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Relationship between Undergraduate Student Activity and Academic Performance

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College of Technology

**Relationship between Undergraduate
Student Activity and Academic
Performance**

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Technology

A Directed Project Report

By

Amy L. Hawkins

May 2010

Committee Member

Approval Signature

Date

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ABSTRACT

Hawkins, Amy L. M.S., Purdue University, May, 2010. Relationship between Undergraduate Student Activity and Academic Performance. Major Professor: Daniel Lybrook.

Research has shown that student involvement enhances the overall college experience and the development of transferable skills for undergraduate students. Participation in student organizations can lead to the development of social and leadership skills, higher retention rates, heightened self-confidence, improved satisfaction with college, the ability to see course curriculum as more relevant, and further success after college. Despite the long list of benefits, there is an assumption that student organizations distract students from educational activities, thus resulting in lower academic performance. This study examined the grade point average (GPA) of undergraduate students enrolled at Purdue University during the fall 2009 semester to determine if there is a relationship between student involvement and GPA. The students were divided into one of three groups: general students, student organization members, and student organization officers. An average GPA was calculated for each group and used in a two-sample t-test for significance. The results indicate a relationship between involvement and GPA with student organization officers earning a significantly higher GPA than regular members of the organizations, and student organization members earning a significantly higher GPA than the general student population. Additionally, the study attempted to determine an optimal amount of involvement by testing the

correlation between the number of organizations in which a student holds membership and term GPA. The results showed a very weak negative correlation. Additional research is needed, but the results of the current study provide students and student affairs professionals with a better understanding of how student involvement impacts academic performance.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This section provides important information relevant to the study of student activity and academic performance. Included in this section is the significance of the problem, purpose of the study, and necessary definitions. The scope of the study is defined through limitations and delimitations.

1.1. Background

This study was conducted at Purdue University and uses data from the fall 2009 semester. Purdue is located in the Midwest region of the United States. It is a coeducational, public university and one of the nation's leading research institutions. Purdue is comprised of 11 different colleges or schools and offers over 200 majors of study.

During the fall 2009 term, 31,145 undergraduate students were enrolled at the university. The College of Engineering had the largest enrollment with 6,850 undergraduate students, followed by the College of Liberal Arts with 6,429 undergraduate students. The undergraduate population was predominately Caucasian with only 1,072 African American, 154 American Indian, 1,668 Asian American, and 904 Hispanic American students. The majority of the undergraduate population was also male with only 42.4% being women.

Purdue currently offers 878 student organizations. These groups can be categorized by type of organization. These categories include athletic performance and recreational, ethnic and cultural, housing groups and Greek organizations, international and multicultural, military, music, political and social action, radio, recognition and service, religious, academic by college or school, and special interest. Purdue has one of the largest fraternity and sorority communities in the country with 49 fraternities and 31 sororities. Almost 5,000 undergraduate students hold membership in a Greek organization. Most of the fraternities and sororities offer on-campus or close-to-campus housing to their members (Purdue University, 2010).

1.2. Problem Statement

Although it is difficult to ignore the overwhelming evidence that student involvement enhances the overall college experience and the development of transferable skills for undergraduate students, there is a widely held belief that student organizations require too much time (Huang & Chang, 2004; Mehus, 1932). Researchers argue that the time students commit to extracurricular activities will ultimately distract from academic work which can negatively impact academic performance. Unfortunately, this belief may discourage students from becoming involved in campus activities, leading to a missed opportunity to receive the various other benefits of belonging to an organization.

1.3. Significance

A large amount of research regarding the effects of student involvement has focused on cognitive growth. In these studies, standardized tests were used to assess skills in mathematics, reading comprehension, and other various aspects of educational development. However, the arguments against student organizations pertain directly to the amount of time students spend on academic study when involved in a student organization. Cognitive ability does not necessarily measure the amount of time students spend on educational activities. Lack of educational involvement should be reflected in grades.

1.4. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between membership in a student organization at Purdue University and academic performance as measured by grade point average. Additionally, information regarding the number of organizations in which a student is involved is used to determine the level at which membership in too many student organizations becomes detrimental to academic performance.

Three separate hypotheses are tested. The first hypothesis states that student organization members earn a higher GPA than the general student population. The second hypothesis states that student organization officers earn a higher GPA than regular members of the organization. Lastly, the third hypothesis states that the number of student organizations in which a student is involved is negatively correlated with academic performance.

