

Student Life Survey:

A Closer Look at Student Organizations

Center for the Study of Student Life

February 2012

INTRODUCTION

The 2011 Student Life survey was a modification of past Student Involvement surveys, which were conducted by The Ohio State University's Center for the Study of Student Life (formerly Student Life Research and Assessment). The Student Life survey included items about involvement and culture at Ohio State, the Ohio Union, Student Health Services, and questions asked by Student Life Marketing. The intent for the survey was to measure aspects of students' outside-the-classroom experiences. This brief highlights students' involvement in student organizations and other extracurricular activities at Ohio State.

METHODOLOGY

The Student Life survey was sent to full-time Ohio State students via e-mail in the 2011 spring quarter. Five thousand students were randomly selected, stratified by class rank (rank 1, 2, 3, 4, graduate, and professional) to receive the survey. Twelve hundred students responded, yielding a 24.0% response rate.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **57.9%** of Ohio State students reported they were a member of a student organization.
- The most popular student organizations were academic and professional organizations, comprising **62.8%** of student organization membership.
- More than half of students in a student organization agreed that their participation in the organization *made them more confident (50.8%)* and/or *taught them problem solving skills (54.2%)*.
- Asian students (**40.6%**) were more than twice as likely as all other students to be involved in research.
- Female students were more likely to be involved in community service than male students.
- **39.5%** of students reported that they attended campus events very often.

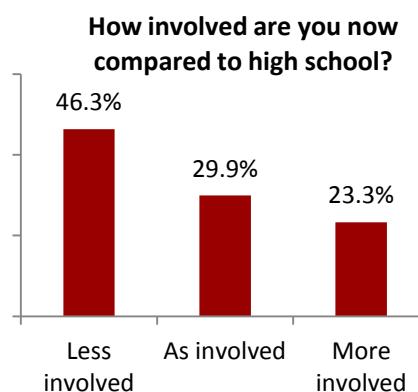
DEMOGRAPHICS

Most of the students (76.6%) who took the survey lived off-campus; 23.4% of survey respondents were on-campus students. Women and first-year students were under-represented in the sample, while Asian students were over-represented.

Class Rank		Ethnicity	
First-Year	6.0%	Asian	9.6%
Upperclassmen	68.2%	Black	5.7%
Graduate	20.0%	Hispanic	2.7%
Professional	5.8%	White	74.7%
		Undisclosed	6.0%

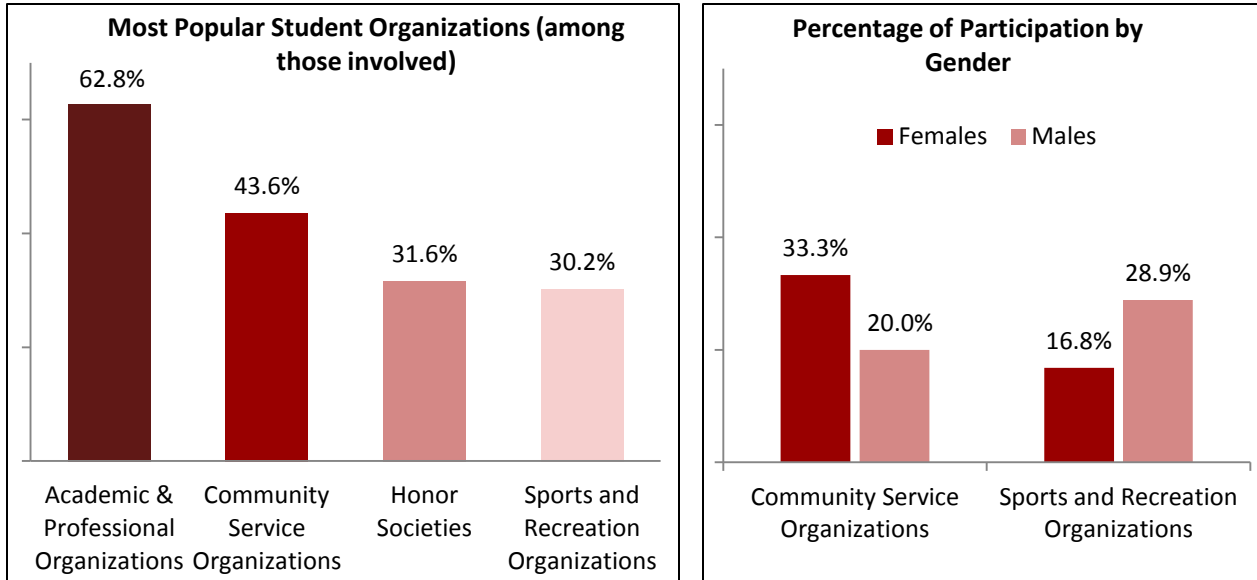
FINDINGS

Any differences among demographic groups reported in this brief were significant at the $p < .05$ level. The responses to the question comparing high school involvement to college involvement gauged students' perceptions of their overall involvement.

