

TITLE Effects of Student Clubs and Organizations on Leadership Skills Development, GPA, and Engagement in Select North Carolina Community Colleges

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OBJECTIVE The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of participation in a community college student club or organization with regards to changes in leadership skills, GPA, and student engagement.

METHODOLOGY

The population for this study was students from five community colleges who participated in a student club or organization (e.g., Student Government Association, Campus Ministries, Phi Theta Kappa, and Student Ambassadors) in the 2013-2014 school year, in the state of North Carolina. For the experimental group, the LPI was administered in the fall semester to 239 students, of which 178 were again returned in the spring (75% response rate). In the control group, 166 students responded to both the pre and post LPI administrations (51% response rate). Participants also provided demographic information and questions regarding engagement, spirituality, GPA, and involvement. The internal reliability for the LPI with the control group pre-test was .901 and post-test was .899; while internal reliability for the experimental group's pre-test was .930 and post-test was .929. In the control group, most respondents were Caucasian (51%), and also true for the experimental group (60%). Most respondents were between 18-30 years of age (75-78%), female (63-57%), in an associate in arts degree program (65-76%), in their second semester for the control group (47%) or more than fourth semester for the experimental group (34%), single (81-83%), and not first-generation students (73-80%).

KEY FINDINGS

A significant difference (increase) was found between the pre and post-test administrations of the LPI to both the control and experimental groups, with all five leadership practices increasing in frequency. There were no differences in any of the five leadership practices by gender on the pre-test for either the control or experimental groups, and the same was true on the post-test administration.

For students involved in Student Government, there was a significant increase in all five leadership practices from the pre to the post-test administration. For students involved in the Ambassadors' program, there was a significant increase in all five leadership practices from the pre to the post-test administration. For students involved in "Other" student organizations, there was a significant increase in all five leadership practices from the pre to the post-test administration. For students involved in Phi Theta Kappa, there was a significant increase in Model, Inspire, and Challenge, a decrease in Enable, and no

change in Encourage. For students involved in Campus Ministries, there was a significant decrease in all five leadership practices from the pre to the post-test administration.

The author concludes:

In this study, club involvement resulted in gains in leadership behaviors, a greater sense of connectivity, growth in academics, fellowship with other members as well as faculty and staff, freedom of expression, support, and accountability and time management... This research could magnify the importance of implementing certain practices that are needed to produce tomorrow's leaders. One tool useful for developing those practices is the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (p. 220).