

# **Student Life Survey: Student Activities Report**

Center for the Study of Student Life

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**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

## INTRODUCTION

This report explores student involvement in on-campus activities outside of the classroom at The Ohio State University. Research and theory suggest that being actively involved and engaged with the campus community boosts student retention and success (Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993). The purpose of this report is to develop a better understanding of the types of activities in which students are involved, the reasons they are involved, and the benefits of involvement.

The data in this report are organized into five sections. First, the types of activities in which students are involved outside of the classroom are reported. The second and third sections summarize students' self-reported reasons for being involved or for not being involved. The fourth section examines student involvement in different types of student organizations. The fifth section summarizes students' perceptions of the outcomes of their involvement. Each section summarizes the overall trends in responses, followed by statistically significant differences in responses based on academic and demographic characteristics.

## METHODS

Data come from the 2016 Student Life Survey, which was administered to random samples of 4,000 undergraduate students on the Columbus campus, 1,000 graduate/professional students, and 1,000 undergraduate students from the regional campuses in January 2016. An additional sample of 1,000 international students were invited to participate, but these are not included in the analytic sample for the current report. A total of 744 Columbus campus undergraduate students (18.6% response rate), 209 graduate/professional students (20.9% response rate), and 176 regional campus students (17.6% response rate) participated in the survey.

Trends were examined separately by academic level and campus, as both of these factors were believed to change the nature and meaning of student involvement. Statistical comparisons between groups of students with different academic/demographic characteristics were conducted using chi-square tests of independence. All comparisons reported are statistically significant unless otherwise noted.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- **57.3%** of Columbus campus undergraduate students, **35.9%** of graduate/professional students and **25.0%** of regional campus undergraduate students are involved in a student organization.
- Among Columbus campus undergraduate students, the top three reasons for being involved outside of the classroom are because the activities match their interests (**73.7%**), to make friends (**72.3%**) and to build their resumes (**68.2%**).
- **60.6%** of graduate/professional students said that they were not involved in any activities outside of the classroom because they didn't have enough time.
- **59.5%** of part-time undergraduate students said they were not involved because of work commitments, compared with **24.3%** of full-time undergraduate students.
- **51.6%** of female undergraduate students reported involvement in community service organizations on campus, compared with **37.4%** of male undergraduates. However, male students were more likely than female students to report involvement in campus governance (**10.3%** vs. **3.6%**, respectively).
- **Over 75.0%** of involved students reported that being involved had helped them form a sense of community, made them feel connected to the university, made them more confident and helped them learn their own strengths/abilities.

## DEMOGRAPHIC AND ACADEMIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Columbus Undergraduate (n = 744)	Columbus Graduate/ Professional (n = 209)	Regional Undergraduate (n = 176)
<b>Years in Program<sup>a</sup></b>			
First-year	27.6%	29.2%	55.7%
Second-year	22.2%	26.8%	18.2%
Third-year	22.2%	15.3%	11.9%
Fourth-year	19.6%	14.8%	4.5%
Fifth + year	8.5%	13.9%	9.7%
<b>Gender<sup>b</sup></b>			
Female	60.2%	62.5%	67.6%
Male	38.6%	36.9%	31.0%
Transgender/Self-Defined	1.2%	0.6%	1.4%
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>b</sup></b>			
African American/Black/African	3.0%	3.6%	5.8%
Asian American/Asian	9.0%	24.6%	1.5%
Latino(a)/Hispanic	3.1%	3.6%	2.2%
White/European American	76.9%	62.3%	83.9%
Multiracial/Other race/ethnicity	8.0%	6.0%	6.5%
<b>Sexual Orientation<sup>b</sup></b>			
Heterosexual	90.3%	89.0%	93.9%
LGBQ	9.7%	11.0%	6.1%
<b>First Generation College Student<sup>b</sup></b>			
First generation	32.0%	25.1%	62.6%
Non-first generation	68.0%	74.9%	37.4%
<b>Citizenship<sup>b</sup></b>			
International student	3.5%	20.3%	0.0%
Domestic student	96.5%	79.7%	100.0%
<b>Age<sup>a</sup></b>			
Traditional age (18-23)	89.4%	18.7%	80.7%
Non-traditional age (24+)	10.6%	81.3%	19.3%
<b>Enrollment Status<sup>a</sup></b>			
Full-time	92.2%	74.2%	85.2%
Part-time	7.8%	25.8%	14.8%
<b>Military/Veteran<sup>b</sup></b>			
Military/Veteran	5.4%	1.8%	5.6%
Civilian	94.6%	98.2%	94.4%

a. Source: Student Information System.

b. Source: Student self-reported.

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

## FINDINGS

### OVERALL STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Students were asked to report whether they were involved in a variety of on-campus activities outside of the classroom. Students most commonly reported involvement in student organizations, followed by on-campus employment and community service/service-learning.