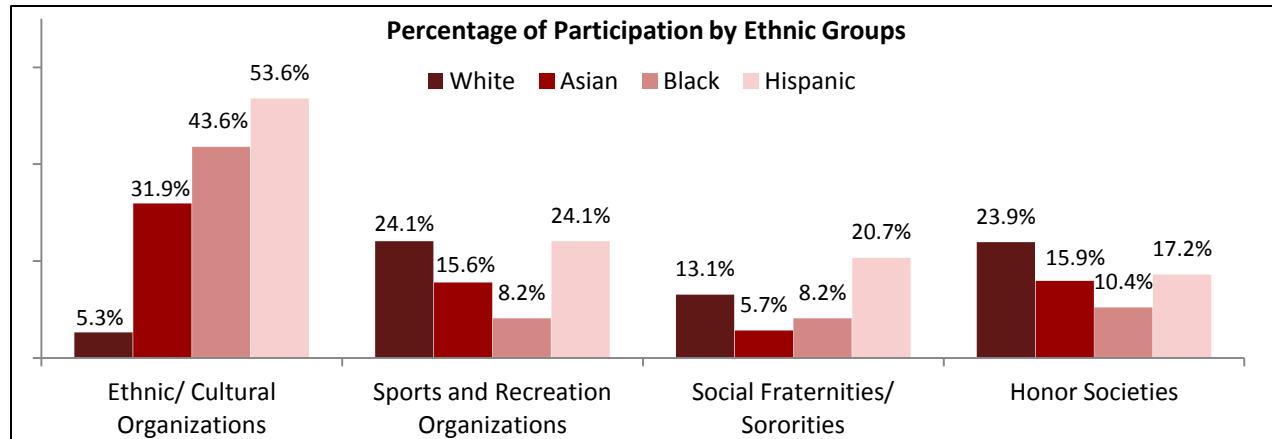


STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Nearly 58% of respondents said they were involved in a student organization. Below are the most popular student organizations and significant differences in organization involvement by gender.



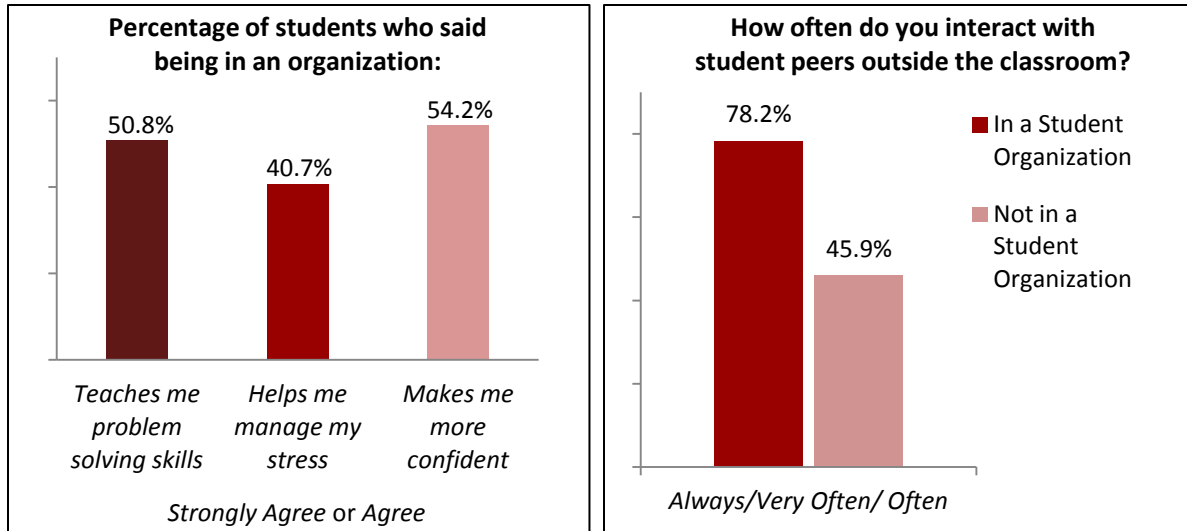
In addition, there were significant differences in organization membership among ethnic groups. Non-white students were significantly more likely to join ethnic or cultural organizations. African American students were the least likely to join sports and recreation organizations and honor societies.