The results of this study provide student affairs professionals with a better understanding of how student involvement impacts academic achievement and provide students with the information needed to make more informed decisions regarding involvement in student organizations.

1.5. Assumptions

The assumptions of this research include:

- Grade point average is a good determinant of academic performance.

1.6. Limitations

The limitations of this research include:

- Not all student organizations are required to register active members with the Student Activities and Organizations Office. Therefore, some organization members are not included in the study.
- This study is limited by the data that can be obtained through student records.
- This study was conducted at a single institution. The results may not be applicable to other colleges and universities.

1.7. Delimitations

The delimitations of this research include:

- The study includes student organizations and organization members and officers registered with the Student Activities and Organizations Office at Purdue University.
- The study includes undergraduate students enrolled in a four-year program at Purdue University-West Lafayette during the fall 2009 semester.
- The study examines the grade point average of students reported after the fall 2009 term.
- Membership on an athletic team is not examined in this study.
- Graduate students and part-time students are not included in this study.
- Students enrolled in a professional program of study, such as Veterinary Medicine or Pharmacy, are not included in this study.

1.8. Definitions of Key Terms

Academic Performance – measured by grade point average or GPA (Baker, 2008).

Involvement – the investment of physical and psychological energy in the collegiate environment. This includes membership in a student organization (Astin, 1984).

Student Organization – a group of students that is typically registered with the University as a sanctioned extracurricular activity (Posner, 2009). For the purposes of this study, organizations registered with the Student Activities and Organizations office at Purdue University will be examined. Individual students participating in the organization are referred to as *members*.

Officer – a member of an organization who has been elected by peers to serve as a positional leader (Posner & Brodsky, 1992).

1.9. Summary

This section provided information relevant to the study of leadership development programs and student leader effectiveness. The significance, purpose, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations create the foundation of the study. Definitions of academic performance, involvement, student organization, and officer are also included to better understand the methodology and results of the study.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section provides a review of the literature that exists related to the importance of involvement in student organizations. This section also discusses the positive and negative effects of student involvement in extracurricular activities on academic performance and development. The literature also provides insight into the design methodology for this study.

2.1. Introduction

It is reported that the average college student spends only 30 percent of his or her waking hours in class (Collison, 1990). A large body of research exists supporting the argument that a student's time outside of the classroom should be spent engaged in an extracurricular activity. Researchers agree that student involvement can enhance the overall college experience.

In his Developmental Theory for Higher Education, Astin (1984) states that "the greater the student's involvement in college, the greater will be the amount of student learning and personal development" (p. 529). Astin also argues that educational impact will be greater if the student is able to connect with his or her institution (Astin, 1984). Clubs and organizations allow students to establish this connection through interaction with peers and members of the faculty (d'Amico & Hawes, 2000).

Although research has shown that student involvement positively impacts the overall development of a student, a debate exists regarding the effects extracurricular activities have on academic performance. Some people believe that the time required to actively participate in student clubs and organizations can interfere with academic studies which will result in lower grades (Huang & Chang, 2004; Mehus, 1932). Research on the relationship between student involvement and academic performance provides inconclusive results.

2.2. History of Student Organizations

Student organizations and activities have evolved throughout the previous century. Although many student groups already existed, it was not until the beginning of the Twentieth Century that student organizations became legitimate extracurricular activities sanctioned by colleges and universities. Literary societies, fraternities, and social and dining clubs were just a few of the early organizations that could be found on the college campuses (Kuk, Thomas, & Banning, 2008). Today, hundreds of student organizations can be found on a single campus. Many smaller groups have emerged from the pre-existing larger organizations, providing students with more opportunities to find their niche (Andring, 2002). Typically, these groups are categorized by the organizations' activities. Some types of organizations include service, athletic, social, religious, and academic (Kuk et al., 2008).

Throughout history, the role of student organizations in relation to the mission of the institution has been questioned. Students and staff have dealt with issues such as censorship, control, affiliation, and image (Kuk et al., 2008). These groups have also

been viewed as a distraction from the ultimate goal of higher education: to learn. In the latter part of the 20th century, researchers began to explore the value of student organizations (Nadler, 1997).

