

The Sociology Club Research Report

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Abstract:

This research report investigates academic and non-academic clubs in Appalachian State University in order to evaluate the current status of the Sociology club. This investigation uses the mixed methods of both focus groups and individual interviews in order to find trends and historical evidence to properly analyze the potential of the Sociology club. By conducting this research and discovering developments from successful clubs on campus, both academic and non-academic, and by learning the history of the Sociology club, the researcher has concluded on not recommending the continuing of the Sociology club.

Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to educate the reader on the benefits of students joining academic clubs in college. There is an underlying question to whether or not academic clubs have run their course in today's university. In the past, collegial clubs may have served more as a social benefit than in today's time, because technology was not as developed as it is today and students had to find a way to get connected. With this in mind, this study will attempt to uncover this assumption and attempt to corroborate current scholarship that shows that academic clubs still offer benefits to student members. Academic clubs defined by the researcher of this report are clubs that are specifically assigned to college disciplines or majors and are usually student run organizations. There have been numerous studies that have shown the positive effects of becoming involved on campus. Involvement leads to better academic and student growth and involvement also correlates with students being able to graduate on time (Massoni, 2011; Monteolongo, 2002; Wang & Shiveley, 2009; Huang & Chang, 2004; Blake, 2009; Johnson, 2005). Campus involvement is a valuable way of promoting positive mental health, showing community involvement, and it assists with personal career development (Johnson, 2005; Foubert & Urbanski 2006; Blake, 2009; "How Can University Clubs Help", "10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help").

Introduction

The impact of extracurricular activities and more specifically academic clubs has been proven to show modest academic and student growth to participating students (Massoni, 2011; Monteolongo, 2002; Wang & Shiveley, 2009; Huang & Chang, 2004; Blake, 2009; Johnson, 2005). A few benefits include reduced behavior problems in students, higher grades, a reduced school completion rate, and positive attitudes towards being productive adults, and the

enjoyment of the socialization that occurs by being in extracurricular activities (Massoni, 2011; Wang & Shiveley, 2009; Jacovino, 2012; Johnson, 2005). Academic clubs also assist with students being able to apply the learning that they received in the classroom to real world settings and develop practical skills for their first job out of college (Montelongo, 2002; Blake, 2009; “How Can University Clubs Help”, “10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help”, “Top 10 Reasons to Join”; Johnson, 2005).

Research Study

In a qualitative research study done by the University of Nevada it was found that four general themes developed from academic club involvement. These themes included relatedness, empowerment, competence, and fun (Carruthers, Busser, Cain, & Brown, 2010). Relatedness correlates with the idea of professional networking, a sense of belonging, feeling of being part of a group, a sense of identity and feelings of support. Empowerment was also felt among the students who belonged to academic clubs, because they believed it bestowed upon them a great deal of responsibility to carry on the legacy of past students and even leave a legacy for future students to follow, and to bring a positive impact on the community. Competence benefits included general confidence, leadership and professionalism through their associated club. Fun, is perhaps the most rudimentary, but also one of the most essential aspects of club involvement. Students found that academic clubs brought about enjoyment into their college career and in their academic program (Blake, 2009; “How Can University Clubs Help”, “10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help”, “Top 10 Reasons to Join”; Carruthers, Busser, Cain, & Brown, 2010; Massoni; 2011 Mayfield; “8 Reasons Why should”; Jacovino, 2012; Montelongo, 2002).

GPA Boosting, Higher Retention, Graduating on Time, Less Absenteeism

It was found that students who participate in academic clubs achieve better GPAs (Wang & Shiveley, 2009; Huang & Chang, 2004; Massoni, 2011; Wilson, 2009, Johnson 2005). Not only are GPAs boosted from academic clubs, but also it decreases absenteeism, increases rates of retention for students, and promotes higher graduation rates (Wang & Shiveley, 2009; Massoni, 2011; Wilson, 2009, Johnson, 2005). Participants in academic clubs are three times more likely to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher (Massoni, 2011, Johnson, 2005). With all of these positive attributes that come with getting involved in academic clubs, it is difficult to believe the idea that there is less of a sense of urgency for students to get involved with them or that they are losing their importance. Academic clubs do not just help with student performance and academic achievement, but they also help with students to develop social, cognitive, and work related skills for after college (Mayfield; “8 Reasons Why should”; Jacovino,2012;“Top 10 Reasons to Join”;Huang & Chang 2004; ;Montelongo, 2002; Johnson, 2005).

Development of Social Skills and Finding Individual Strengths

For decades Colleges have been very supportive to student organizations, because they are convinced of the positive benefits of student led organizations and extracurricular activities (Wang & Shiveley, 2009). Involvement on campus allows for community building, the discovery of passions and strengths, and a connectedness to a student’s school. The development of social skills is also a benefit of joining student led academic clubs, to branch out of a student’s comfort zone and to develop skills that will be essential for their first job out of college (Mayfield; “8 Reasons Why should”; Jacovino,2012;“Top 10 Reasons to Join”; Montelongo, 2002)

Development of Time Management Skills

Benefits may not only be useful on a social level but on an individual level as well. Such as the relieving of stress, because often extracurricular activities involve fun activities. It also allows for students to become more focused by having a structured schedule (“How Can University Clubs Help”; “10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help”; “Top 10 Reasons to Join”; Johnson, 2005; Carruthers, Busser, Cain, & Brown, 2010). Which can promote time management skills, and even helps students become more successful in all areas, because studies have shown that busier students make better students and in order to take full advantage of cognitive and affective growth, students need to be involved in both academic and extracurricular activities as much as they can (Huang & Chang 2004; Jacovino, 2012; Montelongo, 2002; Johnson, 2005).

Learning Work Related Skills

Not only will clubs benefit social and individual means, but also they benefit an individual following college. These advantages come from having connections and establishing a career. Those in leadership roles on campus will likely gain responsibility, negotiation skills, confidence, communication skills, management skills, and problem-solving skills (“How Can University Clubs Help”; “10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help”; “Top 10 Reasons to Join”). By being involved in an academic club related to the student’s desired career pathway, it can greatly improve the likelihood of the student landing a job or internship in that field after college (Blake, 2009; “How Can University Clubs Help”; “10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help”; “Top 10 Reasons to Join”; Montelongo, 2002).

Conclusion

The impact extracurricular activities such as student led organizations can be substantial for students. Such developments include increased GPAs, higher retention rates for students, graduating on time, less absences, work related skills, the development of cognitive growth, and gaining social skills. Even with today's development in technology, and today's overly connected youth, this study has come to conclude that academic clubs are a great resource for student development and success. Involvement in club organizations also positively correlates with many areas of psycho-social development, such as career planning, lifestyle planning and academic autonomy (Foubert & Urbanski 2006; Blake, 2009; "How Can University Clubs Help"; "10 Ways Leadership Roles Will Help"; Johnson, 2005). There are no detrimental effects of joining academic clubs, other than being too involved, which is rarely the case for most students who desire to participate in these social events (Huang & Chang, 2004; Jacovino, 2012; Montelongo, 2002; Johnson, 2005).

Limitations

The research in this study is partial to the advantages of the involvement in academic clubs and does not take into account other scholarship that has come to determine that academic clubs do not in fact have casual effects that promote positive educational outcomes from the participation in these clubs. There is a definite association between participation in academic clubs and educational outcomes but due to methodology limitations, casual effects cannot be determined (Shulruf, 2010). Also the scope of this research did not thoroughly examine the fact that academic clubs can actually cause a student to decrease in academic achievement. This can occur when students are over involved and may not have the time management skills when

balancing extracurricular activities and academics. However, most studies would consider this to be very rare (Johnson, 2005; Huang & Chang, 2004; Jacovino, 2012; Montelongo, 2002).

Introduction to the Sociology Project

This research was conducted in an effort to analyze the current Sociology club and compare it to other academic clubs, as well as non-academic clubs on campus. The Sociology club has had at least a three decade presence on Appalachian State's campus. Throughout its existence it has maintained on average a membership rate of around 5-6 members. These numbers varied between the three faculty club advisors who were interviewed during this study, but it is fair to say that the club has had a minimal presence on campus. The club throughout its existence has met every week, every other week, and monthly. The Sociology club has yet to meet this academic semester, because of poor planning, and inclement weather. This project was assigned precisely to evaluate the club's potential and continuity. Being that there are so many different factors and variables that come into play when trying to compare clubs and because of the methods used, the findings cannot produce generalizable results. However, the findings should elucidate the current state of health of the Sociology club.

