

# Too Engaged? A Study of Student Involvement and Academic Success

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## Introduction

- Student involvement in activities and organizations
- Personal researcher experience
- Foundational guiding Astin's I-E-O model (1993) & work by Kuh (1995) leading to NSSE
- DiRamio & Payne (2006) found a connection between over-involvement in activities and higher stress
- Is there too much of a good thing leading to "hyper-involvement?"

## Getting Started

A special thanks to:

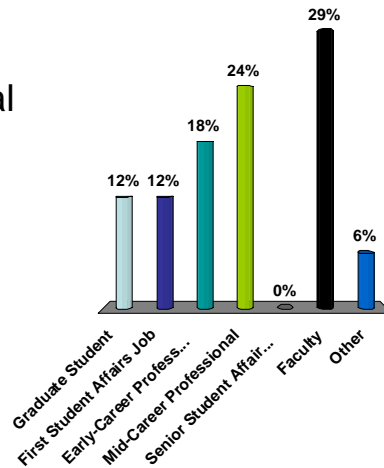


Elizabeth McConnell  
and colleagues from Turning Technologies

[www.turningtechnologies.com](http://www.turningtechnologies.com)

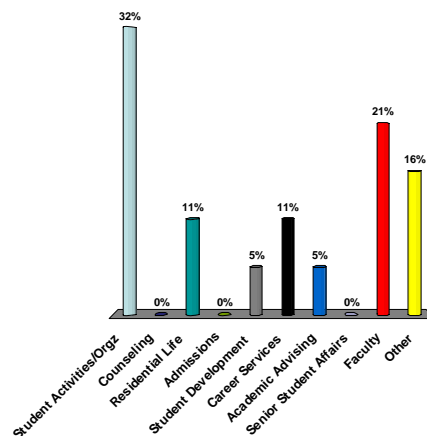
## Who are we?

1. Graduate Student
2. First Student Affairs Job
3. Early-Career Professional
4. Mid-Career Professional
5. Senior Student Affairs Officer
6. Faculty
7. Other



## What unit or area in higher education do you work (functional area)?

1. Student Activities/Orgz
2. Counseling
3. Residential Life
4. Admissions
5. Student Development
6. Career Services
7. Academic Advising
8. Senior Student Affairs
9. Faculty
10. Other



### Survey

Graduated in 2004 and 2005

Data collected three years later (2007 and 2008)

Web-based instrument via e-mail

50+ questions (some multi-part) in the survey

Demographics

Quality of education received

Student experience

[Student Activities & Organizations](#)

Degree major and college attended

Preparation for the workplace

First job after graduation

Current employment

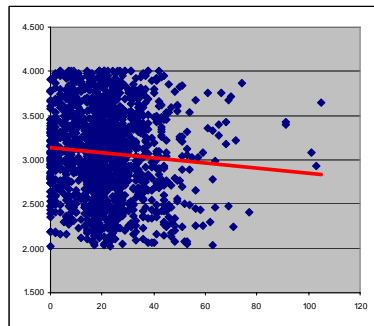
## Sample

N = 1,418

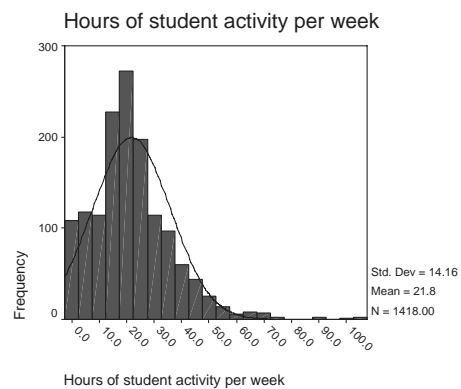
Demographics	School	Survey
Male	51.5%	44.6%
Female	48.5%	54.7%
No answer/missing	0.0%	0.7%
Total	100.0%	100.00%
Caucasian	86.4%	92.0%
African-American	8.0%	4.7%
Hispanic	1.5%	0.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.5%	0.6%
American Indian or Alaskan	0.6%	0.3%
Other	2.0%	1.9%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

## The Study

Scatter plot with trend line showing negative correlation between students' degree GPA and hours spent in student activities per week.



Frequency distribution of hours spent in student activities per week.