On-Campus Activities	Columbus Undergraduate (n = 744)	Columbus Graduate/ Professional (n = 209)	Regional Undergraduate (n = 176)
Student organizations	57.3%	35.9%	25.0%
Student-Life sponsored program	10.3%	4.8%	1.7%
Social fraternity or sorority	13.4%	6.2%	2.3%
Intramural sports	18.1%	7.7%	5.7%
Community service and/or service-learning	19.0%	10.5%	2.8%
Undergraduate research	12.9%	2.4%	6.8%
Working at an on-campus job	30.4%	21.5%	17.6%
Other, please specify	11.2%	9.6%	13.6%

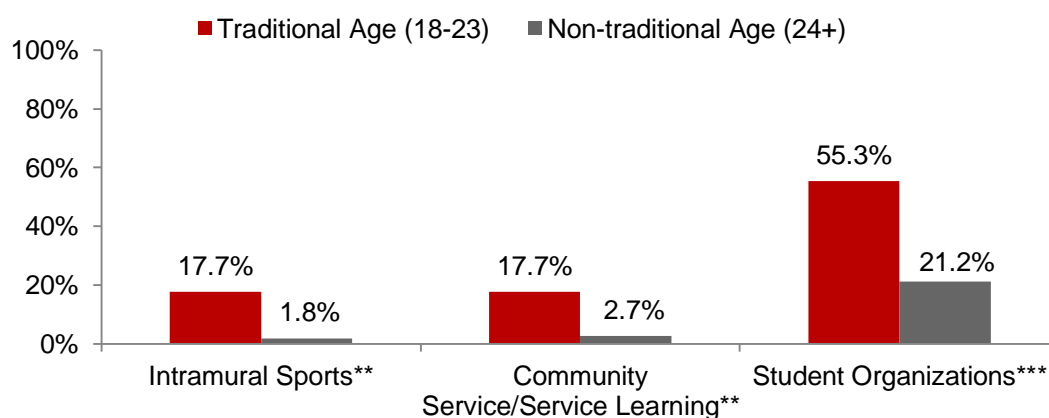
Selected Other Responses:

- a) Honors/Scholars (13)
- b) Varsity/ Club Athletics (11)
- c) Non-Social Fraternities and Sororities (8)
- d) ROTC (6)
- e) Learning Community (6)
- f) Religious Organization (5)

### INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN INVOLVEMENT

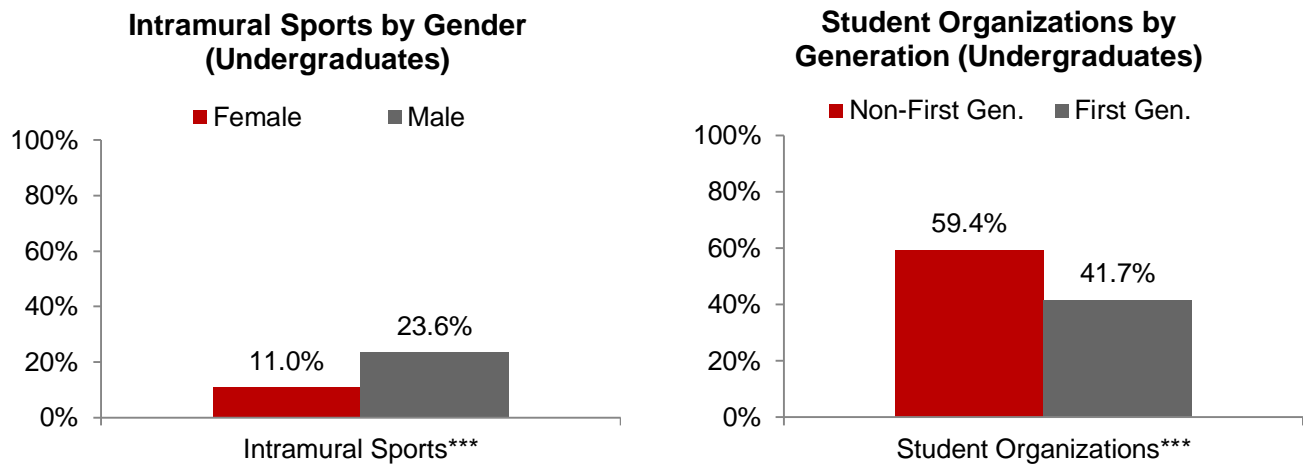
Among the undergraduate students, non-traditional aged students were less likely than traditional aged students to report involvement in intramural sports, community service and student organizations.

#### Student Age and Involvement Type (Undergraduates)



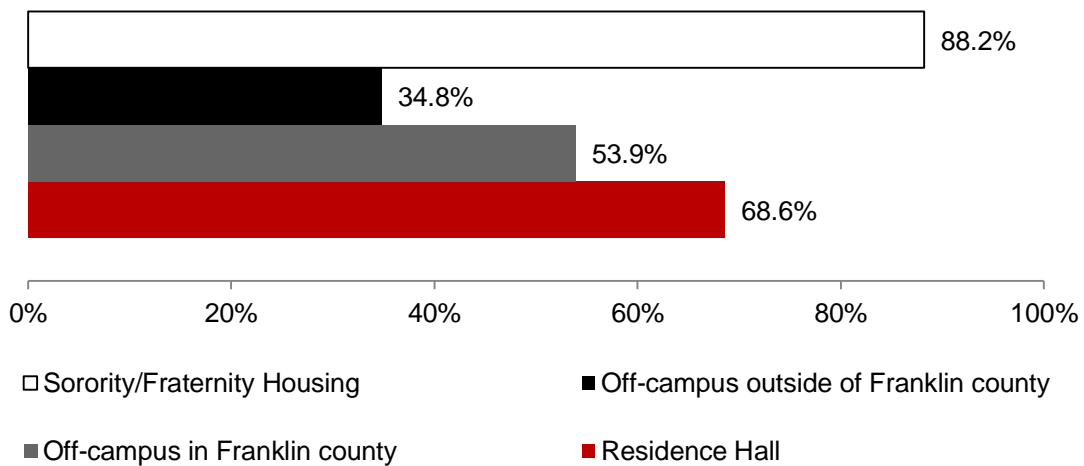
\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Intramural sports participation was also less common among female students than male students, while first generation college students were less frequently involved in student organizations than non-first generation undergraduate students.