Methods

The mixed methods of this research included both focus groups and individual interviews. The focus groups were conducted with five different clubs; The Sociology Club, The Hispanic Student Association (HSA) Club, The Exercise Science Club, The Philosophy Club, and The Gaming Club. Academic clubs defined by the researcher of this report are clubs that are specifically assigned to college disciplines or majors. In this research, this included: The Sociology Club, The Exercise Science Club and The Philosophy Club. Non-Academic clubs are defined by the researcher as clubs offered on campus that do not have a specific discipline focus and are considered special interest or extracurricular clubs. In this research, this included: The Hispanic Student Association (HSA) and The Gaming Club. The clubs were not randomly

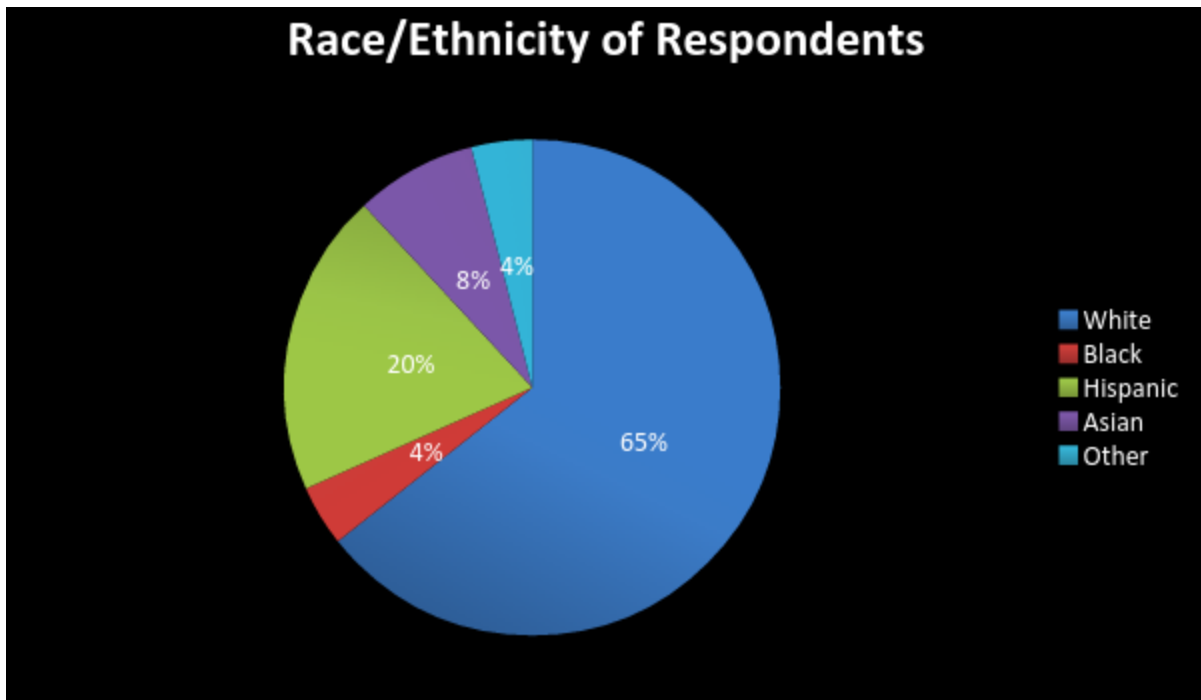
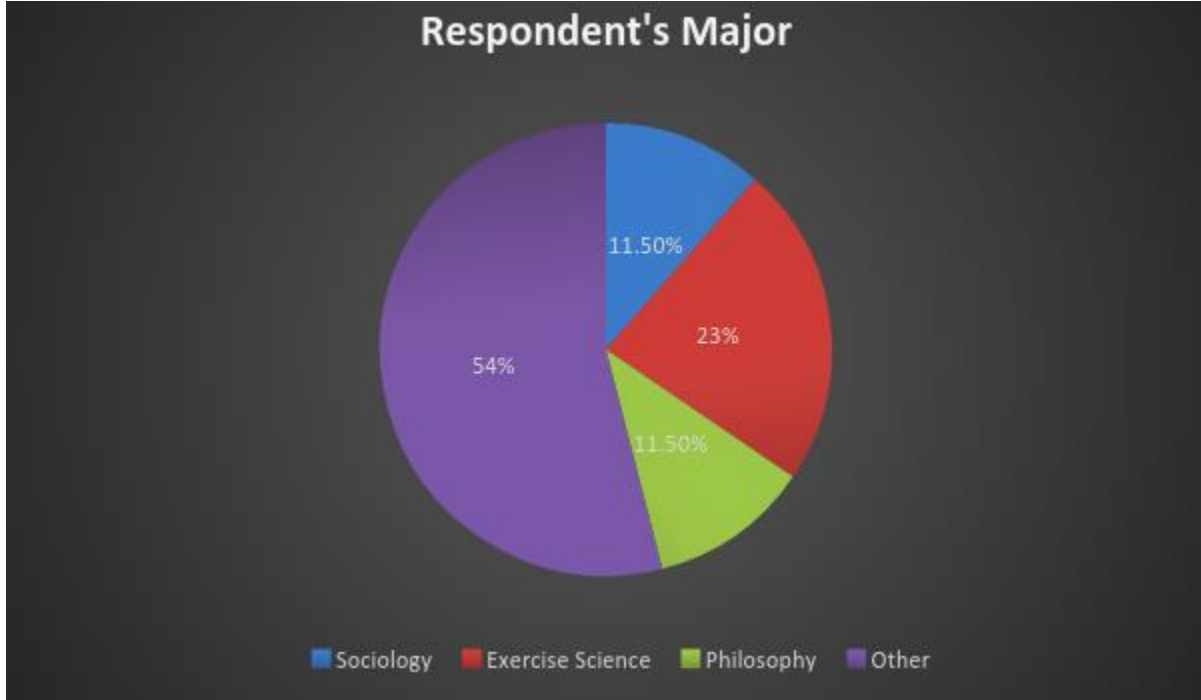
selected, but were chosen because they were the only ones to respond to the researcher's email. The researcher searched through Appalachian State's club directory online, called APPSync, in order to find both academic and non-academic clubs. A formatted email asking for club participation was sent to each of the club's presidents. The clubs were picked with no preference, but were selected for convenience. A total of 25 clubs were contacted, both academic and non-academic clubs. With a response rate of 5 clubs, The Social Justice club responded in interest, but never followed through with subsequent emails. Each of these focus groups were held in a campus location, both the The Plemmons Student Union and a class setting in I.G. Greer Hall, a campus department building. These focus groups lasted on average thirty minutes. A total of twenty-six students participated in the five focus groups. The most that attended were six and the least that attended were three. Each student also filled out a ten question survey that was used for general student demographics. Focus groups were held in the month of March 2015. A copy of the focus group questions is appended at the end of this report.

Individual interviews were also provided in this research report. These interviews were held with past faculty advisors and the current faculty advisor to the Sociology club. These three faculty members include a history of around 18 years of leading the Sociology club. There were five distinct questions that were asked of the interviewees concerning the Sociology club. Each of these interviews were held in the Sociology department building, Chapell Wilson Hall. They lasted on average 15 minutes long. These interviews were intended to get a faculty perspective on the current Sociology club position, and also to get a history of the club's presence on campus. Interviews were held in the month of March 2015. Faculty research questions are also appended at the end of this report.

