

The Perspective of the CMBT Officers in Joining the Student Organizations in NEUST San Isidro Campus

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Abstract - *The purpose of this study was to ascertain the interest in joining the student organization of the College of Management and Business Technology at NEUST San Isidro Campus. The findings of this study support the recognition of student organizations to develop individual students' leadership potential. Faculty and staff must collaborate to firmly develop areas of learning and development for students involved in campus clubs and organizations. Student affairs professionals must cultivate relationships with academics and traditional classroom instructors to supplement students' knowledge acquisition with opportunities for leadership development outside of the expected pedagogy. Similarly, faculty members must recognize that learning occurs outside of the classroom and cultivate relationships with their student affairs colleagues to enhance students' academic journeys through involvement in campus clubs and organizations.*

Key Words: *Student Leader, Perspective, Student Affairs, Student Organizations, NEUST*

INTRODUCTION

The Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology – College of Management and Business Technology in San Isidro is a NEUST Satellite Campus with a large number of Business students. The aim of this study is to investigate why student officers decide to become involved with student organizations during their undergraduate academic careers. Significant research exists on the benefits of student organization participation (Dugan, 2013;

Gellin, 2003; Kuh, 2009; Kuk, Thomas, & Banning, 2008; Smith & Chenoweth, 2015), but there is little research on why a student chooses to participate in a campus club or organization (Trowler, 2010). Student affairs professionals will develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the circumstances that contribute to a student's decision to join by learning more about students' lived experiences which actively participate in a student organization.

The study included a purposeful sampling of students between the ages of 18 and 25 who were verified as current members of a registered club or organization using the institution's student organization software. The identified participants are members of the student organization categories recognized by the subject institution, including club and athletics sports organization, fraternities/sororities, academic, fine arts, service, or cultural councils. A case study methodology was used for this study. "A qualitative case study is an approach that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources," writes Baxter and Jack (2008). Assuring that the issue is examined through a variety of lenses, allowing multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood." This approach is expected to prompt campus leaders at the institution under investigation to consider how best to structure programs, services, and resource allocation to reinforce the importance of student organization involvement.

Students can become purposefully involved in their educational experience by participating in

campus clubs and organizations. Students who participate in student organizations typically experience gains in specific areas of development, such as cognitive skills (Gellin, 2003), interpersonal skills (Huang & Chang, 2004), and developmental skills (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). Furthermore, student organizations provide a learning opportunity to apply classroom skills, resulting in student growth (Foubert & Grainger, 2006).

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

For information collection, this study used a qualitative approach informed by a constructivist-interpretive paradigm centered on understanding the problem of practice from those experiencing it (Pontorotto, 2005). Yin also defines case study research as "a pragmatic inquiry that examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not obvious; and when multiple sources of evidence are used." The research design used a methodology similar to Merriam's (1998) case study methodology definition to collect information directly from students. Merriam (1998) described case study methodology as an examination of educational processes, problems, and programs to ultimately improve practice.

Seven student leaders enrolled in both the Business Administration Major and the Entrepreneurship Program participated in the survey. The respondents were chosen at random using a computerized random number generator.

Observations were used as part of the methodological approach for this case study, in addition to a review of the aforementioned data sources. Observations, as Yin (2013) points out, can be a useful tool for providing additional information relevant to the topic under consideration. Specifically, researcher observations were conducted during the semester's student organization involvement fair.

Following an examination of reports, documentation, and observations, focus group interviews were used to collect information

highlighting a student's personal experience with student organizations. According to Yin (2013), interviews can be one of the most important sources of data for a case study. For this study, a focused interview approach was used (Yin, 2013).

While no study design is perfect, as Marshall and Rossman (2014) point out, every research study has limitations, which researchers must be aware of. This helps to demonstrate the researcher's level of understanding of their research and, as a result, increases a researcher's credibility (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Engagement

In higher education, the term "student engagement" is frequently used. Historically, student engagement has been focused on increasing students' achievement and sense of belonging in order to increase retention and persistence efforts (Taylor & Parsons, 2011). Student engagement or involvement has recently expanded to include specific strategies for a student's learning process as well as institutional accountability for outcomes related to student learning, growth, and development (Kuh, 2009; Trowler, 2010; Taylor & Parsons, 2011). The articles that follow in this section discuss the relationship between student engagement and a student's decision to join a student organization in terms of sense of belonging and peer influence. According to Hall (2012), participation in student organizations provides students with essential learning skills for a professional career.

