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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PROGRAMMING AT FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PROGRAMMING AT FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS

by

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Abstract

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STUDENT ENGAGMENT THROUGH PROGRAMMING AT FOUR-YEAR
INSTITUTIONS
2022-2023
Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

The purpose of this study is to quantitatively examine the ways in which student engagement is utilized on the Glassboro campus at Rowan University and how it has impacted the overall development of undergraduate students enrolled in the Fall of 2022 and Spring of 2023. Utilizing Qualtrics, a 14-question survey was distributed to all enrolled students starting in December of 2022 and ending in February of 2023. This survey contained questions that surveyed the population demographically and asked how frequent they attend various programs on-campus. The survey data was then analyzed to better understand students' perceptions of the current programming structure at Rowan University. The research indicated that many of the current programs are impactful to students such as student organization, Rowan After Hours, and department programs. Through this research, there is also a better understand of how the current programming structure can evolve and meet the needs of the student population. The research suggests that there is a need for more identity-based programming and for alternative timing to programs to fit the schedule of every type of student including commuting students, and non-traditional students.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Higher education has changed significantly throughout the years, and the overall needs of students has drastically shifted. The process of creating and maintaining programs is a key component to student engagement. The term 'student engagement' refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience (Astin, 1999). Researchers such as Owen (2012) have given insight into how a student's willingness to engage with the institution's body and surrounding community plays a vital role in a student's success. Creating programs such as late-night alcohol prevention activities, intramural sports, student organization programs, etc., are a way to engage the student population in an impactful manner.

Statement of the Research Problem

As previously defined by Astin, student engagement is defined by the amount of psychological and physical energy devoted by the student. The more involved a student becomes the more the student benefits from the institution. College is a stressful time and often students find themselves going through a period of self-discovery. It is important that each institution provides an environment that positively impacts a student's journey in the classroom and outside to cultivate a well-rounded experience.

Significance of the Research Problem

As the needs of students change over time, the importance of creating beneficial programming is an essential element to student success and development. This research will reflect the undergraduate student population's feelings towards the current model of student engagement through programming. After the data is collected, the research will

allow professionals to utilize the results to make informed decisions about the current programming structure.

While the topic of student engagement has been explored in many facets through theories such as Astin's theory of involvement and Tinto's student departure theory, it fewer studies exist on student engagement after the COVID-19 epidemic. COVID-19 has significantly disrupted student engagement as the classroom environment was shifted into a wholly online learning environment (Hews, 2022). Student engagement is affected by factors such as self-efficacy, sense of belonging, emotions, and wellbeing. These factors were heavily impacted during the pandemic and students' emotions and wellbeing in their personal lives heavily influence university lives (Hews, 2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to examine the ways in which student engagement is utilized on the Glassboro campus at Rowan University and how it has impacted the overall development of undergraduate students. Rowan University has a multitude of different programs that focus on student engagement and development. These programs include late-night programming (Rowan After Hours), intramural and club sports (Campus Recreation), Student Government Association organization programming, fraternity and sorority life, and departmental programming (Wellness Center, Career Advancement, Accessibility Services, etc.). Each of these areas provide programming to serve the student population and to engage in student development.

Assumptions and Limitations

While this research is designed to provide necessary information for Rowan University, the data collected may not be transferable to all institutions. Student

engagement may look different at other institutions to meet the diverse needs of the students it serves. In addition, this study assumes that all students who willingly participate in the survey would answer the questions honestly though this might not always hold true.

The population for this research was approximately 15,000 undergraduate students. To obtain a confidence interval of 95%, 375 responses had to be recorded. Throughout the data analysis process, the data was cleaned to eliminate data points that were not completed (Osborne, 2013). Many responses recorded were only 25% complete and had to be discarded, leaving the number of legitimate responses to 290. While this does not meet the number of responses required for a 95% confidence interval, trends could still be found in the data. Findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

Operational Definition of Important Terms

Below are important terms defined that are used frequently throughout this research study:

1. *Academic Year*: The period of academic instruction at Rowan University which occurs from early September through early May and is divided into two terms: one in the fall and one in the spring.

2. *Undergraduate Student*: For this study, any student pursuing a bachelor's degree that is enrolled within the academic year of 2022-2023 is defined as an undergraduate student.

3. *Program*: An event occurring on-campus that is provided by the institution

4. *Student Engagement/Involvement*: The amount of physical and psychological participation that an undergraduate student dedicates to their higher education experience.

Research Questions

This study is designed to address the following questions:

1. In what ways does the number of programs and the frequency in which students attend them at Rowan University impact the overall student experience?

2. Which programs provided by Rowan University are perceived to be the most beneficial in serving the needs of undergraduate students?

3. In what ways can Rowan University better serve students regarding campus engagement based on the data collected in this survey?

4. Are there current barriers students face at Rowan University that hinder their ability to engage with the institution's community?