Finally, student activity involvement varied depending on where a student lived. Students who reported living in a sorority/fraternity house were more likely than other groups to report participation in student organizations, while students who commuted to the Columbus campus from outside Franklin county were the least likely to report this type of involvement.

**Student Organizations by Housing\*\* (Undergraduates, Columbus)**



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

## REASONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Students who reported involvement in at least one activity outside of the classroom were asked to select their reasons for getting involved. Although selections varied by campus and academic level, the three most common reasons for getting involved were to make new friends, because the activity matched their interests and to build their resume.

Reasons for Involvement	Columbus Undergraduate (n = 556)	Columbus Graduate/ Professional (n = 122)	Regional Undergraduate (n = 76)
It matched my interests	73.7%	59.8%	51.3%
To make new friends	72.3%	41.0%	52.6%
To build my resume	68.2%	47.5%	50.0%
To gain leadership skills and abilities	56.5%	33.6%	39.5%
To make Ohio State seem smaller	36.5%	10.7%	7.9%
Professional networking	30.9%	36.1%	19.7%
A friend encouraged me to join	28.1%	12.3%	19.7%
Academic reasons	19.2%	26.2%	23.7%
A parent/guardian encouraged me to join	10.8%	2.5%	10.5%
I had nothing better to do/was bored	9.7%	0.0%	7.9%
I was encouraged by University staff	8.5%	4.9%	6.6%
A faculty member encouraged me to join	7.0%	7.4%	19.7%
Other	4.9%	9.8%	13.2%

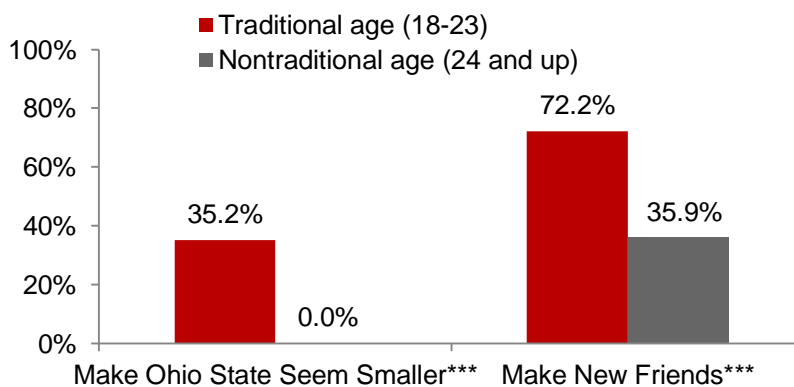
Note: Question only displayed to students who indicated involvement in at least one activity outside the classroom.

## DIFFERENCES IN REASONS FOR GETTING INVOLVED

### Social Reasons for Involvement

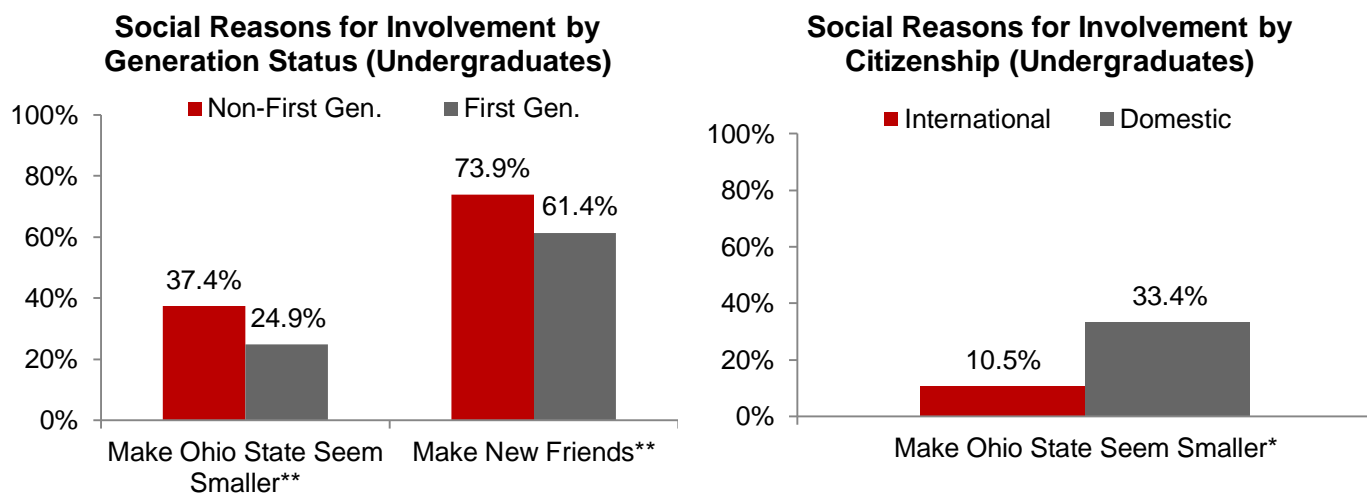
Although social reasons for getting involved were some of the most frequently selected reasons, this varied between groups of students. Undergraduate students under the age of 24 were significantly more likely to indicate that they were involved for social reasons than older undergraduate students. The proportion of traditional aged undergraduate students who were involved in order to make new friends was nearly double that of the non-traditional aged undergraduate students. While none of the non-traditional age undergraduate students were involved in order to make Ohio State feel smaller, over one-third of traditional age undergraduate students selected this reason.