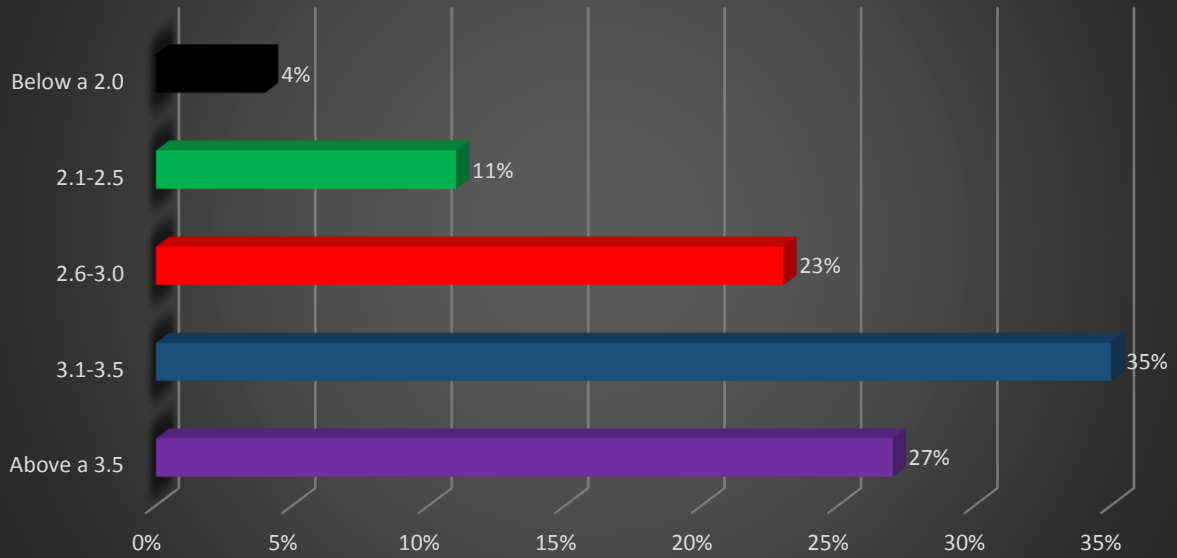
An additional interview was held with the chair of the campus's club council. Her

position is to allocate funds to clubs on campus and to sign off on the creation of new clubs. An interview was held with her for 15 minutes in order to understand the importance of clubs on campus and to discover the club council's definition of a successful club. This interview was held in the month of March 2015. Her questionnaire is also appended at the end of this report.

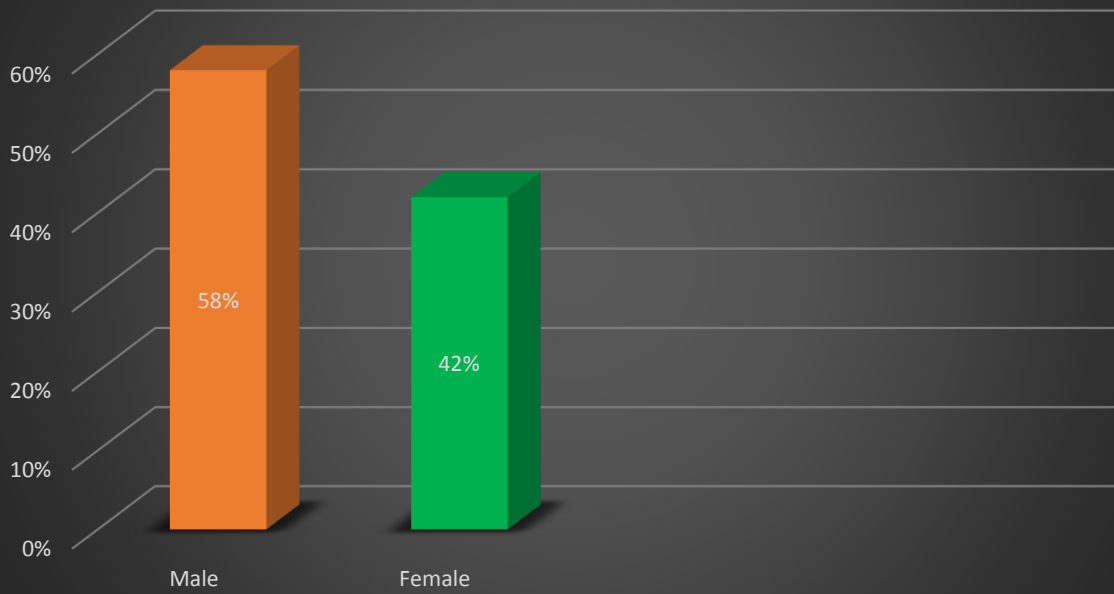
Demographics of Focus Group Participants



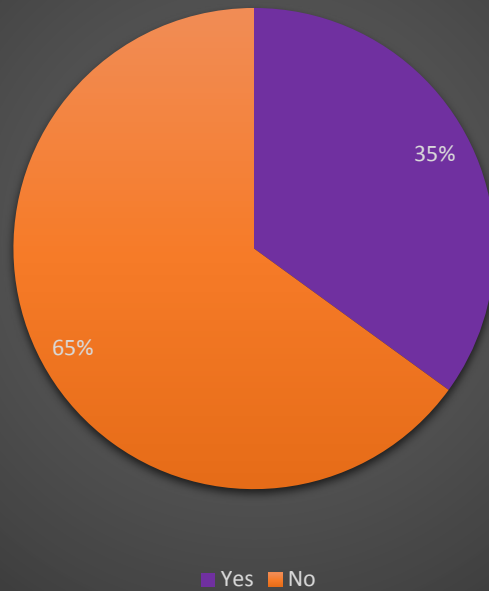
Respondent's GPA Bracket



Respondent's Gender

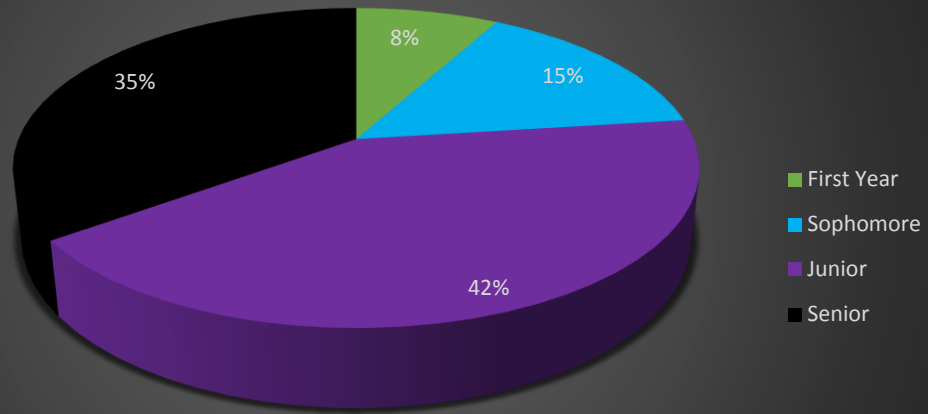


Does The Respondent Have a Job?

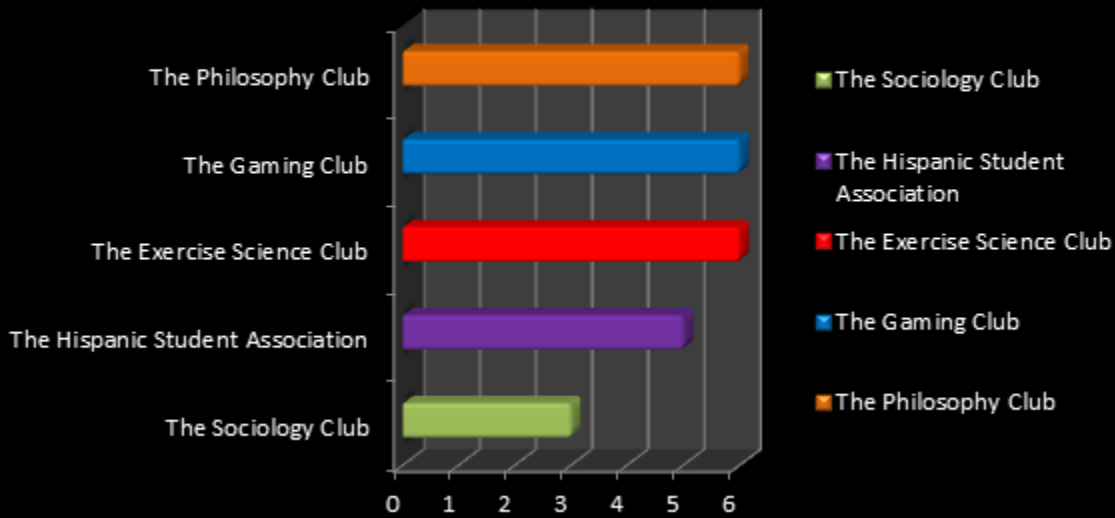


Club Organization	Number of club members for 2014-2015 who regularly attend	How many participated in the focus group
The Sociology Club	Between 4-6	3
The Hispanic Student Association (HSA)	Between 15-30	5
The Philosophy Club	Between 5-9	6
The Gaming Club	Between 10-15	6
The Exercise Science Club	Reported at 200	6

Respondent's Academic Class



Participants Based On Club



*Clubs that were contacted: HOSA, History club, AppCom, TAGA, SHRM, Nerd Network, Jui-Jitsu, MBA club, Feminist Student Union Club, Catholic Campus Ministry Club, AMA, Student Nursing Association, Sustainability and Environmental Education Club, RMA, Society of Professional Journalist Club, English club, Anthropology Club, Health Promotions club, Advertising club, Social Justice club.

