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PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT GOVERNMENT

by  
Kristen Diorio

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
April 19, 2007

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Date approved 4/19/07

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## ABSTRACT

Kristen Diorio  
PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT GOVERNMENT  
2006/2007

Dr. Burton Sisco  
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived benefits of being involved in student government at Rowan University. Thirty-five undergraduate students involved in the Student Government Association (SGA) at Rowan University completed a survey to determine their perceived benefits, discover why they decided to become involved, and to determine whether there was a pattern of involvement.

The findings showed that involved students saw positive benefits in the areas of: personal development, educational, and developing social skills. Rowan University students who were involved in SGA saw positive values from their experience. The higher level of involvement a student had in SGA yielded a greater perceived value academically, socially, personally, and through skill development. No notable difference was discovered based on the demographics of GPA, ethnicity, and year in school with perceived benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive relationship between past and future involvement suggests that past involvement predicts future involvement.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Terry and Julia have known each other since kindergarten, growing up in the same neighborhood and attending the same schools. Julia was an active child participating in girl scouts, soccer, and dance classes. Terry rarely joined anything. As they entered high school, Julia and Terry were both good students and planned on attending college. Julia continued to stay involved in many activities including athletic teams, music, and volunteering in her church. As both started college, Terry dropped out after her first semester. She found herself unhappy, had few friends, was not performing well in classes, and she also found herself going home each weekend. In contrast, Julia became involved in the college student government, made many friends, spent time talking with her professors, and was happy with her college experience. Now five years later Terry finds herself doing secretarial work, is living at home, and attends classes at a local community college part-time. Julia is attending graduate school, advises two student organizations and is planning on continuing to work for her doctorate.

Could it be that Julia's involvement in extra-curricular activities is what made the difference between these two friends? Can student involvement be the key to success? Astin (1984) explains the benefits of extra-curricular activities in his theory of student involvement. Involvement ranges from out-of-class interaction with a professor, to the amount of time a student spends on campus, to student participation in sports or



organizations. Wilson (1966) states that 70% of what a student learns comes from out-of-class experiences. Moffatt (1989) agrees stating that 40% of students surveyed about college indicate that such experiences are the most profound outcomes of the collegiate experience.

### Statement of the Problem

Postsecondary institutions have numerous extra-curricular activities which are considered important, but what are the benefits to students from being involved in a particular activity? Prior research has shown that student involvement increases student retention and heightens graduation rates. Determining why students get involved and what the benefits are may lead to identifying strategies that help increase retention and graduation rates in collegiate settings.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the involvement patterns of selected students in an undergraduate student government organization and the perceived benefits from being involved. Of related interest was whether prior involvement in extra-curricular activities predicated future involvement in higher education.

### Assumptions and Limitations

It is assumed that all participants answered honestly and accurately to all questions. Secondly, it is assumed that the research problem is pertinent to the field of higher education. Third, it is assumed that the population of the study is an accurate representation of state-supported higher education institutions.

This study had several limitations. First there is limited generalizability due to the fact

that all subjects were members of the same higher education institution. Second, only members of a student government organization participated in the study. Third, participants were asked for their perceived benefits which may or may not be a direct result of involvement in extra-curricular activities. A fourth limitation is that the study employed convenience sampling of student leaders in student government who are not representative of the entire student population at Rowan University. Finally, the researcher may have inadvertently biased the results of the study because of her interest and experience in student affairs and the benefits of involvement in extra-curricular activities.

#### Operational Definition of Important Terms

The following terms are defined operationally as they were used in the study:

1. **Extra-curricular Activities:** Refers to organizations or programs offered through an educational institution to help further the development of students socially, emotionally, intellectually, and/or athletically outside of the classroom.
2. **Level of Involvement:** Refers to whether the SGA representative is a member of the executive board or not.
3. **Student Government Association (SGA):** Refers to the student governing board that oversees the 150 chartered organizations at Rowan University. SGA is the students' voice to the administration. SGA promotes students to use leadership skills and provides opportunities to develop these skills further by attending leadership conferences and holding leadership positions. SGA consists of an elected and appointed executive board, and elected senators for each class and each SGA chartered organization. SGA is responsible to oversee and fund all SGA chartered

student organizations at Rowan University.

4. Student Involvement: Rowan University students who actively partake in extra-curricular activities.
5. Student Involvement Theory: A theory developed by Alexander Astin that stresses student involvement in academic, social and extra-curricular activities. He defines involvement as “The amount of physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to an academic experience” (Astin, 1999, p. 199).
6. Students: Full-time undergraduate students enrolled at Rowan University during the 2003-2004 academic year who were involved in student government.

#### Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What benefits do selected SGA members perceive from being involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?
2. What reasons do selected SGA members report for getting involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?
3. Is there a significant relationship between gender, campus residency, GPA, ethnicity, year in school, level of involvement, and perceived benefits of being involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?
4. What is the pattern of involvement in extra curricular activities?

## Organization of the Study

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature on the subject of student involvement. Chapter three provides a description of the study methodology and includes a description of the context of the study, an overview of the subjects used in the study, including the population and sample characteristics, a description of the research design, data collection procedures and instrument used, as well as a brief summary of how the data were analyzed. An overview of the findings of the study is presented in chapter four. Finally, chapter five provides a summary of the study, discusses the findings, offers conclusions based on the findings, and provides recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been increasing amounts of time and money spent researching the development of college students. One constant theme in this research is student involvement. Astin (1999) developed Involvement Theory to, "...bring some order into the chaos of the literature" (p. 518), of student involvement. This chapter is a collection of literature that touches on student involvement theory, the history and purpose of extra-curricular activities, benefits from being involved in extra-curricular activities, and why students are involved.

#### Student Involvement Theory

Astin's (1999) involvement theory states that, "students learn by being involved" (p. 36), and that there is a direct relationship between involvement and development. His theory is made up of five "basic postulates" that describe involvement. Postulate one states that involvement is the physical and psychological energy a person puts into a specific object. This means that in order to be involved in an activity some kind of energy must be exerted. Postulate two states that different people exert different degrees of involvement on a given object at different times; this means that different people exert energy differently, some people will put more energy into chess while others will put more energy into sports. Postulate three states that involvement possesses quantitative and qualitative features. This means that a person's involvement can be measured both

qualitatively and quantitatively. Postulate four states that the amount of learning and development is proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement. Thus the amount of learning is equal to the amount and level of involvement; the more a person is involved the more he/she will learn. Postulate five states that the effectiveness of any policy is directly related to the capacity to increase student involvement. The final postulate emphasizes that the best policies are the ones that allow students to become involved.