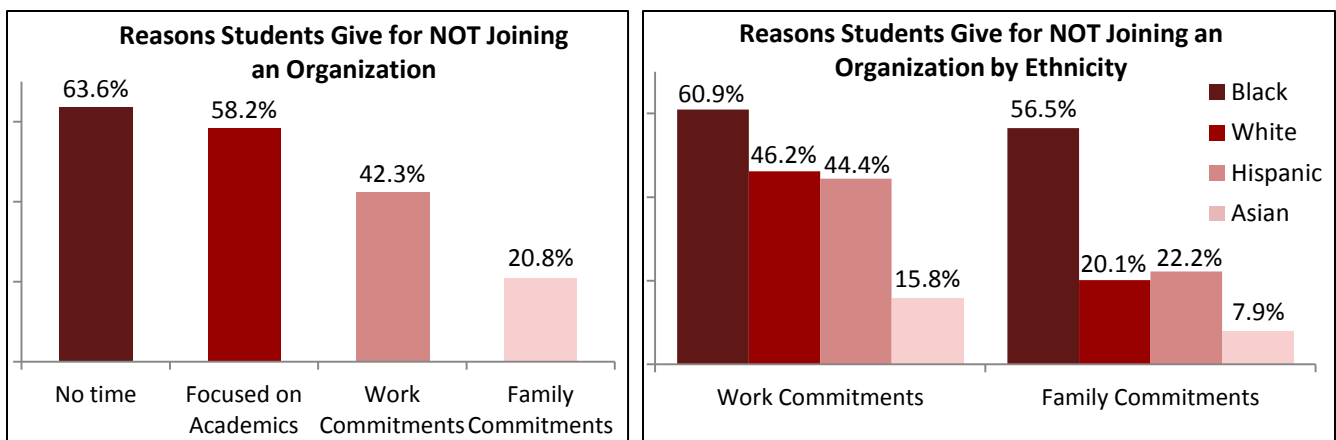
Top reasons for joining an organization:	
It matched my interests	76.1%
To make new friends	75.5%
Resume building	64.4%
Leadership development	58.9%

Students reported their top reasons for joining an organization. One way student organizations piqued students' interest was via the Student Involvement Fair held the first week of each quarter. The largest Involvement Fair was held in fall quarter, which 59.5% of students reported they attended.

Students reported on the personal gains that resulted from participating in an organization, below left. Further analysis revealed that students involved in student organizations were more likely to have interacted with student peers outside the classroom. In addition, significantly more students involved in organizations (47.2%) reported having relationships with faculty at the University than did students not involved in organizations (34.8%). The brief *Student Life Survey: Student Relationships and Campus Climate*, available on the CSSL website, has more information on personal interactions outside the classroom.



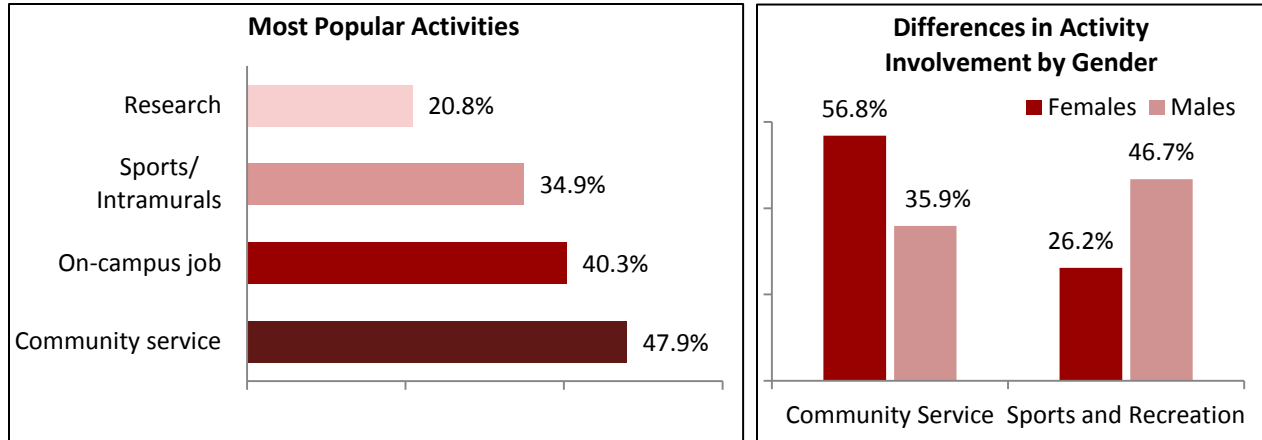
Students who were not involved in a student organization reported their reasons for not joining one. While the general Ohio State population's top answers were *no time* and *focused on academics*, Black students' top answers were *work commitments* and *family commitments*. These differences could in part be explained because 29.7% of employed Black students worked more than 30 hours per week as compared with 15.9% of other employed students.



