



Student Engagement February 2006

INTRODUCTION

This survey focuses on Penn State students' level of engagement in cocurricular activities, programs, and experiences based on the premise "that the impact of college is largely determined by individual effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings" on campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602). Included in the survey are questions concerning students' satisfaction in meeting educational goals, their participation level in a wide range of student clubs and organizations, and their involvement in various other cocurricular experiences.

This survey, conducted by Student Affairs Research and Assessment, was administered by phone and by Web.¹ In total, 1,008 full-time undergraduate students at University Park responded to the survey. By phone, 534 students responded for a 19.1% response rate and, of those contacted, 52.1% participated. By Web, 474 responded for a 19.0% response rate. The confidence interval for the total sample is +/-3.04%.

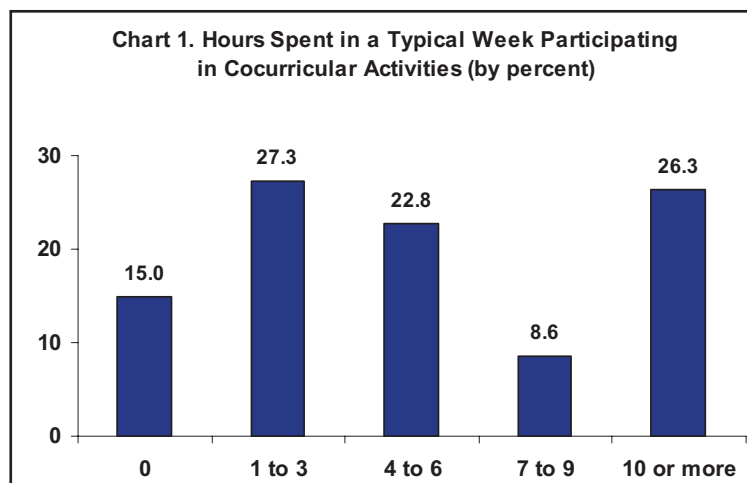
Of the respondents, 51.3% are female; 84.1% are white/Caucasian; 70.7% are juniors or seniors; 93.6% are between 18 and 22 years old; and 73.1% began their Penn State career at University Park.

FINDINGS

Cocurricular Involvement

Students were asked how many hours a week they typically spend participating in cocurricular activities, their level of participation in a variety of clubs and organizations, and their attendance in other out-of-class programs and events.

- Eighty-five percent (85.0%) of students reported spending at least one hour a week participating in cocurricular activities (see Chart 1), and on average, students spend 6.95 hours during a typical week participating in cocurricular activities (data not shown).



"...engagement is the critical determinant of the impact of college..."

Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005

For more information please visit Student Affairs Research and Assessment at <http://www.sa.psu.edu/sara>

¹ The Web survey administration is utilized in order to account for students for whom local phone information was unavailable.



Penn State Pulse is a project of Student Affairs Research and Assessment.

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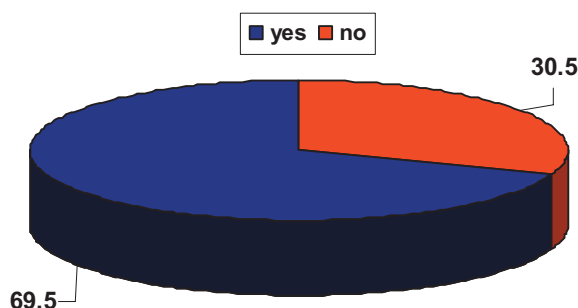
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- Second-, third-, and fourth-year students reported averaging 7.14 hours per week participating in cocurricular activities compared to 5.38 hours for first-year students (data not shown).
- Approximately half of the respondents indicated they attended events, were actively involved, or held a leadership position in academic clubs/organizations (49.8%) and in THON (47.6%) during the current academic year (see Table 1).
- Over 27% of students were actively involved or held a leadership position in intramurals or club sports and 16.2% in service organizations (see Table 1).
- In total (across organizational types), 69.5% of students indicated that, during the current academic year, they were actively involved or held a leadership position in at least one club or organization (see Chart 2).
- Women (74.2%) and on-campus residents (74.3%) were significantly more likely to be actively involved or hold a leadership position in a campus club or organization than were men (64.9%) and off-campus residents (67.2%), respectively (data not shown).
- Students who began their Penn State career at University Park (75.5%) were significantly more likely to be actively involved or hold a leadership position in a campus club or organization than were students who began their Penn State career at a Commonwealth campus (53.4%)(data not shown).
- Evidence suggests a positive relationship between GPA and active involvement; 75.3% of students with a GPA of 3.30 or higher were actively involved or held a leadership position compared to 61.4% of students with a GPA of 2.75 or lower (data not shown).