Organization of the Study

Chapter II will provide a review of relevant literature about the impact and benefits of engaging students through programs. Chapter III provides the methodology used to complete the study at Rowan University. This includes, context of the study, population and sampling, data collection and data analysis. Chapter IV will provide the findings of the study and identify the common themes that emerged through data collection. Chapter V provides a summary of the findings, a discussion of the research, a conclusion, and recommendations of further research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

To gain a better understanding of student engagement through the use of programming, this review will first explore the history of higher education starting in the 1950s and moving into the post-WWII climate. Next, this review will cover theories that pertain to student engagement: Astin's theory of involvement, Tinto's theory of student departure, and the theory of intersectionality. This discussion leads into the importance of identifying current factors that affect a student's ability to attend a four-year institution or to feel connected to their current institution. This includes ethnicity, gender, finances, and home life. Finally, this review covers programming and how it is an effective way to engage students with the campus community.

History of Higher Education

Student engagement and the importance of understanding how to holistically develop students has been a research topic in higher education for years (Owen, 2013). In the 1950s, higher education was a social demand (Geiger, 2019). According to Geiger's (2019) argument of post-WWII life, families sought higher education for their children because it provided opportunities for better life prospects, a relative advantage in economic opportunities, elevated social status, and a distinction in culture. With constantly increasing enrollment, it became important for academics to understand a student's development in order to shape them into functional members of society. As time went on, most students lived on campus and participated in extracurricular life (Geiger, 2019). With more students choosing to participate socially at institutions, the overall purpose of higher education shifted and a greater demand for programs was

determined. What students gain from their college experience depends largely on how much time and effort a student puts into their studies and other educationally purposeful activities (Pascarella, 2001).

Early Researchers of Student Engagement in Higher Education

Student engagement has been researched by many higher education professionals. Throughout this section of the literature review, Astin's student involvement, Chickering and Gamson's seven good practices, and Tinto's student development theory will be examined.

Astin's Student Involvement Theory

As first defined by Astin (1999), student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Through this theory, one can assume that the student who is highly involved and devotes considerable energy into academics and extracurricular activities is more likely to be successful at an institution (Astin, 1999). This theory closely resembles a Freudian concept that those who spend a great deal of energy invested in other people and objects psychologically do better than those who do not (Astin, 1999).

Chickering and Gamson's Seven Good Practices

In the same light, Chickering and Gamson (1999) developed seven good principles for good practice in undergraduate education that include:

1. Student-faculty contact
2. Active learning
3. Prompt feedback
4. Time on task

5. High Expectations

6. Respect for diverse learning styles

7. Cooperation amount students

Each of these practices engages students in a meaningful manner that is impactful for the student and helps engagement at the university at large.

Tinto's Student Departure Theory

Another important development theory is Tinto's model of individual student departure. Tinto's (1988) theory recognizes the distinct stages which reflect the unique problems individuals encounter in seeking to become incorporated into the life of an institution. The three major stages within this theory are: separation, transition, and incorporation. Separation is the stage in which requires students to dissociate from oneself (Tinto, 1988). In this stage, students must shed the identity they had created in past communities such as high school or a previous place of residence. This process can be stressful for the student. The second stage, transition, is a period of passage between the old and the new where the student has separated their past life and has begun to show signs of new norms and patterns in college life (Tinto, 1988). This is a stage where students seek a lot of support as they are not firmly rooted in community yet. Without assistance, students might flounder and withdraw from college. The last stage, incorporation, is when a student has adopted the norms appropriate to the college setting and has established competent membership in social and intellectual communities (Tinto, 1988).

As addressed through the incorporation stage, this theory indicates that extracurricular involvement is believed to be critical in students' process of persistence

(Milem & Berger, 1997). Student success is heavily influenced by the integration of social and academic components of an institution. Additionally, the student must successfully navigate the separation, transition, and incorporation from past norms in order to thrive in a higher education setting (Milem & Berger,1997).

Furthermore, as we have seen throughout history, a great deal of attention is paid to the university community in times of growth (Owen, 2013). Many researchers have sought to understand which components of higher education impact the likelihood of student engagement such as Amy Reschly (2020). Through her research, Reschly (2020) conceptualized student engagement as understanding both psychological connection within this academic environment and active student behavior. Reschly (2020) claimed it is "not sufficient to focus on only the complete learning activities or attendance to re-engage students or foster a student identity as a learner" (p. 7).

George Kuh was the director of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) in Indiana and produced a widely popular data report on the findings of student engagement at institutions across the country (Kuh, 2003). Through his research, he found which student populations had the most success in the classroom by engaging with their community in an active way (Kuh, 2003). Through these discoveries, Kuh (2003) pointed out that those who are most engaged tend to be students who live on campus and attend university full-time. This could be a result of this student population not having as much responsibility outside the classroom as part-time students might (Kuh, 2003).

The Impact of Identities and Other Factors on Student Engagement

While it is important to think about outside factors that might play a significant role in a student's willingness to engage as pointed out by Kuh (2003), it is also

important to consider other roadblocks students might face during their journey through higher education. Schlossberg (1989) articulated that a student's involvement created a connection between students, faculty, and staff that will benefit the student's own personal worth. Throughout this research, Schlossberg was able to identify how marginality and mattering play a huge role in a student's ability to feel like a part of the community. It is stated that higher education professionals identifying student involvement in learning is an important part of well-being (Schlossberg, 1989). As examined by Schlossberg, marginality, mattering, and the feeling of belonging affects whether a student is willing to be involved within the campus community (1989). There is a common theme that is linked between Schlossberg's (1989) main point of creating a welcoming environment and Kuh's (2009) research on student engagement. Through his research, Kuh (2009) can examine exactly how students engage in their campus community throughout their journey. Certain outcomes became present as Kuh (2009) looked at students' race, age, and the institution's overall ability to engage the student population. Kuh (2009) can bring to light many critical areas for student affairs professionals to think about in their careers such as creating a student working environment that is both impactful and useful for the student.

