

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-11-2005

A study investigating undergraduate student leader perceptions of involvement and intentionality of out-of-class learning

Lauren M. Ackermann
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Higher Education Administration Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you -
share your thoughts on our feedback form.

Recommended Citation

Ackermann, Lauren M., "A study investigating undergraduate student leader perceptions of involvement and intentionality of out-of-class learning" (2005). *Theses and Dissertations*. 956.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/956>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact LibraryTheses@rowan.edu.

A STUDY INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT LEADER
PERCEPTIONS OF INVOLVEMENT AND INTENTIONALITY OF
OUT-OF-CLASS LEARNING

by
Lauren M. Ackermann

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
May 11, 2005

Approved by _____

Date Approved May 11, 2005

© 2005 Lauren M. Ackermann

ABSTRACT

Lauren Ackermann

A STUDY INVESTIGATING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT LEADER PERCEPTIONS OF INVOLVEMENT AND INTENTIONALITY OF OUT-OF-CLASS LEARNING

2005

Dr. Burton R. Sisco

Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration

This study was designed to determine why students get involved in student organizations, the perceived benefits of being involved, and the role of student affairs professionals in enhancing out-of-class learning. Fifty-two undergraduate students from Rowan University participated in the study by completing a survey that asked about involvement in a Student Government Association (SGA) chartered organization, perceived learning outcomes associated with involvement, and the student's perceptions about current services offered to student organizations. A follow-up interview was conducted with six students who completed the initial survey in order to more fully answer the question of what student affairs professionals can do to enhance out-of-class learning. The survey inquired about four areas: (a) why student get involved, (b) perceived benefits of involvement, (c) perceived learning outcomes associated with involvement, and (d) perceived actions that can be taken by student affairs professionals to enhance the intentionality of involvement. The results were similar to the research about student involvement theory.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
ONE	INTRODUCTION.....	1
	Statement of the Problem.....	2
	Significance of the Problem.....	2
	Purpose of the Study.....	2
	Definition of Terms.....	3
	Assumptions and Limitations.....	4
	Research Questions.....	5
	Report Organization.....	5
TWO	REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	7
	Importance of Extracurricular Learning to Institutions... ..	8
	What Is Known About Student Leaders.....	12
	Creating an Environment Conducive to Extracurricular Learning.....	13
	Summary of Literature Review.....	16
THREE	METHODOLOGY.....	18
	Study Setting.....	18
	Population and Sample Selection.....	19
	Instrumentation.....	19
	Data Collection Procedures	20
	Data Analysis.....	21
FOUR	FINDINGS.....	23
	Profile of the Sample.....	23
	Research Questions.....	24
	Follow-up Interviews.....	30
	Profile of the Follow-up Interviews Sample.....	30
	Analysis of the Follow-up Interviews.....	31
FIVE	SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS.....	33
	Summary of the Study.....	33

Purpose of the Study	33
Methodology	34
Data Analysis	35
Findings and Conclusions.....	35
Recommendations for Further Research	39
REFERENCES.....	41
APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board Application and Notice of Approval.....	43
APPENDIX B: Letter of Informed Consent and Survey.....	54
APPENDIX C: Follow-up Interview Questions	59

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
4.1 Selected Demographics.....	23
4.2 Why Did You Initially Get Involved in an SGA Chartered Club?.....	24
4.3 Why Did You Decide to Become an Elected Leader of Your Organization?.....	25
4.4 What is the Greatest Benefit of Being Involved?.....	26
4.5 Perceived Learning Outcomes Associated with Out-of-class Activities	27
4.6 Student Leader Perception of Current Supports Offered to All Organizations.....	29
4.7 Selected Demographics of the Follow-up Interview Sample	31

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several years, researchers in the field of higher education have begun to explore undergraduate student learning outside of the classroom. Students spend a majority of their time outside of class, doing such things as working, studying, spending time in the residence halls, and getting involved in campus life. During these out-of-class times it is the responsibility of student affairs professionals to ensure that student learning continues. While students learn educational skills in the classroom, many learn life skills outside of the classroom. Students also learn ways to apply what is learned in the classroom to experiences outside of the classroom. Institutions of higher education should be providing many outlets for involvement outside of the classroom as well as providing the necessary support to make students' involvement more educationally intentional.

The focus of this study was to research the affects of being a student leader in clubs and organizations on out-of-class learning. The study took place at Rowan University and involved several presidents or elected leaders of student government chartered clubs and organizations. The intent of the study was to gauge if students perceived the out-of-class experience as educational. Of related interest was the support received from the institution to make the intentionality more accessible.

Statement of the Problem

Although research is plentiful in the area of out-of-class activities that play a role in student learning, little research has been done that specifically looks at how leadership in clubs and organizations enhances the collegiate experience. By assessing the services and activities provided to students, higher education professionals are able to provide students with a comprehensive educational experience.

Significance of the Problem

Many students are involved in student run clubs and organizations. Part of the role of student affairs professionals is to ensure that students integrate learning into such out-of-class experiences. If, after this study, it is found that out-of-class learning is not occurring, it is imperative that student affairs professionals create new avenues for increasing the intentionality of out-of-class learning experiences. As a result of involvement, students should show gains in both cognitive and affective development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the involvement of students in out-of-class activities and the ways that student affairs professionals can enhance students' out-of-class experience through educationally intentional activities. By surveying and interviewing undergraduate students who were an elected leader of a student club or organization, the aim was to discover what students perceived to be the benefits of involvement and how they felt the administration and institution could make the experience more educational.

Definition of Terms

Clubs and Organizations: For purposes of this study, clubs and organizations refer to any student group that is chartered by the Student Government Association (SGA) at Rowan University. Chartered groups include both groups who receive money from SGA and those who do not (fraternities and sororities).

Student Government Association (SGA): SGA is the governing body of all student organizations on campus. It disperses funds, offers oversight for clubs, and acts as a resource for organizations.

Types of Organizations: All student clubs fall into one of the following categories: Business Associations, Communications, Cultural Organizations, Educational/Honor Societies, Engineering Organizations, Fraternities, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Music Organizations, Non-Bureau Organizations, Religious Organizations, Service Organizations, Sororities, Special Interest Organizations, Sports Clubs, Student Publications, Theatre/Dance, and chartering organizations.

Student Leader: In this study, the president, or elected leader, of each organization was surveyed. It can be assumed that the president or elected leader is the student in the organization who has the most contact with the organizational advisor and the student affairs staff.

Student Affairs Professionals: This term has been used loosely to describe any person who works with students outside of the classroom. This would include, but is not limited, to members of the Division of Student Affairs, office workers and clerical staff,

graduate assistants, faculty advisors to student groups, or anyone else that may advise a student club or organization.

Educational: Kuh, Schuh, Whitt and Associates (1991) describe the term academic as the mission and purpose of the university. The term “educational” is used to describe a broader set of ideas that include moral, social, reasoning and intellectual development. Likewise, “learning” includes the acquisition of any lasting knowledge that is consistent with the mission and purpose of the institution.

Cognitive Development: Deals with the behaviors that require the use of high-order mental processes, such as logic and reasoning (Jacobi, Astin, & Ayala, 1987).

Affective Development: Deals with non-cognitive measures such as a student’s attitudes, values, self-concept, aspirations, and social and interpersonal relationships (Jacobi et al., 1987).

Assumptions and Limitations

It can be assumed that all students who participated in the study were leaders of a student club or organization at Rowan University. As stated earlier, it was assumed that student leaders had the most contact with the organization advisor and the student affairs staff. Because of a pilot study, it was assumed that the instrumentation was free of bias and was reliable and valid. As such, it can also be assumed that the students who responded to the survey were truthful and cooperative. Finally, it is assumed that the students who participated in the study represented the typical Rowan University student leader.

This study is limited to Rowan University undergraduate students in the 2004-2005 academic year. Although the study was designed to paint a vivid picture of how to improve the intentionality of out-of-class experiences on this campus, in order to determine how students nationwide feel, a broader study including more schools would be needed. Also, there may be researcher bias present since the investigator is a former undergraduate student leader at Rowan University and worked in the Student Affairs Division.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. Why do selected undergraduate student leaders get involved in clubs and organizations?
2. What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive as the major benefits of involvement?
3. What learning outcomes do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive as a benefit of being involved in clubs and organizations?
4. What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive are actions that student affairs professionals should take in order to enhance the intentionality of involvement in clubs and organizations?