2.3. Student Involvement & Activity

In 1984, the final report of the Study Group on Excellence in Higher Education listed involvement as the most important condition for improving undergraduate education. Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek (2006) suggest that engagement in extracurricular activities helps students develop the skills needed to succeed in the college environment. Additionally, student organizations provide an outlet for students to explore various interests outside of the classroom allowing students to further develop their talents (Astin, 1985).

There is a significant amount of research that promotes the importance of student involvement. In a review of the existing literature, Nadler (1997) provides a list of the benefits students might experience through membership in a student organization. Some of these benefits include the development of social and leadership skills, improved educational aspirations and academic achievement, enhanced decision making skills regarding career and life planning, heightened self-confidence, stronger relationships with faculty, the ability to see course curriculum as more relevant, and further success after college (p. 17). Pritchard and Wilson (2003) also list improved satisfaction with college and higher retention rates, increased confidence in academic ability, and a stronger drive to achieve as benefits of student involvement.

These previous studies indicate that there are a number of factors impacted by student activity including academic performance (Kuh et al, 2006). However, research does exist pertaining to the negative effects of student organizations.

2.4. Negative Effects of Student Activity

The goal of each student as he or she enters college is to receive further education and earn a degree. It is not surprising then that parents and faculty tend to emphasize the importance of academic work rather than promoting extracurricular involvement. This attitude may be due to the assumption that student organizations compete for time that students should spend studying for class which leads to lower grades. Research conducted by Hartnett (1965) supports this claim. He found that too much involvement can be associated with lowered academic performance.

However, some researchers have argued that the type of organization could affect the outcome of such studies (Baker, 2008). Baker (2008) conducted a study to examine the impact of various types of organizations on the academic performance of under-represented students. The author concludes that college students can benefit from organizational involvement, but the type of organization must be taken into consideration. Results of the study showed that political and art based organizations are the most beneficial, while athletic and religious involvement have no significant effect on the grade point average of under-represented students. However, involvement in athletic clubs and intramurals did have a negative effect on the GPA of Latina students. The study also indicated that involvement in a Greek letter

organization had a significant, negative effect on GPA for African American males and females, and Latinos (Baker 2008).

A large amount of research has examined the effects of membership in a sorority or fraternity. Membership in a Greek letter organization is typically linked to higher levels of alcohol consumption and increased likelihood of cheating (Pascarella, Whitt, and Flowers, 2001). Stereotypically, these groups are not associated with high levels of academic achievement. Previous studies produced inconclusive results when linking membership in a Greek organization to grades (Pascarella et al, 2001).

One such study was conducted to examine the correlation between membership in a Greek organization and GPA. The results of the study indicated a slight, negative correlation between fraternity membership and GPA, but a significant, positive correlation between sorority membership and GPA. The study also examined the impact of holding an office in an organization on GPA. The results were similar, showing a slight negative correlation for men and a significant, positive correlation for women. The research, however, is slightly outdated as it was conducted during World War II. The author suggests that participation in such groups may not have been normal during the time of the study (Stright, 1947).

Another study, conducted by Pascarella, Edison, Whitt, Nora, Hagedorn, and Terenzini (1996), examined the impact of membership in a Greek letter organization on three standardized measures of cognitive development: reading comprehension, mathematics, and critical thinking. These measures were taken at the end of each participant's first year of college. The results indicate that Greek affiliation has a negative effect on all three cognitive measures. However, the results were more

significant for those students holding membership in a fraternity than those holding membership in a sorority.

A key limitation of this study is that it only measures the cognitive impact of membership in a Greek organization through the first year. The negative results could be attributed to the time commitment required for pledging a Greek organization or the period of adjustment many students face during their first year of college (Pascarella et al., 1996). To account for these factors, Pascarella, Whitt, and Flowers (2001) conducted a longitudinal study that examined the cognitive impact of Greek affiliation beyond the first year. The same cognitive measures were taken at the end of the second and third years. The results were similar to the initial study, although the negative effects of Greek affiliation were not as significant in the second and third year of membership (Pascarella et al, 2001). Therefore, the authors conclude that “any major negative learning consequences of Greek affiliation occur primarily when students pledge a fraternity or sorority in the first year of college” (p. 297).

2.5. Positive Effects of Student Activity

Those in support of student organizations argue that extracurricular involvement does not distract students from academic studies. A study conducted by Huang and Chang (2004) examined these claims and found that cocurricular involvement does not decrease academic involvement. They also sought to discover the optimal amount of involvement and found that more campus involvement is better. However, this study was conducted in Taiwan, not the United States.