The theory splits students in two categories, the involved student and the uninvolved student. The involved student spends a lot of time on campus, devotes time to studying, is involved in extra-curricular activities, and interacts with faculty and other students. The uninvolved student neglects his/her studies, spends little time on campus, is not involved in extra-curricular activities, and has little contact with students and faculty (Astin, 1984). The theory states that the more involved a student is whether in class, extra-curricular activities, or interaction with professors, the greater success the student will have.

Astin's theory is used at institutions across the United States to emphasize the importance of student involvement. Tenser (2001) conducted surveys with undergraduate students that confirmed Astin's theory. A survey from spring 2000 found that student satisfaction was dependent upon interaction and relationships with faculty, and other students, involvement in campus organizations, and interaction with administrative personnel and offices. The mission of Monroe Community College's Campus Center (2004) is grounded in Astin's theory. In order to assist in the development of

students a place is provided for informal interactions, information, address concerns, and set policies.

### History and Purpose of Extra-Curricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities were not always a present at higher education institutions as they are today. Extra-curricular activities started in the late 1700s at Cambridge and Oxford Universities as debate teams. Similar organizations emerged soon after at schools all over Europe and eventually spread to the United States (Shandley & Shanley, 1985). Student organizations grew from debate clubs to sports teams, honor societies, and Greek organizations. In the early 1900s schools began to hire student affairs professionals to help in the development of students. The first research in student affairs did not begin until the 1960s (Brubacker & Rudy, 1976).

As student interests and the world changes so does the types of organizations available. Higher education institutions in the United States began to see a rise in the number of political organizations around the 1960s. Membership in Greek organizations have fluctuated drastically over the years; much of this can be contributed to men going overseas for military involvement (Levine, 1993). These organizations gave the students at institutions a voice, a place where they belong, and a way for them to feel more connected to the outside world.

Shandley and Shanley (1985) identifies four general goals of extra-curricular activities. Goal one helps to develop a creative environment on the college campus which leads to an enjoyable and unique experience. Goal two provides an opportunity to put lessons from

the classroom into practice. Goal three gives students an opportunity to grow socially and psychologically. Goal four provides an environment of respect and understanding among students across campus.

Extra-curricular activities benefit not only the students but the college campus as well. Extra-curricular activities give campuses well rounded experiences for current and prospective students. Participation in student groups allows for student interaction with faculty and staff through advising roles. Students are able to develop employable skills that are attractive to potential employers. Additionally, extra-curricular activities reunite alumni to college campuses which can lead to donor development opportunities (Shandley & Shanley, 1985). McKnown (1952) adds that extra-curricular activities gives students the opportunity to share ideas, heighten school moral, increase student interest in the school environment, and build citizenship skills. An involved student spends more time on campus participating in organizations, interacting with peers, and feels connected to the college or university. Such connections help to increase satisfaction, purpose, and drive which translates into a greater likelihood of staying in school and ultimately graduating.

#### Benefits of Student Involvement

Involvement in extra-curricular activities benefits student in a multitude of ways including educationally, socially, and through skill development. The following section discusses how extra-curricular activities affect students in each area.



### *Educational Benefits*

Participation in extra-curricular activities has proven to help students in the classroom. Kuh (1995) conducted a study in which he interviewed 120 students from 12 different higher education institutions to determine how extra-curricular activities impacted the students while in college. A student from Wichita State University states,

After I'd been in student government for a while I saw many of the things we discussed [in the classroom]. I hadn't really thought about it from an academic point of view and I started studying the material and thought, that makes sense according to this and that, drawing parallels between the two experiences. (p. 136)

Students who participated in extra-curricular activities gained more knowledge than those who were uninvolved. Additionally, the students reported taking the knowledge gained in college and applying it to the real world. Astin's involvement theory (1999) states that students who are actively involved in extra-curricular activities are happier and are more likely to graduate than those who are less involved. Additionally, involved students are more likely to pursue graduate and professional degrees; they expressed greater satisfaction with the major area of study, and noted that participation in extra-curricular activities helped lead to job success. Eklund-Leen and Young (1997) found that extracurricular involvement "enhances the educational outcomes of the institution" (p.6).

Kuh (1993) completed a study in which he interviewed 149 seniors from 12 different higher education institutions to determine what students are learning outside of the classroom. His research found a number of benefits from participating in extra-curricular

activities that translated into greater academic success. For example, Kuh noted that involved students took greater responsibility for their own learning and were able to relate material learned in the classroom to outside activities. They also practiced public speaking, enhanced communication skills, and learned to work in teams or groups. Involved students gained knowledge that helped develop critical thinking and self-directed learning skills.

Kuh and Astin both found that involved students develop more of an appreciation for culture and the arts than students who are uninvolved. Wilson (1966) states that 70% of what students learn comes from out-of-class experiences. Moffatt (1989) agrees stating that 40% of students surveyed reported out-of-class learning to be the most significant learning overall during college.

### *Social Benefits*

Involvement in extra-curricular activities goes beyond educational benefits. Research shows that involved students gain social benefits as well. This section highlights research that shows what students gain socially.

Involvement in extra-curricular activities gives students an opportunity to grow socially and expand friendships with peers. Kuh (1994) discusses the importance of developing strong relationships in his research. Kuh found that peers have more influence on other students than faculty when it comes to future goals. Levine's (1993) research found that student values are more influenced through involvement in an organization than from faculty. Peer interaction and friendship play a part in retention and completing college degrees.

Through involvement in extra-curricular activities students have the opportunity to expand social skills. Kuh (1994) mentions that interpersonal competence, intra personal competence, and practical competence are gained by being involved; he states that there is a noticeable development in a student's self-esteem, self-awareness, and social competence. Students become more self-confident which carries over into enhanced interaction with peers. Additionally, Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (1991) state that "Students involved in out-of-class activities are more positive about their college experience, more satisfied with their social life, living environment..." (p. 8).

Hill and Hill (1977) write about how involvement in extra curricular activities provides students with peer interaction which serves as a social learning experience. Being involved in an extra-curricular activity allows students to see and learn more about social interaction. Students are not only exposed to human behavior but have the opportunity to see how they interact socially.

Other areas in which students grow socially are a heightened self-esteem, self-awareness, and social competence. Kuh (1994) states that involved students are more confident with themselves which enhances interaction with peers.

Fitch (1991) found that involved students have a higher interdependence than uninvolved students. The involved students value giving back to society which supports the work of Williams and Winston (1985) who also found higher interdependence among involved students.

Williams and Winston (1985) concluded that students who are involved in activities are more emotionally mature. Students' maturity increases because they are more committed to an organization. Fitch (1991) found that student maturity increases not only for commitment reasons but also because of having to learn to balance personal emotions.

### *Skill Development Benefits*

The research of Astin, Kuh, Schuh, and Laverty and others show that students who are involved in extra-curricular activities develop important life-skills that are beneficial in daily life and in the work world. Organization, leadership, and communication are just some of the skills that are looked at in this section.