Report Organization

Chapter two reviews literature relevant to the study. The literature review provides a framework for the study and discusses what other researchers have found in the areas of out-of-class learning and involvement. Chapter three discusses the

methodology of the research report. The results of the study are presented in chapter four. Finally, chapter five summarizes the study and presents the conclusions based upon an analysis of the findings. Recommendations for practice and future research are also presented in the chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In a 1984 article, Alexander Astin began the conversation about the role of extracurricular involvement in the college setting. The theory of student involvement, as he called it, is still regarded today as the basis for research on student involvement, satisfaction, and retention. The foundation of this theory is to persuade educators to focus on the student; to determine how much time and energy a student devotes to the learning process, both inside and outside of the classroom. The theory is based on five basic postulates that define involvement:

1. Involvement refers to the investment of physical and psychological energy in various objects.
2. Involvement occurs along a continuum, where the ultimate form of non-involvement is the act of dropping out, and the ultimate form of involvement is the act of completion.
3. Involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features.
4. The amount of learning is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement.
5. Effectiveness of any policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy to increase student involvement. (Astin, 1984, p. 298)

Astin (1984) suggests that the greatest amount of learning will occur when the environment is structured in a way that encourages active participation by the student. This includes learning environments both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, asking students to use what they are learning in the classroom in their organization encourages active participation.

The remainder of this chapter explains the importance of offering extracurricular learning opportunities to students, discusses what is known from the literature about student leaders, and offers suggestions from the literature about how to make an environment more conducive to student learning.

Importance of Extracurricular Learning to Institutions

How a student is spending his or her time outside of the classroom should be of prime importance to administrators at colleges and universities. Wilson (1999) identified students' out-of-class activities as the most significant educational experience during the college years. Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, and Associates (1991) echo these findings, and implore administrators to pay special attention to time spent outside of the classroom.

The researchers believe this is important for four reasons:

- 1) College students spend a majority of their time out of class.
- 2) A student's peer group exerts considerable influence on how a student spends discretionary time.
- 3) Out-of-class experiences provide opportunities to acquire important skills not often addressed in the classroom.

- 4) Participation in out-of-class activities contributes to a sense of community (Kuh et al., 1991, pp. 11-12).

While students acquire knowledge primarily in the classroom and by formal academic programs, many students view out-of-class activities as a real world laboratory (Kuh, 1995). Students who are more involved in activities outside of the classroom show greater signs of satisfaction with the institution and perceive that they have developed more personal skills and experienced more of a change than students who were not as involved (Wilson, 1999).

Skill development is an important factor in why institutions should focus on offering out-of-class learning experiences. In a study completed in 1999, Wilson found that involvement in student organizations has a significant positive effect on a student's total academic experience. He also found that holding leadership positions in these organizations helped students develop specific skills such as budgeting, organizing and planning, and that these students often had higher educational aspirations than those students who were not involved (Wilson, 1999).

Wilson's findings supported earlier conclusions made by Kuh (1991, 1994, 1995). Similar to what Wilson reported, Kuh found that out-of-class activities provided opportunities to develop leadership skills, teamwork, decision-making, and planning. He also found that self-esteem and the capacity to develop mature, interpersonal relationships was a byproduct of being involved outside of the classroom (Kuh et al., 1991). In 1995, Kuh stated that involvement in extracurricular activities accurately predicted work place competence more so than grades.

In 1994, Kuh, Douglas, Lund, & Ramin-Gyurnek discovered that there were several links between out-of-class experiences and desired learning outcomes. The links, which fell into five clusters, include (a) cognitive complexity, (b) knowledge acquisition and application, (c) humanitarianism, (d) interpersonal and intrapersonal competence, and (e) practical competence. Cognitive complexity includes the student's ability to develop skills such as critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and intellectual flexibility. The first cluster, knowledge acquisition and application, deals with a student's capacity to understand knowledge from a range of disciplines or realities and their ability to relate this knowledge to daily life. This would include using information learned in one class in another class or area of life. Next, humanitarianism is the student's understanding and appreciation of differences and an increased sensitivity to the needs of others. Interpersonal and intrapersonal competence is a collection of a student's personal attributes and skills. These would include identity, self-esteem, confidence, integrity, and the ability to work with people different than themselves, among others. Finally, practical competence refers to the necessary skills students need in order to manage their personal affairs and be vocationally competent. These skills would include time management and decision-making (Kuh et al., 1994).

Several studies attribute much of the development of the skills listed above as a byproduct of involvement with peer groups. Wilson (1999) noted that involvement in extracurricular activities provides benefits in the area of social adjustment and that interaction with peer groups has a positive affect on self-concept, interpersonal skills, and leadership skills. He also found that interactions with both peers and faculty may

indirectly influence intellectual growth because these interactions can influence the level of involvement that a student will take in their academic experience. Extra attention on academic involvement outside of the classroom will lead to the development of cognitive skills (Wilson, 1999). Kuh (1995) found similar results when students listed peers as instrumental to the development of interpersonal competence, humanitarianism, and cognitive complexity (Kuh, 1995). Specifically, he also found that social leadership activities, such as being president of a student organization, are linked with the development of humanitarian and civic values.

Beyond skills development, perhaps one of the most reported outcomes of involvement in extracurricular activities is the correlation with satisfaction, retention, and persistence. Kuh et al. (1994) found that co-curricular activities were positively related to persistence for two reasons. First, students who get involved are connected psychologically and socially to a group that is achievement oriented, which reinforces the desire to graduate. Second, students who are involved in co-curricular activities acquire skills and competencies that make it more likely for success in college (Kuh et al., 1994). In a later study, Kuh (1995) found that some of the skills gained by involvement that lead to persistence include social competence, autonomy, confidence, self awareness, and appreciation for human diversity. Similarly, Wilson (1999) found that whether students serve in a leadership role or simply attend meetings, their participation can lead to the formation of a more personal connection with the institution and will increase the likelihood that the student will persist to degree completion. Students who were involved reported a greater overall satisfaction for their academic experience.

What Is Known About Student Leaders

Kapp (1979) explored the perceived benefits of extracurricular involvement and who was getting involved in these activities. The research found that students perceived involvement as having an impact on four areas of college life: (a) choosing life goals, (b) increasing thinking ability, (c) getting along better with people, and (d) increasing leadership ability. Students who participated in out-of-class activities viewed the four areas as results of their college experience. Likewise, students who participated in three or more activities were twice as likely as non-participants to view college as having been very useful in increasing leadership ability. The research also found that students perceived their involvement to impact satisfaction with social life, contact with classmates, contacts with faculty and staff, and outlets for creativity.

Wilson (1999) identified three levels of involvement that students assume within various clubs and organizations. The first group includes participants who attend meetings of clubs and organizations. The second group includes students who hold lower level leadership positions, such as secretary and treasurer, in those organizations. And finally, the third group includes students who lead the organization through formal leadership positions such as president and vice president. Wilson continues by stating that no matter the level of involvement, any participation in out-of-class experiences can lead to a personal connection to the institution and increase the chance that students will show gains in cognitive and affective development. Kuh (1995) agrees, but reports that leadership responsibilities are essential to a student's learning and personal development, including planning, organizing, managing, and decision-making. He cites that 85% of

students he studied listed leadership responsibilities as playing an important role in their learning and personal development.

Creating an Environment Conducive to Extracurricular Learning

Kuh (1991, 1994, 1995) provides a framework of the importance of creating an environment that contributes to a productive out-of-class learning experience. He states that a high quality out-of-class experience can be defined as one in which active participation in activities and events that are not a part of the curriculum, but still complement the institution's educational purposes (Kuh, 1991). In a study completed in 1994, Kuh came up with two lists that administrators should make themselves aware of when creating an educational environment. The first list is the five factors that foster engagement in educationally purposeful activities. They are (a) a welcoming physical environment, (b) a psychological environment that seeks to balance challenge and support, (c) the presence of safe spaces that allow for personal reflection, (d) the absence of anonymity, and (e) support for multiple sub-communities to form and flourish (Kuh et al., 1994). The other list is the conditions that characterize a developmentally powerful out-of-class environment that fosters student learning and development. The conditions are (a) a clear, coherent, and consistently expressed educational purpose, (b) an institutional philosophy that embraces a holistic view of talent development, (c) complementary student policies and practices congruent with student needs, (d) high, clear expectations of student performance, (e) use of effective teaching approaches, (f) systematic assessment of institutional practices and student performance, (g) opportunities for involvement in educationally purposeful out-of-class activities, (h)

human-scale setting characterized by an ethics of membership and care, and (i) an ethos of learning that pervades all aspects of the institution (Kuh et al., 1994).