When comparing students who were involved in campus activities and those who were not, Mehus (1932) found that the most active students received the highest grades. The results of this study also indicate that students who do not participate in extracurricular activities tend to receive the lowest grades. However, Mehus notes that these results could be due to the fact that student organizations tend to attract high achieving individuals (Mehus, 1932).

Wang and Shiveley (2009) conducted a study that compared two groups of students: those who participated in an extracurricular activity and those who did not. The subjects who participated in an extracurricular activity had better grade point averages than those students who chose not to participate. These results also support the argument that student involvement does not decrease academic achievement (Wang & Shiveley, 2009).

It is obvious that results from research investigating the impact of student organizations on academic performance vary between studies. One explanation for varying results could be the attitude of the student group towards academics. As reported by Schragger (1986), a study conducted by Butler compared three high achieving fraternities and three low achieving fraternities. He found that the academic achievement of freshmen members tended to be influenced by the attitudes of older members of the organization. In other words, a pledge's concern for academic achievement was modeled after the behavior of the active members (Schragger, 1986).

2.6. Reasons for Positive Effects

While time commitment is the main argument against student involvement, there are many arguments as to why student involvement may have a positive effect on academic performance. First, an argument can be made that regular interaction with peers through clubs and organizations can provide students with support groups, study partners, and the opportunity to seek advice from classmates outside of the classroom (Huang & Chang, 2004). As reported by Foubert and Grainger (2006) in their review of the existing literature, Astin stated that a student's peer group is the most influential on cognitive development. He also argued that the more interaction a student has with his or her peers, the more positive the outcome.

However, peer interaction can have differing effects for males and females. Ullah and Wilson (2007) found that the academic achievement of male students decreased with greater amounts of peer interaction. The results were quite the opposite for female students. As relationships with peers improved, the academic achievement of female students also improved. Based upon these findings, the authors suggest that female students will achieve higher grades if they participate in student organizations (Ullah & Wilson, 2007). Taking into account the research discussed earlier, these results could be impacted by the type of student organization in which the student is involved.

Another argument that can be made in favor of student involvement is the idea of group mentality. Certain student organizations, such as Greek and Cooperative groups provide housing to their members. Studies have shown that academic performance can be influenced by a student's living environment (Schrager, 1986). Similarly, a study that

examined the affects of residence halls provides evidence that living with peers can promote academic achievement by creating a competitive environment where good performance is rewarded by status. These living arrangements also provide the opportunity for informal peer tutoring (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). These outcomes could potentially be applied to any organization. It is also reported that students required to participate in monitored study hours tend to have higher achievement levels (Terenzini et al., 1996). There are many student organizations that require members to attend a certain number of hours to study each week.

Lastly, student involvement in extracurricular activities tends to be associated with increased interaction between students and faculty. Strapp and Farr (2010) report that such relationships can ultimately increase levels of academic achievement because students will be inclined to put more effort into school work. To support this claim, a positive correlation was found between student-faculty relationships and academic achievement (Ullah & Wilson, 2007).

2.7. Summary

This section provided a review of the literature that exists regarding the benefits of involvement in student organizations. This section also discussed the arguments that exist in favor of and against student involvement in extracurricular activities. The literature also provided examples of previous research to gain insight into the design methodology for this study. Results of these studies have produced varying results indicating a need for further research.

CHAPTER 3. PROCEDURES AND DATA COLLECTION

This section provides an overview of the data. Included in this section is an explanation of the data collection process, information included in the data, parameters for the sample, procedures employed to create the sample, and sample size.

3.1. Data Collection

To explore the effects of involvement in student organizations on academic performance, a student's level of academic achievement will be represented by his or her grade point average (GPA). Student records were collected through the Office of the Dean of Students at Purdue University. This information was obtained through COGNOS, the records database used by the university. The output included the overall and term GPA for all students enrolled at the university during the fall 2009 semester. Variables such as gender, date of birth, ethnicity, the college and major in which each student is enrolled, and academic year and status were also included in the records. To ensure confidentiality, names and identification numbers were removed from all records.

Records of involvement were obtained through the Student Organizations and Activities (SAO) Office. These records identify students that are involved in a university sanctioned organization, students that are involved in more than one university sanctioned organization, and organization officers. Unfortunately, not all organizations are required to provide a roster to the SAO Office. Therefore, only those students

registered with the university as members of one or more organization are included in the data.