Intersectionality

As established throughout this section, it is important that a student's identity is considered in the conversation of institutional programming and engagement. As defined in Patton's (2016) research, a student's identity model must account for the complexity of backgrounds, characteristics, beliefs, and aspirations. In other words, the study of intersecting identities is an important topic to discuss as it relates to student development

theory (Patton, 2016). The theory of intersectionality emerged in the twenty-first century

due to the lack of consideration that had previously been given to the convergence of

identities (Patton, 2016). For example, a student who identifies within multiple identities

that are targets of systematic oppression will have different challenges than a student who

may identify with one oppressed identity. Intersectionality expresses the idea that

students may experience their identity differently in different campus contexts over time

and that their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religious identities will all

influence one another (Patton, 2016). In terms of student engagement, intersectionality

theory plays a role in the way students interact with an institution.

On Campus Living & Student Engagement

Another key element to identity and student engagement is providing a living-

learning environment for students (Webber, 2013). As discussed in Webber's (2013)

research, students who live on campus reported a more positive perception of campus,

tended to be more satisfied with their experience, reported more personal growth and

development, and engaged more frequently with peers and faculty members than students

who lived off campus.

However, living on campus is not the reality of many college students identifying

as commuter students. Commuters can be defined as students whose place of residence

while attending college is not in a campus residence hall or in a fraternity or sorority

house (Jacoby, 2000). As discussed by Burlison (2015), based on a 2011-2012

undergraduate student profile, over 60% of the students who lived off campus were either

married, over the age of 30, or worked full-time while enrolled in school. However, there

is a difference between traditional age first-year students versus non-traditional

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commuters. First-year students who do not live on campus are more likely to be living with their parents or be an older student with a permanent residence (Kuh, Gonyea, & Palmer, 2001). Many students who are attempting to balance both their home life and their school life can have feelings of guilt from missing out on family time or find themselves not feeling as connected to the campus community as a student (Burlison, 2015).

Financial Aid & Student Engagement

Additionally, in more recent years, higher education has seen an increase in the cost to go to college (Boatman & Long, 2016). Rising tuition prices have outpaced inflation and growth in family income for the last seven decades (Boatman & Long, 2016). This directly affects a student's ability to go to college and student involvement as a whole. As discussed in Boatman and Long (2016), involvement in campus organizations could increase the benefits a student gets from college by fostering networks and personal skills (Boatman, & Long, 2016). However, due to the increase in cost, students pursuing higher education may have other responsibilities such as a job or home life. This means that many undergraduate students are juggling multiple responsibilities and have less time to spend with the campus community. Due to this, there is an increase in the need for meaningful programs that will engage students socially and academically.

Programming as a Tool to Enhance Student Engagement

Furthering Kuh's point to continue to engage the student population in meaningful ways, Groccia (2018) examined what student engagement is in a modern lens on four-year college campuses. The term 'student engagement' has become a prominent

determination of student and institutional success. To understand this further, Groccia (2018) specifically set out to determine the components that encompass engagement on campus: with faculty, staff, peers and the student's community. A faculty member's reinforcement on co-curricular involvement and using collaborative learning techniques positively impacts students and they show a higher level of engagement (Webber, 2013). The impact college has on students is largely dependent on their involvement in the classroom and outside of the classroom through other activities (Groccia, 2018). This is not necessarily a new finding, but Groccia (2018) expanded to say that the importance of student engagement operates on multiple levels: behavioral, affective, and cognitive. To engage in a behavioral level, the student must participate and be committed to the learning process (Groccia, 2018). To engage at the affective level, students must have an interest in the experience and the motivation to sustain commitment (Groccia, 2018). Lastly, students will engage at a cognitive level by showing ways in which they mentally process thought and engage in the learning process (Groccia, 2018). Similarly, to Kuh (2003), Groccia looked at student engagement in multiple unique lights. Groccia (2018) was able to engage the way in which Kuh looked at other factors hindering student engagement, and approach how it will then impact the student cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally.

Ratcliffe and Dimmock (2013) also examined student engagement similarly to the way in which Kuh (2003) and Groccia (2018) were able to articulate throughout their research. Ratcliffe and Dimmock (2013) approached what student engagement means by examining student life at Exeter College in the United Kingdom in comparison to an American university. At Exeter, faculty, staff, and students found that student

engagement is about encompassing a student's interaction to the entire university experience. This includes participation, engagement, and activism on campus. An American university professor viewed student engagement merely as an academic focus. This professor had only seen student engagement in the lens of participation in the classroom and within academic affairs. Engagement consists of much more than what happens in the classroom and students can find themselves at different levels of engagement with their university life (Ratcliffe & Dimmock, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

The definitions used throughout the literature review, the discussion in the history of higher education post-WWII, and the theories explained – Astin's theory of involvement, Chickering and Gamson's seven good practices, Tinto's theory of student departure, and the theory of intersectionality – provide a theoretical framework for the research questions and a lend for analyzing the data.