Brown (1985) developed a list of standards and procedures that should be followed by all professional educators. This list, focused on program development and assessment, supports the 1968 guiding statement of the Committee of the Student in Higher Education of the Hazen Foundation. Brown suggests that all educators must (a) assess all students' current developmental status and diagnose their developmental needs, (b) help and counsel the students to determine appropriate goals and experiences for themselves, (c) design and implement programs that foster the desired development, (d) evaluate each student's developmental progress, and (e) record all developmental attainment.

In the 1991 book titled *Involving Colleges*, Kuh, Schuh, Whitt and Associates studied colleges that were creating positive out-of-class experiences. It was found that the involving colleges used different means to promote learning and personal development, however the colleges all used means that were compatible to the institutional missions and student characteristics. There were several conditions that the studied colleges shared; each had a clear mission, they valued and expected student initiative and responsibility, recognized and responded to the total student experience, provided small, human-scale environment and multiple sub-communities, valued students and took both them and their learning seriously, and had the ability to generate feelings of loyalty. Similarly, students at involving colleges shared a set of common characteristics. Students knew how their institution worked, perceived their in-class and out-of-class lives to be

seamless, took seriously the institution's expectations that students are responsible for their own lives, have learned as much from peers as they have from classes, and have experienced a congruency between their expectations and the demands of the institution (Kuh et al. 1991).

The idea of a seamless view of academic and student affairs is an important point. Kuh et al. (1994) points out that the single most important deed an institution can do is to get students to think about what they are doing in classes and in other areas of life, and to apply what they are learning in both. This ethos of learning best occurs through collaboration among administration, faculty, student affairs professionals and students. Most importantly, as Kuh et al. discusses, student affairs professionals and faculty should spend more time engaged with students, asking them to interpret and apply their learning. In order to facilitate student growth and learning, students should be challenged as well as supported both academically and socially. Unfortunately, as Kuh et al. points out, many faculty members, academic affairs and student affairs professionals do not spend time on creating a link between what is learned inside the classroom to how the learning is used outside of the classroom. This attitude, which reflects the belief that learning is only done inside of the classroom, creates a "debilitating psychological and symbolic boundaries between the formal curriculum and other learning and personal development experiences" (Kuh et al., 1994, p. 6). In an earlier work, however, Kuh (1991) found that many students described seamlessness between learning inside and outside of the classroom. He suggests that the boundaries between academic and student affairs often perceived in the research may be indistinguishable to students.

There are several criteria that Kuh et al. (1994) state student affairs professionals must meet. Student affairs personnel must (a) be prepared to work with students from a variety of backgrounds, (b) be grounded in theory and research, (c) clarify expectations for students with this knowledge base, (d) organize activities so that students reflect on their experience in a thoughtful way, (e) employ active learning strategies, (f) periodically assess the impact of their efforts on student performance, and (g) offer timely feedback to students about their behavior. The concept of assessment and feedback is an important one, as Kuh et al. (1994) point out, suggesting that institutions that take seriously student learning outside of the classroom regularly assess the relationship between student involvement, outcomes, and institutional policies and practices. Assessment data should be used to improve the quality of the programs and services offered to students and to identify the importance of out-of-class environments in enhancing student learning. Most importantly though, the assessment data should assist in the shift of focus from what service and programs institutions are providing to what students are learning and how they are developing.

Summary of Literature Review

The foundation of Astin's (1984) theory of involvement is to persuade educators to focus on the student; to determine how much time and energy a student devotes to the learning process, both inside and outside of the classroom. The theory relies on five basic postulates that define involvement. Several researchers identified students' out-of-class activities as their most significant educational experience, and implored administrators to pay special attention to time spent outside of the classroom. Students

who are more involved in activities outside of the classroom show greater degrees of satisfaction with the institution and perceive that they have developed more personal skills and experienced more of a change than students who were not as involved.

Involvement in student organizations has a significant positive effect on a student's total academic experience, and holding leadership positions in these organizations helps students develop specific skills such as budgeting, organizing and planning. A high quality out-of-class experience can be defined as one in which active participation in activities and events that are not a part of the curriculum, but still complement the institution's educational purposes. The single most important goal an institution can work towards is to get students to think about what they are doing in classes and in other areas of life, and to apply what they are learning in both. This ethos of learning can better occur through collaboration among administration, faculty, student affairs professionals and students.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

Rowan University is a selective, medium sized state university located in southern New Jersey, approximately 20 minutes from Philadelphia. It holds students to very high standards, encouraging both cognitive and social development. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked Rowan as one of the top public universities in the Northeast. It has also earned such honors as Kiplinger's *100 Best Buys in Public Colleges and Universities*, Kaplan's *320 Most Interesting Colleges* and Princeton Review's *The Best Northeastern Colleges* (<http://www.rowan.edu>). The campus contains 42 buildings, including 8 residence halls, 3 apartment complexes, a Student Recreation Center, and 21 computer labs.

The University enrolls more than 9,500 undergraduate and graduate students who represent the Mid-Atlantic states and 30 foreign countries. Rowan offers 36 undergraduate majors in the colleges of Business, Communication, Education, Engineering, Fine & Performing Arts, and Liberal Arts & Sciences. Also, there are currently more than 26 graduate programs leading to masters and a doctoral degree.

Students can choose from approximately 100 clubs and organizations that offer students professional, cultural, and service activities. All of the resources of a large university are present, without sacrificing the personal attention and small class size of a

college. The average class size is 21 students and the student/faculty ratio is 14 to 1 (<http://www.rowan.edu>).

Population and Sample Selection

Undergraduate students who held elected leadership positions in Student Government Association chartered clubs and organizations during the 2004-2005 academic year were asked to participate in this study. Of the 9,500 students enrolled at Rowan University, 7,971 are fulltime undergraduates. Of this number, 85 students held elected leadership positions in chartered organizations on campus and constitute the total population. As stated earlier, elected leadership position is defined as the student who runs the organization, in many cases the president or chairperson.

For purposes of this study, the total population was asked to participate in the initial survey. Eighty-five surveys were handed out with 52 returned for a response rate of 61%. The researcher then selected six survey participants to take part in a follow-up interview. The participants were chosen as a sample of convenience.

Instrumentation

The survey used in the study (Appendix B) was developed by the researcher, based on a previous survey administered by Wilson in 1999. The survey inquired about four areas: (a) why student get involved, (b) perceived benefits of involvement, (c) perceived learning outcomes associated with involvement, and (d) perceived actions that can be taken by student affairs professionals to enhance the intentionality of involvement. The format of the survey includes rank order and Likert-scale responses. The survey also asked for demographic information such as gender, class rank, and grade point average.

The survey was based on previous research and was considered to be valid. A pilot study was completed with the survey to assure reliability. The pilot survey was administered in late September 2004 and changes were made based on the response. The survey was then sent to the Institutional Review Board for approval on October 6, 2004 and notice of approval was received on October 23, 2004 (Appendix A).

The responses gathered from the initial survey determined a follow-up interview. In order to obtain a more in-depth look at the responses given in the survey, the follow-up interview asked many open-ended questions based on the research questions. Students were asked a series of questions, similar to what can be found on the survey. The main focus of the interview, however, was to identify actions that student affairs professionals can take to enhance out-of-class learning. A guideline of questions for the follow-up interviews is located in Appendix C.

Data Collection Procedures

Following approval of the instrument from the Institutional Review Board to proceed, the survey was administered to all elected leaders of Student Government chartered clubs and organizations. The surveys were addressed to each leader and left in the organization's mailbox in the Student Government office. Since this is where all the organizations came to conduct business, it was the most efficient way to distribute the survey. Upon receiving only a 35% response rate, an additional survey was placed in every mailbox with a reminder. Eventually, student leaders had to be tracked down and asked personally to complete the survey. In the end, 52 surveys were completed for a 61% response rate.