The raw data provided included records for all 42,575 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at Purdue University during the fall 2009 semester. Of those students, approximately 10,642 are identified as having held membership in a student organization and 2,007 held a leadership position within a student organization during that period of time.

3.2. Sample

The purpose of the study is to examine the effects participation in a student organization has upon academic performance for the typical, undergraduate college student. Therefore, the sample only includes undergraduate students enrolled in a four-year program in which they are classified as 01 through 08 and students born between 1986 and 1993. Students that take longer than four years to graduate are included because they are not distinguishable within the data.

To create this sample, Microsoft Excel was used to organize the raw data. First, graduate students, students enrolled in a professional program such as Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy, temporary students, and distance education students were removed from the data. Students born before 1986 were also removed. Next, students that have not declared a major were removed because they are not enrolled in a four-year program, and many of these students only take required and/or elected courses. Finally, 13 students were removed from the data because a term GPA was not recorded.

The final data set yields a sample size of 28,148 general students, 8,664 members of student organizations, and 1,583 organization officers. Of the students that participated in an organization, 4,626 students held membership in more than one organization. Similar to the student population, all three groups were predominately Caucasian with 75% of the general student sample, 79% of the organization members sample, and 78% of the organization officers sample reporting Caucasian descent in his or her student records. Ethnicity demographics can be found in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Race/Ethnicity of Sample

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Students		
	General Students	Members	Officers
African American	963	262	56
Asian American	1,843	591	132
Hispanic American	852	267	50
American Indian	133	41	9
Caucasian	21,310	6,881	1,236
Other	676	199	44
No Response	2,371	423	56
TOTAL	28,148	8,664	1,583

3.3. Summary

This section provided an overview of the data. Included in this section was an explanation of the data collection process and the system through which the data was obtained. Information included in the raw data, parameters for the sample, and procedures employed to create the final sample. Demographics of the sample were also discussed.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section provides an overview of the data analysis and the results of the study. Included in this section is an identification of the variables examined in this study, the statistical methods that were used for analysis, and results from the various statistical tests.

4.1. Data Analysis

For the purposes of this study, only the term GPA was examined for each student. A student's involvement during previous semesters could have had an effect on his or her overall GPA. However, the data only provides a snapshot of the student's time enrolled at Purdue.

In order to analyze the data, the subjects were first divided into one of three different groups based upon their involvement: general students, student organization members, and student organization officers. Unfortunately, because names and identification numbers were removed from the data, there is no way to distinguish the overlapping members in each group.

Once each student was placed into an appropriate category, a mean GPA was calculated for each group. The mean GPA for each group was used to compare academic performance in relation to involvement. A two sample *t*-test performed in Microsoft Excel was then used to calculate the significance of the results. An alpha

level of 0.05 was used for all statistical tests. In sum, two tests of significance were performed.

To determine an optimal amount of involvement, each student was divided into a group based on the number of organizations in which he or she holds membership. Just as before, a mean GPA was calculated for each group. This statistic was then used to find a correlation between number of organizations and GPA.

4.2. Results

Prior to performing any statistical tests, an initial analysis of the data compared the GPA distribution of each group. As indicated in Figure 4.1, a higher percentage of involved students received a GPA between 3.00 and 4.00 than the general students. Furthermore, a higher percentage of student organization officers received a GPA above 3.00 than the organization members.