In Kuh's (1995) study of 120 students from 12 higher education institutions in the United States he found that students who are involved outside of the classroom have more leadership, responsibility, knowledge, and higher academic skills than uninvolved students. A student from Miami University reports that her leadership roles contributed to the development of "practical and interpersonal competence" (p. 133). This student remarked that because of her involvement in a number of activities she learned that, "...you have to find a way to communicate with all kinds of people because that's what it takes to get things done, to make things happen" (p. 133).

Astin's theory of student involvement (1999) emphasizes that students who are involved in extracurricular activities gain leadership experience and have greater artistic interests. His theory additionally claims that the more involved a student is the more benefits he/she will receive.

Schuh and Laverty (1983) researched the long-term impact of student involvement in extra-curricular activities. Students who held leadership positions during college reported success in their lives to the skills they acquired in college from being involved. The skills he found that were most affected are: communication, teamwork, decision-making, leadership, assertiveness, planning, organizing, self-awareness, budgeting, and supervisory skills. Students claim to develop these skills by having the opportunity to work with peers, hold activities, manage budgets, and many other tasks associated with involvement in extra-curricular activities. Eklund-Leen & Young (1997) found that students who work closely with others students are able to expand their communication skills, which includes writing, public speaking, and interpersonal communication. Students who held leadership positions learned how to delegate responsibilities, work as a team, develop supervision skills, and hone mediation skills.

#### Student Government

Astin (1999) discusses involvement at the student government level. Like other actively involved students on campus, those in student government are more likely to graduate and report being more satisfied with collegiate studies. Students involved in student government expressed a greater than average interest in politics, artistic needs, and had a greater satisfaction when it comes to friendships (Astin, 1999).

Student government participation also boosts self-esteem, self-concept, and persistence. Being active allows students to practice practical skills such as organizing, planning, managing, and decision making. Practicing these skills on a daily basis helps to

prepare students for the work world. Student government involvement provides students the opportunity to relate material from the classroom to practical experiences.

Involvement in a student group allows students to expose themselves to views and ideas of other students who they normally may not interact with (Terrell, 1994).

Students involved in student government are more likely to become involved in other campus organizations or activities. Such involvement expands personal development by meeting people from different backgrounds. They additionally have the opportunity to travel and experience new environments (Kuh, 1994).

Also, students have the opportunity to explore different career paths through serving on committees and interacting with university officials and community members. Student government participants develop skills that are transferable to the work place such as decision making, empathy, and understanding group dynamics and processes. They gain meaningful experience in working in teams and groups. Student government participants demonstrate organization planning skills. Also they appear to be good decision makers, managers, and public speakers (Kuh, 1994).

Students involved in student government possess an increased appreciation for others. Through community service projects and helping fellow students, they develop a concern for the welfare of others. Pascarella, Ethington, and Smart (1988) found social leadership to be a major outcome from involvement in student government

## Why are Students Involved?

Axelrod-Contrada (2003) discusses college transition for new students. She states that students who are involved in high school will likely join similar activities in college and be campus leaders. The literature says that people join an organization to fulfill a certain need. Some needs revolve around wanting to get involved, meeting new people, developing leadership skills, and believing in an organizations mission (University of Nevada, 2003).

Klopf (1960) states that belonging to a group gives students the feeling of acceptance, development of friendships, and social status at an institution. Also, students hold leadership positions which contributes to personal and professional development.

Chickering and Scholssberg (1995) provide some reasons as to why three different students chose to get involved in college activities. One student stated that he got involved to meet people as contacts to help with future employment. Another student alluded to joining an organization because of shared interests. Another student stated that she got involved to gain experience in working with others. She also stated that it was gratifying to help others and have the opportunity to learn at the same time.

## Summary of the Literature Review

Extra-curricular activities have existed on college campuses since the 1700s and continue to be an important part of today's collegiate lifestyle with the quantity and assortment of activities increasing.

Institutions are using extra-curricular activities as a recruiting and retention tool for their students. Extra-curricular activities allow students to develop personal, educational, and social skills. Some of these skills are listening, peer interaction, connecting with faculty and staff outside of the classroom, and public speaking. Students are reporting that they are able to take the learned skills from their organizations and apply them to the classroom. By becoming more confident and productive members of the collegiate environment, students are able to excel on campus, serve the community, and graduate on time. Institutions are seeing the involvement of students as a way of marketing the opportunities available to students that will help them succeed both in school and in life.

Engaging in student government allows students to become actively involved in campus life by teaching civic responsibility, leadership, and principles of democracy. Research shows that the more students are involved in extra-curricular activities the more likely they are to graduate. Understanding why students get involved in extra-curricular activities and the benefits gained will allow institutions and student affairs professionals to develop more meaningful experiences for students.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Context of the Study

The study was conducted at Rowan University, a selective, medium sized state supported university located in rural southern New Jersey in the town of Glassboro. Glassboro is known for its heritage in glass manufacturing and is home to approximately 20,000 residents. The university is located approximately 20 minutes from Philadelphia, 45 minutes from Atlantic City and 30 minutes from Delaware. Rowan boasts a tree-lined campus comprised of 42 buildings, including eight residence halls, three apartment complexes, a Student Recreation Center and 21 computer labs (Rowan University).

Rowan is well known for receiving one of the largest gifts ever given to a public university, a \$100 million gift from local industrialist Henry Rowan and his wife Betty. Rowan University is ranked in *U.S. News & World Reports* as one of the top public universities in the north and *Kiplinger's* names the university one of the 100 Best Buys in Public College and Universities (Rowan University).

The student body is comprised of more than 9,500 students from the Mid-Atlantic States, 97% of which are from New Jersey and 30 foreign countries. Undergraduate students entering the university in 2003 had a mean SAT of 1,160 and were ranked in the top quarter of their high school graduating classes. Rowan offers 36 undergraduate majors through six colleges. The university also offers 26 graduate programs and a doctoral

program in educational leadership. The university sponsors over 150 clubs and organizations that range from professional organizations, cultural, service, and athletic groups (Rowan University).

### Population and Sample

The population in the study consisted of members of the 2003-2004 Rowan University Student Government Association (SGA) which is made up of 102 students. The SGA is comprised of full time undergraduate students who form an executive board and a senate. Every recognized campus organization has a representative on the SGA senate and each representative serves on at least one committee. All executive board members were elected by the student body or appointed by the executive board. A convenience sample was selected for this study which consisted of 60 students involved in SGA.