Following the collection and input of data, several leaders who completed the survey were selected at random to complete a follow-up interview. Once again, due to difficulty in getting students to participate, the researcher had to seek out students to be interviewed. The result was six very active student leaders whom the researcher knew.

Data Analysis

After the surveys were administered, the data were analyzed in four parts based on the research questions. The first two items, “Why do student leaders get involved in clubs and organizations” and “What do they perceive as the major benefits of their involvement,” were analyzed by looking at the Likert-scale responses from the first section of the survey. In order to answer the first research question, the researcher looked at the survey items “Why did you initially get involved in an SGA chartered club?” and “Why did you decide to become an elected leader in your organization?” The second research question was answered by students identifying what they perceive as the major benefit of involvement. Students answers were ranked from the most important benefit to the least important benefit.

The next research question, “What learning outcomes do student leaders perceive as an effect of being involved in clubs and organizations,” was addressed by examining the perceived learning outcomes section of the survey. The researcher sought to determine if students attributed specific learning outcomes to participation in out-of-class activities. Students were given a list of outcomes and were asked to rank each as a Significant Change, Moderate Change, Low Change or No Change.

And finally, the last research question, “What do student leaders perceive are actions that student affairs staff and administration can take in order to enhance the intentionality of being involved in clubs and organizations,” was answered by students who expressed their feelings about current services offered to student organizations. Students could Strongly Agree, Agree, No Opinion, Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statements.

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which calculated frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings of the data analysis were then used to create a set of open-ended questions for the follow-up interview. The questions followed the same set of research questions, but attempted to get a more specific understanding of the survey findings. Upon speaking to the students, the answers were analyzed by categorizing the comments and suggestions made by the students.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Profile of the Sample

Undergraduate student leaders at Rowan University were asked to participate in the study. The sample for the initial survey consisted of 85 student leaders, which constitutes a total population. Every student leader who participated is a president or elected leader of an SGA chartered organization. The total number of students who completed the survey was 52, which represented a 61% response rate. Table 4.1 represents the demographics of the survey participants. Seventy-five percent of the participants were female, 69.2% were seniors, and 51.9% had over a 3.51 grade point average.

Table 4.1

<i>Selected Demographics</i>			
Variable		Frequency n=52	%
Gender			
	Male	13	25
	Female	39	75
Year Classification			
	Freshman	0	0
	Sophomore	0	0
	Junior	16	30.8
	Senior	36	69.2
Grade Point Average			
	2.26-2.50	2	3.9
	2.51-2.75	5	9.6
	2.76-3.00	2	3.9
	3.01-3.25	6	11.5
	3.26-3.50	10	19.2
	Above 3.51	27	51.9

Research Questions

Research Question 1: Why do selected undergraduate student leaders get involved in clubs and organizations?

Table 4.2 represents the responses from the survey question “Why did you initially get involved in an SGA chartered club?” The answers were ranked from most important reason for getting involved to least important reason for getting involved. Thirty-six point five percent of students identified “The club met one of my interests” and 26.9% identified “For the experience/to build skills” as the most important reasons. The last important reason was “For my resume,” as identified by 40.4% of students.

Table 4.2

Why Did You Initially Get Involved in an SGA Chartered Club?

	Most Important n=52, SD=1.42 M=3.44		2 nd n=50, SD=1.365 M=2.88		3 rd n=50, SD=1.434 M=3.06		4 th n=48, SD=1.505 M=2.77		5 th n=42, SD=1.218 M=3.07	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
The club met one of my interests	19	36.5	10	19.2	12	23.1	8	15.4	1	1.9
For the experience/to build skills	14	26.9	18	34.6	7	13.5	7	13.5	4	7.7
To meet people	8	15.4	9	17.3	15	28.8	8	15.4	8	15.4
For my resume	7	13.5	6	11.5	6	11.5	10	19.2	21	40.4
I was involved in HS and wanted to continue	4	7.7	7	13.5	10	19.2	15	28.8	8	15.4

Table 4.3 represents the responses from the survey question “Why did you decide to become an elected leader of your organization?” The responses were, once again, ranked from the most important reason for taking on a leadership role to least important reason. The most important reasons were “I wanted to make a difference” and “I enjoy the club and wanted to spend more time working with it,” receiving 34.6% and 30.8%

respectively. The least important reason was “No one else wanted the position,” as identified by 44.2% of participants.

Table 4.3

Why Did You Decide to Become an Elected Leader of your Organization?

	Most Important n=51, SD=1.132 M=3.8		2 nd n=47, SD=1.591 M=2.89		3 rd n=47, SD=1.663 M=2.87		4 th n=45, SD=1.323 M=4.24		5 th n=39, SD=.933 M=2.85	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	I wanted to make a difference	18	34.6	12	23.1	8	15.4	7	13.5	0
I enjoy the club and wanted to spend more time working with it	16	30.8	10	19.2	13	25	4	7.7	4	7.7
No one else wanted the position	11	21.2	2	3.8	0	0	7	13.5	23	44.2
For the experience/to build skills	3	5.8	14	26.9	14	26.9	14	26.9	2	3.8
For my resume	3	5.8	9	17.3	12	23.1	13	25	10	19.2

Research Question 2: What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive as the major benefits of involvement?

Table 4.4 sought to answer the second research question by asking students to rank order a list of seven benefits of involvement. “Getting to meet more students” and “Developing transferable skills” were the most important benefits of being involved, receiving 65.3% of the results. Students identified that “getting free stuff was the least important benefit.”

Table 4.4

What is the Greatest Benefit of Being Involved?

	Most Imp. n=52 SD=1.579 M=2.87		2 nd n=50 SD=1.783 M=3.8		3 rd n=50 SD=1.654 M=3.6		4 th n=48 SD=1.820 M=3.58		5 th n=48 SD=1.812 M=3.31		6 th n=40 SD=2.002 M=4.25		7 th n=30 SD=.814 M=6.60	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Getting to meet more students	19	36.5	8	15.4	4	7.7	6	11.5	11	21.2	2	3.8	0	0
Developing transferable skills	15	28.8	8	15.4	11	21.2	6	11.5	8	15.4	2	3.8	0	0
Networking with faculty/administration	8	15.4	6	11.5	9	17.3	10	19.2	9	17.3	6	11.5	0	0
Networking in your career field	8	15.4	6	11.5	4	7.7	8	15.4	10	19.2	2	3.8	6	11.5
Learning communication skills	2	3.8	14	26.9	18	34.6	12	23.1	4	7.7	0	0	0	0
Knowledge of the campus	0	0	6	11.5	4	7.7	6	11.5	6	11.5	18	34.6	2	3.8
Getting free stuff	0	0	2	3.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	19.2	22	42.3

Research Question 3: What learning outcomes do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive as a benefit of being involved in clubs and organizations?

The third research question is answered by looking at Table 4.5. A list of learning outcomes were provided to students for identification of significant, moderate, low or no change as associated with involvement in the organization. “Running a meeting” and “Leadership” were the areas in which students identified the most change, with over 50% of respondents identifying a significant change in each area. In the areas of no change, 19.2% of students identified “mediating conflict” and 11.5% identified both “persuasion” and “time management” as having no connection with involvement.

Table 4.5

Perceived Learning Outcomes Associated with Out-of-Class Activities

	Significant Change		Moderate Change		Low Change		No Change	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Running a Meeting n=52, SD=.752 M=1.56	29	55.8	19	36.5	2	3.8	2	3.8
Leadership n=52, SD=.696 M=1.58	28	53.8	18	34.6	6	11.5	0	0
Public Speaking n=52, SD=.729 M=1.69	24	46.2	20	38.5	8	15.4	0	0
Problem Solving n=52, SD=.826 M=1.85	20	38.5	22	42.3	8	15.4	2	3.8
Communication n=52, SD=.826 M=1.85	20	38.5	22	42.3	8	15.4	2	3.8
Teamwork n=52, SD=.832 M=1.88	19	36.5	22	42.3	9	17.3	2	3.8
Goal Setting n=52, SD=.793 M=1.87	17	32.7	28	53.8	4	7.7	3	5.8
How to Motivate n=52, SD=.908 M=2.13	15	28.8	18	34.6	16	30.8	3	5.8
Mediating Conflict n=52, SD=1.024 M=2.33	11	21.2	23	44.2	8	15.4	10	19.2
Time Management n=52, SD=.837 M=2.08	10	19.2	34	65.4	2	3.8	6	11.5
Persuasion n=52, SD=.867 M=2.38	7	13.5	24	46.2	15	28.8	6	11.5

Research Question 4: What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive are actions that student affairs professionals should take in order to enhance the intentionality of involvement in clubs and organizations?