Table 1. Participation by Type of Club or Organization (by percent)

Activity	Not Involved	Attended Events	Actively Involved/ Leader
Academic clubs / organizations	50.2	22.6	27.2
THON	52.4	24.8	22.8
Intramurals or club sports	60.1	12.7	27.2
Service organizations (excluding THON)	71.4	12.5	16.2
Music and other performing arts	72.1	19.3	8.6
Social fraternities or sororities	78.9	8.3	12.9
Religious, interfaith, or spiritual groups	79.1	12.6	8.3
Multicultural clubs / organizations	81.6	9.3	9.2
Political or social action groups	85.5	9.1	5.2
Student newspaper, radio, TV, etc.	85.9	9.2	5.0
International or language groups	88.9	6.3	4.9
Student government organizations	91.8	3.6	4.6

Chart 2. Percent of Students who were Actively Involved or Held a Leadership Position (by percent)



- Approximately 85% of respondents attended at least one athletic event during the current academic year; the average number of athletic events students attended was 9.74 (see Table 2).
- In addition, 67.9% attended at least one lecture outside of class, and 60.4% attended at least one cultural event (see Table 2).
- Close to 35% participated in spiritual or religious events either on or off campus; the average number of spiritual or religious activities attended was 5.46 (see Table 2).
- Related to students' civic engagement, 48.5% of respondents indicated they had volunteered on campus or in the community at least once; on average, students volunteered 3.78 times during the current academic year (see Table 3).
- In addition, 24.7% and 16.4% had participated in at least one of the State College area events/organizations and participated in political activities, respectively (see Table 3).

**Table 2. Participation by Type of Activity
(during the current academic year)**

Activity	Percent ²	Avg. Number of Times
Attended an athletic event	85.4	9.74
Attended a lecture outside of class	67.9	2.19
Attended a cultural event	60.4	2.03
Participation in spiritual/religious activities on/off campus	34.8	5.46

**Table 3. Participation in Civic/Community Activities
(during the current academic year)**

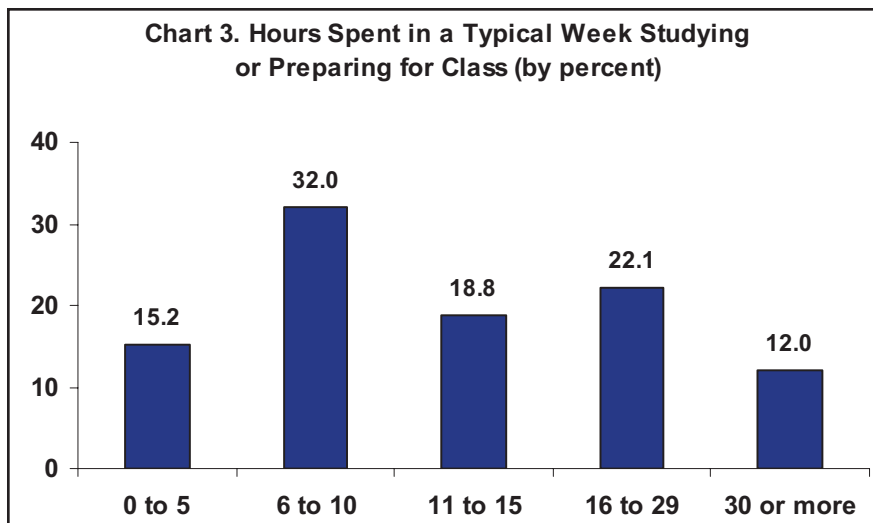
Activity	Percent ²	Avg. Number of Times
Volunteered on campus or in the community	48.5	3.78
Participated in State College area events / organizations*	24.7	1.32
Participated in political activities (campaigns, rallies, etc.)	16.4	0.59

* such as attending a local council meeting or serving on a community committee

Class Preparation and Faculty Interaction

An important area of student engagement is the time spent preparing for class and the interaction with faculty outside the classroom.