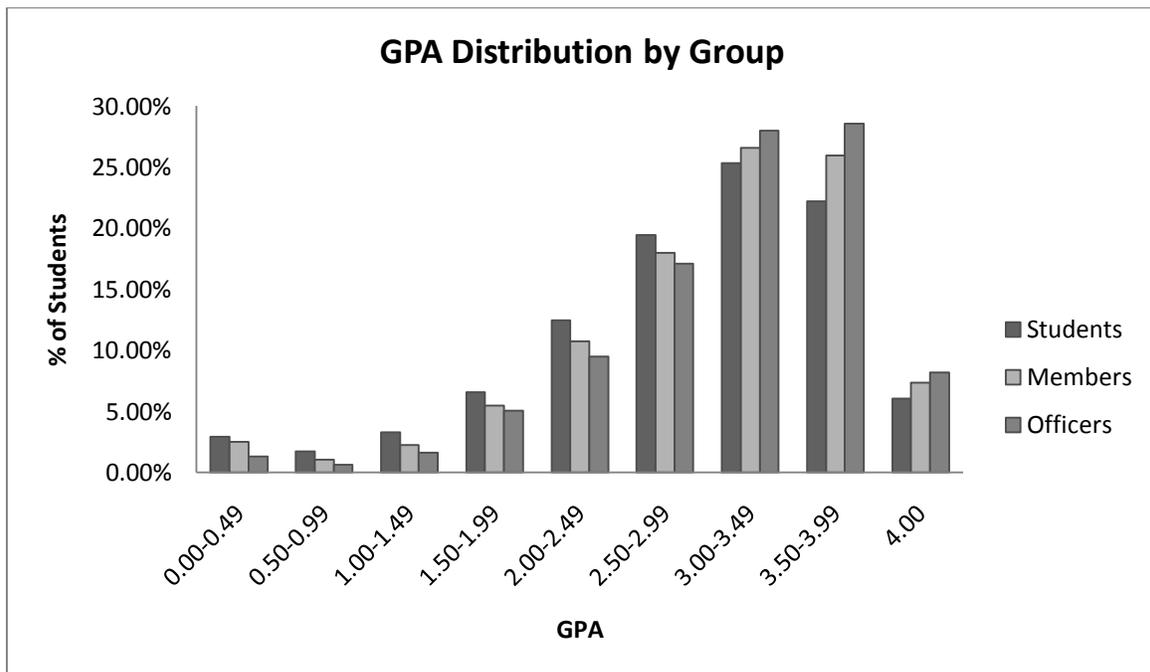


Figure 4.1 GPA Comparison between Groups

Additionally, a mean GPA was calculated for the males and females of each group. Females consistently achieved a higher mean GPA regardless of their involvement. However, the mean GPA for both genders was highest for organization officers and lowest for general students.

Table 4.1 Mean GPA by Gender

Gender	Mean GPA		
	General Students	Members	Officers
Male	2.78	2.90	3.04
Female	3.01	3.09	3.18

The first test of significance was conducted to determine the general impact of student involvement on academic performance. For this test, the mean GPA of the general students (2.88) was compared to the mean GPA of the student organization members (2.99). The two sample *t*-test produced a *t*-statistic of -10.9805 with a *p*-value < 0.0005. This indicates that there is significant evidence that student organization members have higher grade point averages than general students.

The second test of significance was conducted to explore the impact that level of involvement has on academic performance. Because we already know that student organization member GPA is significantly higher than the general student GPA, the mean GPA of the student organization officers (3.10) will only be compared to the mean GPA of the student organization members. This is to determine a difference between a typical member and an organization leader. The two sample *t*-test produced a *t*-statistic of -5.0409 with a *p*-value < 0.0005. This indicates that there is significant evidence that student organization officers have higher grade point averages than a typical organization member.

Another purpose of the study was to determine an optimal amount of involvement. These students were categorized by the number of organizations in which they membership. A mean GPA was calculated for each group. The data is provided in Table 4.2 and plotted in Figure 4.2. The means were then compared to find a correlation between amount of involvement and academic performance. In this comparison, $r = -0.29$ indicating a very slight, negative correlation. When looking at the data, there appears to be as steady increase in term GPA that ends with the group of students belonging to six organizations. There also appears to be a steady decline in term GPA after joining ten organizations with the exception of the means at 16 and 20, which would be related to the low number of students within those groups.

Table 4.2 Amount of Involvement Data

# of Organizations	Mean Term GPA	# of Students
2	3.02	2046
3	3.05	1056
4	3.08	636
5	3.12	362
6	3.11	199
7	3.09	112
8	3.14	81
9	3.33	35
10	3.05	26
11	3.02	22
12	3.03	14
13	2.98	8
14	2.98	9
15	2.89	3
16	3.33	2
17	2.86	2
18	2.62	2
20+	3.17	5