* Participating clubs: Philosophy club, Gaming club, Exercise Science club, HSA, and the Sociology club.

Findings

The trends that were found actually show more similarities between academic and non-academic clubs than the two club types have alone. Academic clubs defined by the researcher of this report are clubs that are specifically assigned to college disciplines or majors. In this research, this included: The Sociology Club, The Exercise Science Club and The Philosophy Club. Non-Academic clubs are defined by the researcher as clubs offered on college campuses that do not have a specific discipline focus and are considered special interest or extracurricular clubs. In this research, this included: The Hispanic Student Association (HSA) and The Gaming Club. Non-academic clubs that took part in this research had no exclusive trends that differed from academic clubs. Academic clubs had two discernable trends that were exclusive to their club type and were prevalent in this research, which were the trends of bringing in faculty, and the ability to gain connections and network.

Process of Coding and Transcription

Some of these trends are subjective and may seem to be difficult to code for, such as passion and dedication, but based on the definition that the researcher gives of each trend, findings were coded accordingly. All interviews were transcribed and then coded.

Academic club trends

Bringing in faculty: Faculty involvement in a club setting. This includes faculty attendance to the club, and their sharing of research and knowledge to club members.

It was found that 58% of the students in the Exercise Science and Philosophy club believed bringing in faculty was an important component of their club. Club members found it intriguing to be able to listen to faculty talk about their research and also on their career decisions. The students found it very helpful to hear their faculty speak, because all of the faculty are working

professionals and had experience to share to their students and had taken similar routes as the students.

Philosophy member- "I love when professors come in and talk about what they're writing about. I think that's my favorite activity this club offers."

Exercise science member- "I love when we bring in faculty, because I love to hear about their projects."

Connections: The availability of networking, job prospects, and internships that the club offers to their membership.

The Exercise Science unanimously (100%) agreed that the idea of connections was one of the main benefits of their club. They saw it as very beneficial to be in a club with a reported turnout of 200 students every meeting. Mostly, because they believed it was a good way to gain connections to become professionals in their career field. This club appeared to be the most career centric and professionally oriented club.

Both academic and non-academic club trends

Academic and non-academic clubs can agree upon most of the same basic concepts of the ideal structure of clubs. These answers are in response to qualities of both unsuccessful and successful clubs, and their own clubs.

Passion: The importance of the specific club focus to its members.

Dedication: The commitment the members portray to the club's focus that is apparent through attendance and participation in club activities. Also, individual demonstrations of commitment to the club's focus outside of the club.

The two traits of passion and dedication were combined in this study. All clubs agreed upon the importance of passion and dedication in their club and these trends attributed to 77% of the participants. Every club was passionate about their specific club focus. Whether it was based on their love of academics, the love of one's ethnic culture, the aspirations of service, or even the

love of one's career field. Each of the clubs had members who portrayed a visible passion and dedication to their club

Philosophy member- "The most important quality in a member is a love of philosophy."

HSA member- "I get this feeling that I'm helping my Hispanic community by reaching out, giving my experiences and doing what I can to help out."

Participation: The action of contributing to a club by being an active and involved club member through communication, attendance, and involvement in club activities.

Each of the members (100%) agreed upon the importance of participation in college clubs. Since participation includes communication, attendance, and involvement in club activities, this is an overarching definition and many students interpreted participation in different ways. Most club members looked at participation as involvement and communication in a club setting and some members interpreted participation as the sheer amount of members in the club. Based on the flexible definition of participation, both views were coded under the same trend.

Sociology member- "Participation, if I learned anything from this year, we need member participation and their ideas or otherwise we won't get anywhere."

HSA member- "Member participation is very necessary, because members make the club, without members participating; it's just like a class."

Inclusivity: The general accepting and embracing quality that a clubs portray to all members.

A total of 69% of all club members mentioned the importance of inclusivity. This trend, is one of most important trends based off the fact that each club at least mentioned inclusivity in general and the researcher was able to find this trend in all 5 clubs. Acceptance of all types of members seemed to be a must have for all clubs that were studied, and club members mentioned their disliking towards clubs they considered to be cliquish. Inclusivity promotes other "good" club qualities such as a positive atmosphere, closeness, and friendships.

Gaming member- "members have to be accepting, no one wants to join exclusive clubs"

Sociology member- "If the club was exclusive, I would not join it, if it was just a social hour for a group of friends."

Socialization: The ability to converse and interact with club members.

A total of 77% of all members in this 5 focus group study agreed upon that socialization is an important part of their own club. This is simply the ability to interact and converse with people in its most fundamental levels. Socialization is a very important component of living life as a human, and it's to no surprise that all 5 clubs mentioned its importance.

Gaming member- "I like to play games with people, rather than play against them online, I want to talk to people"

HSA member- "It's a good support system for everyone. We get together and study and eat together, it's nice, and we even drink together."

Organization: An arranged and systematic approach of running a club.

A total of 75% of members of each focus group excluding the Philosophy club mentioned the importance of organization in a club. Most students mentioned the fact that disorganization and a club's lack of planning is truly detrimental to its survival. Some believed that there is no reason to join a club that does not effectively manage or plan out an agenda for each club meeting, because they are essentially doing nothing. In the researcher's opinion, the Philosophy club did not mention the importance of organization, because the way their club was organized was that they ran the club as an open forum. Most days were seen as open forum discussion days to apply Philosophy theories, however some days faculty would come in to speak, but the importance of club organization was not mentioned at all within their focus group recording.

Exercise science member- "Any club that isn't organized and if members do not know what is going on, makes a bad club."

HSA member- "A bad club is when there is disorganization within the club, people are there and people are talking, but not paying attention."

Good Leadership: The ability of executive members in a club to effectively guide, manage and implement direction in their club.

The good leadership trend was found to be important to 75% of all members in all clubs besides the Philosophy club. Leadership is essentially the ability for executive members to properly manage and control their club. Most members were able to bring up past clubs they were members of as a representation of bad leadership, but they were also able to recognize the good leadership in their own club. The Philosophy club, yet again, was not able to be coded or represented in this trend. In the researcher's opinion, no Philosophy member mentioned the importance of the executive board as leaders, because they have a laid back atmosphere where there is no true need to control or effectively manage anything in the club setting, because of their lack of discernable organization in their club, but the members prefer it this way.

Gaming member- "From my past experience in clubs, I know that having good leaders that work together is extremely important"

Sociology member- "I would say if you don't have good officers, then you are not going to get anywhere."

Outside of club activity: All activity that is done outside of the club involving club members.

Outside of club activity was mentioned from the Exercise Science club and HSA. The Exercise Science club routinely mentioned the love of their activity outside of meetings, because of the largeness of their club, so the members were able to better informally get to know one another at their hosted socials and events. HSA mentioned the importance of this trait, because of the "family hood" they considered their club to foster, and they consistently spoke on community involvement, hanging out with club members outside of their club and the dances they host as being some of the most significant semester milestones in their club.

HSA member- "My favorite things of this club are all of the things we do outside the club, our community outreach, dances, our outreach off the mountain, to Winston Salem, Raleigh, Hickory and Lenoir."

Closeness: The ability to have intimate bonds with club members.

Closeness is defined as the ability to form intimate bonds with club members. The majority of respondents (85%) mentioned the importance of meeting new people, developing personal relationships, sharing personal stories, and the feeling of community in their clubs.

Sociology member- "As a member I get the personal relationships from the people I meet and our faculty advisor, her and I are very close, and she has helped me through personal things."

HSA member- "I get love, and friendship, true bonds, with my mates. I feel a sense of community."

Homogeneity: Club members who share distinct or idiosyncratic qualities.

This trend was prevalent in 92% of all respondents. This trend was carefully picked out by the researcher, not necessarily to stereotype or pigeonhole a club's membership, but to apply the club's focus to the members. Whether it was a club member mentioning the niche type of individual it takes to join their club, the club's overrepresented ethnic demographic, or just the majority of the club members having the same interest after college.

Gaming member- "You have to be a gamer, that's the bare minimum."

Exercise science member- "We all have in common that we want to go to a professional school afterwards, we all have a health interest in mind."

Dues: A fee or subscription charge that clubs require members to pay in order to maintain membership.