Social Reasons for Involvement by Age (Undergraduates)



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

Among undergraduate students, the proportion of international students who indicated getting involved outside the classroom in order to make Ohio State feel smaller was one-third that of domestic students. Statistically significant differences in social reasons for getting involved were also observed between first generation students and continuing-generation students. On average, first generation students were less likely to indicate social reasons for getting involved.



### Interest-Based Reasons for Involvement

The second most common reason for getting involved outside of the classroom for undergraduate students, and the most common among graduate/professional students, was because the co-curricular activities matched students' interests.

Involved Because Activities Matched Interests (Undergraduates)	%	Sig.
Non-First Generation	79.5%	***
First Generation	59.3%	
International	36.8%	***
Domestic	73.7%	
Traditional Age (18-23)	72.5%	**
Non-Traditional age (24+)	48.7%	

While more than half of all undergraduate students indicate getting involved because the activities matched their interests, a smaller proportion of first generation students than non-first generation students selected this reason. Getting involved because activities matched their personal interests was also less common among international students and students 24 years of age or older.

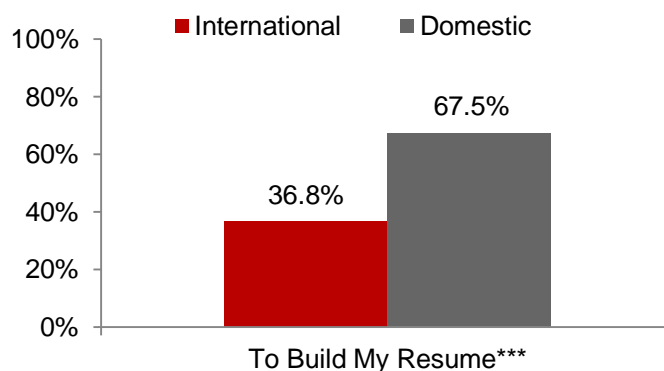
\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

## Professional Reasons for Involvement

Professional reasons for getting involved, such as to build a resume and for professional networking, were also commonly endorsed by students. However, significant differences in the endorsement of these reasons were observed based on demographic and academic characteristics.

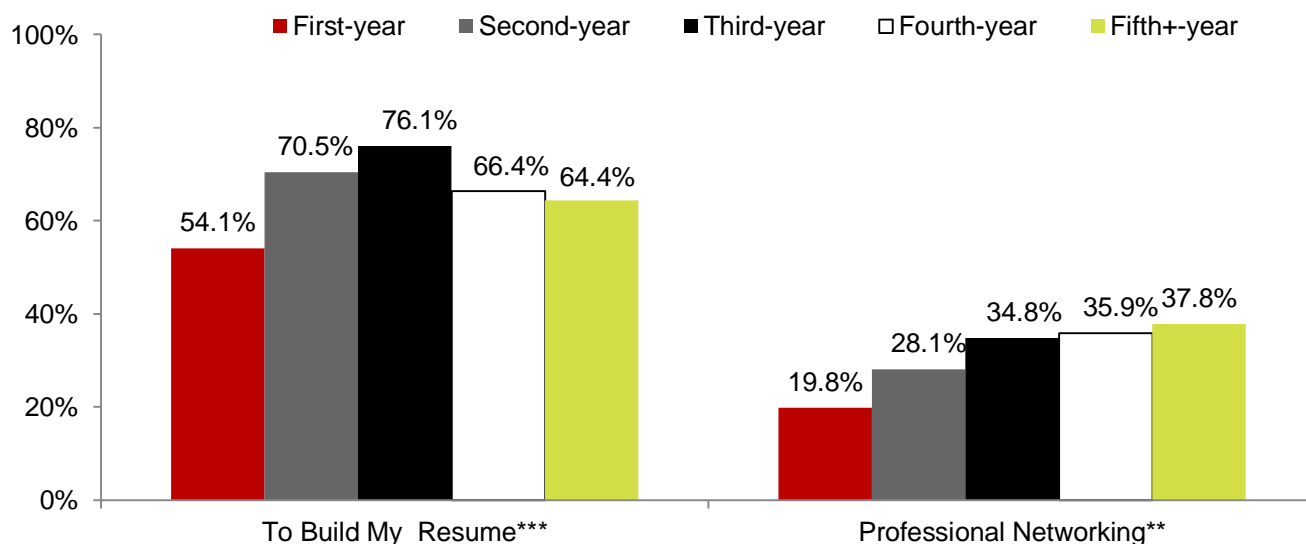
Among undergraduates, differences were observed in the professional reasons for involvement between domestic and international students. While 67.5% of domestic undergraduate students indicated that they were involved in order to build their resumes, fewer than half of international undergraduate students selected this reason. While a larger percentage of domestic (31.1%) than international (21.1%) undergraduate students reported that they were involved for professional networking, this difference was not statistically significant.

**Professional Reasons for Involvement by Citizenship (Undergraduates)**



The number of years that an undergraduate student had been enrolled was also significantly associated with differences in professional reasons for getting involved. First-year students were the least likely to indicate professional reasons for getting involved outside of the classroom.