Conclusion

Higher education continues to evolve over centuries of adaptation to match the needs of students. As discussed throughout this literature review, theories such as Astin's theory of involvement, Tinto's theory of student departure, and the theory of intersectionality help higher education professionals better understand how to engage students within the campus community. To further this research, the literature review offers how to engage students through impactful programming. Programming at institutions seeks to provide students with a welcoming space to develop socially, academically, and emotionally. As campus climates continue to change over time, programming and other ways in which students engage with an institution will also need

to adapt. With my theoretical framework in mind, the next chapter details the decisions I

made when designing this research study.

Chapter III

Methodology

Context of the Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University (RU). Rowan University is a Carnegie-classified national doctoral research university located in Glassboro, New Jersey. According to Rowan University Fast Facts, Rowan offers bachelor's through doctoral programs to more than 22,000 students through its campuses in Glassboro, Camden, Stratford, New Jersey, and online (Rowan University, 2022a). RU offers 90 bachelor's, 48 masters, 2 professional, and 9 doctoral degree programs.

At Rowan University, there are a multitude of programs and resources offered to engage students such as leadership programs, campus activities, fraternity and sorority life, fitness opportunities, and student government opportunities (Rowan University, 2022b). For the purposes of this research, the target population is students on the Glassboro campus. The is available to 15,269 undergraduate students regardless of race, gender, and other factors.

Population and Sampling

Before conducting my research, I first approached the IRB board to ensure that my practices are ethical and that there is minimal risk to the participants. Due to the nature of my research being conducted via email through Qualtrics and entirely up to free will, there are no risks involved with the students participating. Each participant remained completely anonymous by the utilization of coded data. Participants included all undergraduate students enrolled in the 2022-2023 academic year at RU. This survey was available to 15,269 undergraduate students currently enrolled at Rowan University's

Glassboro Campus. To obtain statistical significance, I needed 375 respondents to the survey. This sample size was determined based on a 95% confidence rate.

The reason I will only be surveying undergraduate students is due to the student life fee that is required for all undergraduate students enrolled at RU. Students received an email to their student email accounts with access to the survey. The choice to participate was entirely up to the student and there was no incentive provided.

Data Collection

Data collection was done via a survey in Qualtrics, a software platform designed for creating surveys. Qualtrics collected the quantitative data needed to complete the research. The questions for the research were based on a Likert-type scale to measure level of agreement to a statement (McMillian, 1992). The survey gathered data on rating scales to record how often programs are attended. Once the survey was taken, that was all that was required of the participant. There was not any follow-up conducted after the survey was completed. The survey was available for students to take from December 2022 until the beginning of February 2023. The variables will be used to sort the data by categories such as: gender, age class, graduation year, college and school the participants are in, if they are part-time or a full-time student, and if they have an off or on campus job.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using quantitative methodologies. In most instances, only descriptive statistics were reported. Each question was summarized through frequencies of occurrence (counts) and percentages in contingency tables (Sommer, 2001).

When appropriate more advanced data analysis took place (crosstabulation) to determine differences based on student populations (McMillian, 1992). All data was reported in aggregate and measures were taken to protect confidentiality. I kept all data in a secure or in an encrypted and password protected environment with access limited to the study team.

Chapter IV

Findings

Profile of Population

  This study was conducted at Rowan University's Glassboro Campus between the dates of December 19th, 2022, and February 6th, 2023, after IRB approval was obtained. The survey was made available to 15,269 enrolled, undergraduate students at RU via email through Qualtrics. The survey included 13 questions based on a Likert scale (McMillian, 1992). After the initial email, four follow-up emails were distributed to all undergraduate students who had not yet completed the survey. The survey concluded on February 6th, 2023, with 394 recorded responses.

  After the survey was closed, the data was evaluated for the potential of missing or incomplete data. Missing and incomplete data was identified as any responses recorded where participants of the study failed to respond to questions accurately or had abandoned the survey with a significant number of questions unanswered. This practice was used to eliminate the potential of misleading data and outliers. (Osborne, 2013). After the data was evaluated based on these factors, 290 legitimate responses were left for data analysis. The data set was analyzed using Qualtrics and each table was formatted to report the data utilizing simple statistics. The following tables analyze the respondents' demographics within the study.

Presentation of Data

Five of the questions within the survey were closed-ended questions to understand the respondents' thoughts on the current programming structure at Rowan University. The following tables were formatted to showcase simple statistics of the responses analyzed. Two of the questions in addition to the close-ended questions gave respondents the option to answer questions open-ended. Each open-ended response was analyzed for common keywords, phrases, or topics. Quotes from responses were given categories and then revised to eliminate redundancy between keywords and quotes (McMillian, 2016) within the data set.

Table 1

What is Your Age? n=290

Age	f	%
18-24	257	88.62
25-34	23	7.93
35-44	5	1.72
45 and older	5	1.72

Note. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study by age. This shows that majority of respondents (88.62%) for this study fell into the age range of 18-24 years old. Less than 5% of the respondents were older than 35.