A total of three clubs spoke on dues, which applied to 47% of their club members, excluding the Sociology and Philosophy clubs. Most of the commentary on dues were negative. Whether it was the fact that if dues did not have a foreseeable benefit to the member, it could become an issue, or to some, an unwillingness to pay anything at all for joining a club. Dues were evidently not a

problem in either the Sociology or Philosophy clubs, and it was never discovered as to whether or not those two clubs have to pay dues.

Incentives: Motivational techniques used in a club in order to encourage involvement and engagement.

A total of 71% of respondents mentioned the importance of incentives to promote involvement and engagement in their club, excluding the Sociology and Philosophy clubs. Members overwhelmingly appreciated the incentives their clubs offered, such as free dances, apparel, socials and hosted events. The Sociology club did not mention incentives, and in the researcher's opinion, it's because the club itself is not completely set up as a functioning club. The Philosophy club did not mention the need for incentives as well, however, it is difficult to measure if their academic discoveries they gain from their club meetings can be seen as an incentive.

Exercise science member- "We hold socials that are not included when the club meets, they are so fun."

HSA member- "When you pay your dues, you get into a dance for free."

Another component to consider

Size differences

Philosophy member- "I'm in two clubs on campus and I'm really more attached to this one, being that it's a smaller club. In a club with a lot of people you don't get that feeling of closeness to people. If it's too big, I feel like I'm not participating and I'm just a number"

Exercise science member- "On average we have about 120 members that come to every monthly meeting, because the exercise science school is so big"

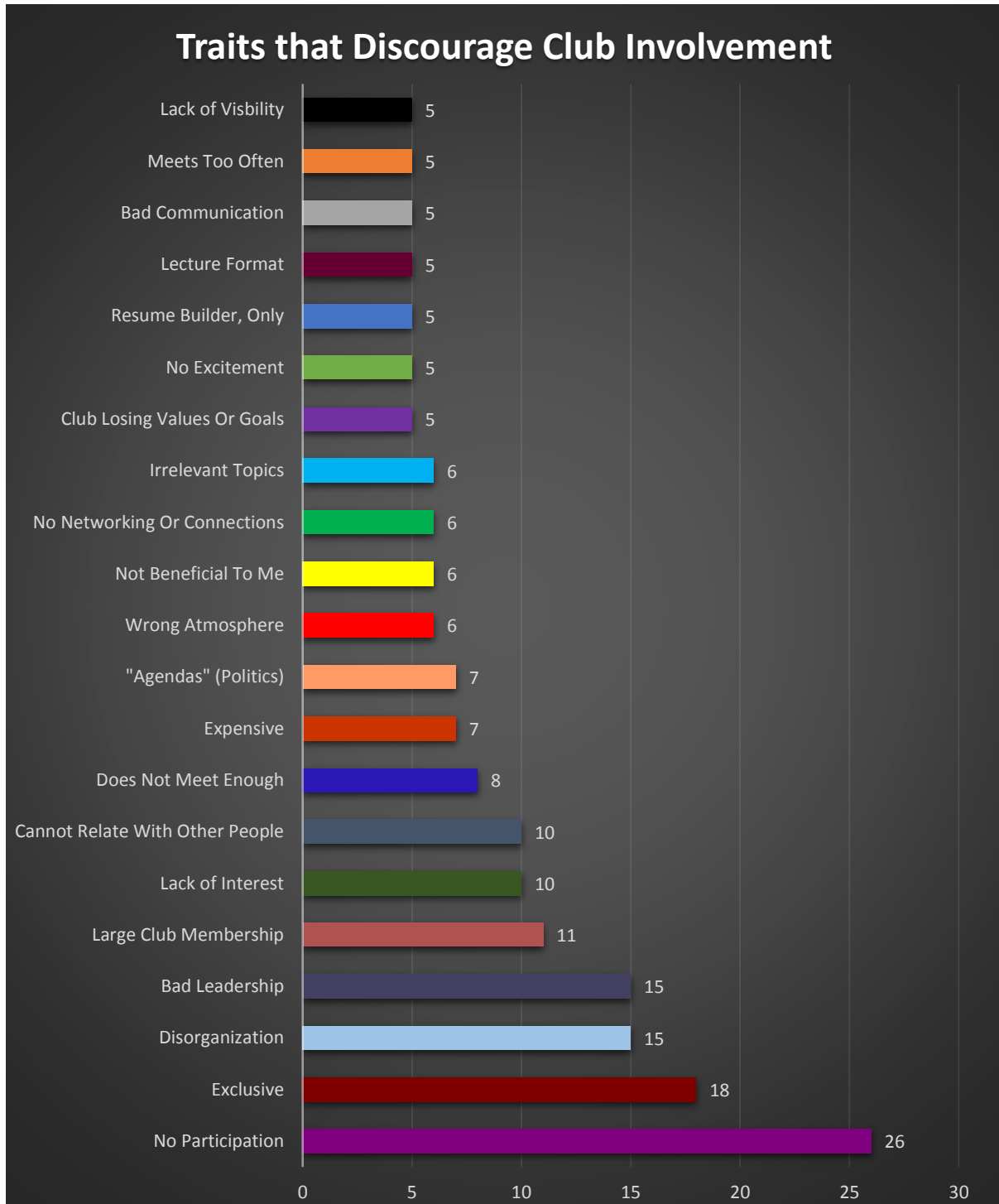
Gaming club member- "I was in a different club where there was little member participation and we just did nothing and no one really rejoined the year after it, clubs are nothing without its members."

HSA member- "We have 15, 20, 30 people come regularly, but our mailing list is like 150 people. "

Sociology member- "Umm, well definitely the four of us officers, I would go as far as to say that there is one other person that goes to every single meeting."

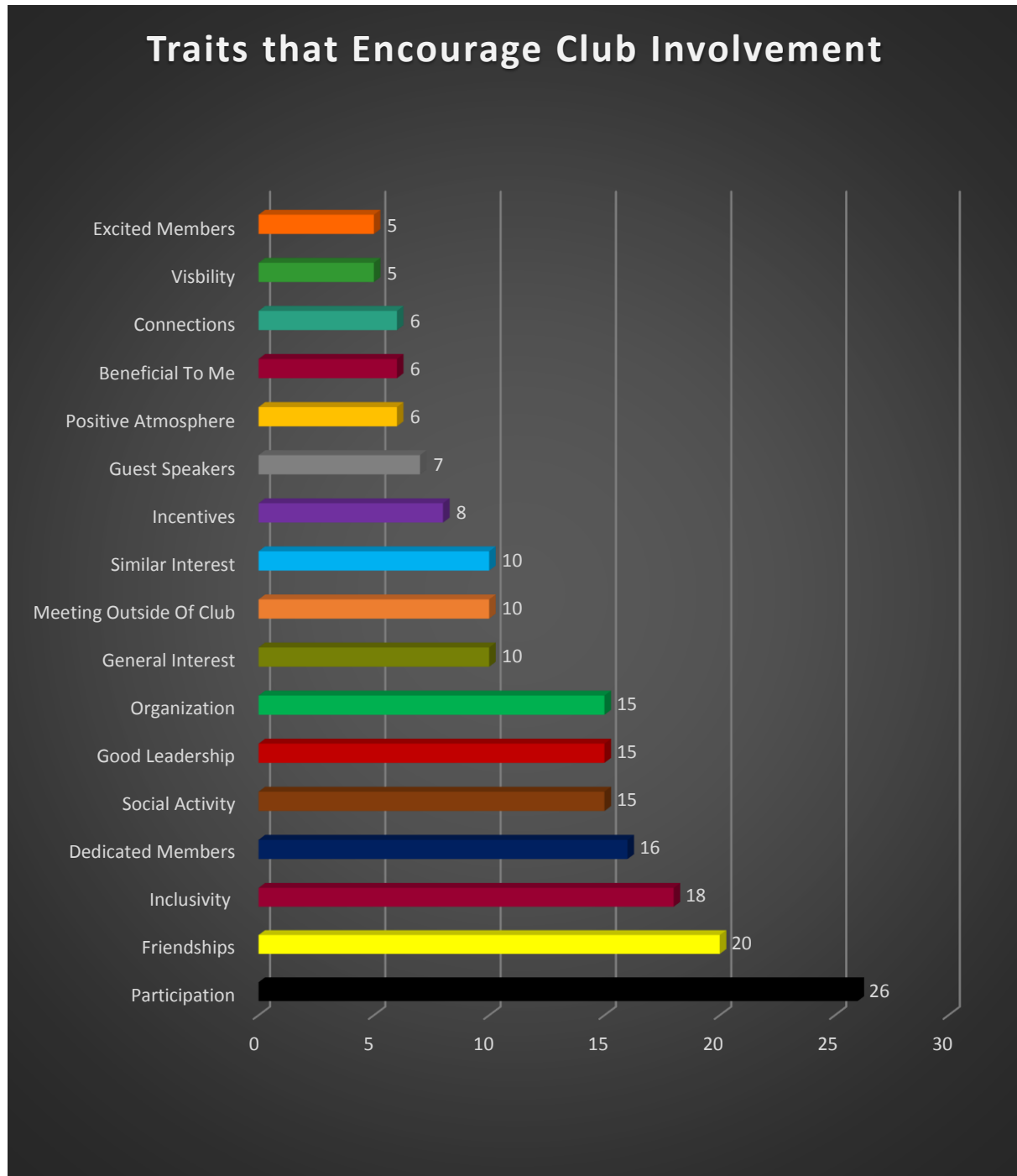
The following is a list of popular deterrents that the clubs mentioned, each of these were at least mentioned once by all club focus groups, and sometimes were corroborated by other group members.