- Over half (52.9%) responded that, during a typical week, they spend 11 or more hours studying (see Chart 3); however, only 12.0% indicated they spend 30 or more hours (a level consistent with the suggested two hours of out-of-class preparation for every hour spent in class) (see Chart 3).
- On average, students reported spending 15.19 hours per week studying or preparing for class (data not shown).
- When comparing the typical hours spent per week studying or preparing for class based on various demographics, the differences between groups were not statistically different (data not shown).
- In addition, most students (93.9%) indicated they spend time on a weekly basis discussing class projects or topics with other students outside of class; students averaged 4.07 hours a week (data not shown).
- Approximately 38% participated in academic research with faculty outside of class during the current academic year (see Table 4).
- While 32.6% indicated they worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework, only 8.4% had served on a university committee with faculty or staff (see Table 4).



² Percent who participated/attended at least once during the current academic year.

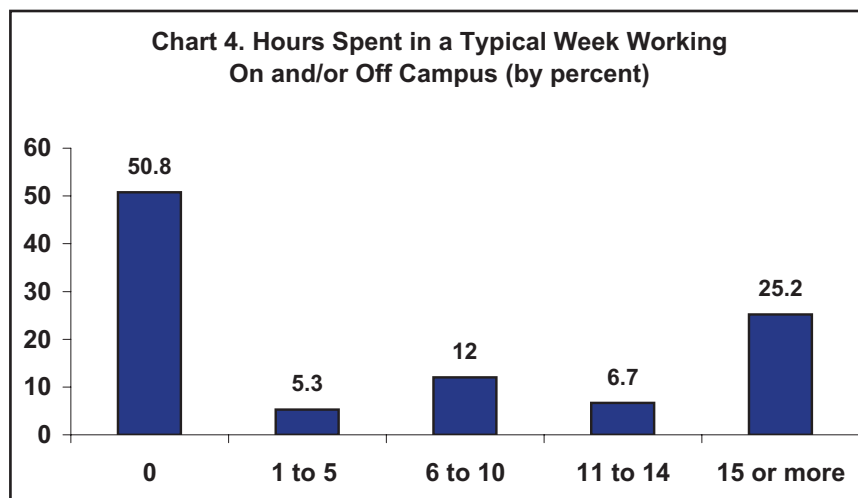
Table 4. Engagement with Faculty (during the current academic year)

Activity	Percent ³	Avg. Number of Times
Participated in academic research with faculty outside of class	37.9	3.70
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, cocurricular activities)	32.6	2.57
Served on a university committee with faculty/staff	8.4	0.39

Working for Pay

As research shows, the effect of employment on students’ education varies depending on where they work and how many hours they work. Working part time (less than 15 hours) on campus has a positive effect on graduation, self-reported learning and development, and satisfaction with their college experience. On the other hand, working full time and working off campus has been shown to have a negative effect on degree attainment, GPA, and satisfaction (Astin, 1993; King, 1998).

- Over half of respondents did not work; however, 25.2% were working 15 hours or more a week (see Chart 4).
- Approximately 30% worked on campus, averaging 3.92 hours a week, and 28.3% worked off campus, averaging 4.31 hours a week (see Table 5).
- Of students who were working, 33.1% responded that their job was at least “substantially” related to their major, and 36.2% felt they were significantly gaining skills and experiences related to their career interests (data not shown).
- Students with a GPA of 3.0 or lower worked significantly more hours off campus (\bar{x} =5.28 hours) than did students with a GPA higher than 3.0 (\bar{x} =3.87 hours)(data not shown).⁴
- On average, white students worked significantly more hours off campus (\bar{x} =4.64 hours) when compared to students of color (\bar{x} =3.01 hours)(data not shown).
- On average, upper-class students worked more hours on and off campus than did first-year students (data not shown).
- Students who began their Penn State career at a Commonwealth campus worked significantly more hours off campus (\bar{x} =6.56 hours) than did students who began at University Park (\bar{x} =3.50 hours)(data not shown).
- Consistent with national research, students who were actively involved or held a leadership position in a campus club or organization worked significantly more hours on campus (\bar{x} = 4.29 hours) and significantly less hours off campus (\bar{x} =3.76) than did their counterparts (\bar{x} =3.09 on campus and \bar{x} =5.56 off campus)(data not shown).



³ Percent who participated/attended at least once during the current academic year.

⁴ In addition, hours working off campus is inversely related to GPA based on correlation ($r = -.99$).

Table 5. Working for Pay (hours during a typical week this semester)

Hours	On Campus (by percent)	Off Campus (by percent)
Zero	70.2	71.7
1 - 5 hours per week	5.4	4.7
6 - 10 hours per week	9.3	6.7
11 - 14 hours per week	4.7	2.1
15 or more hours per week	10.3	14.7

Use of Facilities

Another measure of engagement is the use of campus facilities.