A sense of belonging or a connection to campus Students decided to join student organizations in order to meet new people and connect with peers who share similar interests. The fact that students involved in student organizations felt connected to campus was a recurring theme throughout all interviews. Participation in a student organization provided students with something to relate to as well as someone to relate to, which enhanced their sense of community and connection to the college or university. Students stated that if

they had not been involved with at least one student organization, they would not have continued their education. Officer A, for example, stated that his fraternity assisted him in adjusting to campus and establishing a sense of belonging. Officer A's friend who attended another local institution did not participate in any student organizations and "hated" his collegiate experience. Furthermore, Officer B stated that as a student transferring from a large city to a rural campus, he felt isolated at first, so it was critical for him to make friends and feel connected to the institution. He went on to say:

It is critical to become involved and to feel at ease on your campus, because if you are not at ease on your campus, you will not be happy there. You simply need to find a student organization that will assist you in making your institution your second home. Because I wanted to find people to whom I could relate as a student.

Student participants joined student organizations to meet new people and connect with others at the university. The importance of connecting with others and finding a home away from home was a recurring theme in discussions with participants. Each student described how their student organization served as a safety net for them and helped them stay at the university. "You can be that student who doesn't feel like a university is your home, but the second you join a student organization that aligns with your interests, you'll stay," Officer C said. "You'll think to yourself, "This is where I belong." Students expressed the importance of feeling like they belonged. The sense of belonging helped them focus on their academic responsibilities and make sound decisions for the future. Student engagement and a student's investment in their academic success are directly related to the sense of belonging expressed by student participants. According to Parsons and Taylor (2011), "student engagement focuses on increasing achievement, positive behaviors, and a sense of belonging in students in order for them to remain in school" (p. 3). This study focuses on how joining student organizations as a way of connecting with others and the institution improves student engagement outcomes and a student's overall success.

Students involved in student organizations also stated that joining a student organization helped them identify with the organization's goals. As previously stated, making friends and feeling welcome were important factors in deciding to join a student organization, but student engagement was also determined by sharing common interests with members of the organization that could prove beneficial to one's personal and professional development. Officer D stated:

I knew I wanted to get involved so that I could meet new people. I didn't come to college with any high school friends, so I knew this would be a good way to meet people. And be able to match my extracurricular activities with club interests and goals that are related to what I am studying.

This identification increased a student's desire to make friends and reinforced students' commitment to participating in student organizations and their sense of belonging. Student organization involvement, according to Officer E, "gives you a chance to do stuff that actually matters and connect with people who have similar interests."

Many participants stated that their sense of belonging to student organizations played a role in determining their level of commitment over time. Students who felt a stronger commitment to an organization saw opportunities to improve both the organization and themselves, which aided their social and academic growth and development. Improvements included developing a member recruitment strategy, planning and facilitating meaningful organization meetings, connecting with other constituents on campus to collaborate on a project, fundraising, and initiating programs, as well as managing the student organization's fiscal aspects. The importance of involvement in student organizations is confirmed by a sense of belonging, which explains the students' interest in joining.

Influence from peers. Students' decisions to join a student organization were influenced by their peers, both current friends and upper-level students. Many students saw involvement in student

organizations as an opportunity to meet new people, with some saying that their friends in a student organization served as their family while they were in college, which aligned with developing a sense of belonging and engagement. The role of peers in student decisions has been highlighted in research, and this study focuses on how friends influenced a student's reason for joining a student organization, increasing the likelihood of persistence as a result.

The majority of students who took part in the focus group interviews emphasized the importance of making connections with others and making friends as a deciding factor in their decision to join a student organization. Furthermore, participants stated that their involvement was motivated by their friendships. Others stated that their friends encouraged them to try new things, which helped them figure out what their interests were and which student organizations were the best fit for them. Other participants stated that when this peer influence did not last long, it resulted in a lack of involvement with the student organization.

Peers had a direct influence on other students' decision to join student organizations. The most influential peer-to-peer relationships were those in which trust or institutional affiliation was established. Peer influence was not haphazard, but rather defined by an existing relationship or campus program involving peer leaders.