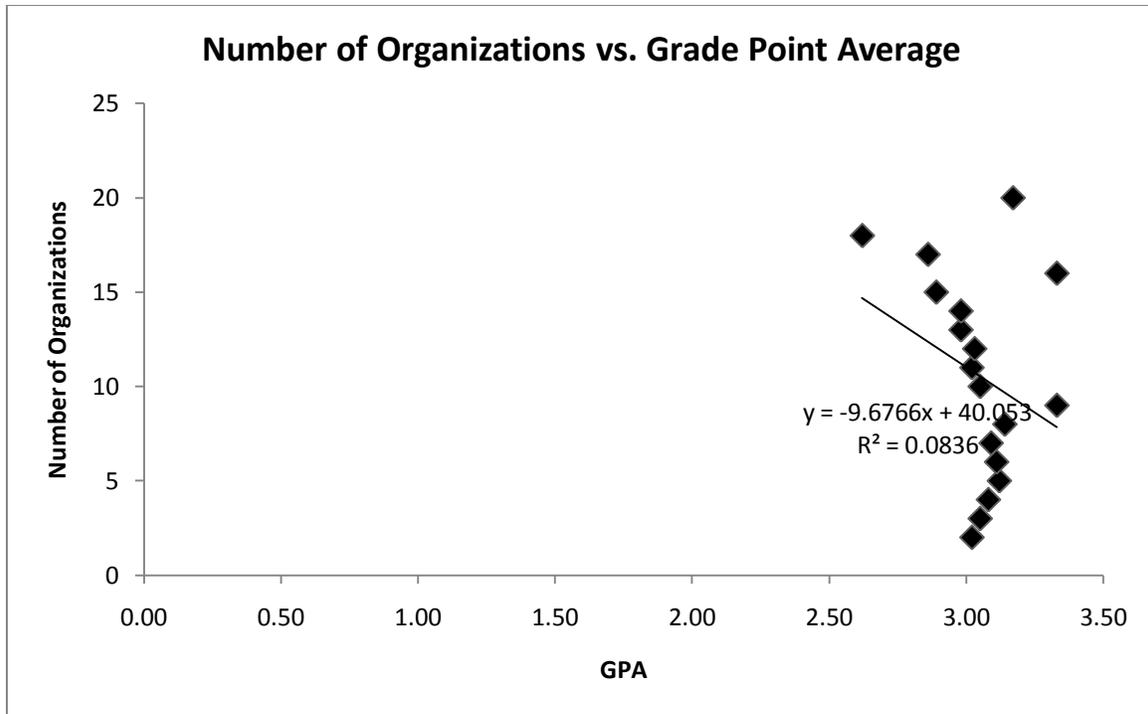


Figure 4.2 Amount of Involvement Data

4.3. Summary

This section provided an overview of the data analysis and the results of the study. Included in this section was an identification of the variables examined in this study, the statistical methods that were used for analysis, and results from the various statistical tests. The results showed that the mean GPA for student organization members and officers was significantly higher than the mean GPA for the general student group. Also, the number of student organizations in which a student holds membership is negatively correlated with GPA.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section states the possible conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the study. Also included are some topics for further discussion, such as implications the results have for students and student affairs professionals, possible factors that could affect the current study, and recommendations for future research.

5.1. Discussion

While involvement in student organization does appear to positively affect academic performance, there are several other factors that could influence these outcomes. Information regarding these factors cannot be obtained from student records and were, therefore, not included in this study; however, it is important to note that these variables could have played a role in the current study.

For example, in a study of freshmen students who participated in an extracurricular activity, Wang and Shiveley (2009) found that the subjects who did participate were more likely to be enrolled as a full-time student, live on campus, and were usually more prepared for college. One might argue that these factors could impact academic performance. However, Wang and Shiveley took measures to control for these variables in their study and the results still showed that students who participated in an extracurricular activity achieved a higher GPA.

Schrager (1986) found that a student's academic performance can also be impacted by the attitude of older members of the organization in which he or she belongs in relation to scholastic activities. As reported by Schrager, a 1959 study conducted by Butler compared three fraternities achieving a high level of academic performance and three fraternities achieving a low level of academic performance. Butler found that a pledge's academic achievement could best be explained by the attitude of the active members towards academics. These impressionable new members were easily influenced and typically modeled their behavior on the older members in order to fit in with the group.

The results of the current study could be explained by the scholarship requirements that some organizations place on their members. This is particularly true for Greek letter organizations. Many sororities and fraternities require a minimum GPA to gain membership into the organization. They also require their members to maintain a minimum GPA to remain in good standing. A member can be removed from the organization should his or her grades not improve.

