

MANAGEMENT

Involvement for Success: The Examination of Student Motivation for Extracurricular Activity Participation

Student researcher:

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Extant research has shown that college students who exhibit a high degree of student involvement are more likely to achieve higher levels of personal development, academic achievement, and satisfaction with their college experience, according to Moore and colleagues in their 1998 article “Why Involvement Matters: A Review of Research on Student Involvement in the Collegiate Setting.” Students who do not live on campus, referred to as *commuter students*, participate in extracurricular activities to a lesser degree, have fewer interactions with their professors, are more likely to drop out of college, and are less satisfied with their college experience, according to Astin’s 1984 article “Student Involvement: A Developmental Theory for Higher Education” and Kuh and colleagues’ 2001 article “The Disengaged Commuter Student: Fact or Fiction.” This is problematic, as commuter students constitute a majority of the Purdue University Northwest (PNW) population. There is limited on-campus housing at the Hammond location, with 750 dorms available and no housing at the Westville location. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the main factors of student involvement in activities, student clubs, and organizations on both campuses of PNW. This research also will examine how involved PNW students are and what their perceived difficulty is to overcoming the barriers to involvement.

We developed the PNW Student Involvement Survey to understand the underlying reasons for low participation and student involvement, compare the answers between the Hammond and Westville campuses, and learn about students’ perceptions and attitudes toward on-campus activities. A pretest was conducted with a sample size of 69 PNW College of Business students. The results of the pretest revealed insights into the attitudes and perceptions of PNW students. The results show that half of the respondents feel more connected to faculty than other students on campus. We also found that students on the Westville and Hammond campuses travel approximately the same distance to their respective campuses. The commute to campus is a barrier to involvement for PNW students; however, campus event attendance rates on the Hammond campus are higher than those on the Westville campus. 11.4% of respondents on the Hammond campus stated that they have never attended an on-campus event, while 32.4% of respondents on the Westville campus stated that they

have never attended an on-campus event. Of the 69 respondents, 50 respondents (72%) reported being a member of a club or student organization; however, 75% of respondents reported spending 0 to 5 hours per month participating in on-campus activities. This suggests that while a large number of respondents are members of a club or student organization, they do not actively participate and interact with other students.

The results of this pretest guided the revision of the PNW Student Involvement Survey. The survey will be distributed through Qualtrics and will aim to reach 1,000 students. The results of this survey will be used to develop strategies that clubs and student organizations at PNW can use to increase member retention and participation. The results also can develop a groundwork that can be used by commuter campuses to improve strategies for increasing student involvement and participation in guest speaker events, career fairs, student organization meetings, field trips, and workshops.

Research advisor Ceren Ekebas-Turedi writes: “This study aims to investigate the determinants of student involvement, which is a very critical determinant of student success. The majority of Purdue University Northwest students are ‘commuters’; therefore, student organizations suffer from a lack of interest and low levels of participation. Jason and John’s findings will impact the PNW community by developing strategies to increase student motivation and involvement.”

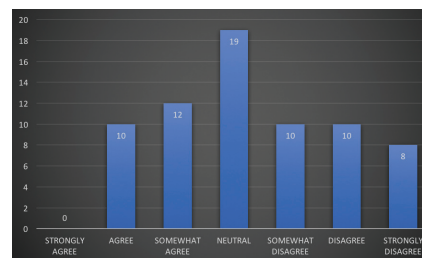


Figure 1. Distribution of students’ answers to the statement “I feel connected to the students at PNW.”

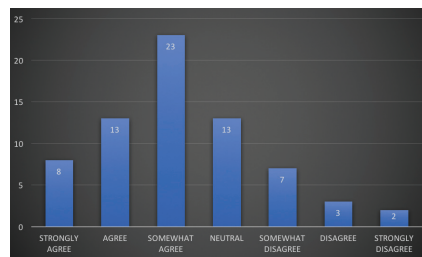


Figure 2. Distribution of students’ answers to the statement “I feel connected to the professors at PNW.”