What reasons would keep you from joining a club, and what makes a bad club?

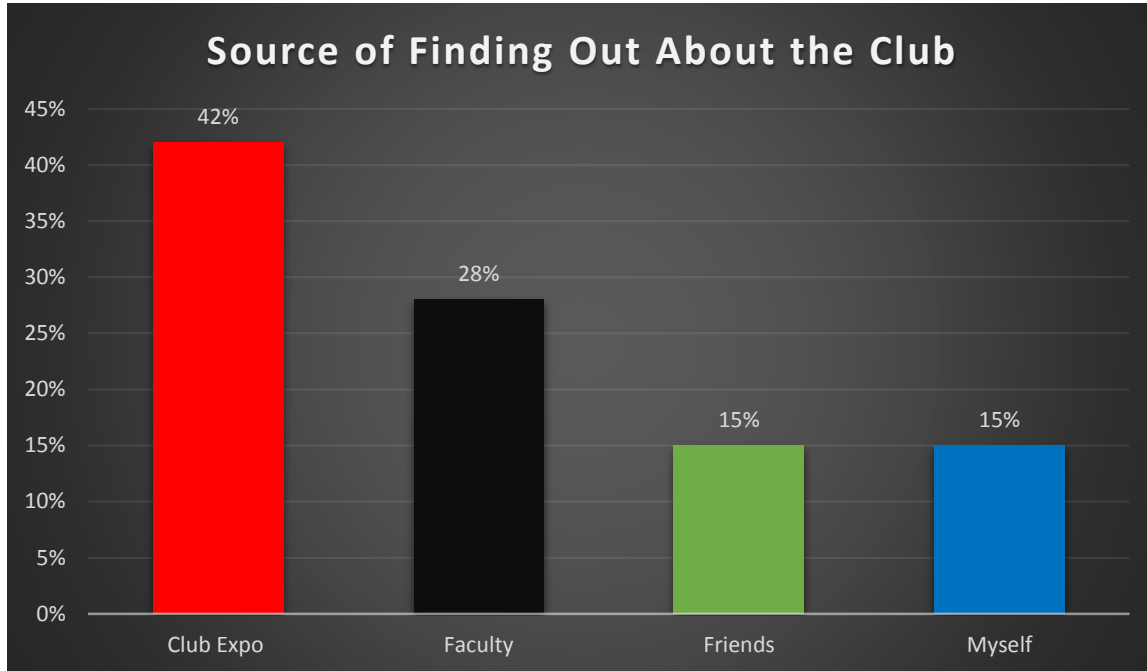


The following is a list of popular positive attributes of clubs, each of these were at least mentioned once by all club focus groups, and sometimes were corroborated by other group members.

What makes a good club?

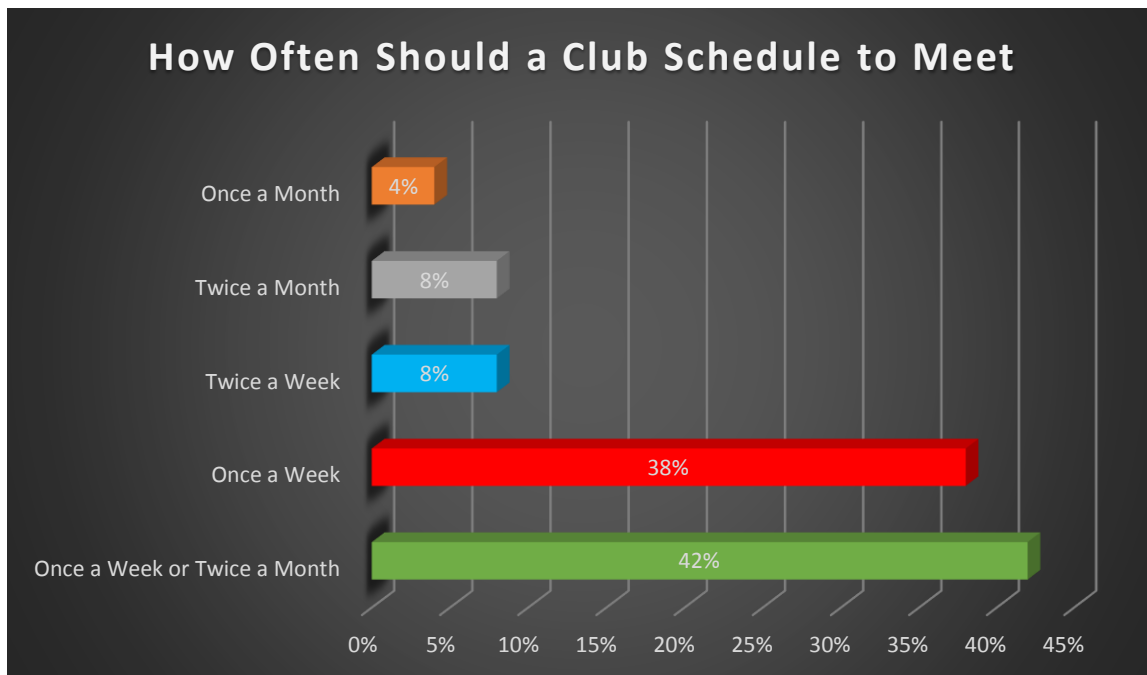


How did you find out about this club?



This is how often the members of the five focus groups believed that clubs should schedule to meet

How often should a club schedule to meet?



First, an idea of what the Sociology club could be

It is only fair to mention the potential and the possibilities of what the Sociology club could offer on campus. One past faculty advisor spoke on her visions of the club by stating “We are very much an applied department and service oriented. I would like to see the club’s outreach grow. I want students to be connected and involved in the community to bridge the gap between campus and the community.” Another past faculty advisor said, “I would like to see more unity outside of class. Doing service projects together and having brown bag discussions of Sociology where faculty and community members come to speak and for our students to partner with the community for service projects.” The current faculty advisor spoke about unity as well. She stated, “To bring more awareness to our department and to those majoring in Sociology, we really need to build good solid relationships. For example, a lot of the students don’t know one another, because they are in different classes and don’t get an opportunity to speak with one another. They need to have these relationships in order to engage in service projects and be successful in them.” There are definitely discernable trends that are apparent from these three statements. The idea of community, unity, and service. The aspirations of the Sociology club becoming something that it has not proven to portray in the last 18 years.

Consider this definition of a successful club

Before reading the concluding thoughts on the Sociology club, this definition of a successful club should be taken into consideration; this definition was developed from K.K. Kohler who is the chair of the club council on campus. She said, “A successful club doesn’t really depend on members or a presence on campus. It’s more if the members are happy within their club. A successful club is when all members feel purposeful, when they’re contributing and when they

feel welcome there.” By this definition alone, the researcher concludes that 4 out of the 5 clubs that the researcher studied fit this definition. The Sociology club is the only club that does not fit this definition. It is a fairly obtainable definition to reach, but the Sociology club has not shown the ability to reach or fit the definition’s requirements.

The following is a list of noticeable trends that the Sociology club portrays or lacks in its club

Lack of visibility (advertising)

Visibility: The awareness a club has on campus.