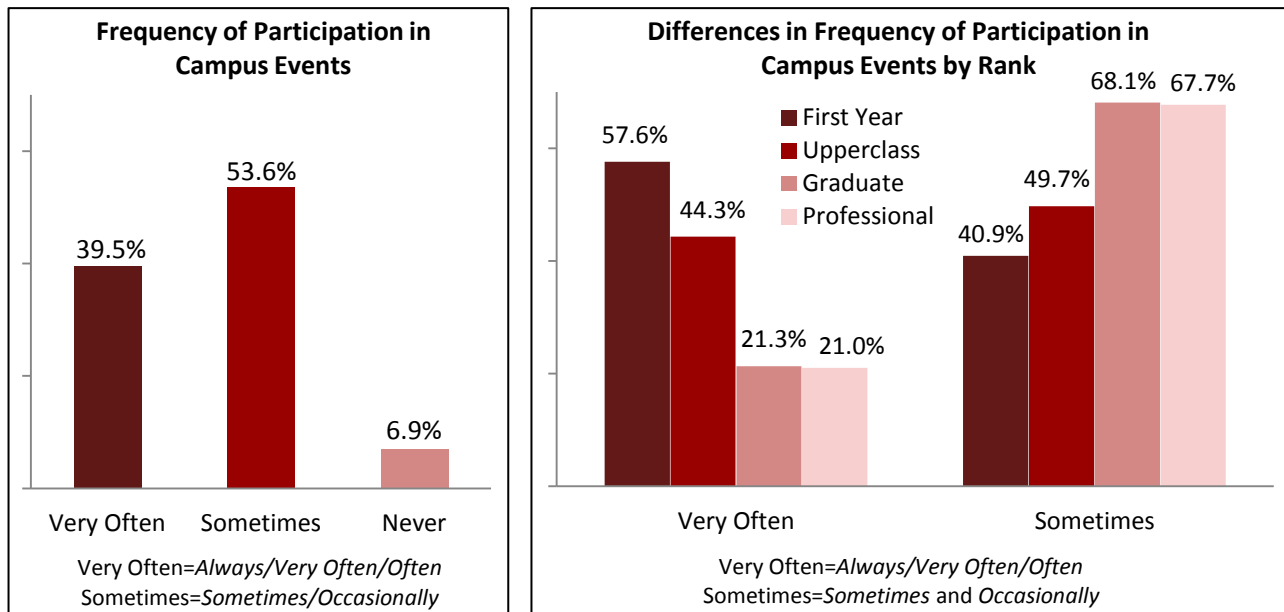
Among students not involved in an organization, 39.7% reported that they plan to join an organization in the future. The top organizations these students plan to join are academic, special interest, community service, and sports organizations. The most popular reasons students gave for wanting to join an organization in the future were *to build a resume*, *to make friends*, and *for professional networking*.

ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS INVOLVEMENT

The survey asked students to report on their involvement in activities outside student organizations and to indicate their frequency of participation in campus events. Below are the most popular activities for students to be involved in and significant differences in activity involvement by gender.



Significant differences in activity involvement also existed among ethnicities. Black students were involved in sports and recreation activities at a lower rate (13.5%) than White students (39.1%). In addition, Asian students (40.6%) were more than twice as likely as all other students to be involved in research.



Students' reported the frequency of their participation in campus events, above left. Significant differences in campus event participation existed for students of different class ranks, above right. Students reported the most common ways they found out about these events were from *emails, friends, posters/fliers, and Facebook.*