Student participants in the focus group interviews, specifically Officers A, B, C, D, and E, stated that friends influenced them to investigate a particular student organization, at least initially. Friends "dragged" each of these students to student organization informational meetings, which contributed to their involvement with a student organization. Officer F, for example, stated:

Fortunately, I had a friend from high school come here [to the subject university]. She was like a security blanket for me, and we tried out a lot of things [student organizations] together. At a college student organization recruitment event, we discovered the club we are still involved with today.

Officers D and G both stated that their roommates had an impact on their decision to attend meetings. "My roommate kind of forced me to go to a meeting," Officer G explained. Despite the fact that I did not have time to participate due to work, school, and other obligations, I enjoyed the club." The consistency with which peer influence influenced decision-making to join raises an intriguing question for further investigation of patterns of engagement based on peer group, housing arrangements, and other potential institutional patterns.

Furthermore, more than half of the student focus group participants stated that when they were freshmen, their student orientation leaders or their peer mentor in specific academic programs, such as the Honorific Society Program, encouraged them to explore student organizations. Those upperclassmen emphasized the numerous opportunities for involvement on campus, with student organizations serving as a prime example. Participants discussed how upperclassmen influenced their decision to join a student organization during the university's student organization recruitment event. The recruitment event gave students the opportunity to learn about different student organizations, and that interaction frequently influenced a student's decision to participate. Participation as a leader and as a member was examined further, with an emphasis on how students in leadership positions and those who are members develop skills differently (Stogdill, 1950; Dungan & Komives, 2007). According to research, different levels of involvement serve as indicators of students' development of essential skills (Astin, 1984; Gassman et al., 2014).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Student participation is a critical component of higher education. Institutions are always looking for new ways to improve a student's overall academic experience by encouraging growth, learning, and development. This study investigated the reasons why students decided to join student organizations, and it resulted in a better understanding of the role of student organization engagement on college campuses. While the findings of this study provide a solid foundation for

student organization programmatic development, specific areas require additional research.

First and foremost, this was a case study conducted at a single university, NEUST. Future research is needed to determine whether the findings of this study are replicated at other institutions of higher learning with similar research interests. Similar studies at other institutions would validate the findings beyond the scope of this study, increasing its credibility. Similar research would address the scholar practitioner role on a national scale among various institutional demographics, including diverse student populations.

Second, more than half of the participants held leadership positions in their student organizations. Certainly, the research in this study is important for developing a comprehensive view of clubs and organizations. However, research must also be conducted to determine whether there are differences between student organization leaders and the general membership of a student organization. Future research should focus on how different levels of involvement affect the sense of belonging, skill development, and leadership development. It is critical to understand whether there are any differences based on levels of involvement and roles, or whether the outcomes are consistent with the findings of this research regardless of whether you serve as a leader or a general member. The findings of a study on student organization membership levels could have a significant impact on future practice, particularly in terms of best practices for developing strong, comprehensive student organization programs.

Third, understanding student engagement requires determining why students do not participate in student organizations. This study had a preliminary discussion of this viewpoint with participants, but it did not go into great detail on the subject. It is beneficial to conduct research on why students have never joined a student organization or participated in any co-curricular activity. It is critical to comprehend why this is the case, as well as how potential changes in the programmatic perspectives of student organizations could result in increased involvement among all students. This research would also look into whether demographics have anything to do with not getting involved.

As a suggestion, academics and student affairs should work together to develop students' leadership potential through student organizations. This collaborative approach creates a rich learning environment for students and benefits their development. First and foremost, it is critical to recognize the importance of this partnership in a student's academic journey. Academic and student affairs professionals both improve students' lives, and when efforts to create robust learning environments are combined, the impact on a student's leadership development is profound. Second, it is critical to recognize the significance of assessing leadership skill development, validating it in both curricular and co-curricular settings, and identifying areas for potential growth. Furthermore, as Smith and Chenworth (2015) pointed out, using assessment of leadership learning outcomes as an intentional means of pairing the two sides of learning – the thinking and the doing – holds promise for making the student experience cohesive and the staff experience collaborative, enriching the involvement of all involved groups.

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