**Professional Reasons for Involvement by Years Enrolled (Undergraduates)**

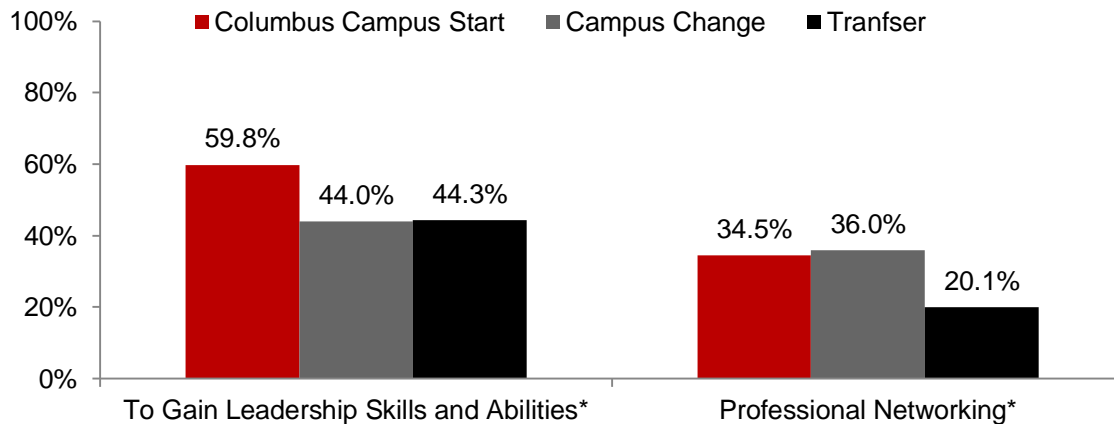


\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$



Among undergraduate students on the Columbus campus, differences in professional reasons for getting involved were also observed between students who started on the Columbus campus and those who started elsewhere. Students who indicated having starting at a regional campus or at another institution were less likely to state that they got involved to gain leadership skills and abilities. Students who transferred from a different institution were the least likely to indicate getting involved for professional networking.

### Professional Reasons for Involvement by Transfer Status (Undergraduates, Columbus)



Overall, these findings indicate that students get involved in activities outside of the classroom for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, these findings highlight the ways in which academic differences, such as where a student is in their program, and demographic differences such as race/ethnicity and citizenship, are associated with differences in students' reasons for getting involved.

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

## REASONS FOR NOT GETTING INVOLVED OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

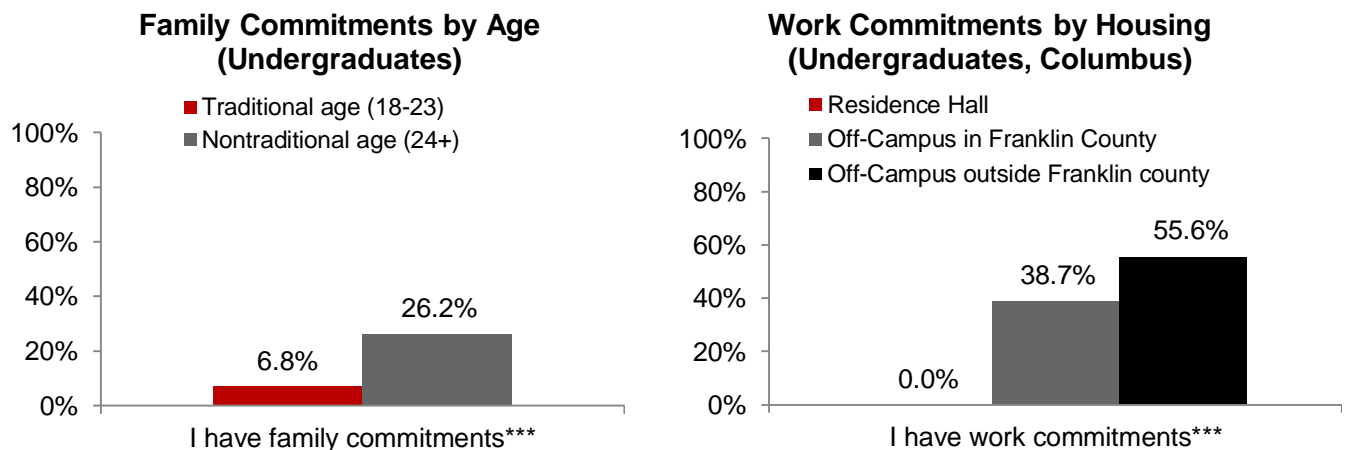
Students who did *not* indicate being involved in at least one activity outside of the classroom were asked to select their reasons for not getting involved. The following table summarizes the percentage of students who selected each reason, from those who were not involved in any activities on campus. The most common reasons for not getting involved were lack of time, work commitments, being focused on academics and commuting.

Reasons for Not Getting Involved	Columbus Undergraduate (n = 134)	Columbus Graduate/ Professional (n = 71)	Regional Undergraduate (n = 88)
I don't have enough time	39.6%	60.6%	31.8%
I have work commitments	33.6%	31.0%	25.0%
I am too focused on academics	29.1%	28.2%	21.6%
I commute, so it's not convenient	24.6%	18.3%	35.2%
I do not feel connected to campus	14.2%	5.6%	8.0%
I don't know about the groups or how to join	10.4%	1.4%	15.9%
I have family commitments	9.7%	15.5%	15.9%
I'm not interested in those activities	9.7%	8.5%	8.0%
I don't have the money	6.7%	1.4%	3.4%
Other	6.0%	7.0%	4.5%

Note: Question only displayed to students who did not indicate involvement in at least one activity outside the classroom.