In fact, 2/3 of the members of the Sociology club, said they were referred to this club through our current faculty advisor, each their sophomore year. Both had been Sociology majors for nearly a year before they heard about it. Visibility has only gotten worse, because the club has not met this entire semester. This trait was not one that was avidly mentioned by the clubs in order to become a trend, but was notable when club focus groups mentioned qualities of a good club. Based on membership in comparison to other clubs, the Sociology club does not have enough visibility, especially because of the amount Sociology majors in the university. The Philosophy club has more reported members, even though the major only has 25 students.

Sociology member- “I learned about this club through our faculty advisor. I decided to see what it was all about. The first time I heard about it was through her, my sophomore year.”

Lack of Participation

Past faculty advisor- “We have struggled to get students to be involved. The students say they want to get involved but they don’t do it.”

The Sociology members mentioned participation as the main focus of their club. They spoke on the lack of flowing ideas, students expecting the officers to make the decisions, and just the general

inability to keep members in the club. Participation is a vital component of a successful club, and the Sociology club in comparison to the other clubs has dismal participation rates.

Lack of Committed Membership

The club is unable to have a committed membership, because of their lack of organization and lack of setting up a solid schedule. They do not plan out events, but just brainstorm ideas. Without proper planning and implementing at least one or two events at the beginning of the semester, nothing will come to fruition and members will leave. Why join a club that does nothing? The members also need to be familiar with one another before they follow through with service projects. Each of the other clubs in this study portrayed a committed membership.

Faculty advisor- "First and foremost we need to develop a good rapport with one another. We really need to build good solid relationships. For example, a lot of the students don't know one another, because they are in different classes and don't get an opportunity to speak with one another. They need to have these relationships in order to engage in service projects and be successful in them."

Lack of Faculty and Student Buy in

If a student body does not seek to be in a club like the Sociology club and is not passionate or dedicated to making the club successful, then why offer the club at all? The Sociology faculty would be in full support of this club if it showed promise and if students portrayed such a desire to be active in the club. The club membership has not made this evident in the past; therefore because of the lack of student buy in, there is a lack of faculty buy in as well. In both of the other academic clubs, faculty buy in was evident, and to an extent, even in HSA.

Past faculty advisor- "I do feel like that academic clubs are just not where it's at and there is less of a desire for them. Non-academic clubs have most of the attention. Maybe it's not worth the effort if there is not a huge buy in from the students or faculty."

Lack of Scheduled Meetings and/or a Deadlocked Schedule

Sociology member- "Last semester we met every other week, but this semester we have yet to have a meeting, so yeah."

The ability for a club to meet on a solid schedule is imperative for a club's success. Interested Sociology students need to know when and where the club schedules to meet. There cannot be continuous cancellations even if some of the officers cannot make it. A habit has developed this semester, because the club has yet to meet. This only adds fuel to fire, and a true lack of visibility of the club. Each of the other clubs studied were confined to a locked schedule and there were no club cancellations reported in the club focus groups.

Lack of Clear Objectives and/or Mission Statement

Past faculty advisor- "It was always a very democratic process. We didn't have a set mission statement. It was kind of a loose framework."

Clubs need to be based on some sort of clear objectives or mission statement. When a club is left in a loose framework, there are no guidelines or structure to the club. This adds on to the ambivalence of the club's direction, especially because of all the pressure for the officers and president to decide on what the club's focus will be. A mission and set of clear objectives were prevalent in the other studied clubs.

Lack of Leadership

The participants in the Sociology club are overwhelmingly officers. There is at least a four person turn out, because there are four active officers in the club. Leadership is one of the most needed traits for the Sociology club. The inability to retain members, their disorganization, and lack of partnerships, lack of deadlocked schedules, and a lack of visibility are all connected to leadership. However, this has been a continuous issue for the officers throughout the club's existence. There is no way that this responsibility can be put on the shoulders of four individuals.

The status the Sociology club cannot be remedied by these individuals themselves. It's easy to pigeonhole a group to blame for the position that the club is currently in, but they inherited it. The leadership component is what is going to make or break this club, and this club has to be desired by the students, but even if they do desire it, they do not have the resources or capability to revitalize the club at this point, because there is not enough active members to put an adequate amount of effort to rebuilding the club. Also, the current members are not able to appropriately decide on a mission or clear objectives of the club. It's much easier for a successful club to be adopted and carried out instead of having to create one from the ground up. Leadership was apparent and visible in each of the other clubs, besides the Philosophy club, whose club atmosphere and club objectives does not rely on a strong and firm leadership.

Sociology member- "I would say if you don't have good officers then you're not going to get anywhere. You need them to be dedicated or the club will fall apart."

Lack of Partnerships

Past faculty advisor- "There are amazing nonprofits and organizations we can partner up with, but when you sign up with these agencies, you can't back down. The Farm Café gets screwed all the time with students who sign up to volunteer, and then they don't show up."

We can only orchestrate an initiative to form partnerships when we have active participation and membership. Partnerships can only occur when the club proves that it can sustain itself alone. Also, the fact that the Sociology club has had such a poor record, at least this semester, with scheduling a time to meet, it is unlikely that the club can build a positive rapport with any partners if they are unable to meet for their own meetings. Partnerships were apparent in HSA, the Gaming club, and the Exercise Science club.

Lack of Organization

Faculty advisor- "When you get through one meeting and the generation of ideas are good, but you don't have anything solid to work towards, then it won't happen."

The Sociology club members mentioned that when students were in the club, they would look to the officers and president to decide on what they were going to do. Even when the officers asked for their input, they sat silent and just stared at them. Organization stems from a mission or clear objectives, which the club has not had. It would be unfair of the officers to not ask for advice in a democratic style. However, the officers are uncertain on what to do as well. Like all departments, workforces, and even countries, goals and a mission are required in order to maintain stability and organization, which the club does not have. Organization was stressed by all clubs, besides the Philosophy club, who continue to be an anomaly in my research, by both club atmosphere and necessary club traits.

Lack of Dedication

Past faculty advisor- "It has been pretty consistent throughout the decades, in terms of lack of involvement and a lack of buy in from students, even when I ran it. I think students have changed based off their schedules and desires, and what they are looking for from their college educations."

It was mentioned that passion and dedication are important aspects of a club. I do not doubt that the current members are passionate about Sociology, but they are not dedicated in the manner to be able to portray their passion in actual action, through participation and working towards creating a sustainable club. However, it would be unlikely for these students to be able to build this club up by themselves, without adequate resources, which will be spoken about later in this report. Dedication was portrayed by all clubs in this study, besides the Sociology club.

Lack of Service projects

This club does not have the ability to engage in community service projects based off its low retention rates of club membership and their lack of rapport with service partners. Service projects were not a big deal for the other clubs; however, past faculty advisors and current

Sociology members have been pressing this as the focus of the club, being that this is a very much applied discipline. Service projects were only evident in HSA, however, this service component appears to be an important focus that the Sociology faculty and members desire.

Past Faculty advisor- "I would like to see that outreach grow. I wanted students to be connected and involved in the community, to be that bridge between campus and community."

Lack of Incentives

Incentives play a large role with the clubs that took part in this research. Three of the five clubs, HSA, Exercise science, and the Gaming club all provided incentives to promote an active membership in their club. Incentives were mentioned in all clubs, besides the Philosophy and Sociology clubs.

Past faculty advisor- "I have been dismayed in the past where other faculty members on campus met in their departments and talk about their books and films and when we set up those evening activities, students won't show up unless extra credit is being offered."

Lack of Connections

The Sociology club really has no networking, at least currently. In the past they have had community partners, but they do not have those connections or ties with anyone presently. There is a low likelihood that job prospects can develop from being in the Sociology club. This at least was very important to the Exercise Science members, where 100% of their focus group members mentioned the importance of it.

Exercise Science member- "If it didn't benefit me at all, like no connections or no nothing. I'm not going to join the sewing club or something that doesn't help me."

Lack of Academic Enlightenment

Academic Enlightenment- Knowledge sharing in a club that stems from the imparting of learned knowledge from class to the club.

The Sociology club, though similar in size to the Philosophy club, is not engaged in the academic fervor that the Philosophy club displays. The Philosophy club is strictly defined as an academic club, where theories, the application of knowledge, and the transition between class and the club is highly visible. However, the Sociology club has only been defined in the past as a service oriented club and just recently, a social club. Nevertheless, if the club was academically based, a high turnout of members may not be as necessary, just like the Philosophy club, who has at least six very happy members.

Philosophy member - "I like thinking about things, so it's really hard to be in this club if you don't like to think, and getting into the depths of it."