Table 4.6 depicts the responses to research question four. The statements on the survey were made about current services offered to all student organizations. Students were asked about working with student affairs professionals, knowledge of policies and procedures, and overall satisfaction with the educational component of out-of-class experiences. Seventy-five percent of the subjects strongly agree with the statement “I would consider my leadership experience to be educational.” Other statements that students strongly agreed with are “By being involved I am learning skills I can use in the future” and “My organization’s advisor is easily accessible.” The statement with the lowest percentage of students indicating strongly agree (15.4%) was “The student affairs staff is friendly and approachable.” For this statement, 34.6% of respondents had no opinion.

Table 4.6

Student Leader Perception of Current Supports Offered to All Organizations

	Strongly Agree		Agree		No Opinion		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
I would consider my leadership experience to be educational n=52, SD=.49 M=1.27	39	75	12	23.1	1	1.9	0	0	0	0
By being involved, I am learning skills that I can use in the future n=52, SD=.561 M=1.37	35	67.3	15	28.8	2	3.8	0	0	0	0
My organization's advisor is easily accessible n=52, SD=1.078 M=1.88	23	44.2	20	38.5	3	5.8	4	7.7	2	3.8
I understand how my organization gets funded n=52, SD=.696 M=1.71	20	38.5	29	55.8	1	1.9	2	3.8	0	0
My organization's advisor plays an active role in the group's day-to-day activities n=52, SD=1.402 M=2.38	20	38.5	12	23.1	4	7.7	12	23.1	4	7.7
There is a connection between my in-class and out-of-class experiences n=52, SD=1.126 M=2.21	12	23.1	29	55.8	3	5.8	4	7.7	4	7.7
I understand how SGA works and the role it plays with my organization n=52, SD=.754 M=1.98	10	19.2	37	71.2	2	3.8	2	3.8	1	1.9
If my organization has a problem, I usually know where to go for a solution n=52, SD=.85 M=2.06	10	19.2	35	67.3	2	3.8	4	7.7	1	1.9
The Student Affairs staff is friendly and approachable n=52, SD=.678 M=2.19	8	15.4	26	50	18	34.6	0	0	0	0

Follow-up Interviews

Following the completion of the initial survey, additional questions needed to be explained. The survey was able to determine some feelings that students had towards the current services offered to all student organizations, but more data was needed to answer Research Question 4: What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive are actions that student affairs professionals can take in order to enhance the intentionality of being involved in clubs and organizations? To complete this task, the researcher completed a follow-up interview with six conveniently selected students.

Profile of the Follow-up Interviews Sample

While the initial intent was to complete a stratified random sample of representatives from the many different types of student organizations, the end result was a sample of convenience. Six students participated in the study, which involved an informal conversation about the current services offered by the university and the perceptions of what student affairs professionals can do to make a students' experience more educational. The students who participated with the follow-up interviews were all actively involved in SGA chartered organizations. Since there was difficulty in selecting a random sample, the researcher utilized students who spent significant time in the student center and were known as very active student leaders. As such, a potential bias in the research could be that the students chosen do not represent the typical student leader. Table 4.7 represents the demographics of the follow-up interview participants. Sixty-six percent of respondents were female, 66% were seniors, and 50% maintained above a 3.51 grade point average.

Table 4.7

Selected Demographics of the Follow-up Interview Sample

Variable	Frequency N=6	%
Gender		
Male	2	33.3
Female	4	66.6
Year Classification		
Freshman	0	0
Sophomore	0	0
Junior	2	33.3
Senior	4	66.6
Grade Point Average		
2.26-2.50	0	0
2.51-2.75	2	33.3
2.76-3.00	0	0
3.01-3.25	0	0
3.26-3.50	1	16.6
Above 3.51	3	50

Analysis of the Follow-up Interviews

The goal of the follow-up interviews was to identify areas for improvement for student affairs professionals to make out-of-class experiences more educational. Upon speaking to the students, the answers were analyzed by categorizing the comments and suggestions made by the students. Three categories for areas of improvement were identified: (a) advisor knowledge and accessibility, (b) clear communication of policies and procedures, and (c) adequate training of new officers/members of organizations.

The first area of concern, advisor knowledge and accessibility, was one that was identified by every student interviewed. Students feel very strongly that their advisor is an asset to the organization, and for that reason should be knowledgeable in the area with which they are working. This includes knowledge of campus policies and resources for

student organizations. Some of the students felt as if the advisor did not receive any training when accepting the role, and often felt like they are shuffled around when looking for an answer. Another part of the concern is advisor availability and accessibility. Students reported that finding the advisor was difficult, due to limited office hours. This is in part due, as students confessed, to waiting until the last minute to try and get things done. Students admitted that better planning would have alleviated the problem. Also, students who have advisors in Student Affairs, rather than faculty advisors, did not feel as strongly about the issue.

The next largest issue that students identified as needing improvement was a clearer communication of policies and procedures. Students felt that because the campus and community are changing so quickly, it is hard to keep up with the current policies. Also, students identified a disparity in how organizations are treated. For example, some of the larger organizations feel like they are scrutinized more closely than smaller groups on campus, and as such have to follow policies that most other organizations do not even know about.

Finally, when specifically asked how being involved in an organization can become an educational experience, many of the students talked about better training for officers and members. Students felt as if leadership training is an essential part of being a leader in a campus organization, but few organizations provided any formal leadership training. While many of the students identified as having little or no leadership training through the organization, several of the students were given the opportunity to attend conferences with a leadership component. When asked if they would participate in leadership training on campus, the answer was unanimously 'yes.'

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Study

This study was designed to determine why students get involved in student organizations, the perceived benefits of being involved, and the role of student affairs professionals in enhancing out-of-class learning. Fifty-two undergraduate students from Rowan University participated in the study by completing a survey that asked about involvement in a Student Government Association (SGA) chartered organization, perceived learning outcomes associated with involvement, and the student's perceptions about current services offered to student organizations. A follow-up interview was conducted with six students who completed the initial survey in order to more fully answer the question of what student affairs professionals can do to enhance out-of-class learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the involvement of students in out-of-class activities and the ways that student affairs professionals can enhance students' out-of-class experience through educationally intentional activities. By surveying and interviewing undergraduate students who were an elected leader of a student club or organization, the aim was to discover what students perceived to be the benefits of

involvement and how they felt the administration and institution could make the experience more educational.

Methodology

The participants in the study consisted of 52 selected undergraduate student leaders at Rowan University. In order to safeguard the rights and welfare of the participating students, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application (Appendix A) was completed on October 6, 2004 and submitted to Rowan University IRB for approval. Notice of approval was given by the IRB on October 23, 2004. The survey with attached consent form (Appendix B) was then distributed to participants.

The survey inquired about four areas: (a) why student get involved, (b) perceived benefits of involvement, (c) perceived learning outcomes associated with involvement, and (d) perceived actions that can be taken by student affairs professionals to enhance the intentionality of involvement. The format of the survey included rank order and Likert-scale responses. The survey also asked for demographic information such as gender, class rank, and grade point average.

Following completion of the surveys, follow-up interviews were conducted with six student leaders. Students were asked a series of questions, similar to what can be found on the survey. The main focus of the interview, however, was to identify actions that student affairs professionals can take to enhance out-of-class learning. A guideline of questions for the follow-up interviews is located in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

After the surveys were administered, the data were analyzed in four parts based on the research questions. The first two research questions were analyzed by looking at the Likert-scale responses from the first section of the survey. The third research question was addressed by examining the perceived learning outcomes section of the survey. The researcher sought to determine if students attributed specific learning outcomes to participation in out-of-class activities. And finally, the last research question was answered by students who expressed perceptions about current services offered to student organizations. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which calculated frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings of the data analysis were then used to create a set of open-ended questions for the follow-up interview. Upon speaking to the students, the answers were analyzed by categorizing the comments and suggestions made by the students.