## DIFFERENCES IN REASONS FOR NOT GETTING INVOLVED

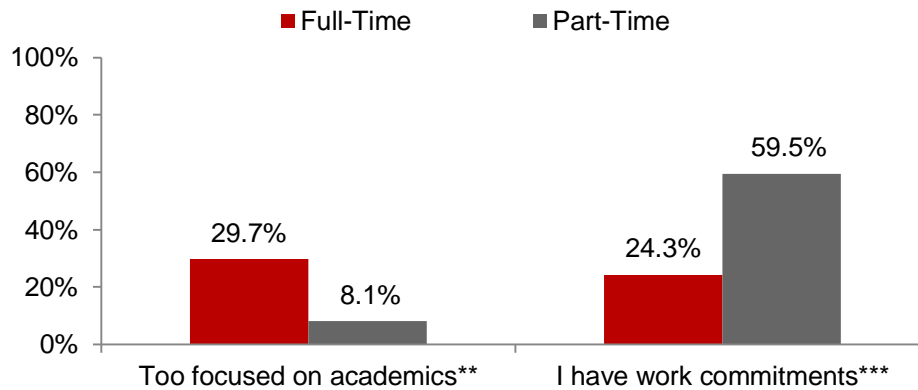
Reasons for not getting involved in activities outside of the classroom varied depending on several demographic and contextual factors. While none of the undergraduate students who lived on-campus indicated that work commitments were a reason for their lack of involvement, significant percentages of off-campus students selected this reason. Meanwhile, undergraduate students over the age of 23 were more likely to say that family commitments were a barrier to getting involved outside of the classroom.



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

Among undergraduates, differences in reasons for not getting involved outside of the classroom were also observed between students enrolled part-time and those enrolled full-time. Whereas part-time students who were not involved in at least one activity were more likely to indicate having work commitments, full-time enrolled students were more likely to attribute their uninvolvement to being too focused on academics.

### Reasons for Lack of Involvement by Enrollment Status (Undergraduates)



Although these findings should not be interpreted causally, they suggest that contextual factors such as a students' commitments to work, family and academics may have an important influence on their level of involvement in activities outside of the classroom.

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

## INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

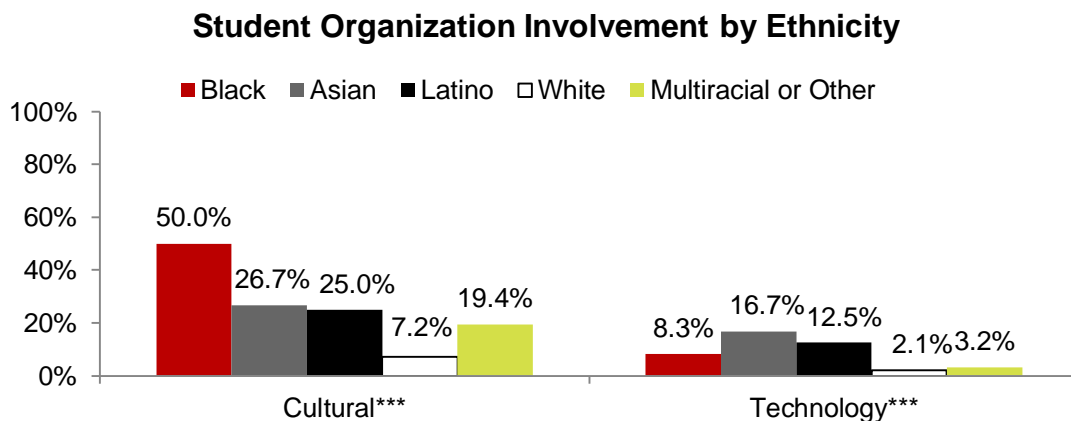
Students who indicated being involved in a student organization were asked to select the type(s) of organizations in which they were involved from a list. Responses varied by academic level and campus, although the most common type of student organization selected by all groups was academic/departmental/professional.

Type of Organization	Columbus Undergraduate (n = 395)	Columbus Graduate/ Professional (n = 72)	Regional Undergraduate (n = 41)
Academic/Departmental/Professional	59.7%	84.7%	53.7%
Community Service	47.3%	37.5%	39.0%
Special Interest (e.g. Chess Club)	30.1%	15.3%	39.0%
Sports and Recreation (e.g. Skydiving - Sport Club)	28.6%	12.5%	7.3%
Awareness/Activism	22.3%	25.0%	17.1%
Honoraries/Honor Societies	19.2%	23.6%	26.8%
Social Fraternities/Sororities	18.7%	11.1%	4.9%
Religious/Spiritual	18.0%	9.7%	19.5%
Ethnic/Cultural	13.7%	18.1%	7.3%
Residence Hall Programs	12.2%	2.8%	9.8%
Creative and Performing Arts	11.1%	5.6%	12.2%
Governance Bodies (e.g. Undergraduate Student Government)	5.6%	8.3%	9.8%
Technology (e.g. Information Systems Association)	4.8%	2.8%	0.0%
Media, Journalism, and Creative Writing	4.3%	0.0%	9.8%

Note: Question only displayed to students who indicated involvement in a student organization.

## INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN STUDENT ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATION

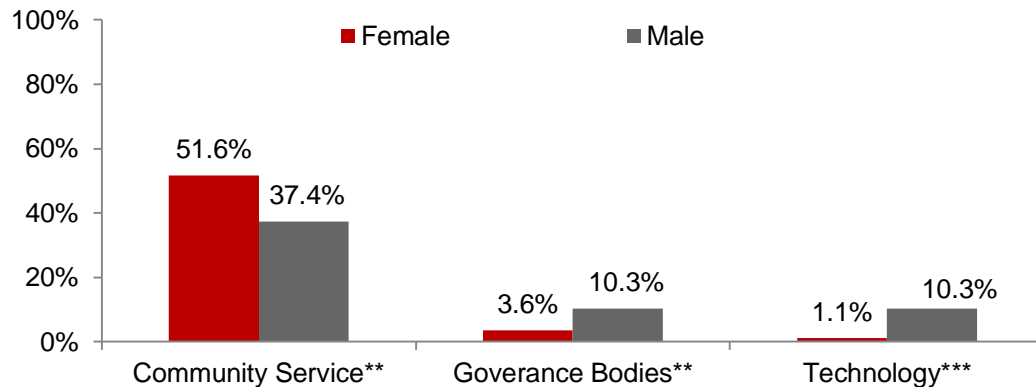
Among undergraduate students, significant racial/ethnic differences were observed in the types of organizations in which students were involved.



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

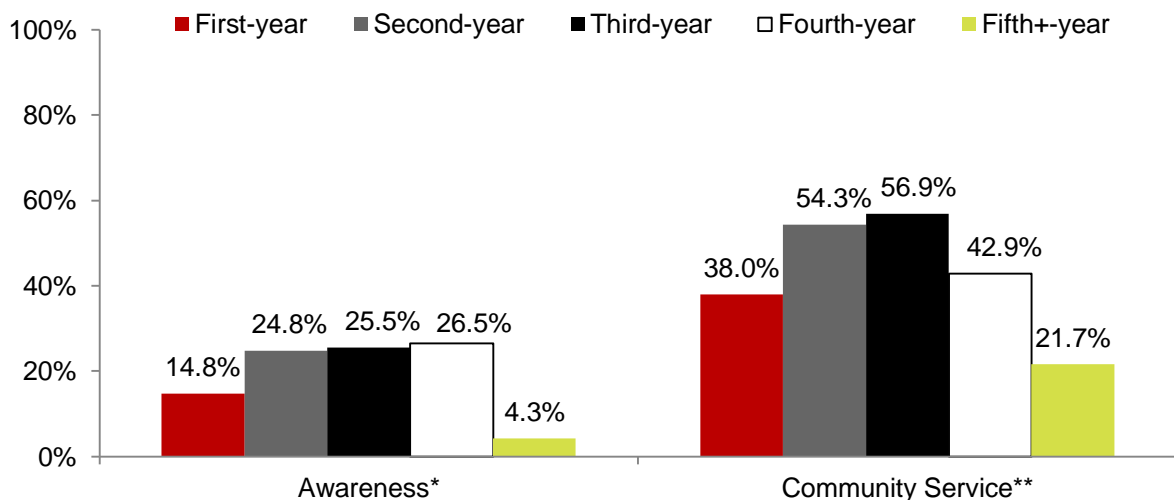
Gender differences in student organization involvement were also observed, with female students more frequently reporting involvement in community service, while male students more frequently reported involvement in technology organizations and governance bodies.

### Gender Differences in Student Organization Type (Undergraduates)



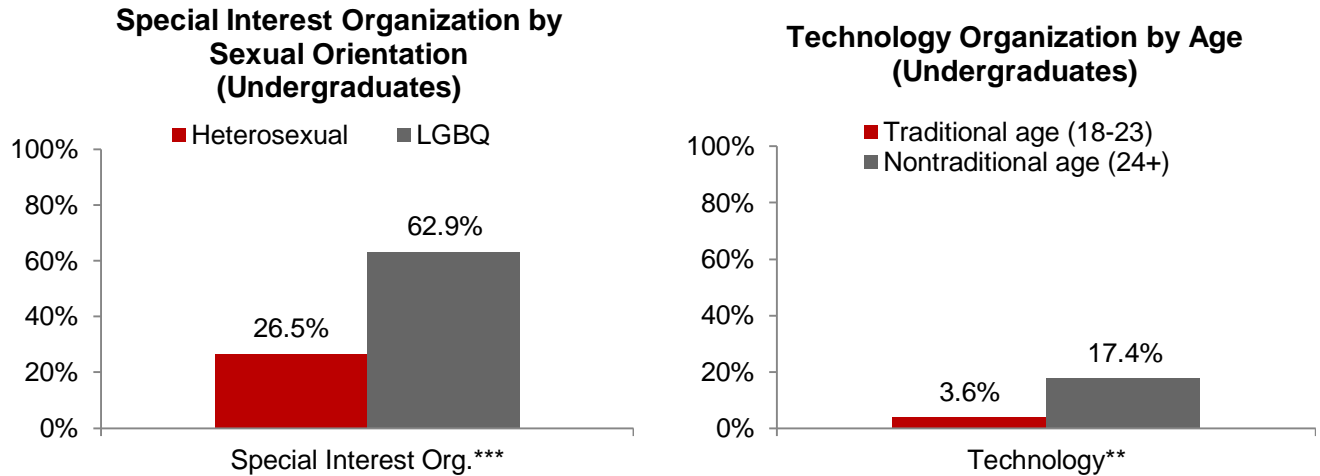
Involvement in community service and awareness/activism organizations was significantly different based on years enrolled. Undergraduate students in their second, third, or fourth year were more likely to report engaging in these types of organizations.