Table 2

Are You Part-Time (1-11 credits) or Full-Time (12 credits)? n=290

Variable	*f*	%
Part-time	24	8.28
Full-time	266	91.72

Note. Table 2 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study by number of credits taken during a semester at Rowan University. In this data set, 91.72% of the respondents who responded were full-time, undergraduate students.

Table 3

What is Your Expected Graduation Date? n=290

Graduation Year	*f*	%
2023	98	33.79
2024	80	27.59
2025	49	16.90
2026	63	21.72
Later than 2026	0	0.00

Note. Table 3 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study by expected graduation year. In this data set, the graduation year of 2023 and 2024 result in about 50% of the data set. 33.79% of the respondents' expected graduation year is 2023. 27.59% of the respondents expected graduation year is 2024. 16.9% of the respondents in this survey will graduate in 2025. 21.72% of respondents will graduate in 2026. There were no respondents with a later graduation year than 2026.

Table 4

What School are You Apart Of? n=286

Variable	*f*	%
Rohrer College of Business	27	9.44
Ric Edelman College of Communication	33	11.54
College of Education	24	8.39
Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering	35	12.24
College of Humanities & Social Sciences	41	14.34
College of Performing Arts	10	3.50
College of Science & Mathematics	90	31.47
School of Earth & Environment	12	4.20
School of Nursing & Health Professions	14	4.90
School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship	0	0.00

Note. Table 4 demonstrates the demographic within this study by the respondent's respective school. Nearly half of all responses came from students in two colleges: 90 of the respondents (31.47%) are a part of the College of Science & Mathematics school, while 14.34% of respondents were in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Table 5

Do You Have an On-Campus Job? n=289

Variable	*f*	%
Yes	68	23.53
No	221	76.47

Note. Table 5 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study who hold

an on-campus job versus those who do not. The majority of respondents, 76.47%,

answered "no".

Table 6

Do You Have an Off-Campus Job? n=289

Variable	*f*	%
Yes	148	51.21
No	141	48.79

Note. Table 6 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study who hold

an off-campus job versus those who do not. Out of 289 responses, 51.21% of respondents

answered "yes" to having an off-campus job. While 48.79% of respondents answered

"no" to having an off-campus job.

Table 7

Please Select Each Program That You Have Attended in the Past (Multiple Selection)
n=591

Variable	*f*	%
Student Organization	105	17.77
Recreational	105	17.77
Fraternity & Sorority Life	34	5.75
Rowan After Hours	136	23.01
Department	111	18.78
College and School Academic	100	16.92

Note. Table 7 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study by which

programs they have attended in the past. Respondents had the option to select multiple

programs. 136 of the respondents (23.01%) have attended a Rowan After Hours program.

111 of the respondents (18.78) have attended a department program. 105 respondents

(17.77%) have attended a Student Organization Program or a Recreational Program. 100

respondents (16.92%) reported attending a College and School Academic Program.

Table 8

Frequency of Programs Attended n=273

Variable	*f*	%
Very Frequently	42	15.38
Frequently	63	23.08
Neither frequently nor infrequently	57	20.88
Not Frequently	58	21.25
Infrequently	53	19.41

Note. Table 8 demonstrates how often the respondents within this study attend programs. Respondents were able to choose from the following options to express how frequently they have attended campus programs:

1. Very Frequently – multiple programs every week

2. Frequently – one program every week

3. Neither Frequently nor Infrequently

4. Not Frequently – more than 3-4 programs a year

5. Infrequently – less than one programs a year

Out of 273 respondents, 63 respondents (23.08%) identified that they attend campus programs frequently which is about one program a week. 58 respondents (21.25%) identified that they attend campus programs not frequently. This means that respondents are attending more than 3-4 programs a year. 57 respondents (20.88) identified that they attend programs neither frequently nor infrequently. 53 respondents (19.41%) of the respondents reported that they attend less than one program a year or infrequently. 42 respondents (15.38%) identified themselves as attending multiple programs a week.

Table 9

Which of the Following Programs Have Made a POSITIVE Impact on Your Time as an

Undergraduate Student (Can Select Multiple) n=445

Variable	*f*	%
Student Organization	87	19.55
Recreational	83	18.65
Fraternity & Sorority Life	23	5.17
Rowan After Hours	99	22.25
Department	86	19.33
College and School Academic	67	15.06

Note. Table 9 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study by which

programs have made a positive impact on them. Respondents had the option to select

multiple programs. 99 respondents (22.25%) reported of having a positive experience at a

Rowan After Hours Program. 87 respondents (19.55%) reported having a positive

experience at a Student Organization program.

Table 10

Which of the Following Programs Have Made a NEGATIVE Impact on Your Time as an

Undergraduate Student n=67

Variable	f	%
Student Organization	9	15
Recreational	4	6.67
Fraternity & Sorority Life	29	48.33
Rowan After Hours	7	11.67
Department	7	11.67
College and School Academic	4	6.67

Note. Table 10 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study by which

programs have made a negative impact on them. Respondents had the option to select

multiple programs. Out of 67 responses, 29 respondents (48.33%) reported of having a

negative experience at a Fraternity and Sorority Life program. 9 respondents (15%)

reported having a negative experience at a Student Organization program.