Findings and Conclusions

Research Question 1: Why do selected undergraduate student leaders get involved in clubs and organizations?

In order to answer the first research question, the researcher looked at the survey items “Why did you initially get involved in an SGA chartered club?” and “Why did you decide to become an elected leader in your organization?” When asked why they initially got involved, 62% of respondents identified “For the experience/To build skills” as the most important or second most important reason, followed closely by “The club met one of my interests,” which had a 56% response rate as most important or second most

important. Forty percent of respondents stated that “For my resume” was the least important reason for getting involved. The next survey item asked students to identify the main reason for becoming an elected leader in their organization. Fifty-nine percent of respondents identified “I wanted to make a difference” as the most important reason or second most important reason for taking on a leadership role, followed closely by 57% of respondents who identified “I enjoy the club and wanted to spend more time working with it” as the most important or second most important reason. “For my resume” was one of the lowest scored answers, identified as the least important reason by 20% of respondents.

Research Question 2: What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive as the major benefits of involvement?

Students identified what they perceived to be the major benefit of involvement by ranking answers from the most important benefit to the least important benefit. “Getting to meet more students” and “Developing transferable skills” were the two most important benefits of being involved, receiving 37% and 29% of the responses respectively. Students also identified “Networking with faculty/administration” and “Networking in your career field” as important, getting 15% of the responses each. “Knowledge of the campus” and “Getting free stuff” were the least important benefits of student involvement. Wilson (1999) found that holding leadership positions in student organizations led to skill development such as budgeting, organizing and planning. It is important to note, however, that this study did not look at what skills were being developed, just that student perceived skill development as an important benefit of being

involved. Interaction with peers is also an important benefit of involvement, as reported by Wilson (1999) and Kuh (1995). Both report that peer groups have a positive effect of self-concept, interpersonal skills, intellectual growth, humanitarianism, and civic values.

Research Question 3: What learning outcomes do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive as a benefit of being involved in clubs and organizations?

The third area of this study asked students to identify learning outcomes associated with involvement in an organization. Students were given a list of outcomes and were asked to rank each as a Significant Change, Moderate Change, Low Change or No Change. The highest rated areas of significant change were “Running a meeting” (56%), “Leadership” (54%), “Public Speaking” (46%), “Problem Solving” (38%), and “Communication” (38%). Students identified “Persuasion” (40%), “Motivation” (37%), and “Mediating Conflict” (35%) as having little or no change due to involvement in an SGA chartered organization.

Several areas of the literature support the findings about leadership. Kapp’s 1979 study found that students identified increased leadership ability as one of the four major areas that were impacted by involvement. Kuh (1995) states that leadership is an essential part of a student’s learning and personal development, and that in his study, 85% of students listed leadership as an important developmental role.

Research Question 4: What do selected undergraduate student leaders perceive are actions that student affairs professionals should take in order to enhance the intentionality of involvement in clubs and organizations?

The fourth research question was answered by asking students to complete a Likert-scale response to statement made about services offered to SGA chartered student organizations. Students could Strongly Agree, Agree, No Opinion, Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the statements. For the statement “I would consider my leadership experience to be educational” 98% of students agreed or strongly agreed. Ninety-six percent of students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “By being involved, I am learning skills I can use in the future.” The highest percentage of no opinion (35%) came from the statement “The student affairs staff is friendly and approachable,” which suggests that the students who answered this way either did not have interactions with the student affairs staff or did not know who the student affairs staff consisted of. The highest response of disagree or strongly disagree, 31%, came from the statement “My organization’s advisor plays an active role in the group’s day-to-day activities”.

Dissatisfaction with the level of involvement of organizational advisors was also evident in the follow-up interviews. The interviews led to three areas needing improvement for student affairs professionals on the Rowan University campus: advisor knowledge and accessibility, clear communication of policies and procedures, and adequate training of new officers/members of organizations.

Each of the areas identified by the students as needing improvement was specific to the Rowan University campus, and cannot be compared to the literature. However, the literature provides a framework for best practices in the field. An advisor-training program should be created to ensure that all organizations are getting an appropriate amount of support from the institution. Kuh et al. (1994) provides a comprehensive list

of criteria for student affairs professionals to meet. This list should be the basis for training, as well as including training in areas such as campus policies and procedures, knowledge of campus resources, and information on appropriate ways to conduct assessment of learning outcomes.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. This study looked at student involvement at Rowan University. In order to gauge student perceptions at a national level, a larger study including more institutions would be needed.
2. This study found that students identified “building skills” as a benefit of involvement, but did not identify which skills. Further research should be done to identify the specific skills that students are learning to gauge consistency with the literature.
3. A longitudinal assessment of learning outcomes, following students from joining an organization through graduation, would better describe the outcomes associated with involvement in a specific organization.
4. This study only looked at Rowan University, so the suggestions for actions that student affairs professionals can take to enhance out-of-class learning would only be appropriate to the campus.
5. It was difficult to get student organization presidents to participate in the study. It would have been helpful to find a common time that all organization presidents could meet, or worked with SGA to include the survey as part of a clubs requirement to stay chartered.

6. It was difficult to arrange participant schedules for the follow-up interviews, and as such, all participants were very active leaders that the researcher knew. Additional interviews with a stratified random sample of organization presidents are suggested for further research.

REFERENCES

- Astin, A.W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 25, 297-308.
- Brown, R. (1985). The student development educator role. In U. Delworth & G Hanson (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (pp.191-208). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Jacobi, M., Astin, A., & Ayala, F. (1987). College student outcomes assessment: A talent development prospective. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*. No. 7. Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Higher Education.
- Kapp, G.J. (1979). *College extracurricular activities: Who participates and what are the Benefits?* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of California, Los Angeles.
- Kuh, G.D., Schuh, J.H., Whitt, E.J., & Associates. (1991). *Involving colleges: Successful approaches to fostering student learning and development outside the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuh, G.D., Douglas, K.B., Lund, J.P., & Ramin-Gyurnek, J. (1994). Student learning outside the classroom: Transcending artificial boundaries. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report*. No. 8. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University, School of Education and Human Development.
- Kuh, G.D. (1995). The other curriculum: Out-of-class experiences associated with student learning and personal development. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 66 (2), 123-155.

Rowan University Fact Sheet. (n.d.). Retrieved December 1, 2004 from

<http://www.rowan.edu>

Wilson, J.D. (1999). *The impact of involvement in campus organizations on student satisfaction, skill development, and perceived personal change*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Georgia, Athens.

APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Application and Notice of Approval

Rowan University
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW APPLICATION

2004-144
RECEIVED OCT 07 2004

INSTRUCTIONS: Check all appropriate boxes, answer all questions completely, include attachments, and obtain appropriate signatures. Submit an **original and two copies** of the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost for Research Expediter(s). Be sure to make a copy for your files.

FOR IRB USE ONLY:

Protocol Number: IRB-

Received: _____ Reviewed: 10/18/04

Exemption: Yes No

Category(ies): 2

Approved: [Signature] (date) 10/18/04

Step 1: Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?

All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, **STOP**. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

Step 2: If you have determined that the proposed research is subject to IRB review, complete the identifying information below.

Project Title:

A Study Investigating the Intentionality of Student Clubs and Organizations at Rowan University

Researcher: Lauren Ackermann or B. Sisco

Department: Educational Leadership

Location: Rowan University

Mailing Address: 201 Mullica Hill Rd (Street)

Glassboro, NJ 08028 (Town/State/Zip)

E-Mail: ackerm17@students.rowan.edu

Telephone: (856) 256-6367

Co-Investigator/s:

n/a

Faculty Sponsor (if student)* Dr. Burt Sisco

Department Educational Leadership Location: Rowan University

E-Mail: sisco@rowan.edu Telephone: (856) 256-3717

Approved For Use by Rowan IRB: 7/04

From "Tricia J. Yurak" <yurak@rowan.edu>
Sent Saturday, October 23, 2004 5:00 pm
To "Tricia J. Yurak" <yurak@groupwise.rowan.edu> ,
ackerm17@students.rowan.edu
Cc
Bcc
Subject APPROVAL: IRB Application 2004-144-Ackerman

Your IRB application is now approved.