Ultimately, what the Sociology club does not have in comparison to the other clubs

Based on the researcher's opinion, and through the research done. The Sociology club lacks visibility, dedication by both students in the major and in the club, organization, and good leadership. Missions and objectives are also lacking in the Sociology club. They were not a trend that was evident in the focus group recordings, but they are discernible traits that the members mentioned for successful clubs and traits the Sociology club does not have. Lack of connections and academic enlightenment were offered by the researcher as an alternative understanding of what the club may lack, because these trends were obvious in the other academic clubs; however, they may not represent the desires of actual club members and potential members for the Sociology club. There are outliers to this research, especially with the Philosophy club who did not stress organization, leadership or incentives, but because the Sociology club has to be considered in a lower form of development in comparison to the other clubs in this research, it is

imperative that organization and leadership is portrayed in the Sociology club. The Sociology club also has a different atmosphere than the Philosophy club, because one is academically driven and the other desires to be service oriented, so leadership and organization is more vital in such an atmosphere that the Sociology club wants to foster. Some of the other stated flaws mentioned in the Sociology write-up above are actually side effects of the primary negative traits mentioned in this paragraph. These side effects include a lack of service projects, partnerships, lack of scheduled meetings or a deadlocked schedule, lack of student and faculty buy in and a lack of committed membership.

Arguments for keeping the Sociology club

Students who major in Sociology, but who have no identifying club, may be curious to why this department does not have an identifying club, because even the Philosophy school that only has 25 majors, has a club. There will not be unity, community, or service, from specifically Sociology majors, which were the aspirations of the club in the first place. The Sociology students will be spread throughout the school in their own clubs, but will have no real connection with other Sociology students, other than students in their same cohort while taking their required Sociology courses. Also, faculty will not be able to have an easy way to share their research to our students.

Conclusion

All of the other clubs in this study considered and were aware of their faults, but still believed their club to be successful. Club members were passionate, dedicated, and were in love with what their clubs were about. Whether it was just based on the social atmosphere, the networking, or the academic side. Even the Philosophy club who is comparable to the Sociology club in size was more than content with their club. They enjoyed the fact that they are a small and close

group of members, but that could have something to do with the fact that there are only 25 Philosophy majors and there are no other clubs on campus similar to the Philosophy club. From what was gathered from these focus groups, the students and faculty of the Sociology club see their club as a failure, they wish for more membership and participation, and they wish to be more service oriented, unlike the Philosophy club who only participate in the academic side. It is not fair to compare the Sociology club to any of the studied academic clubs since the differences are immense. The Sociology club has never been about networking, and from what research that has been done, there never was a committed effort to have a transition from what was being learned in class into the club, as far as it being an academic based club. The club is socially oriented and was very much a service club, when it was in its prime. Other factors include the size of the Sociology College, in comparison to the Exercise Science School. As well as the fact that there are a countless amount of social justice based clubs on campus, who have focuses, of which Sociology students are more than likely members of. Based on all of the faults and the history of the Sociology club, I cannot recommend the Sociology club to continue. Based on everything that I have discovered from my research, the Sociology club only has promise if an immense amount of effort is put towards the initiative to revitalize the club. The trends have been continuous, at least for the past 18 years that I was able to learn about. It cannot be just poor leadership; it has to do with so many different factors. One of them being the fact that we have more popular social justice based clubs on campus with a common goal and focus, while the Sociology club is too general with no objectives or mission statement. There is also no structure in this club as well as little or no faculty and student buy in. The club would be like so many other clubs on campus that have shown a continuity of success, if only it was built upon success, or its success was inherited. More importantly the club members are not dedicated towards this

club. While they may be passionate about Sociology and social justice, implementing that passion in the form of action is so much more difficult when you have to attempt to build a structure for a failing club. The club has continued to not show any progress. The members have not met this whole semester, which is living proof to its deteriorating presence on campus. Based on every piece of evidence that I can use to understand the Sociology club, I can only see a downward trend. While we may want to focus on the ideal and aspiring vision of the Sociology club being this magnificent bridge to fill the gap between the community and the school or the idea that this club can reach an infinite amount of potential, because it is not limited by a focus, however, history has proven that these feats are going to be very difficult to reach. The problem itself would take a massive amount of buy in and effort from both students and faculty and all of the listed faults of this club have to be fixed in order for it to show promise. It's an effort that isn't realistically going to be taken on. However, there is more hope to pushing Sociology students in the direction of our copious amounts of Sociology based clubs on campus, and I would propose an effort for us to do that.

If The Researcher's Advice is NOT taken

If the researcher's advice is not taken, Sociology faculty needs to create a mission statement and objectives for the club. Also, faculty members need to put in the effort to create the foundation of this club, which the students will follow and plan accordingly to the mission, once it's set up. Faculty need to carefully ***monitor*** the club for ***at least a year***, and make sure that strong and ready leaders take office. Good leadership, organization, advertising through word of mouth, flyers, and online needs to be pursued. Also, having objectives and a focus will put this club on its feet. Our students will be dedicated to this club if it is set up in a way that can be easily run, because as of right now, the officers are finding it difficult to properly run the club. All of the

negative traits and side effects of not having these core components will be non-existent if the core competencies are fulfilled. There will be no lack of student buy in once the club is visibly sustaining and when students hear about the service the club is completing.

Ending statement

This statement attempts to tie up the conclusions of this research. A past faculty advisor said, “My big part is engagement, if they are getting engagement somewhere else, then that’s okay.” This quote highlights what we should really be pushing our students to do. It does appear to be an easy out; we can easily get rid of the Sociology club by being okay with the idea that as long as our students are getting the involvement or that engagement outside of the Sociology club, then that’s okay. I would propose for more research to be done to find out on a university level how engaged, involved, and active our students are. The research should measure the amount of clubs students are involved with, the amount of students who have jobs, the average amount of academic hours they are taking, and the average GPA of our students. This would better gauge how involved the students are. If we decide to cut the Sociology club, it will not be the end of the world. In fact there is an overrepresentation of Sociology and social justice based clubs on campus, and we need to put effort into supporting those. Also, if we decide to terminate the Sociology club, but down the road students decide they want an identifying club for the major and are passionate and dedicated about the creation of such a club, then effort can go towards creating and building up this club when it is truly sought after and when there is enough student buy in, because as of right now, we may be pushing this club on a group of students who do not have the passion or dedication to make this club successful.

Limitations

The limitations of this research project include the selection process and subsequently the lack of generalizability of this research. The fact that out of 25 clubs that were asked to participate, only 5 responded. The other limitation of this research is the lack of generalizability of these findings. This study was all done at the same institution, which cannot lead to generalizable findings to any macro level, because of the possibility of differing environmental factors that are exclusive to this school. Also, there was an overall small amount of interviews held and clubs studied in this research.

Focus Group Questions:

Do you believe member participation is important in your club?

If so, why?

How many people attend your club meetings regularly?

Does everyone participate in your club meetings?

What does your club value the most out of its members and Why?

Are you planning on going to graduate school?

Why did you join this club?

What reasons would deter you from joining a club?

Would you ever join more than one club?

How often do you meet in this club?

What makes this club different from other clubs?

Would you ever join a non-academic club?

Would you ever join an academic club?

What makes a good club?

What makes a bad club?

How did you find out about this club?

How often should a club schedule to meet?

What are your favorite activities that this club offers?

What do you get out of this club as a member?

Interview Questions for Sociology Faculty

How aware are you of the Sociology Club and their activities?

What roles does the Sociology Club play in the department?

Do you have any goals or visions for the sociology club?

Do you think sociology majors are aware of the sociology club?

Interview Questions with the head of Club Council

Define a successful club

What types of clubs seem to be the most successful?

Do you find that non-academic or academic clubs are more successful?

Do you think that students who join clubs are more successful in college?

Do you believe that more specialized clubs are more successful than general clubs?

What are some qualities of an unsuccessful club?

What are some qualities of a successful club?

Do you have any other insights on clubs on campus that would be relevant to this study?

Survey Questions:

What is your Sex?

Male/Female

How many academic hours are you enrolled in this semester?

What is your age?

How many class sessions do you miss per week?

0-1, 2-4, 5+

What Race/Ethnicity do you identify with?

What is your major?

What is your academic class?

What GPA bracket do you fall under?

Below a 2.0, 2.1-2.5, 2.6-3.0, 3.1-3.5, Above a 3.5

Do you work?

Yes/No

If Yes, how many hours?

Are you involved in any clubs on campus?

Yes/No

If Yes, how many?

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