Table 11

Overall Have you Felt Connected to the University by Attending Programs? n=279

Variable	f	%
Yes	137	49.10
Neither Yes or No	97	34.77
No	45	16.13

Note. Table 11 demonstrates the demographic of respondents within this study who have felt connected to the University by attending programs. 137 of the respondents (49.10%) felt connected to Rowan University by attending programs. 97 of the respondents (34.77%) felt neither connected nor no impact by attending programs and 45 responded with "no", that they did not feel connected to the University through attending programs.

Table 12

Please Rank the Following Suggestion That May Improve Your Experience on Rowan University Campus as it Pertains to Programming n=216

			Rank		
			1	2	3
			(High)		(Low)
Variable	Time	Count	107	62	47
		%	49.54	28.7	21.76
	Accessibility	Count	47	90	79
		%	21.76	41.67	36.57
	Diversity	Count	62	64	90
		%	28.7	29.63	41.67

Note. Table 12 demonstrates the response from the population to rank the following suggestions that may improve the overall experience as it pertains to programming. The respondent's task was to rank from highest (1) to lowest (3) in accordance to their preference. The options were as followed:

1. Different times that programs can occur on-campus

2. Better accessibility to programs on campus

3. More diverse program options on-campus

Out of these options, the option ranked 1 the most frequently was the option of different times that programs can occur on-campus. 49.57% (107) of respondents ranked this option first. The second most favorable suggestion appeared to be accessibility, with

only 36.57% of respondents ranking it lowest importance, followed by diverse program

options, which was ranked by 41.67% as the lowest important suggestion.

Table 13

Frequency of Programs Attended and How Connected Respondents Feel to Rowan University Crosstabulation n=269

			Rank			
			Yes	Neither Yes nor No	No	Total
Variable	Very	Count	32	5	4	41
	Frequently	%	23.9	5.4	9.5	15.2
	Frequently	Count	46	13	3	62
		%	34.3	14	7.1	23.0
	Neither	Count	30	18	8	56
	Frequently or	%	22.4	19.4	19	20.8
	Infrequently					
	Not	Count	22	29	7	58
	Infrequently	%	16.4	31.2	16.7	21.6
	Infrequently	Count	4	28	20	52
		%	3	30.1	47.6	19.3

Note. Table 13 is a crosstabulation that was run to show how respondents answered how frequently they attend programs and how connected they feel to Rowan University. As shown in the table, 78 respondents marked that they attend programs very frequently or frequently. As indicated under the "yes" column, these two categories accounted for 58.2% of the respondents.

Common Themes

As mentioned previously throughout this study, respondents had the option of writing an answer to the following questions:

1. Which of the following programs had a NEGATIVE impact on your experience at Rowan University.

   a. What led to this experience and why?

2. What programs would you like to see on Rowan University's campus, if any?

Respondents answers to these questions were reviewed and evaluated for common themes. The common themes picked out were that programs lack inclusivity, time of program perceived as inconvenient, and a need for more identity-based programming.

Programs Lack Inclusivity

When answering the question, "What led to this experience and why?", respondents had the option to explain what their negative experience at any of the programs they have attended during their time at Rowan University. Many of the respondents spoke about a lack of inclusivity as it pertains to accessibility, and not being inclusive to a non-traditional student. One respondent included, "As a commuter and a non-traditional student I am not able to participate in activities." Another student said "(I) have mobility issues, even if I want to attend I usually cannot." Another respondent recorded, "I think Rowan does a fairly good job of providing a good number of events throughout a given semester. I just think accessibility and diversity gets considered as an afterthought rather than a requirement." These are just a few examples of multiple responses that have found it difficult to attend programs at Rowan University.

Time of Program Perceived as Inconvenient

Another theme that was persistent throughout answers was the lack of convenience in the time that events happen. One respondent argued, "more (programs) that occur during the day because most take place at night and not everyone is a night person, and most people are off campus by that time." As mentioned previously accessibility for commuters was a common theme throughout the responses. One respondent recorded:

I would like to see more accessibility for commuters, which is the overwhelming majority of Rowan Students. Yet events are catered to dorm students who can make 8pm events. I'd like to see events throughout the morning and day. Especially around 4 or 5pm.

A Need for More Identity-Based Programming

An overwhelming majority of responses to the following question, "What programs would you like to see on Rowan University's campus, if any?" listed different identity-based groups that they would like to see programmed for. This includes but is not limited to people of color (POC), cultural-based, LGBTQ+, neurodivergent, gender-based and mental-health identity-based programming. Another common theme was the suggestion to have major-related programming and more professional development opportunities. One respondent recorded:

More (programs) geared towards helping women. Maybe a reproductive justice club to encourage addition of tampons and pads in bathrooms. Maybe a club for future researchers or for grad student and maybe a club for first-generation student to help them navigate the college world.

Chapter V

Summary, Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendation

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which student engagement is utilized on the Glassboro campus at Rowan University and how it has impacted the overall development of undergraduate students. Undergraduate students who are enrolled in the Fall 2022-Spring 2023 academic year received a 14-question survey that was created using Qualtrics. Students received the survey via their student email about the study. All responses were entirely voluntary. Rowan University has a multitude of different programs that focus on student engagement and development. These programs include late-night programming (Rowan After Hours), intramural and club sports (Recreation Center), Student Government Association organization programming, fraternity and sorority life, and departmental programming (Wellness Center, Career Advancement, Accessibility Services, etc.).