### Instrumentation

The data were collected through a survey titled "Perceived Benefits of Involvement in Student Government" (Appendix C). The survey instrument was divided into four sections. The first section gathered demographic information from the subjects that consisted of gender, age, year in school, GPA, college/major, place of residence, ethnicity, and whether or not they resided on campus. The second section was designed to determine the subjects past involvement in extra-curricular activities. Subjects were asked whether they were involved in extra-curricular activities prior to attending Rowan University. Section three was comprised of questions to determine the subjects' current involvement in student government. The section asked if subjects were elected or appointed, why they joined, if they served on the executive board of SGA, and if they

served on a committee. The final section consisted of 16 statements using a five-point Likert scale to determine the subjects perceived value of being involved in SGA and an open ended question section. The 16 statements were designed to determine if subjects found their SGA experience valuable in four areas, social benefits, personal benefits, educational benefits, and skill development benefits with the possible responses of strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA) respectively.

On Monday, May 3, 2004 the survey was distributed during a student government meeting. Attendance at the meeting was 30 students all who took part in the survey. The surveys distributed during the SGA meeting were collected immediately afterwards. Thirty other students who were not in attendance were asked to complete the survey. Each student was given a packet that included a consent form, a brief paragraph explaining the purpose of the survey and the survey. Six of the 30 delivered surveyed were completed and returned. Those placed in the SGA mailboxes were given a deadline of Monday, May 10, 2004. The collection period ended on Monday, May 10, 2004 and the data analysis began.

To insure that the survey was reliable, valid and free of bias a pilot study was conducted. Following the pilot, the instrument was modified several times to improve clarity for the subjects. A Likert scale was included instead of yes/no forced choice option to allow subjects more of a range of answers. In addition, wording of some of the items were changed so there would be less confusion. A follow up pilot study was conducted to test the changes and confirm the improved clarity of the instrument.

Each packet included a consent form, a brief paragraph explaining the purpose of

the survey, and the survey. A consent form was used to protect the rights of the students who participated in the study (Appendix A). The survey was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Rowan University on Wednesday, April 7, 2004 and approved on Sunday, April 25, 2004 (Appendix B). All participants signed a consent form prior to completing the survey. A total of 60 surveys were distributed and 36 were returned for a return rate of 60%.

#### Procedure of Gathering Data

On Monday, May 3, 2004 the survey was distributed during a Student Government Association meeting. In attendance were 30 students who all completed the survey. Thirty additional students, who were not in attendance at the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting, received a survey and a return envelope through their Student Government Association mailboxes and were given a deadline of Monday, May 10, 2004 to respond. Out of those 30 delivered six were returned. The collection period ended on Monday, May 10, 2004 and data analysis began.

#### Data Analysis

All quantitative survey data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software Program (SPSS, student version 11.0). Research questions one, two, and four were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Data for research question three were analyzed using the Pearson correlation test to determine whether the demographics of gender, place of residence, GPA, ethnicity, and year in school yielded any significant relationships to involvement and perceived benefits for being involved. Open-ended qualitative data were

analyzed using a content analysis procedure looking for similarities between responses.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### Profile of the Sample

A total of 60 students who were enrolled in Rowan University and active in the Student Government Association (SGA) in the spring of 2004 received a survey. Thirty-six of the 60 surveys were completed and returned giving a 60% response rate; one of the survey responses was deemed unusable because of incomplete information. Table 4.1 depicts the demographic information of the subjects who participated in the study.

Table 4.1

#### *Demographics*

Variable	Frequency n=35	%
GPA		
2.0-2.45	1	2.8
2.5 - 2.95	12	34.3
3.0 - 3.45	10	28.6
3.5 - +	12	34.3
Year in School		
Freshman	6	17.1
Sophomore	9	25.7
Junior	10	28.6
Senior	10	28.6
Gender		
Female	21	60
Male	14	40
Campus Residency		
On Campus	26	74.3
Off Campus	9	25.7
Ethnicity		
White	22	62.9
Black	11	31.4
Hispanic	1	2.9

Age	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	2.9
	18	4	11.4
	19	8	22.9
	20	9	25.7
	21	8	22.9
	22	4	11.4
	23	1	2.9
	24	1	2.9
College	Liberal Arts and Sciences	13	37.1
	Education	10	28.6
	Communications	5	14.3
	Business	2	5.7
	Engineering	2	5.7
	Fine and Performing Arts	2	5.7
	Undeclared	1	2.9

Of the 35 subjects 17.1% were freshman, 25.7% were sophomores, 28.6% were juniors, and 28.6% were seniors. Seventy-four point three percent of subjects lived on campus and 25.7% lived off-campus. Overall, 40% of subjects were male and 60% female.

Ninety-seven point one percent of subjects had a GPA of 2.5 or higher, 34.3% had a GPA of 2.5-2.95, 28.6 % a GPA of 3.0-3.45, and 34.3% a GPA of 3.5 or higher. Ninety-four point three percent of all the subjects resided in New Jersey with 54.3% from southern New Jersey and 40% from other areas of New Jersey. The ethnicity break down was 62.9% Caucasian, 31.4% Black/African American, 2.9% Asian/Pacific Islander and 2.9% Hispanic. The age of subjects ranged from 18-24 with 11.4% who were 18, 22.9% who were 19, 25.7% who were 20, 22.9% who were 21, 11.4% who were 22, 2.9% who were 23, and 2.9% who were 24. Participants represented each college with 37.1% from Liberal Arts and Sciences, 28.6% from Education, 14.3% from Communications, 5.7%

from Business, 5.7% from Engineering, 5.7% from Fine and Performing Arts, and 2.9% who were undeclared.

### Research Questions

Research Question 1: What benefits do selected SGA members perceive from being involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?

Tables 4.2-4.5 depict the information regarding research question 1. The tables are organized according to the benefit factors of social, educationally, personal, and skill development.

The subjects were asked to indicate the perceived value of involvement in SGA according to helping them develop friendships, interact better with faculty and staff, become more outgoing, and to be more empathetic to others. Table 4.2 shows the responses.

Table 4.2

#### *Involvement in SGA Helped Promote Social Development*

Level of Agreement	Develop Friendships n=35, SD=.83, M=2.3		Interaction with faculty/staff n=35, SD=.94, M =2.3		More Outgoing n=35, SD=1.07, M =2.5		Empathetic to others n=35, SD=.97, M =2.7	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	6	17.1	4	11.4	5	14.3	3	8.6
Agree	15	42.9	20	57.1	14	40	14	40
Neutral	12	34.3	8	22.9	10	28.6	13	37.1
Disagree	2	5.7	1	2.9	4	11.4	3	8.6
Strongly Disagree	0	0	2	5.7	2	5.7	2	5.7
Total	0	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 4.3 depicts subjects' responses to the following four statements; (a) involvement in SGA helped improve my GPA, (b) helped me present my ideas more effectively, (c)



helped me stay in school, and (d) helped me with problem-solving. Subjects indicated the greatest value came in the area of helping to present ideas more effectively as 65.7% strongly agreed or agreed with that statement.