- During a typical week, 85.5% of students indicated that they utilize the HUB-Robeson Center at least once, and the average use was 5.90 times a week (see Table 6).
- In addition, 70.1% reported using recreation facilities during a typical week; the average use was 5.13 times a week (see Table 6).

Table 6. Use of Facilities (during a typical week this semester)

Facility	Percent ⁵	Avg. Number of Times
HUB-Robeson Center	85.5	5.90
Recreation facilities (White Building, Recreation Hall, etc.)	70.1	5.13
Pattee, Paterno, or Pollock Libraries	69.6	2.75
Pasquerilla Spiritual Center	18.1	0.49

Effect of Engagement

In order to understand the relationship between student engagement and educational outcomes, three factors were created to provide a broad lens to assess this relationship. These factors⁶ include students' levels of connectedness to Penn State, satisfaction with their academic progress, and satisfaction with their interpersonal progress. The focus of the analysis is on the impact of various levels of engagement with the outcomes.

- On-campus residents reported significantly higher CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE when compared to off-campus residents (data not shown).
- Students who began their Penn State career at University Park reported significantly higher CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE and SATISFACTION WITH INTERPERSONAL PROGRESS than did students who began at the Commonwealth campuses (data not shown).
- Students who worked fewer than 15 hours a week reported significantly higher CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE than did students who worked 15 hours or more (data not shown).
- When compared to students with a GPA of 3.0 or lower, students with a GPA higher than 3.0 reported significantly higher CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE and SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC PROGRESS (data not shown).

Evidence clearly suggests that cocurricular engagement is related to students' CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE and their satisfaction with their academic and interpersonal progress.

- Students who typically spend more than five hours a week participating in cocurricular activities reported significantly higher CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE, SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC PROGRESS, and SATISFACTION WITH INTERPERSONAL PROGRESS than did students who participated for five or fewer hours per week (see Table 7).

Table 7: Outcomes: By Levels of Cocurricular Participation and Involvement Status

Factors	Cocurricular Participation			Actively Involved/Leaders		
	≤ 5 hours per week	> 5 hours per week	Sig.+	Yes	No	Sig.+
CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE	4.24	4.41	**	4.39	4.14	***
SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC PROGRESS	4.19	4.28	*	4.25	4.12	**
SATISFACTION WITH INTERPERSONAL PROGRESS	4.16	4.37	***	4.34	4.02	***

Scale: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree for the CONNECTEDNESS factor and 1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied for ACADEMIC and INTERPERSONAL factors; + Significant differences at the * (.05), ** (.01), and *** (.001) levels.

⁵ Percent who utilized these facilities at least once during a typical week.

⁶ Factors are data reduction tool that combines multiple questions into a larger concept based on logic and statistical analysis. The factor composition is typically found in the corresponding table, and factor names are denoted by the use of SMALL CAPS.

- Students who were actively involved or held a leadership position in at least one campus club or organization reported significantly higher CONNECTEDNESS TO PENN STATE, SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC PROGRESS, and SATISFACTION WITH INTERPERSONAL PROGRESS than did students who were not actively involved (see Table 7).

Limitations of Campus Involvement

Students were also asked about the extent to which several issues limit their campus involvement.

- Most frequently, students indicated that academic demands or pressures limit their campus involvement (65.0%)(see Table 8).
- Approximately 39% reported that a lack of knowledge about the opportunities and/or how to get involved limit their campus involvement (see Table 8).
- Students who began their Penn State career at a Commonwealth campus were significantly more likely to indicate their campus involvement is limited by financial constraints, academic demands, personal or family pressures, and a lack of knowledge of the opportunities than were students who began at University Park (data not shown).
- When compared to students with a GPA higher than 3.0, students with a GPA of 3.0 or lower were significantly more likely to indicate that financial constraints limit their campus involvement (data not shown).
- Off-campus students and upper-class students were significantly more likely to indicate their campus involvement is limited by financial constraints, academic demands, personal or family pressures, and a lack of knowledge of the opportunities than were their counterparts (data not shown).

Table 8. Limitations to Involvement

Limitations	Percent	Average
Academic demands or pressures	65.0	3.67
Limited knowledge of the opportunities or how to get involved	38.6	2.92
Financial constraints	34.8	2.74
Lack of interest	32.1	2.71
Personal or family demands	26.7	2.53

Scale: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree