

Eastern Illinois University

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The EIU Student Life Survey: Explanations for Involvement

David Milberg

Douglas J Bower, *Eastern Illinois University*

Charles G Eberly, *Eastern Illinois University*



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The EIU Student Life Survey: Explanations for Involvement

David Milberg, Director of Student Life
Doug Bower, Associate Dean, College of Education and Professional Studies
Charles Eberly, Professor of Counseling and Student Development

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The purpose of the Student Life Survey was to help the Office of Student Life (OSL) gain a clearer understanding of the ways Eastern Illinois University students spend their out-of-class (extracurricular activity) time. The survey was developed as part of a campus-wide effort to assess all student affairs programs and services in the 1997-98 year. As part of its Strategic Plan, OSL wanted to determine student self-reported reasons for their involvement or non-involvement in extracurricular activities to guide programming, marketing, and timing. Specific areas of interest included the following:

1. The ways in which students spend/use their time
2. Factors which appear to have an effect on involvement or non-involvement in student organizations
3. Levels of participation in student organizations
4. The range of organizations in which students invest their time
5. Level of student awareness of services and programs offered through the Office of Student Life
6. Quality of student contact with staff in OSL (customer satisfaction)
7. To assess reasons among students for the support of an increase in the student activity fee
8. Student preferences for Spring Concert Artists by musical category
9. To assess the need for additional weekend event programming

Survey items were developed with the cooperation of the Student Life staff, the Director of OSL and members of the EIU General Education Assessment Committee (charged to assess the quality of general education on the EIU campus). The Director of Testing and Assessment (now the Associate Dean of the College of Education and Professional Studies) served as the technical expert in generating the final survey document. A panel of 15-20 highly involved student leaders were selected to complete the initial survey draft to provide the development group feedback about the length, organization and clarity of items. Due to the sheer number of activities in which the student panel was involved it was thought that they would take the longest time in minutes to complete the instrument (about ten minutes).

Following the encouragement of the General Education Assessment Committee the surveys were distributed first to students in freshman and sophomore general education classes. Upperclass students in Speech Communications, Geography and Geology classes completed a second administration of surveys. All classes used were selected upon consultation with the General Education Assessment Committee and

the full cooperation of all faculty involved. A total of 483 surveys (97%) were completed and usable out of the sample of 500 surveys administered to students.

The class breakdown was freshman (n=241; 50%); sophomore (n=71; 15%); junior (n=60; 12.5%); senior (n=105; 22%); graduate (n=3; 0.6%). The proportion of students by class year did not match the proportion of students by class year in the overall EIU population. One purpose of the survey was to assess out-of-class expressions dealing with general education program objectives for freshman and sophomore students, so the data as collected was deemed adequate to address the evaluation needs of the General Education Assessment Committee. From an OSL viewpoint, seniors were sampled more than juniors in order to develop a cross sectional analysis (yet to be completed) between what students report doing in their freshman year compared to their self-reported level of involvement in the senior year.

Selected Results

There is much yet to be done to complete a full analysis of these self-reported data about out-of-class student involvement at Eastern Illinois University. We have selected several elements of information to serve as illustrations of what a student life staff can do with data of this sort. Among the issues selected are items about using information to support a program activity fee increase, targeting students for involvement in student activities, and interpreting the campus climate to other academic and student affairs departments.

Supporting an Activity Fee Increase

Students were asked "whether you would support a student fee increase for the following activities" (items 84-89) which included "activities and programs for non-fee funded Recognized Student Organizations," "Increased weekend programming...", an "all campus RSO recognition and awards program..." an "RSO Newsletter," "all campus student leadership training series for student organization leaders/members," and "diversity grants to RSO's to help support expanded multicultural programs...". Of these, only "increased weekend programming" garnered a "yes" from more than half the responding students (n=262; 55.2%). Reinforcing their willingness to support a fee increase, 52% of respondents said "no" when they were asked, "Is there currently enough weekend programming provided by the University Board" (item 100). Interestingly, the second highest positive response was toward the funding of "diversity grants" (n=163; 34.7%).

This information about student interest in weekend programming was used early this semester as part of a successful campaign in support of a student activity fee increase, the first such increase at EIU in more than a dozen years. The topic of diversity grants and the means to promote them is still under advisement.

Involving Students in Activities

There is much in the literature about the significance of student involvement in campus life and retention (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The survey addressed what developers considered to be student barriers to making commitments to out of class events and activities. Among these 57 percent of student respondents (n=275) said that money was "not usually a problem" or "not a problem" in their "attendance/participation in leisure events or activities" (item 8).

Another issue considered was whether students were encouraged by their professors to participate in out-of-class activities. Enabling students to make meaning of their in-class study with their out-of-class actions would seem to promote the goals of a general education. Unfortunately the current evidence suggests that these students' academic majors do not "require participation in extracurricular activities" (item 9). Only 65 of 483 students (13.9 %) reported that their major "regularly" required them to participate in extracurricular activities. Alternatively, slightly more students (n=75; 15.7%) reported "in relation to in-class work... participation in campus life and extracurricular activities" was "very important" (item 10). Please examine the attached cross-tabulations of these data.

Interpreting Student Perceptions

A third purpose of the survey was to interpret the campus climate, student trends, and student needs to other campus and community stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and local citizens. Among issues directly affecting the Office of Student Life were a series of items requesting students to indicate their preference for a Spring Concert by the type of music students would most like to hear. Among the categories, contemporary, alternative, rhythm and blues, Christian, other religious, Classic rock, Jazz, RAP, Reggae, and Country, students preferred alternative (n=182; 37.7%) as "most desired."

Other items addressed student customer satisfaction with the quality of their interaction with OSL staff (items 79 to 83). Among the twenty-one percent of responding students who had contact with the office, responses to staff helpfulness, courtesy, friendliness, and knowledge was uniformly positive (more than 85 percent "agree" or "strongly agree" for all items).

Summary

Selected data drawn from preliminary frequency distributions of a student life involvement survey at Eastern Illinois University have been described. Applications of these data to student life issues on the campus were suggested. While much of the survey was designed to assist student life staff in program planning, development and evaluation, the University's General Education Assessment Committee has also found the information of interest as it assesses the relation of student in-class to out-of-class activities.

Reference

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). How college affects students. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Table 1

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week in out-of-class involvement (Item 14)
versus gender (Item 3) (N=470)

Response Category		Item 14: Hours in Out-of-Class Involvement/Week			
Item 3: Gender	0 – 5 Hours/Wk	6 – 10 Hours/Wk	11-15 Hours/Wk	16 + Hours/Wk	Row Total
Male	113	22	19	19	173
	167	63	37	30	297
Column Total	280	85	56	49	470

Pearson's Chi Square (3 df, N = 470) = 6.15, $p < .10$

Pearson's R = .04

Table 2

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported importance of participation in campus life and extracurricular activities (Item 10) versus the importance of engaging in intellectual conversations outside of the classroom with my peers on such things as current issues (Item 11) (N=478)

Response

Category

Item 11: Importance of intellectual conversations out-of-class

Item 10: Participati on in Campus Life	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Row Total
Not Important	34	34	16	12	96
Somewhat Important	11	68	56	17	152
Important	12	48	73	22	155
Very Important	5	20	22	28	75
Column Total	62	170	167	79	478

Pearson's Chi Square (9 df, N = 478) = 93.2, $p < .000$

Pearson's R = .303

Table 3

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week in out-of-class involvement (Item 14) versus the importance of engaging in intellectual conversations outside of the classroom with my peers on such things as current issues (Item 11) (N=471)

Response

Category

Item 11: Importance of intellectual conversations out-of-class

Item 14: Hrs./Week In Out-of- Class Involve- ment	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Row Total
0 – 5 Hrs/wk	41	111	85	43	280
6 – 10 Hrs/Wk	7	28	38	13	86
11 – 15 Hrs/Wk	8	19	21	8	56
16+ Hrs/Wk	4	12	21	12	49
Column Total	60	170	165	76	471

Pearson's Chi Square (9 df, N = 471) = 13.4, $p < .14$

Pearson's R = .11

Table 4

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week in out-of-class involvement (Item 14) versus the importance of participation in campus life and extracurricular activities (Item 10) (N=471)

Response

Category

Item 11: Importance of participation in campus life

Item 14: Hrs./Week In Out-of- Class Involve- ment	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Row Total
0 – 5 Hrs/wk	78	109	76	17	280
6 – 10 Hrs/Wk	10	23	35	18	86
11 – 15 Hrs/Wk	3	10	24	19	56
16+ Hrs/Wk	5	6	20	18	49
Column Total	96	148	155	72	471

Pearson's Chi Square (9 df, N = 471) = 86.08, $p < .00000$

Pearson's R = .386

Table 5

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week in out-of-class involvement (Item 14) versus hours per week involved with television/computer/Internet (recreation) (Item 21) (N=471)

Response
Category

Item 21: Hours/Week in TV/Computer/Internet

Item 14: Hrs./Week In Out-of- Class Involve- ment	None	1 – 2 Hours/ Week	3 – 5 Hours/ Week	6 – 8 Hours/ Week	9 + Hours/ Week	Row Total
0 – 5 Hrs/wk	18	38	95	60	70	281
6 – 10 Hrs/Wk	6	24	27	15	14	86
11 – 15 Hrs/Wk	4	16	16	13	6	55
16+ Hrs/Wk	4	8	19	10	8	49
Column Total	32	86	157	98	98	471

Pearson's Chi Square (12 df, N = 471) = 19.44, $p < .078$ NS

Pearson's R = - .11

Table 6

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week in class (Item 12) versus hours per week in out-of-class involvement in student organizations, etc. (Item 14) (N=471)

Response Category	Item 11: Hours/Week in Out-of-Class Involvement in Student Organizations, etc.				
Item 14: Hrs./Week In Class	0 - 5 Hours/Wk	6 - 10 Hours/Wk	11 - 15 Hours/Wk	16 + Hours/Wk	Row Total
0 - 5 Hrs/wk	19	3	4	7	33
6 - 10 Hrs/Wk	145	36	27	19	227
11 - 15 Hrs/Wk	98	42	21	18	179
16+ Hrs/Wk	18	5	4	5	32
Column Total	280	86	56	49	471

Pearson's Chi Square (9 df, N = 471) = 11.98, $p < .21$ (too many cells with expected frequencies < 5)

Pearson's R = .02

Table 7

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week spent studying (on average) (Item 13) versus the importance of engaging in intellectual conversations outside of the classroom with my peers on such things as current issues (Item 11) (N=475)

Response
Category

Item 11: Importance of intellectual conversations out-of-class

Item 13: Hours spent in study/wk	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Row Total
0-5 hours/week	26	45	30	11	112
6-10 hours/week	23	70	75	27	195
11-15 hours/week	7	34	33	19	93
16-20 hours/week	4	17	20	12	53
21+ hours/week	2	4	8	8	22
Column Total	62	170	166	77	475

Pearson Chi Square (12 df, N=475) = 29.84, $p < .00295$
Pearson's R = .21

Table 8

EIU STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

Self-reported hours per week spent in class (on average) (Item 12) versus the importance of engaging in intellectual conversations outside of the classroom with my peers on such things as current issues (Item 11) (N=477)

Response
Category

Item 11: Importance of intellectual conversations out-of-class

Item 12: Hours spent in class/wk	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Row Total
0-10 hours/wk	9	10	11	4	34
11-15 hours/wk	28	86	80	35	229
16-20 hours/wk	22	67	61	32	182
21+ hours/wk	3	6	15	8	32
Column Total	62	169	167	79	477

Pearson Chi Square (9 df, N = 477) = 12.20, $p < .20$, NS

Pearson's R = .10

STUDENT LIFE SURVEY

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Please CIRCLE or fill in your response to the following questions. Please CIRCLE only one response for each question.

1) Year in College

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate
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2) Race/Ethnicity

American Indian	African American	Asian American	Hispanic	International	White	Other
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3) Gender

Male	Female
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4) Age

20 and Under	21-25	26-29	30 and Over
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5) Do you live on-campus (university housing)?

Yes	No
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6) What is your major?

7) Are you a transfer student?

Yes	No
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8) To what extent is money a factor in your attendance or participation in leisure events or activities?

Not a Problem: I have enough money to do whatever I want	Not usually a problem: I have enough money to do most things I want	Often a problem: I have to carefully choose what things to do because of money	Major problem: I have practically no money left after paying for necessities
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9) To what extent does your major require participation in extracurricular activities?

Never	Occasionally (1-2 times a semester)	Regularly (3 or more times a semester)
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In relation to your in-class work, how important is:

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not important
10) Participation in campus life and extracurricular activities.	4	3	2	1
11) Engaging in intellectual conversations outside of the classroom with my peers on such things as current issues.	4	3	2	1

SECTION 2: HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR TIME

INSTRUCTIONS: Please CIRCLE the number corresponding to your response to the following questions.
Please CIRCLE only one response for each question.

On average, how many hours PER WEEK do you spend:

	21+	16-20	11-15	6-10	0-5
12) in class?	5	4	3	2	1
13) studying?	5	4	3	2	1
14) in out-of-class involvement in student organizations, civic organizations and volunteer activities?	5	4	3	2	1
15) at work?	5	4	3	2	1

On average, how many hours PER WEEK do you spend attending, involved or participating in:

	9+	6-8	3-5	1-2	0
16) theater?	5	4	3	2	1
17) musical concerts (jazz, classical, recitals)?	5	4	3	2	1
18) lectures/workshops (non-classroom)?	5	4	3	2	1
19) leisure reading (newspapers, books, magazines)?	5	4	3	2	1
20) volunteer activities (Charleston community and/or local charities)?	5	4	3	2	1
21) television/computer/Internet(for recreational purposes)?	5	4	3	2	1
22) events sponsored by University Board?	5	4	3	2	1
23) recreation and fitness (intramurals, exercising, etc)?	5	4	3	2	1

What may prevent you from becoming involved in out-of-class activities?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24) I am not aware of activities taking place.	4	3	2	1
25) Inconvenient scheduling of programs/activities.	4	3	2	1
26) Lack of interest in current programs/activities.	4	3	2	1
27) Cost of participating is prohibitive.	4	3	2	1
28) Lack of time due to evening classes, family, work, etc.	4	3	2	1

In choosing how to spend your leisure time, what activities are important to you?

	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
29) Socializing with friends (parties, etc).	4	3	2	1
30) Watching TV, going to movies, renting videos.	4	3	2	1
31) Volunteering either on campus or in the community.	4	3	2	1
32) Participating in recognized student organizational activities.	4	3	2	1
33) Exercising, working out, wellness activities, recreational activities, intramurals.	4	3	2	1
34) Intellectual discussions with others.	4	3	2	1
35) Attending cultural events such as theater, music, concerts, UB events, etc.	4	3	2	1
36) "Surfing" the WEB/Internet.	4	3	2	1
37) Reading, writing, poetry.	4	3	2	1

SECTION 3: INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

INSTRUCTIONS: Please CIRCLE or fill in your response to the following questions. Please CIRCLE only one response for each question.

38) Are you currently involved in a Recognized Student Organization (RSO)?

YES GO TO QUESTION 39	NO, Not currently but have been in the past GO TO QUESTION 66	NO, Never have been involved GO TO QUESTION 66
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39) Do you hold a leadership position in a Recognized Student Organization?

Yes	No
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40) What year in school did you FIRST become involved in a Recognized Student Organization?

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate
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41) How did you PRIMARILY become involved in the organization(s) that you belong to?

Major/Department Contact	Friend/Roommate	Freshman Seminar Presentation	Started my own organization	Through "Student Organization Day"
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Why did you become involved in a Recognized Student Organization? (Place a check mark in the box next to each statement that applies)

42) To develop leadership skills	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
43) It is related to my major or department.	<input type="checkbox"/>
44) It is related to a hobby or special interest of mine	<input type="checkbox"/>
45) For personal and professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>
46) To have fun outside of my regular school routine	<input type="checkbox"/>
47) Friends/family convinced me it would be worthwhile	<input type="checkbox"/>
48) To gain experience to help get a job when I graduate	<input type="checkbox"/>
49) To learn something new about others, a different culture, lifestyle	<input type="checkbox"/>

What have you GAINED through your involvement in Recognized Student Organizations? (Place a check mark in the box next to each statement that applies)

50) I have made personal and/or professional contacts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
51) I have developed new leadership skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
52) I have a more positive connection to EIU	<input type="checkbox"/>
53) I feel more confident speaking in public and/or writing	<input type="checkbox"/>
54) I have developed a new and/or renewed appreciation for multi-cultural issues and different lifestyles	<input type="checkbox"/>

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please CIRCLE the number corresponding to your response to the following questions.
Please CIRCLE only one response for each question.

Please indicate your LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION in each type of organization listed below:

		Leadership Position	Member Only	Not Involved
55)	Departmental club	3	2	1
56)	Social fraternity or sorority	3	2	1
57)	Residence Hall Council/Residence Hall Association	3	2	1
58)	Professional club or society	3	2	1
59)	Religious or interfaith organization	3	2	1
60)	Minority, multicultural, international or ethnic organization	3	2	1
61)	Political and/or social action organization	3	2	1
62)	Publications and/or communications organization	3	2	1
63)	University Board	3	2	1
64)	Service and/or community service organization	3	2	1
65)	Student Government	3	2	1

GO TO SECTION 4 - QUESTION 71

If not currently involved in a Recognized Student Organization, why not? (Place a check mark in the box next to each statement that applies)

66)	No organization of interest to me exists at EIU.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
67)	I choose to spend my time involved in other activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
68)	I am not sure how to get involved.	<input type="checkbox"/>
69)	I am not interested in getting involved in any activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
70)	I do not have enough time.	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 4: OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please CIRCLE the number corresponding to your response to the following questions.
Please CIRCLE only one response for each question.

Please indicate your **LEVEL OF AWARENESS** of the services offered through the Office of Student Life.

		Very Aware	Moderately Aware	Slightly Aware	Not Aware
71)	Recognized Student Organization annual recognition process	4	3	2	1
72)	Who's Who annual award program	4	3	2	1
73)	Multicultural programs, support and advisement (BGC, BSU, LASO)	4	3	2	1
74)	Leadership resources and information	4	3	2	1
75)	Parents Club programs and services (scholarships, family weekend, etc)	4	3	2	1
76)	Greek programs, support and advisement (rush, Greek Week etc.)	4	3	2	1
77)	Student Government, University Board programs, services, and advisement	4	3	2	1
78)	Student Volunteer support and services	4	3	2	1

- 79) Have you had any contact (phone or office visit) with the Office of Student Life during the past year?

Yes GO TO QUESTION 80	No GO TO QUESTION 84
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		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
80)	The staff member was helpful.	4	3	2	1
81)	The staff member was courteous.	4	3	2	1
82)	The staff member was friendly.	4	3	2	1
83)	The staff member was knowledgeable.	4	3	2	1

Please indicate whether you would support a student fee increase for the following activities.

	YES	NO
84) Activities and programs for non-fee funded Recognized Student Organizations (RSO's)	2	1
85) Increased weekend programming (activities such as Quakin the Quad, Comedians, etc.)	2	1
86) All campus RSO recognition and awards program (program/adviser of the year, outstanding organization, etc)	2	1
87) RSO Newsletter	2	1
88) All campus student leadership training series for student organization leaders/members	2	1
89) Diversity grants to RSO's to help support expanded multicultural programs for the EIU community	2	1

University Board traditionally presents a Spring Concert. Please answer the following to assist in the selection process.

What type of music would you like to hear? Please rate the following types from 1 to 8 with 1 being the most desired and 8 being the least desired.

90) Contemporary	
91) Alternative	
92) R & B	
93) Christian	
94) Other Religious Music	
95) Classic Rock	
96) Jazz	
97) RAP	
98) Reggae	
99) Country	

100) Is there currently enough weekend programming provided by University Board (Quakin the Quad, Comedians, Concerts, etc.)?

YES	NO
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101) What additional weekend programs would you like to see offered?

TURN PAGE FOR CONCLUSION OF SURVEY

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ADD ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS THAT YOU MAY HAVE IN THE SPACE BELOW. ALSO, IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION REGARDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT, PLEASE INDICATE YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, AND E-MAIL ADDRESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS PAGE OR SEND THIS INFORMATION TO THE OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE, RM 316 UNION.