Table 4.3

*Involvement in SGA Helped Promote Educational Development*

Level of Agreement	Improve GPA		Present ideas more effectively		Helped me stay in school		Helped my problem solving	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	1	2.9	3	8.6	2	5.7	3	8.6
Agree	4	11.4	20	57.1	7	20	9	25.7
Neutral	22	62.9	9	25.7	14	40	18	51.4
Disagree	6	17.1	2	5.7	7	20	3	8.6
Strongly Disagree	2	5.7	1	2.9	5	14.3	2	5.7
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 4.4 depicts subjects' responses to the following four statements; (a) involvement in SGA helped me attain personal goals, (b) helped my maturity, (c) helped increase my self esteem, and (d) has helped my confidence. Subjects indicated the two greatest value were attaining personal goals with 68.5% who strongly agreed or agreed with that statement, and helping to mature with 57.2% who strongly agreed or agreed with that statement.

Table 4.4

*Involvement in SGA Helped Promote Personal Development*

Level of Agreement	Attain personal goals n=35, SD=.87 M=2.31		Helped me mature n=35, SD=.87, M=2.49		Helped my self esteem n=35, SD=1.05, M=2.89		Helped my confidence n=35, SD=1.01, M=2.86	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	4	11.4	3	8.6	3	8.6	3	8.6
Agree	20	57.1	17	48.6	9	25.7	9	25.7
Neutral	8	22.9	11	31.4	15	42.9	15	42.9
Disagree	2	5.7	3	8.6	5	14.3	6	17.1
Strongly Disagree	1	2.9	1	2.9	3	8.6	2	5.7
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

The subjects were asked to indicate the perceived value of involvement in SGA in helping to enhance their skills of public speaking, writing, listening, and critical thinking. Table 4.5 depicts the responses. Subjects reported the greatest value was listening skills with 74.3% who strongly agreed or agreed with that statement.

Table 4.5

*Involvement in SGA Helped Promote Skill Development*

Level of Agreement	Public speaking skills n=35, SD=.98, M=2.57		Writing skills n=35, SD=.93, M=3.2		Listening skills n=35, SD=.74, M=2.26		Critical thinking skills n=35, SD=.91, M=2.66	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly Agree	5	14.3	2	5.7	3	8.6	3	8.6
Agree	11	31.4	1	2.9	23	65.7	12	34.3
Neutral	14	40	21	60	6	17.1	15	42.9
Disagree	4	11.4	8	22.9	3	8.6	4	11.4
Strongly Disagree	1	2.9	3	8.6	0	0	1	2.9
Total	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Research Question 2: What reasons do selected SGA members report for getting involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?

Table 4.6 depicts the information relating to research question 2.

Table 4.6

*Reasons for Joining SGA*

Reason Joined	Total Frequency	%
Interested in the groups' purpose SD= .497, M= 1.4	21	60
Gain experience SD= .497, M= 1.4	21	60
Help professionally/resume SD= .507, M= 1.5	17	48.6
To advance intellectual interests SD= .471, M=1.7	11	31.4
Friends were members SD= .497, M=1.6	11	31.4
Status SD=.382, M=1.8	6	17.1
For recreation SD= .169, M= 2.0	3	8.6
Because of family SD= .471, M= 1.7	1	2.9

The subjects were asked to indicate the reasons they decided to become involved in SGA. The three highest responses were, being interested in the groups' purpose (60%), joined to gain experience (60%), and joined to help professionally/resume (48.6%). The three lowest responses for joining SGA were, for status (17.1%), for recreation (8.6%), and because of family influence (2.9%).

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between gender, campus residency, GPA, ethnicity, year in school, level of involvement, and perceived benefits of being involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed for the data in Tables 4.7-4.12. No significant relationships were found between GPA, ethnicity, and year in school with perceived benefits of being involved.

Table 4.7 displays the significant relationship which was found between gender and perceived social benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive weak correlation was found between gender and being more outgoing ( $r(33)=.372, p <.05$ ).

Table 4.7

*Relationship Between Gender and Perceived Social Benefits*

Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> - level
Gender-Being More Outgoing	.372	.028*

\*Statistically significant  $p <.05$

Table 4.8 displays the significant relationship between campus residency and perceived social benefits. A positive moderate correlation was found between campus residency and developing friendships ( $r(33)=.412, p <.05$ ).

Table 4.8

*Relationship Between Place of Residence and Social Benefits*

Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> - level
Place of Residence- Developing Friendships	.412	.014*

\*Statistically significant  $p <.05$

Table 4.9 displays the significant relationships which were found between level of involvement and perceived social benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive moderate correlation was found between level of involvement and social benefits in the following areas: developing friendships ( $r(33)=.591, p <.01$ ), interaction with faculty and

staff ( $r(33)=.403, p <.05$ ), and becoming more outgoing ( $r(33)=.501, p<.01$ ).

Table 4.9

*Relationship Between Level of Involvement and Perceived Social Benefits*

Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> - level
Executive Board- Developing Friendships	.591	.000**
Executive Board- Interaction with Faculty and Staff	.403	.018*
Executive Board- More Outgoing	.501	.003**

\* Statistically significant  $p <.05$

\*\* Statistically significant  $p <.01$

Table 4.10 displays the significant relationships that were found between level of involvement and perceived educational benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive moderate correlation between level of involvement and educational benefits was found in the following areas: improved GPA ( $r(33)= .412, p<.05$ ), learning to present ideas more effectively ( $r(33)=.460, p<.01$ ), and problem solving ( $r(33)=.407, p<.05$ ).

Table 4.10

*Relationship Between Level of Involvement and Perceived Educational Benefits*

Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> - level
Executive Board- Improved GPA	.412	.015*
Executive Board- Present Ideas	.460	.006**
Executive Board- Problem Solving	.407	.017*

\* Statistically significant  $p <.05$

\*\* Statistically significant  $p <.01$

Table 4.11 displays the significant relationships between level of involvement and perceived personal benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive weak correlation between level of involvement and personal benefits was found in attaining personal goals ( $r(33)=.378, p<.05$ ). A positive moderate correlation was found between level of involvement and the personal benefits of increased self esteem ( $r(33)=.465, p<.01$ ), and increased confidence ( $r(33)=.461, p<.01$ ).

Table 4.11

*Relationship Between Level of Involvement and Perceived Personal Benefits*

Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> - level
Executive Board- Attain Personal Goals	.378	.027*
Executive Board- Increase Self Esteem	.465	.006**
Executive Board- Increase Confidence	.461	.006**

\* Statistically significant  $p < .05$

\*\* Statistically significant  $p < .01$

Table 4.12 displays the significant relationships which were found between level of involvement and perceived skill development benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive moderate correlation was found between level of involvement and skill development in public speaking ( $r(33)=.498, p<.01$ ), writing skills ( $r(33)=.429, p<.05$ ), listening skills ( $r(33)=.516, p<.01$ ), and critical thinking skills ( $r(33)=.560, p<.01$ ).

