



Involvement and Belonging

A Research Report from the
2024 Student Life Survey

Regional Campuses

Center for the Study of Student Life

April 2024



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the involvement, engagement and sense of belonging on campus of undergraduate students at The Ohio State University. Data for this report are from the 2024 Student Life Survey. In January 2024, 4,165 students on the Lima, Marion, Mansfield, Newark, and ATI-Wooster campuses were surveyed, out of which 882 responded, resulting in a response rate of 21.2%. Data were weighted to be representative of the full Ohio State population.

INVOLVEMENT

- **50.3%** of all Ohio State students on regional campuses report being involved with at least one campus activity.
- **Top campus activities among regional undergraduate students**
 - Student organizations (20.6%)
 - Working at an on-campus job (16.8%)
 - Intramural sports (3.8%)
 - Research with a faculty member (3.8%)

SENSE OF BELONGING: UNDERGRADUATES

- Undergraduate students who were involved with on-campus activities had **significantly higher sense of belonging scores on average (3.08)** compared to undergraduate students who were not involved with on-campus activities (2.82).
- Compared to undergraduate students who were not involved, undergraduate students who were involved with campus activities were:
 - **2.3** times more likely to have relationships with other Ohio State students.
 - **2.0** times more likely to have relationships with Ohio State faculty.
 - **2.0** times more likely to have relationships with Ohio State staff.

INTRODUCTION

This report explores the involvement, engagement and sense of belonging of students at The Ohio State University. Involvement in on-campus activities during college plays a critical role in student success, from bolstering a student's sense of belonging to increasing retention and academic success (Tinto, 2006-2007; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012). Involvement fosters experiential learning during college, which is linked to getting a good job after graduation, workplace engagement, overall well-being and alumni attachment (Gallup, 2014).

METHODS

The Student Life Survey is administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life to examine trends in student engagement, sense of belonging and satisfaction with the college experience. The 2024 Student Life Survey was administered to a population sample of 4,165 regional campus Ohio State students at the beginning of spring semester (January 2024). This sample comprised 4,165 undergraduate students at the Lima, Marion, Mansfield, Newark, and ATI-Wooster campuses. A total of 882 students responded to the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 21.2%. See Appendix A for a summary of respondents' demographic and academic characteristics. Demographics of the students included in the report did not substantially vary from the overall Student Life Survey sample. Note that not all students who completed the survey answered every question, resulting in different totals for some questions.

WEIGHTING PROCEDURE

Responses were weighted to address differences between the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents compared to the general student population at Ohio State in the spring semester of 2024. Weights were adjusted so the survey data are representative of the student population at Ohio State. For example, 62.6% of survey respondents in the Student Life Survey were female, but 52.4% of the total population at Ohio State was female. The rake weight procedure adjusts for the over-representation of female students in the data to make responses more reflective of the student population, thus making the data more generalizable to Ohio State students. The procedure adjusted the base weight to the demographic data available on the sampling frame using sex, race/ethnicity and student status (i.e., undergraduate, graduate student or professional student). Weighted and unweighted demographic data for survey respondents is available in Appendix A.



FINDINGS

CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT

The percentage of involved students was calculated by examining participation across thirteen different types of campus activities and community service. Among all respondents, 50.3% report being involved in at least one of thirteen types of involvement. The tables below summarize campus activities and community service involvement. Undergraduate students were most likely to be involved with a student organization (20.6%) and working at an on-campus job (16.8%).

Table 1: Campus Involvement

	Undergraduate students (<i>n</i> = 872)
A social fraternity or sorority	0.3%
A business fraternity or sorority	0.2%
Intramural sports	3.8%
Sports clubs	2.7%
Student organizations (e.g., Psychology Club, Running Club, Black Student Association)	20.6%
Research with a faculty member	3.8%
Working at an on-campus job	16.8%
A learning community in the Residence Halls (e.g., Engineering House, Stadium Scholarship Program, Morrill Scholars Program, Global Business)	3.3%
A capstone project or experience (e.g., senior thesis, portfolio, doctoral dissertation)	0.8%

Table 2: Community Service Involvement by Educational Level

	Undergraduate students (<i>n</i> = 858)
An academic course with a service-learning component	10.7%
A one-day service event	11.9%
Multi-day service event (e.g., Buck-I-SERV, a church or club-based service trip)	2.0%
An ongoing service/volunteer program (e.g., volunteered at a community organization once a month or more)	9.2%

SENSE OF BELONGING AND INVOLVEMENT: UNDERGRADUATES

To examine the association between involvement and one's attitudes about and sense of belonging, chi-square tests of independence and logistic regressions were employed. A student was coded as involved if they participated in at least one of the thirteen activities illustrated in Tables 1 and 2.

