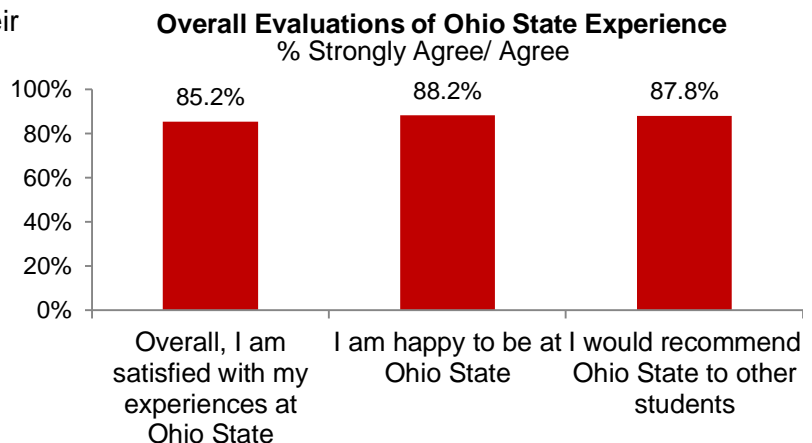
## SENSE OF BELONGING

Nearly 80% (77.8%) of students report feeling a sense of belonging to Ohio State. Sense of belonging to Ohio State did not differ significantly by race/ethnicity. However, more civilian students (79.1%) reported a sense of belonging at the university than students with current or prior military experience (65.1%). In addition, involved students were more likely to strongly agree or agree they felt a sense of belonging (84.0%) than students not involved (70.9%).



## SATISFACTION WITH OHIO STATE

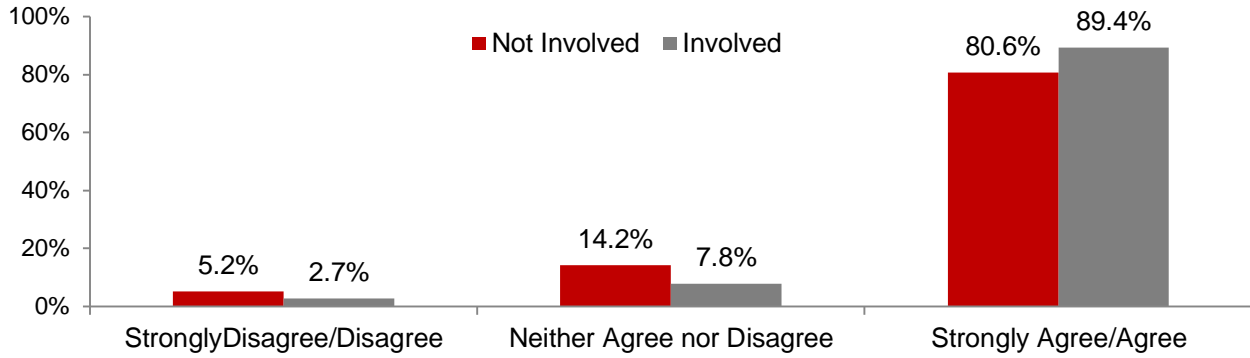
Students were largely positive in their overall evaluation of Ohio State. These overall evaluations did not differ significantly by demographics. However, students involved in a student organization, Student Life-sponsored program or social fraternity or sorority reported higher levels of satisfaction than students not involved in these activities.



\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001



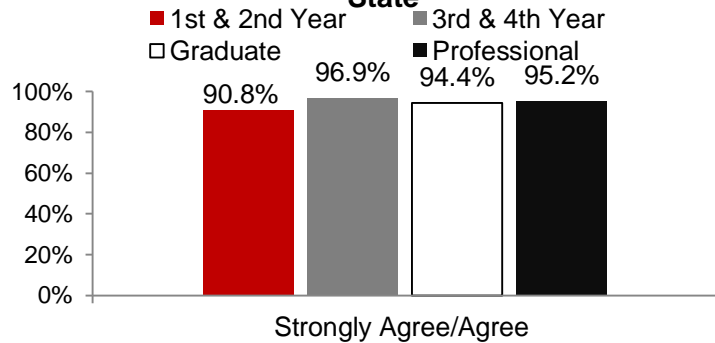
**Overall, I am satisfied with my experiences at The Ohio State University\*\***



**INTENT TO GRADUATE FROM OHIO STATE**

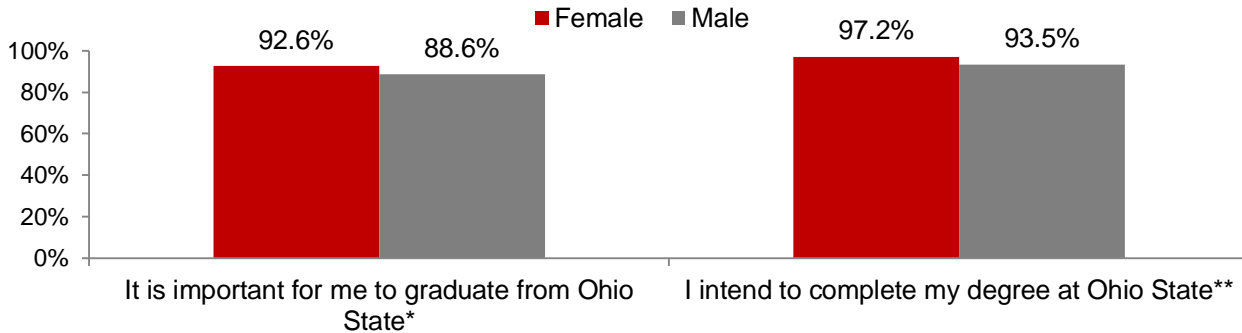
Overall, 90.2% of students strongly agree/agree that it is important for them to graduate from Ohio State, and 94.7% of students strongly agree/agree that they intend to complete their degree at Ohio State. Further, 84.2% report that they are confident that they made the right decision to attend Ohio State. Responses to some of these questions differed by rank, gender and involvement (see charts right and below).

**I intend to complete my degree at Ohio State\*\***

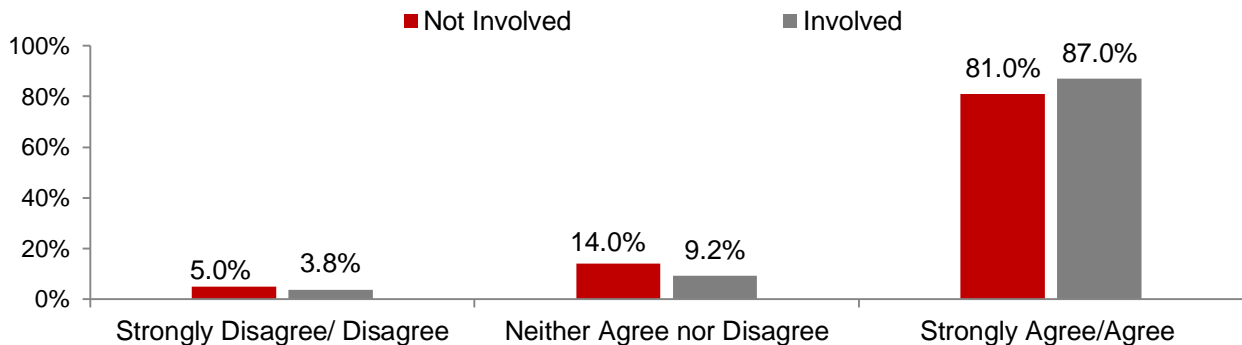


**Gender Differences in Intent to Graduate from Ohio State**

*% Strongly Agree/Agree*



**I am confident I made the right decision to attend Ohio State\*\***



\* p<.05, \*\* p<.01, \*\*\* p<.001

## CONCLUSION

Students' involvement and engagement with their college or university is a key component of their success. Being involved at a university and feeling a sense of belonging is related to greater persistence (Astin, 1999; Tinto 1993). Results from the 2015 Student Life Survey at The Ohio State University indicate that more than half of student respondents (55.1%) are involved in a student organization, Student Life-sponsored program or social fraternity or sorority, and 41.3% hold a leadership position. Yet, involvement in student organizations varies; males, students who work 20 hours a week or more, graduate students and international students are less likely to be involved. While first generation students are more likely to report holding leadership positions than non-first generation students, first generation students are less likely to report that they take part in university traditions or participate in campus events. The main reasons why students join student organizations were because the organization matched their interests, to make friends, build their resume or gain leadership skills. Students who do not join organizations report they have not joined because they do not have enough time, are too focused on academics or have work commitments.

As prior research would suggest, being involved has positive outcomes, including increasing sense of belonging to the university, teaching students problem solving skills and making them more confident. In addition to being involved in student organizations, the majority of students (73%) report strong feelings of involvement with other students at the university. This report highlights differences in involvement and belonging among students at Ohio State and indicates that being involved is related to positive outcomes for students, including an increased sense of belonging.

## REFERENCES

- Astin, A. W. (1997). How 'good' is your institution's retention rate? *Research in Higher Education*, 38, 647–658.
- Finn, J. D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of educational research*, 59(2), 117-142.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.