Table 4.12

*Relationship Between Level of Involvement and Perceived Skill Development*

Item	<i>r</i> coefficient	<i>p</i> - level
Executive Board- Public Speaking	.498	.003**
Executive Board- Writing Skills	.429	.011*
Executive Board- Listening Skills	.516	.002**
Executive Board- Critical Thinking Skills	.560	.001**

\* Statistically significant  $p < .05$

\*\* Statistically significant  $p < .01$

Research Question 4: What is the pattern of involvement in extra curricular activities?

Table 4.13 shows the subjects history of involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Table 4.13

*Involvement in Extracurricular Activities*

	Yes	No	Total
Prior to high school n=35, SD=.32, M=1.11	31	4	35
In high school n=35, SD=.24, M=1.06	33	2	35
At Rowan n=35, SD=.0, M=1	35	0	35
Total	99	6	105

When the subjects were asked about involvement in extra-curricular activities before high school, 88.6% stated yes and 11.4% stated no. When the subjects were asked about involvement in extra-curricular activities in high school, 94.2% stated yes and 5.8% stated no. When the subjects were asked about involvement in extra-curricular activities at Rowan, 100% stated yes and 0% stated no.

At the end of the survey subjects were given the opportunity to list any other benefits they perceived from being involved in SGA. Subjects provided a total of 26 open-ended comments. Table 4.14 displays the responses arranged in rank order.

Table 4.14

*Additional Comments from Subjects*

Theme	<i>f</i>	%
SGA allowed them to have a voice on issues	6	23
SGA made them more knowledgeable about campus events	5	19.2
SGA allowed them to interact with different types of people	5	19.2
Developed time management	2	7.7
Fun and interesting to do	1	3.8
Made me a little more responsible	1	3.8
Professional development	1	3.8
Priority scheduling	1	3.8
Helped learn the responsibilities of a campus organization	1	3.8

If you are interested in politics it's a great place. Else wise, you just need to stand your ground.	1	3.8
Developed commitment to come to every meeting	1	3.8
Involved to keep organizations status/funding	1	3.8

Out of the 26 comments, six of the subjects mentioned that they felt being involved in SGA allowed them to have their voice heard on important issues and that they could be part of making a difference on campus. Five commented that their involvement in SGA allowed them to be knowledgeable of campus activities and events. Five subjects commented their involvement allowed them to interact with different types of people. Two subjects commented that their SGA involvement helped them with time management.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of the Study

Extra-curricular activities have existed at higher education institutions since the 1700s and continue to thrive today. Astin and Kuh suggest that students involved in extra-curricular activities gain a more meaningful collegiate experience than those who remain uninvolved. By taking part in extra-curricular activities students develop personal, social, and educational skills. These students give back to their institutions by serving in campus leadership roles and have a higher retention rate than those who are less involved. At Rowan University, a major extra-curricular organization is the Student Government Association (SGA) whose purpose is to provide students with a voice to the administration while providing opportunities to develop leadership skills. In this study selected members of the SGA were surveyed to determine the perceived benefits of being involved in extra-curricular activities, in particular, SGA.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate how involvement in student government impacts students, what they perceive to be the benefits of being involved, and whether past involvement predicts future involvement.

#### Methodology

The subjects in the study consisted of 36 members of Rowan University's Student

Government Association who constituted a convenience sample. All members of the SGA were full time undergraduate students at the institution during the 2003-2004 academic year. An Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted on Wednesday, April 7, 2004 and approved on Sunday, April 25, 2004. Each subject signed a consent form before completing the survey.

The data were collected through a survey titled "Perceived Benefits of Involvement in Student Government." The survey instrument was divided into four sections. The first section gathered demographic information from the subjects that consisted of gender, age, year in school, GPA, college/major, place of residence, ethnicity, and whether they resided on campus. The second section was designed to determine the subjects past involvement in extra-curricular activities. Subjects were asked whether they were involved in extra-curricular activities prior to attending Rowan University. Section three was comprised of questions to determine the subjects' current involvement in student government. The section probed whether subjects were elected or appointed, why they joined, if they served on the executive board of SGA, and if they served on a committee. The final section consisted of 16 statements using a five-point Likert scale to determine the subjects' perceived value of being involved in SGA. In particular, four areas were investigated including social benefits, personal benefits, educational benefits, and skill development benefits.

On Monday, May 3, 2004 the survey was distributed during a Student Government meeting. Attending the meeting were 30 students who completed the survey. The surveys distributed during the SGA meeting were collected immediately afterwards. Thirty other

students who were not in attendance at the meeting were asked to complete the survey. Each student was given a packet that included a consent form, a brief paragraph explaining the purpose of the survey, and the survey. Six of the 30 delivered surveys were completed and returned. Those placed in the SGA mailboxes were given a deadline of Monday, May 10, 2004. The collection period ended on Monday, May 10, 2004 and the data analysis began.

### Data Analysis

The Likert scale data for research questions number one were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software Program (SPSS, students version 11.0). The data were analyzed for frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The data for research question two, reasons the subject decided to become involved, were analyzed for frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Data for research question number three were analyzed using a Pearson correlation test to determine whether a significant relationship was found between groups and their perceived benefits for being involved. Demographic information were analyzed for frequency, percentage, and calculation of mean and corresponding standard deviation where applicable. Open ended data were analyzed using a content analysis procedure for similarities between responses.

### Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What benefits do selected SGA members perceive from being involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?

### *Social Benefits*

Kuh (1994) discusses the importance of out-of-class relationships with peers. His research shows that students whose close friends share common interests and aspirations are more likely to continue their schooling. Students become more confident with themselves and this carries over into interactions with peers. Kuh (1994) mentions that interpersonal competence, intra personal competence, and practical competence are gained by being involved. Hill and Hill (1977) speak about how involvement in extra curricular activities provides students with peer interaction which serves as a social learning experience. Being involved in an extra-curricular activity allows a student to see and learn more about social interaction. They are not only exposed to human behavior and are able to study it but have the opportunity to see how they interact socially.

The findings from this study showed that 57.9% of subjects strongly agreed or agreed to statements dealing with social development. When asked if being involved in SGA helped subjects to develop friendships, 60% either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. When asked if being involved in SGA helped subjects to interact with faculty and staff better, 68.5% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if being involved in SGA helped subjects to become more outgoing, 54.3% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if being involved in SGA helped subjects become more empathetic to others needs, 45.7% agreed or strongly agreed. The findings of this study supports the research of Kuh and Hill and Hill.

### *Educational Benefits*

Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (1991) claim that participation helps students

develop "...more complicated views on personal, academic, and other matters, provided opportunities for synthesizing and integrating material present in the formal academic program" (p.133). Student participation provides a positive influence on gains in knowledge acquisition and application. Astin (1999) claims that students who are actively involved in extra-curricular activities are more engaged in their institution which increases retention rates. Additionally, students are more likely to pursue graduate and professional degrees, are more satisfied with their area of study, and achieve greater job success. Wilson (1966) states that 70% of what students learn come from out-of-class experiences.