### Differences in Student Organization Involvement by Years Enrolled (Undergraduates)



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

Age and sexual orientation were also associated with differences in the types of student organizations in which students were involved. Students who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or queer were more likely to participate in a special interest organization than students who identified as heterosexual. Non-traditional age undergraduate students were more likely to be involved in technology-oriented student organizations than students than traditional aged undergraduate students.



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

## OUTCOMES OF INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

To assess students' perceptions of the benefits of their co-curricular involvement, students were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement "Being involved on campus..." followed by a series of potential outcomes. The percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed that being involved led to each outcome is reported in the following table.

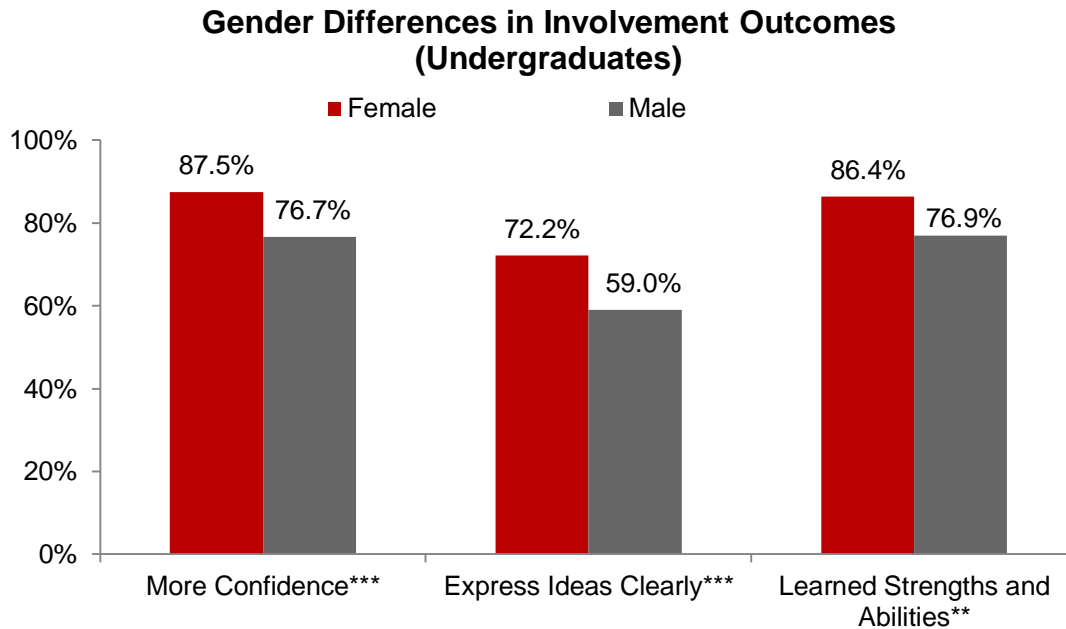
Outcome of Involvement	Columbus Undergraduate (n = 556)	Columbus Graduate/ Professional (n = 121)	Regional Undergraduate (n = 74)
Provides me with a sense of community	86.4%	76.1%	78.7%
Has made me feel more connected to the university	85.1%	74.4%	81.6%
Has made me more confident	83.4%	75.2%	80.8%
Helped me learn my own strengths and abilities	82.6%	75.2%	84.0%
Taught me to take responsibility for my actions	76.7%	67.8%	73.3%
Taught me leadership skills	75.7%	71.7%	74.3%
Taught me problem solving skills	73.6%	66.1%	64.9%
Helped me become a better citizen	69.8%	51.2%	71.6%
Helped me reflect on my personal ethics	68.3%	60.3%	65.3%
Taught me to express my ideas clearly and effectively	67.1%	60.3%	68.0%
Allowed me to apply skills I learned in the classroom	52.6%	51.3%	68.0%

Note: Note: Question only displayed to students who indicated involvement in at least one activity outside the classroom. Percentages indicate the proportion of students who agreed or strongly agreed that being involved had led to each outcome.

Overall, students reported that being involved on campus made them feel more confident, with over three-quarters of each group reporting this outcome. Other common outcomes included developing a sense of connection to the university, a sense of community and helping students learn their own strengths and abilities.

## DIFFERENCES IN OUTCOMES OF INVOLVEMENT

Students' perceptions of the outcomes associated with being involved outside of the classroom varied demographically. For example, gender differences were observed in three of the outcomes. Female undergraduate students were more likely than male undergraduate students to report that being involved had led to more confidence, better idea expression and learning their own strengths/abilities.



Full-time students and traditional-age undergraduate students were more likely to report that being involved helped them learn to take responsibility for their actions.

Learned to Take Responsibility	% (Strongly) Agree	Sig.
Full-Time Student	77.5%	***
Part-Time Student	57.5%	
Traditional Age (18-23)	77.7%	**
Non-traditional Age (24+)	55.0%	

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