A hard-copy of this notification will be mailed to the Principal Investigator shortly.

Thank you, and good luck with your project.

~~~~~  
Tricia J. Yurak, Ph.D.  
Chair, Rowan University Institutional Review Board  
Department of Psychology  
Rowan University  
Glassboro, NJ 08028

yurak@rowan.edu  
fax: 856-256-4892  
~~~~~

**Rowan University
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
 HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW APPLICATION**

INSTRUCTIONS: Check all appropriate boxes, answer all questions completely, include attachments, and obtain appropriate signatures. Submit an **original and two copies** of the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost for Research Expediter(s). Be sure to make a copy for your files.

FOR IRB USE ONLY:
 Protocol Number: IRB-_____
 Received: _____ Reviewed: _____
 Exemption: Yes No
 Category(ies): _____
 Approved _____ (date)

Step 1: Is the proposed research subject to IRB review?

All research involving human participants conducted by Rowan University faculty and staff is subject to IRB review. Some, but not all, student-conducted studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to IRB review. Check the accompanying instructions for more information. Then check with your class instructor for guidance as to whether you must submit your research protocol for IRB review. If you determine that your research meets the above criteria and is not subject to IRB review, **STOP**. You do not need to apply. If you or your instructor have any doubts, apply for an IRB review.

Step 2: If you have determined that the proposed research is subject to IRB review, complete the identifying information below.

Project Title:

A Study Investigating the Intentionality of Student Clubs and Organizations at Rowan University

Researcher: Lauren Ackermann

Department: Educational Leadership Location Rowan University

Mailing Address: 201 Mullica Hill Rd (Street)
Glassboro, NJ 08028 (Town/State/Zip)

E-Mail: ackerm17@students.rowan.edu Telephone: (856) 256-6367

Co-Investigator/s:
n/a

Faculty Sponsor (if student)* Dr. Burt Sisco
 Department Educational Leadership Location: Rowan University
 E-Mail: sisco@rowan.edu Telephone: (856) 256-3717

Approved For Use by Rowan IRB: 7/04

Step 3: Determine whether the proposed research eligible for an exemption from a full IRB review.

Federal regulations (45 CFR 46) permit the exemption of some types of research from a full IRB review. If your research can be described by one or more of the categories listed below, check the appropriate category(ies), complete questions 1-5, and complete the Assurances on the last page of the application.

If your research cannot be described by any of these categories, your research is not exempt, and you must complete the entire "Human Research Review Application."

- Category 1** - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as: (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies; or (b) research on the effectiveness of, or the comparison among, instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
- Category 2** - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior, unless: (a) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that the human participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants; and (b) any disclosure of the human participants' responses outside the research could reasonably place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the participants' financial standing, employability, or reputation.
(Note: Exemption for survey and interview procedures does not apply to research involving children. Exemption for observation of public behavior does not apply to research involving children except when the investigator does not participate in the activities being observed.)
- Category 3** - Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under Category 2 above if: (a) the human participants are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (b) federal statute requires without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
- Category 4** - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that participants cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the participants.
- Category 5** - Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (a) public benefit or service programs; (b) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (c) possible changes in or alternatives to these programs or procedures; or (d) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those programs.
- Category 6** - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies: (a) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed; or (b) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
(Note: Exemption categories cannot be applied to research involving fetuses, pregnant women, human in vitro fertilization, or prisoners.)

Please answer Questions 1-5 below

1. WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH?

To determine the following: 1. Why student leaders get involved and what they perceive as the major benefits of their involvement
2. What learning outcomes student leaders perceive as an effect of being involved in clubs and organizations
3. What student leaders perceive are actions that student affairs staff and administration can take in order to enhance the intentionality of being

2. DESCRIBE THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH INCLUDING WHAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF SUBJECTS (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEET IF NECESSARY):

This is a mixed method research project. The initial survey will be distributed to approximately 100 students. After the surveys have been collected, a random sample of students will be chosen for a followup interview. Attached, please find the survey and a sample of questions to be asked at the followup interview. Please note that the exact interview questions will be determined based on the responses in the survey.

3. DESCRIBE THE SUBJECTS WHO WILL BE PARTICIPATING (NUMBER, AGE, GENDER, ETC):

The surveys are being distributed to all presidents (or elected leaders) of student clubs chartered by the SGA at Rowan University. There will be approximately 100 students asked to fill the survey out. The students will all most likely be juniors and seniors, and a mixture of genders, SES, ethnicity, etc.

4. DESCRIBE HOW SUBJECTS WILL BE RECRUITED (e.g. ADVERTISEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS IN CLASS, E-MAIL, INTERNET)

Surveys will be put in each organization's mailbox in the SGA office.

5. WHERE WILL THE RESEARCH BE CONDUCTED:

Rowan University

NOTE: IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED IN ANOTHER INSTITUTION (e.g. A SCHOOL, HOSPITAL, AGENCY, etc.) A PERMISSION LETTER FROM AN ADMINISTRATOR ON THE LETTERHEAD OF THAT INSTITUTION MUST BE ATTACHED.

IF THE RESEARCH IS TO BE CONDUCTED AT ANOTHER UNIVERSITY, A SIGNED COPY OF THE IRB APPROVAL FORM FROM THAT UNIVERSITY MUST BE ATTACHED.

ATTACH THE CONSENT FORM TO THIS APPLICATION. The Consent Form must address all of the elements required for informed consent (SEE INSTRUCTIONS).

NOTE: IF THE ONLY RECORD LINKING THE SUBJECT AND THE RESEARCH WOULD BE THE CONSENT DOCUMENT, AND THE RESEARCH PRESENTS NO MORE THAN MINIMAL RISK OF HARM TO SUBJECTS, YOU MAY USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE FOR CONSENT. IF YOU WISH TO REQUEST PERMISSION FROM THE IRB TO USE AN ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE, ATTACH A COPY OF THE FIRST PAGE OF YOUR RESEARCH INSTRUMENT OR A LETTER WITH THE REQUIRED INFORMATION (see Instructions).

If you are requesting an exemption from a full IRB review, STOP. Complete the last page of this application ("Certifications"), and forward the completed application to the Office of the Associate Provost for Research, The Graduate School, Memorial Hall.

IF YOU CANNOT CLAIM ONE OF THE EXEMPTIONS LISTED ABOVE, COMPLETE ALL OF THE ABOVE AS WELL AS THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR A FULL IRB REVIEW.

Does your research involve a special population?

- Socioeconomically, educationally, or linguistically disadvantaged, racial/ethnic group
- Pregnancy/fetus
- Cognitively impaired
- Elderly
- Terminally ill
- Incarcerated
- No special population

At what level of risk will the participants in the proposed research be placed?

(Note: "Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. The concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes risks to the participant's dignity and self-respect as well as psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk.)

Minimal Risk More than Minimal Risk Uncertain

1. HOW WILL SUBJECTS BE RECRUITED? IF STUDENTS, WILL THEY BE SOLICITED FROM CLASS?

2. WHAT RISKS TO SUBJECTS (PHYSIOLOGICAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL) ARE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH?

3. IS DECEPTION INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH? IF SO, WHAT IS IT AND WHY WILL IT BE USED?

4. WHAT INFORMATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SUBJECTS AFTER THEIR PARTICIPATION? IF DECEPTION IS USED, IT MUST BE DISCLOSED AFTER PARTICIPATION.

5. HOW WILL CONFIDENTIALITY BE MAINTAINED? WHO WILL KNOW THE IDENTITY OF THE SUBJECTS? IF A PRE-AND POSTTEST DESIGN IS USED, HOW WILL THE SUBJECTS BE IDENTIFIED?

6. HOW WILL THE DATA BE RECORDED AND STORED? WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE DATA? ALL DATA MUST BE KEPT BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR FOR A MINIMUM OF THREE YEARS.

CERTIFICATIONS:

Rowan University maintains a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. This Assurance includes a requirement for all research staff working with human participants to receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors.

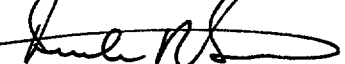
Please attach a copy of your "Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams" from the National Institutes of Health.