First, associations between student responses and involvement status were examined. Second, logistic regression analyses were used to determine if the association between involvement and student outcomes remained after taking into account demographic and academic characteristics.

Control variables included gender identity, race/ethnicity, international student status, living on campus, academic rank, cumulative GPA and first-generation student status. These analyses suggest that involvement had strong associations with students' sense of belonging, even when controlling for demographic and academic factors.

Table 3: Undergraduate Involvement and Belonging

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Involved	Not Involved	χ^2	Odds Ratio ^a
I feel a sense of belonging at Ohio State	87.8%	80.2%	7.5**	1.6**
I feel that I am a member of the Ohio State community	85.7%	80.3%	3.5	1.6**
I have relationships with other Ohio State students	89.5%	75.4%	24.9***	2.3***
I have relationships with Ohio State faculty (e.g., professors)	81.9%	66.8%	21.2***	2.0***
I have relationships with Ohio State staff (e.g., academic advisors, hall directors, Student Life employees)	72.3%	58.1%	16.5***	2.0***
I participate in Ohio State traditions	72.2%	57.6%	17.3***	1.9***
My experiences at Ohio State have helped me to set professional goals.	87.4%	85.5%	0.5	1.5*
I have developed as a leader during my time at Ohio State.	73.3%	62.2%	10.4**	1.7***
During my time at Ohio State, wellness (i.e., physical, mental and emotional health) has become more important to me.	83.7%	80.3%	1.5	1.4*
Academic programs at Ohio State meet my needs.	89.9%	89.3%	0.1	1.4*
Programs and services at Ohio State meet my needs (e.g., support offices, student activities).	89.7%	88.5%	0.3	1.2
I would recommend Ohio State to other students.	94.3%	95.5%	0.6	1.3
Overall, I am satisfied with my experiences at The Ohio State University.	91.1%	89.3%	0.6	1.5*

^a Results from logistic regression controlling for, or taking into account: gender, race, international status, living on campus, academic rank, cumulative GPA and first-generation student status.

OVERALL BELONGING SCORES

The final set of analyses examined variations in students' average sense of belonging. To obtain a mean score, select items from Table 3 were used to create a sense of belonging scale. Table 4 illustrates which items were incorporated into the scale. Additional analyses demonstrated that the items had an acceptable reliability score ($\alpha = 0.84$) and loaded onto a single factor, indicating this is a reliable scale for measuring sense of belonging. Each item was a four-point Likert question (i.e., Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree), meaning that a minimum possible score was one, and a maximum possible score was four. Students were given a score if they answered at least four out of the five questions on the belongingness scale.

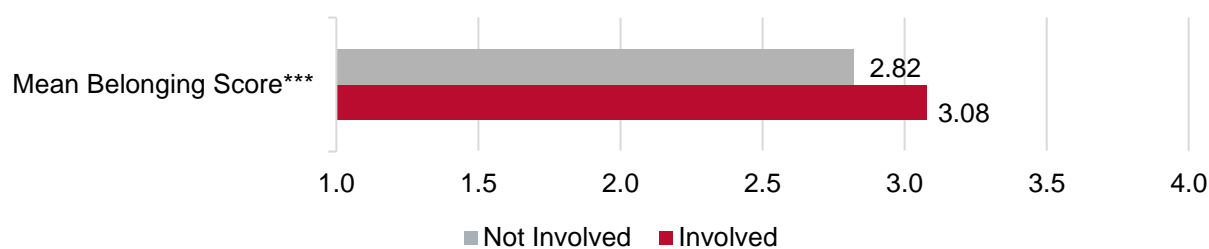
Table 4: Sense of Belonging Scale Items

% Agree or Strongly Agree	Undergraduate students
I feel a sense of belonging at Ohio State	84.1%
I feel that I am a member of the Ohio State community	83.1%
I have relationships with other Ohio State students	82.3%
I have relationships with Ohio State faculty (e.g., professors)	74.5%
I have relationships with Ohio State staff (e.g., academic advisors, hall directors, Student Life employees)	65.5%

Note. The sample included $n = 841$ -845 undergraduate students.

The average belonging scores for all undergraduate students was 2.95. Figure 1 summarizes the average belonging scores by level of involvement as well as the statistical significance of the results. Undergraduate students who were involved in at least one of the thirteen activities in Table 1 had a significantly higher average belonging score than students who were not involved with on-campus activities.

Figure 1: Average Undergraduate Belonging Scores



CONCLUSION

This report provides valuable information for understanding students' sense of belonging and activity involvement at Ohio State, as well as the relationship between these two variables. Roughly half of undergraduate students reported being involved in at least one campus activity at Ohio State. 20.6% of undergraduate students reported being involved with a student organization, and 16.8% had an on-campus job.

Undergraduate activity involvement was generally associated with higher sense of belonging among undergraduate students, particularly for building relationships with other Ohio State students, faculty and staff and participating in Ohio State traditions. This suggests that involvement is influential for shaping sense of belonging among undergraduate students.

Overall, this report reinforces the importance of examining sense of belonging and activity involvement across all educational levels. Ohio State should continue to emphasize co-curricular student involvement for student development, academic growth and retention.

REFERENCES

- Gallup. (2014). *Great jobs, great lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index report*. Washington, D.C.
- Morrow, J., & Ackermann, M. (2012). Intention to persist and retention of first-year students: The importance of motivation and sense of belonging. *College Student Journal*, *46*(3), 483-491.
- Tinto, V. (2006-2007). Research and practice of student retention: What next? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice* *8*(1), 1-19.



APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Note: Participant demographics below represent all regional campus respondents in the 2024 Student Life Survey.

	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Total	882		
Academic Level	882		
First-year undergraduate	514	58.3%	59.3%
Second-year undergraduate	203	23.0%	22.9%
Third-year undergraduate	96	10.9%	10.3%
Fourth-year undergraduate	41	4.7%	4.4%
Fifth-year or beyond undergraduate	28	3.2%	3.1%
Gender Identity	882		
Man	252	28.6%	37.6%
Non-binary	11	1.3%	1.2%
Woman	570	64.6%	55.8%
Another identity not listed	12	1.4%	1.3%
Multiple identities selected	21	2.4%	2.1%
Prefer not to answer	16	1.8%	2.0%
Transgender Identity	879		
Transgender	21	2.4%	2.3%
Cisgender	831	94.5%	94.6%
Prefer not to answer	27	3.1%	3.1%

	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Race/Ethnicity	882		
Black and/or African American	78	8.8%	11.2%
Asian/Asian American, Pacific Islander, Desi American, and/or Native Hawai'ian	41	4.7%	4.9%
Latine and/or Hispanic	27	3.1%	3.1%
Middle Eastern and/or North African (MENA)	7	0.8%	0.8%
White and/or European American	627	71.1%	67.2%
Multiracial and/or Biracial	65	7.4%	8.1%
Another identity not listed	6	0.7%	0.9%
Prefer not to answer	31	3.5%	3.9%
Sexual Orientation	878		
LGBQ+	196	22.3%	21.2%
Heterosexual/straight	649	73.9%	74.9%
Prefer not to answer	33	3.8%	3.9%
Generational Status	882		
First-generation student	400	45.4%	43.9%
Continuing-generation student	449	50.9%	52.6%
Unknown	33	3.7%	3.5%
Disability	881		
Has a disability	135	15.3%	15.4%
Does not have a disability	704	79.9%	79.9%
Prefer not to answer	42	4.8%	4.7%
Education Route	880		
Campus change	41	4.7%	5.0%
Transfer student	160	18.2%	17.3%
Continuing Ohio State student	679	77.2%	77.7%

	<i>n</i>	Un-weighted Percent	Weighted Percent
Residence	879		
On-campus	174	19.8%	19.0%
Off-campus	705	80.2%	81.0%
Sorority or fraternity housing	—	—	—
Campus	882		
Lima	150	17.0%	14.1%
Mansfield	134	15.2%	15.9%
Marion	168	19.1%	16.9%
Newark	327	37.1%	44.3%
ATI-Wooster	103	11.7%	8.8%