As the needs of students change over time, the importance of creating beneficial programming is an essential element to student success and development. This research examined the undergraduate student population's feelings towards the current model of student engagement through programming.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1

In what ways does the number of programs and the frequency in which students attend them at Rowan University impact the overall student experience?

As stated throughout this paper, one can assume that the student who is highly involved and devotes a considerable energy into academics and extracurricular activities is more likely to be successful at an institution (Astin, 1999). Groccia continued to explain that the positive or negative impact college has on students behaviorally, affectively, and cognitively is largely dependent on their involvement (Groccia, 2018). Groccia's theory is shown within the study's findings. As shown in Table 13 in Chapter IV, the more frequently a student attends events, the more likely they will feel connected to Rowan University.

Research Question 2

Which programs provided by Rowan University are perceived to be the most beneficial in serving the needs of undergraduate students?

In the survey, respondents had the opportunity to identify programs that have had a positive and negative impact on their experience at Rowan University. In question 9, respondents were asked which programs have impacted them positively. In Table 9 it shows that multiple programs could be selected, and 445 responses were recorded.

On the other hand, the same question was posed for respondents to identify any programs that have negatively impacted them. In table 10 it shows only 67 responses were recorded. An overwhelming majority were able to identify having a positive impact through the current programming model.

In addition, the programs with the highest percentage of responses recorded to question 9, which of the following programs have had a positive impact on your experience at Rowan University, were Rowan After Hours programs, Student Organization programs, and Departmental programs. These three categories accounted

for over 50% of the responses. Therefore, from this dataset it is assumed that these programs are the most beneficial for undergraduate students.

As shown through the demographic breakdown of the study, many respondents were full-time students between the ages of 18-24. This means that the majority of recorded respondents can be categorized as traditional students. While it is uncertain if the respondents live on or off campus, students with a more traditional experience with no outside responsibilities is reported to have a more positive perception of campus, tended to be more satisfied and experience more growth on campus (Webber, 2013). This explanation shows that programs designed for a traditional experience such as Rowan After Hours programs, Student Organization programs, and Departmental programs would be considered the most impactful.

Research Question 3

In what ways can Rowan University better serve students regarding campus engagement based on the data collected in this survey?

Through examining the answers of respondents in this survey, overall, the current programming model works efficiently to provide students an impactful campus experience. However, when respondents were given the opportunity to provide insight into what they would like to see on campus as it pertains to programming, many voiced the need for identity-based programming. With the current programming structure, there is a lack of programming options that celebrate the diverse needs of students with different minds, cultures, and identities alike.

The study was distributed to all enrolled, undergraduate students so it can be assumed that students who responded identify by different ethnicities, genders, sexual

orientation, and religious identities. As identified in Chapter II through Patton, in terms of student engagement, intersectionality theory plays a role in the way students interact with an institution (Patton, 2016). As recorded in the study, Rowan University should aim to engage all members of the undergraduate student population with different intersecting identities.

Research Question 4

Are there current barriers students face at Rowan University that hinder their ability to engage with the institution's community?

A common theme throughout the responses collected within the survey was a need for more inclusive timing of events. While Rowan University provides many programs on the weekends and late at night, a large majority of students have other commitments that make staying on campus that late difficult. As discussed in Chapter II, Burlison explained that many students who find themselves commuting to campus are attempting to balance their home life and school life. This leaves students to feel guilt from missing family time or feeling not as connected to the campus community (Burlison, 2015). As seen through the open-ended responses, many students who were commuters or non-traditional students felt it was difficult to connect and engage with the campus community.

Recommendation*s* for Future Research

There are many recommendations that can be made to further this research including:

1. Expand this knowledge further and compare the programming model at Rowan University to a similar University. This will give a broader sense of how impactful certain programs are at universal level.

2. A study that compares how engaged students at Rowan University are as compared to public data such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE).

Conclusion

Student engagement continues to be an ongoing topic in student affairs at higher education institutions. Engaging students meaningfully through programming provides students with a welcoming space to develop socially, academically, and emotionally. As campus climates continue to change over time, programming and other ways in which students engage with an institution have adapted. Given the importance of student engagement on campuses, the significance of this study was identifying how beneficial Rowan University's current programming structure is for the undergraduate student population. Through this study, recommendations for better programming models can be made that match the ever-evolving needs of students.

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Appendix A

Institutional Review Board Approval

DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111
Rowan IORG/IRB: Glassboro/CMSRU
IRB Chair Person: Dr. Ane Johnson
IRB Director: Eric Gregory
Effective Date: November 23, 2022

Notice of Approval - Initial

Study ID: PRO-2022-302
Title: Student Engagement Through Programming at Four-Year Institutions
Principal Investigator: Stephanie Lezotte
Study Coordinator: Sydney Hartman
Co-Investigator(s): Sydney Hartman
Sponsor: Internal

Submission Type: Initial
Submission Status: Exempt
Approval Date: November 23, 2022
Review Type: Exempt
Exempt Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Pregnant Women, Human Fetus, and Neonates Code: 46.204, 46.205, 46.206, 46.207, N/A
Pediatric/Children Code: 46.404, 46.405, 46.406, 46.407, N/A

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.