The findings from this study found that 35% of subjects strongly agreed or agreed to statements that SGA helped promote educational development. When asked if being involved in SGA helped the subjects to present ideas more effectively, 65.7% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. When asked if being involved in SGA helped subjects with problem solving most were neutral but 34.3% agreed or strongly agreed. The findings in this study suggest that educational benefits were perceived by the subjects as less valuable.

#### *Personal Benefits*

According to Terrell (1994), student government participation boosts self-esteem, self-concept, and persistence to graduate. Kuh (1994) states that there is a noticeable developmental shift in a student's self-esteem, self-awareness, and social competence. Williams and Winston (1985) concluded that students who are involved in activities are more emotionally mature. They contend that students' maturity increases because of increased commitment to an organization. Moreover, Fitch (1991) found that student

maturity increases not only for the reasons stated above but also because of learning to balance personal emotions.

The findings from this study showed that 48.6% of subjects strongly agree or agreed to statements about personal development. When asked if being involved in SGA helped subjects to achieve personal goals, 68.5% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. When asked if being involved in SGA helped boost maturity, 57.2% agreed or strongly agreed. The findings of this research found that subjects had an increase in attaining personal goals and maturity, which coincides with previous research.

#### *Skill Development*

Schuh and Laverty (1983) studied the impact of involvement in extra-curricular activities in later life. Students who held leadership positions were able to use the skills learned in college in their adult lives. The skills he found that were most affected were: communication, teamwork, decision-making, leadership, assertiveness, planning, organizing, self-awareness, budgeting, and supervisory skills. Eklund-Leen & Young (1997) found that involvement in extra-curricular activities helped students develop many skills that they were able to use in the classroom and in the workplace after college. By working closely with others, subjects were able to expand communication skills including writing, public speaking, and interpersonal communication. Students were also able to hold leadership positions where they learned how to delegate responsibilities, worked in teams, learned supervision skills, and practiced mediation.

The findings from this study showed that 42.9% of the subjects strongly agreed or agreed to statements about skill development. When asked if being involved in SGA

helped the subjects improve their public speaking skills, 45.7% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if being involved in SGA helped with listening skills, 74.3% agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if being involved in SGA helped to develop critical thinking skills, 43% agreed or strongly agreed. The findings from this study suggest that subjects increased listening skills which coincide with Schuh and Laverty's (1983) findings, showing an increase in communication skills among college students.

Research Question 2: What reasons do selected SGA members report for getting involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?

Chickering and Scholssberg(1995) supply some reasons as to why students chose to get involved in college activities through analysis of three students who participated in depth interviews. One student stated that he got involved to meet people as contacts to help him with future employment. Another student alluded to joining an organization because he shared the same interests. The final student stated that she got involved to get first hand experience in working with others. She also stated that it would be gratifying to help others and have the opportunity to learn at the same time. Klopff (1960) says that belonging to a group gives students a feeling of acceptance, allows them to form friendships, and gives them social status at the institution. It also gives students the opportunity to hold leadership positions and develop themselves both personally and professionally.

When asked why subjects decided to become involved in SGA, 60% reported joining because they were interested in the groups purpose, 60% joined to gain organizational experience, 48.6% joined to help professionally/resume, 40% stated to meet people,

31.4% joined because their friends were members, and 31.4% joined to advance intellectual interests. The findings from this study support the research of Chickering and Scholssberg and Klopff.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between gender, campus residency, GPA, ethnicity, year in school, level of involvement, and perceived benefits of being involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University?

Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement states that the more involved a student is, whether it is in class, extra-curricular activities, or interaction with professors, the greater success the student will have. The fourth postulate in his theory states that the amount of learning and development is proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement. This means that the amount of learning is equal to the amount of involvement; the more a person is involved the more he/she will learn.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between gender, place of residence, GPA, ethnicity, year in school or level of involvement and the subjects perceived benefit of involvement. No significant relationships were found between GPA, ethnicity, year in school, and perceived benefits of being involved.

Males and females displayed a significant relationship between their involvement in SGA and being more outgoing. A positive weak correlation between gender and being more outgoing was found to be statistically significant ( $r=.372, p < .05$ ). The correlation suggests that females found being involved in SGA helped them to be more outgoing than males.



A significant relationship was found between place of residence and developing friendships. A positive moderate correlation between place of residence and developing friendships was found to be statistically significant ( $r=.412, p<.05$ ). The correlation suggests that those living on campus saw a greater benefit in developing friendships than those who lived off campus.

Subjects' level of involvement indicated the greatest impact in the four areas of benefit: social, educational, personal, and skill development. A positive moderate correlation between level of involvement and social benefits was found in the following areas: developing friendships ( $r=.591, p<.01$ ), interaction with faculty and staff ( $r=.403, p <.05$ ), and becoming more outgoing ( $r=.501, p<.01$ ). The correlations suggest that members of the executive board perceived greater social benefits than non executive board members.

A positive moderate correlation between level of involvement and educational benefits was found in the following areas: improved GPA ( $r= .412, p<.05$ ), learning to present ideas more effectively ( $r=.460, p<.01$ ), and problem solving ( $r=.407, p<.05$ ). The correlations suggest that members of the executive board perceived greater educational benefits than non executive board members.

A positive weak correlation between level of involvement and personal benefits was found in attaining personal goals ( $r=.378, p<.05$ ). A positive moderate correlation between level of involvement and personal benefits was found in increase self esteem ( $r=.465, p<.01$ ), and increased confidence ( $r=.461, p<.01$ ). The correlations suggest that members of the executive board perceived greater personal benefits than non executive board members.

A positive moderate correlation between level of involvement and skill development was found in public speaking ( $r=.498, p<.01$ ), writing skills ( $r=.429, p<.05$ ), listening skills ( $r=.516, p<.01$ ), and critical thinking skills ( $r=.560, p<.01$ ). The correlations suggest that members of the executive board perceived greater skill development than non executive board members.

Research Question 4: What is the pattern of involvement in extra curricular activities?

Axelrod-Contrada (2003) states that students who are involved in high school are more likely to join similar activities in college and often sample other activities. When asked about past involvement prior to high school, 88.6% of the subjects stated they were a part of an organization. When asked if they were involved in extra-curricular activities in high school, 94.3% stated yes. When asked if they are currently involved in extra-curricular activities at Rowan University, 100% stated yes. The data gathered in this research confirms the research of Axelrod-Contrada.