If you need to complete that training, go to the Web Tutorial at <http://cme.nci.nih.gov/>

Responsible Researcher: I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks and will adhere to the policies and procedures of the Rowan University Institutional Review Board. I will ensure that all research staff working on the proposed project who will have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting this research (including students fulfilling these roles) will complete IRB approved training. I will not initiate this research project until I receive written approval from the IRB. I agree to obtain informed consent of participants in this project if required by the IRB; to report to the IRB any unanticipated effects on participants which become apparent during the course or as a result of experimentation and the actions taken as a result; to cooperate with the IRB in the continuing review of this project; to obtain prior approval from the IRB before amending or altering the scope of the project or implementing changes in the approved consent form; and to maintain documentation of consent forms and progress reports for a minimum of three years after completion of the final report or longer if required by the sponsor or the institution. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature.

Signature of Responsible Researcher:  Date: 10/6/04

Faculty Advisor (if Responsible Researcher is a student): I certify that I am familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human participants from research risks. I further certify that I have completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years as indicated below my signature (attach copy of your "Completion Certificate for Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams" from the National Institutes of Health).

Signature of Faculty Adviser:  Date: 10/6/04



Search

[NCI Home](#)[Cancer Topics](#)[Clinical Trials](#)[Cancer Statistics](#)[Research & Funding](#)[News](#)

Human Participant Protections Education for Research

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Lauren Ackermann

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 10/05/2004.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.
- the roles, responsibilities, and interactions of federal agencies, institutions, and researchers in conducting research with human participants.

National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nih.gov>

[Home](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Policies](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Site Help](#) | [Site Map](#)

A Service of the National Cancer Institute



FIRSTGOV



Search

GO

NCI Home | Cancer Topics | Clinical Trials | Cancer Statistics | Research & Funding | News | About NCI



Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams

Completion Certificate

This is to certify that

Burton Sisco

has completed the **Human Participants Protection Education for Research Teams** online course, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), on 09/29/2004.

This course included the following:

- key historical events and current issues that impact guidelines and legislation on human participant protection in research.
- ethical principles and guidelines that should assist in resolving the ethical issues inherent in the conduct of research with human participants.
- the use of key ethical principles and federal regulations to protect human participants at various stages in the research process.
- a description of guidelines for the protection of special populations in research.
- a definition of informed consent and components necessary for a valid consent.
- a description of the role of the IRB in the research process.

APPENDIX B

Letter of Informed Consent and Survey

Dear Student Organization President,

I am a graduate student in the Higher Education Administration program and **would like to ask for your help with a research study I am conducting as part of my thesis.** The study is investigating student leader perception of learning outside of the classroom and perceptions of what administrators can do to help facilitate this learning.

Attached is a letter of consent and a short survey. Please fill both out completely. Once the survey is complete, you can return it to me (with the informed consent form) in one of the following ways:

-Drop it off in Student Center room 107 (back office, between the bathrooms and the student center main office). There will be a folder hanging on the door, so you can drop it off at any time.

or

-Mail it to me. You can address it to Lauren Ackermann, Box 2785, Rowan University, 201 Mullica Hill Rd, Glassboro, NJ 08028 (or simply Lauren Ackermann, Box 2785 and put it in the on-campus mail slot in the mailroom).

Please return both the survey and informed consent by February 18th, 2004.

Thank you in advance for your support!

Sincerely,

Lauren Ackermann

Lauren Ackermann
Graduate Student/ Higher Ed Admin.
(856) 256-4187

Informed Consent Form

I agree to participate in a research project entitled “A Study Investigating the Intentionality of Student Clubs and Organizations at Rowan University”, which is being conducted by Lauren Ackermann as an assignment in partial fulfillment of the Master’s Degree in Higher Education Administration. This purpose of this study is to explore the ways that student affairs staff and administration can enhance a student’s out-of-class experience through activities that promote learning. The data collected in this study will be combined with data from previous studies and will be submitted as part of a research paper.

I understand that my responses will be anonymous and that all the data gathered will be confidential. I agree that any information obtained from this study may be used in any way thought best for publication or education provided that I am in no way identified and my name is not used.

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 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 Lauren Ackermann at (856) 256-4187 or Dr. Burt Sisco at (856) 256-3717.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Investigator)

(Date)

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

This survey is being administered as part of a master's degree research project. While your participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions herein, your cooperation and participation are important to the success of the project and are greatly appreciated. If you choose to participate, please understand that all responses are strictly confidential and no personally identifiable information is being requested.

This purpose of this study is to explore the ways that student affairs staff and administration can enhance a student's out-of-class experience through activities that promote learning.

Please answer the following questions about your involvement in an SGA chartered club:

- 1) Why did you initially get involved in an SGA chartered club? (Please rank order by level of importance with 1 being most important, 2 being next important, etc.)

I was involved in HS and wanted to continue For the experience/to build skills
 To meet people For my resume
 The club met one of my interests Other (please specify below)

- 2) Why did you decide to become an elected leader of your organization? (Please rank order by level of importance with 1 being most important, 2 being next important, etc.)

For the experience/to build skills For my resume
 No one else wanted the position I wanted to make a difference
 I enjoy the club and wanted to spend more time working with it
 Other (please specify) _____

- 3) What is the greatest benefit of being involved? (Please rank order by level of importance with 1 being most important, 2 being next important, etc.)

Networking with faculty/administration Getting to meet more students
 Developing transferable skills Knowledge of the campus
 Learning communication skills Networking in your career field
 Free stuff Other (Please specify below)

Please complete the second side of the survey

- 4) The following is a list of skills that a person could develop or enhance from participation in an SGA chartered club. Please look at this list and check the response which best reflects how you feel that being a leader in an SGA Chartered Club has helped you personally change. The possible responses are:

Significant Change (SC) Moderate Change (MC) Low Change (LC) No Change (NC)

	SC	MC	LC	NC		SC	MC	LC	NC
Time management	___	___	___	___	Public speaking	___	___	___	___
Running a meeting	___	___	___	___	Goal setting	___	___	___	___
Leadership	___	___	___	___	Problem solving	___	___	___	___
Mediating conflict	___	___	___	___	How to work on a team	___	___	___	___
Persuasion	___	___	___	___	Communication	___	___	___	___
How to motivate	___	___	___	___					

- 5) Listed below are statements that reflect attitudes towards institutional support for student organizations. For each statement check whether you:

Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) No Opinion (NO) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD)

	SA	A	NO	D	SD
There is a connection between my in-class and out-of-class experiences	___	___	___	___	___
My organization's advisor is easily accessible	___	___	___	___	___
My organization's advisor plays an active role in the group's day-to-day activities	___	___	___	___	___
The Student Affairs staff is friendly and approachable	___	___	___	___	___
I understand how SGA works, and the role it plays with my organization	___	___	___	___	___
If my organization has a problem, I usually know where to go for the solution	___	___	___	___	___
I understand how my organization gets funded	___	___	___	___	___
By being involved, I am learning skills that I can use in the future	___	___	___	___	___
I would consider my leadership experience to be educational	___	___	___	___	___

Please provide the following demographic information:

Gender ___ Male ___ Female

Year Classification ___ Freshman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior

GPA ___ Below 2.0 ___ 2.01-2.25 ___ 2.26-2.50 ___ 2.51-2.75

 ___ 2.76-3.00 ___ 3.01-3.25 ___ 3.26-3.50 ___ Above 3.51

Thank you for your time and help!

PLEASE RETURN (WITH INFORMED CONSENT FORM) TO STUDENT CENTER ROOM 107, MAIL TO BOX 2785, ROWAN UNIV. 201 MULLICA HILL RD, GLASSBORO, NJ 08028 OR EMAIL ACKERM17@STUDENTS.ROWAN.EDU

APPENDIX C

Follow-up Interview Questions

Student Involvement Study

Follow-up Interview

- 1) Why did you become a leader in your organization?
- 2) What are the benefits of being involved?
- 3) What skills, knowledge and dispositions have you learned in your organization that you can apply in the classroom (and vice versa)? Please explain.
- 4) What is the greatest lesson you have learned from your leadership experience?
- 5) What types of supports does your organization receive from the institution? Do you feel it is adequate?
- 6) What role does your advisor play in your organization?
- 7) Concerning how your organization and the institution interact: if you could change anything, what would you change?
- 8) How is Rowan is providing a rich out-of-class learning experience? Please explain.