It is also important to note that student organizations tend to attract higher achieving individuals. Students who participate in extracurricular activities might be more engaged and motivated to begin with. They may also have been members of various clubs and activities in high school. These students would be more adapt to finding a balance between schoolwork and out-of-class activities.

5.2. Conclusions

The results of this study support all three hypotheses. This indicates that students involved in campus clubs or organizations do not receive lower grades than the general student population. The argument that students involved in organizations have lower academic performance because they commit too much of their time to out-of-class activities was found to be false. In fact, the results demonstrate that involved students tend to achieve a higher level of academic performance as indicated by grade point average. Furthermore, the results show that officers within an organization tend to perform slightly better academically than the average organization member. Although, the duties and responsibilities of an organization leader can require a bigger time commitment, an officer's grade point average seems to be positively affected.

The results also support the hypothesis that amount of involvement is negatively correlated with GPA. However, this correlation is very weak with a correlation coefficient of -0.29. These results support Hartnett's (1965) conclusion that too much involvement in extracurricular activities outside of the classroom can lead to lower academic performance, but directly contradicts Astin's (1984) belief that more involvement is better. It is important to note, that the optimal amount of involvement can be largely dependent on the individual and his or her level of participation in each student organization. Although a steady increase in GPA was present through six organizations, a student may be able to participate in more organizations and still maintain a high GPA if the organizations do not require a large time commitment.

5.3. Implications

Based upon the results of this study, undergraduate students should join a student organization. Previous research has shown that there are countless benefits to being involved outside of the classroom. Contrary to the widely held assumption that student involvement leads to lower academic performance, GPA appears to be positively related to student organization membership.

University administrators can use the results of this study to promote and manage student involvement. The benefits of joining a student organization can be printed in brochures and be included on the institution's website along with GPA information for involved students. Student affairs professionals can also use this information to ease the concerns of parents and students who are under the impression that extracurricular activities will lower academic performance. Information and question and answer sessions can be held during day-on-campus events and freshman orientation activities.

It may also be appropriate for a university to limit the number of organizations a student can join. Although the correlation is weak, a negative trend indicates that students should be cognizant of how many organizations they are involved in and the affect this may have on academic performance. These results should be used by students when choosing how many and which organizations to join as some organization may require a larger time commitment.

5.4. Recommendations for Future Research

Due to the time constraints of this study, additional research is needed to provide a more in-depth analysis of the impact student involvement has on academic performance. Future research should include data from multiple institutions. This will provide results that are more transferrable to other colleges and universities. Researchers should also consider a longitudinal study that would provide more time to examine students' grade point average before and after joining an organization. This would provide more information about the correlation between organization membership and GPA.

Future research should also explore other variables that may impact academic performance once a student chooses to join an organization. Based upon the previous research, the type of organization could have a significant effect on academic performance. With 878 student organizations at Purdue University (Purdue University, 2010), there are many differences among organizations in regards to mission, purpose, and day-to-day activities. Some groups are linked to a particular major or area of study and are created for the purpose of academic achievement, while others are created for social purposes and do not place any emphasis on scholastic activities.

Results can also vary between genders. When examining peer relationships and academic achievement, Ullah and Wilson (2007) found that the academic achievement of male students decreased as their relationship with peers increased. The reverse was true for female students. As involvement in student organizations provides students with the opportunity to develop relationships with their peers, it appears that males and females would be impacted differently by their participation in a student group.

Another potential variable that could affect academic performance is residency. The argument could be made that students who live on campus have a stronger connection to his or her institution. According to Astin (1984), this connection is an important factor in educational impact.

5.5. Summary

This section provided the possible conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the study. Overall, the results favor involvement in student organizations with respect to academic performance. The implications of the results for students and student affairs professionals, possible factors that could affect the current study and recommendations for future research were also discussed.

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APPENDIX



HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS

To: DANIEL LYBROOK
YONG 441

From: RICHARD MATTES, Chair
Social Science IRB

Date: 02/24/2010

Committee Action: **Exemption Granted**

IRB Action Date: 02/23/2010

IRB Protocol #: 1002008962

Study Title: Correlation between Student Activity and Academic Progress and Achievement

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the above-referenced protocol and has determined that it qualifies for exemption pursuant to Federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101(b) exempt category(4) .

If you wish to revise or amend the protocol, please submit a revision request to the IRB for consideration. Please contact our office if you have any questions.

We wish you good luck with your work. Please retain copy of this letter for your records.