### Conclusions

The following are the five conclusions that can be made based on the findings of this study. The findings support the research of Kuh and Astin which suggests that involved students see positive benefits in the areas of: personal development, educational, and developing social skills. Rowan University students who were involved in SGA saw positive values from their experience. The higher the level of involvement a student had in SGA, the greater the perceived value academically, socially, personally, and through skill development. No notable differences were discovered based on the demographics of GPA, ethnicity, and year in school and perceived benefits of being involved in SGA. A positive

relationship between past and future involvement suggests that past involvement predicts future involvement.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations are made for further research:

1. Conduct more studies that focus on different types of extra-curricular activities. This study focused solely on student government and there may be affects from involvement in other activities such as community service, Greek life, or athletics.
2. Conduct a study that compares those students who are involved in extra-curricular activities and those who are not.
3. Conduct a study that examines the impact of different levels of involvement in extra-curricular activities. This study discovered a difference in the response patterns of those who held leadership roles in the organization than those who did not.
4. Conduct a larger study at the regional or national level to see how involvement in extra-curricular activities impacts students at different institutions. This study only examined involvement at one institution; a larger study would provide data that could be more generalizeable to other institutions and types of activities.

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**APPENDIX A**

**Approved Institutional Review Board Disposition Form**

2004-103  
RECEIVED APR 07 2004

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
DISPOSITION FORM

Principal Investigator  
Kristen Diorio

Co-Principal Investigator (if applicable)

Address of Principal Investigator  
Investigator  
22 Buffalo Run

Address of Co-Principal

City, State, and Zip Code  
East Brunswick, NJ 08816

City, State, and Zip Code

Telephone # Fax # e-mail address  
mail address  
856-256-6127  
dior0898@students.rowan.edu

Telephone # Fax # e-

TITLE OF RESEARCH

Perceived Benefits of Involvement in Student Government at Rowan University.

ADMINISTRATIVE DISPOSITION - DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

Your claim for exemption for the research study identified above has been reviewed. The action taken is indicated below:

APPROVED FOR EXEMPTION AS CLAIMED - CATEGORY #

Note: Anything that materially changes the exempt status of this study must be presented to the IRB for approval before the changes are implemented. Such modifications should be sent to the IRB Office at the address above.

APPROVED FOR EXEMPTION - BUT NOT AS CLAIMED. Your claim for exemption does not fit the criteria for exemption designated in your proposal. However, the study does meet the criteria for exemption under CATEGORY #.

A determination regarding the exempt status of this study cannot be made at this time. Additional information is required.

Your proposal does not meet the criteria for exemption, and a full review will be provided by the IRB.

EXPEDITED REVIEW:  Approved  Denied

FULL REVIEW:

Approved  Approved with modifications  Denied

DENIED:

See attached Committee Action Letter for additional comments.

Chair, IRB

J. Swak

Co-Chair, IRB

Date

4/28/04

Date

BS



**APPENDIX B**

**Consent Form**

**Consent Form for Perceived Benefits of Involvement Survey**  
Conducted by Kristen Diorio  
Spring 2004

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to participate in the study titled, “The Perceived Benefits of Involvement in Student Government at Rowan University.” Ms. Kristen Diorio, a graduate student in the Education Leadership Department at Rowan University, will be conducting this research project under the supervision of Dr. Burton Sisco as part of her master's thesis project.

I understand that my participation in the survey should take approximately 10 minutes and that my participation is on a volunteer basis. I understand that I will be asked a number of questions about my current and past involvement in extra-curricular activities, and the benefits I perceive from being involved.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and give permission for my responses to be included in Ms. Diorio's thesis.

I understand that there are no physical or psychological risks involved in this study, and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

I understand that my participation does not effect my involvement in any organization I am currently involved in or wish to be in the future.

I understand that my participation does not imply employment with the state of New Jersey, Rowan University, the principal investigator, or any other project facilitator.

If I have any questions or problems concerning my participation in this study I may contact Kristen Diorio at (856) 256-6127.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Investigator)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## APPENDIX C

### Perceived Benefits of Involvement in Student Government Survey

## Perceived Benefits of Involvement In Student Government

The purpose of this survey is to determine the perceived benefits of student involvement in Student Government at Rowan University. All information will be kept anonymous.

Thank you for your time.

Please read each question carefully and answer as accurately as possible.

### Section I- Demographic Information

1) Sex: (please circle one) Male Female

2) Year (please circle one) Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

3) Age \_\_\_\_\_

4) Cumulative GPA \_\_\_\_\_

5) College/Major (if undecided please indicate)

---

6) Place of Residence (please mark one)

\_\_\_ South Jersey (South Jersey consists of Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Ocean, and Salem counties)

\_\_\_ Other area of New Jersey

\_\_\_ Out of state

7) Ethnicity

\_\_\_ Black

\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_ Asian/South Pacific Islander

\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_ White

8) Do you live on campus? (please circle one) Yes No

## Section II- Extra-Curricular Involvement

Section II is to determine the depth of your involvement in extra curricular activities. Please read each question and place a check next to your corresponding answer.

**9) Were you involved in extracurricular activities prior to high school?**

Yes

No

**10) If so what types of activities? (Check all that apply)**

athletic

social

drama

musical

religious

government/ political

educational

volunteer

publication

other \_\_\_\_\_

**11) Were you involved in extracurricular activities in high school?**

Yes

No

**12) If so what types of activities? (Check all that apply)**

athletic

social

drama

musical

religious

government/ political

educational

volunteer

publication

other \_\_\_\_\_

**13) Are you involved in extracurricular activities at Rowan?**

Yes

No \_\_\_\_\_

**14) If so what types of activities?(Check all that apply)**

athletic

social

drama

musical

religious

government/ political

educational

volunteer

publication

Greek organization

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Section III-Student Government Involvement** This section is designed to determine your involvement in SGA.

**15) Were you elected or appointed into SGA? (Circle one)** Elected Appointed

**16) Why did you decide to become involved in SGA? (check all that apply)**

Meet people

Friends were members

Family

Recreation

Status

To advance intellectual interests

Interested in the groups purpose

To help you professionally/resume

To gain experience

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**17) Are you a member of Executive Board?(Circle one)** Yes No

**18) Do you serve on a committee? (Circle one)** Yes No

**19) If so what committee?** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Section IV- Perceived Value of SGA Involvement

Please read each statement, circle the corresponding answer

Strongly Agree(SA), Agree(A), Neutral(N), Disagree(D), and Strongly Disagree(SD)

Being involved in SGA has helped me develop friendships.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me to improve my GPA.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me attain personal goals.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me to present my ideas more effectively.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me to stay in school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me interact with faculty and staff better.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my public speaking skills.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my maturity.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me be more outgoing.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my writing skills.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my self esteem.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me with problem solving.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped me to become more empathetic to others needs.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my listening skills.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my confidence.	SA	A	N	D	SD
Being involved in SGA has helped my critical thinking skills.	SA	A	N	D	SD

What other benefits (if any) do you perceive from being involved in SGA activities?

Thank you for your time and participation!