Appendix B

Survey Questions

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Student Engagement Through Programming at Four-Year Institutions. You are included in this survey because you are an enrolled, undergraduate student at Rowan University's Glassboro Campus. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be 375, but the survey will be available to 15,269 students.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey.

The purpose of this research study is to quantitatively examine the ways in which student engagement is utilized on the Glassboro campus at Rowan University and how it has impacted the overall development of undergraduate students.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand the importance of creating beneficial programming is an essential element to student success and development. This research will reflect the undergraduate student population's feelings towards the current model of student engagement through programming. After the data is collected, the research will allow professionals to utilize the results to make informed decisions about the current programming structure.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can reach out to Sydney Hartman at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Sydney Hartman: hartma79@rowan.edu

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Stephanie Lezotte, School of Graduate Studies, lezotte@rowan.edu 856-256-4124

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, Pro-2022-302

Please complete the checkbox below.

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older and an enrolled, undergraduate student at Rowan University. Place a check box here ☐

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey ☐

Demographics:

1. What is your age?

    i. 18-24

    ii. 25-34

    iii. 35-44

    iv. 45 and older

2. Are you a part-time (1-11 credits) or full-time (12 credits) undergraduate student?

    i. Part-time

    ii. Full-time

3. What is your expected graduation date?

    i. 2023

    ii. 2024

    iii. 2025

    iv. 2026

    v. Later than 2026

4. What college & school are you apart of?

    i. Rohrer College of Business

    ii. Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts

    iii. College of Education

    iv. Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering

    v. College of Humanities & Social Sciences

    vi. College of Performing Arts

vii.   College of Science & Mathematics

viii.   School of Earth & Environment

ix.   School of Nursing & Health Professions

x.   School of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

5. Do you have an on-campus job?

    i.   Yes

    ii.   No

6. Do you have an off-campus job?

    i.   Yes

    ii.   No

Questions:

7. Please select each program that you have attended in the past

    i.   Student Organization Program (an SGA chartered org.)

    ii.   Recreational Program (Intramural/club sports, group fitness)

    iii.   Fraternity and Sorority Life Program

    iv.   Rowan After Hours Program

    v.   Department Program (the Wellness Center, SJICR, Career Advancement, etc.)

    vi.   College and School Academic Program

8. How frequently do you attend the events that have been selected?

    i.   Very Frequently (multiple programs every week)

    ii.   Frequently (one program every week)

    iii.   Neither Frequently nor Infrequently

  iv. Not Frequently (3-4 > programs a year)

  v. Infrequently (<1 programs a year)

9. Which of the following programs have made a POSITIVE impact on your time as an undergraduate student?

  i. Student Organization Program (an SGA chartered org.)

  ii. Recreational Program (Intramural/club sports, group fitness)

  iii. Fraternity and Sorority Life Program

  iv. Rowan After Hours Program

  v. Department Program (the Wellness Center, SJICR, Career Advancement, etc.)

  vi. College and School Academic Program

10. Which of the following programs have made a NEGATIVE impact on your time as an undergraduate student?

  i. Student Organization Program (an SGA chartered org.)

  ii. Recreational Program (Intramural/club sports, group fitness)

  iii. Fraternity and Sorority Life Program

  iv. Rowan After Hours Program

  v. Department Program (the Wellness Center, SJICR, Career Advancement, etc.)

  vi. College and School Academic Program

 10a. What led to this experience and why?

11. Have you overall felt connected to Rowan University through attending programs on campus?

i.   Yes

ii.   Neither yes nor no

iii.   No

12. Please rank the following suggestions that may improve your experience on Rowan

University's campus as it pertains to programming.

i.   Different times that programs can occur on-campus

ii.   Better accessibility to programs on-campus

iii.   More diverse program options on-campus

12c. What programs would you like to see on Rowan University's campus, if any?

Appendix C

Recruitment Email

Email Subject/Letter Heading: Student Programs at Rowan University Survey

Hello,

I am writing to you about a volunteer opportunity to participate in a research study titled: Student Engagement Through Programming at Four-Year Institutions. This research study is to quantitatively examine the ways in which student engagement is utilized on the Glassboro campus at Rowan University and how it has impacted the overall development of undergraduate students. Potential benefits of this important research study are by participating in this study, you may help us understand the importance of creating beneficial programming is an essential element to student success and development. This research will reflect the undergraduate student population's feelings towards the current model of student engagement through programming. After the data is collected, the research will allow professionals to utilize the results to make informed decisions about the current programming structure.

You may volunteer to participate in this study if you are an enrolled, undergraduate student at Rowan University's Glassboro Campus. Your participation will require you to complete a survey that may take approximately 10 minutes. This research study will take place at Rowan University via online survey).

Contact Stephanie Lezotte at lezotte@rowan.edu or Sydney Hartman at hartma79@rowan.edu about this research study.

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # Pro 2022-302)

Sincerely,

Sydney Hartman