## The Study

Used standard deviation to estimate three (3) groups based on hours of activity per week

Group One “Low/No Involvement with 8 or fewer hours” (n=254)

Group Two “Moderate to High Involvement with 9 to 39 hours” (n=1,016)

Group Three “Hyper-Involvement with 40 or more hours” (n=148)

GPA for Group Three “Hyper-Involvement with 40 or more hours” was statistically significantly lower than Group One “Low/No Involvement with 8 or fewer hours,” at 2.98 versus 3.17 ( $F_{[2,1417]}=7.690, p<.001, \eta^2=.01$ )  
Post-hoc  $d = -.38$  (moderate practical significance)

## Survey Questions

### • Related to Preparation & Student Experience

Five questions

Use “clickers” to answer from your experience

In light of the findings, were you similar to the “hyper-involved” students or the general population?

Also, Mean score for our group... are we similar to hyper-involved?

**Preparation**

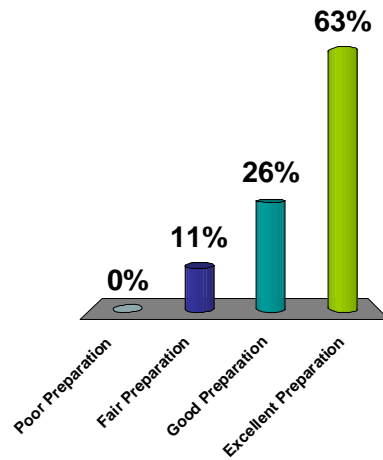
How well did [the university] prepare you in  
**Written Communication skills?**

1. Poor Preparation
2. Fair Preparation
3. Good Preparation
4. Excellent Preparation

**Mean = 3.5263**

Hyper-involved (3.26) felt better prepared in written communication skills vs. rest of student population (3.10)

$t_{(1371)}=2.554, p=.011, d = .23$



**Preparation**

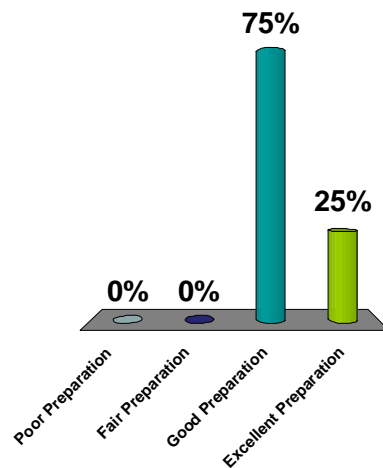
How well did [the university] prepare you in  
**resourcefulness?**

1. Poor Preparation
2. Fair Preparation
3. Good Preparation
4. Excellent Preparation

**Mean = 3.1111**

Hyper-involved (3.41) felt better prepared in resourcefulness vs. rest of student population (3.26)

$t_{(1371)}=2.311, p=.021, d = .23$



**Student Experience**

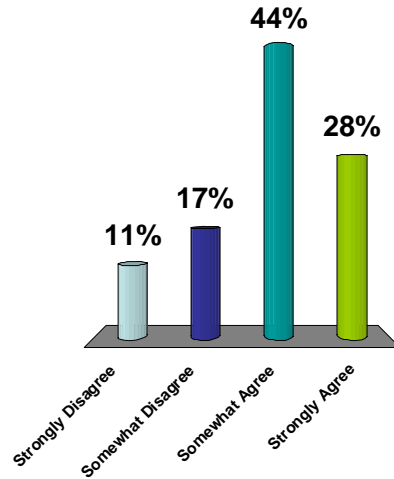
My [university] experience increased my awareness of global issues and problems.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Somewhat Disagree
3. Somewhat Agree
4. Strongly Agree

**Mean = 2.8889**

Hyper-involved (2.78) felt greater awareness of global issues and problems vs. rest of student population (2.54)

$t_{(189)}=2.676, p=.008, d = .23$



**Student's Major Department**

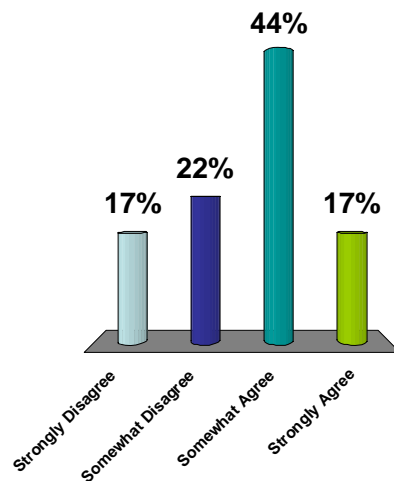
The interactions and discussions with my peers in the department were a major source of motivation and support.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Somewhat Disagree
3. Somewhat Agree
4. Strongly Agree

**Mean = 2.6111**

Hyper-involved (3.44) felt interaction with peers were source of motivation and support vs. rest of student population (3.29)

$t_{(1371)}=2.170, p=.030, d = .20$



**Student's Major Department**

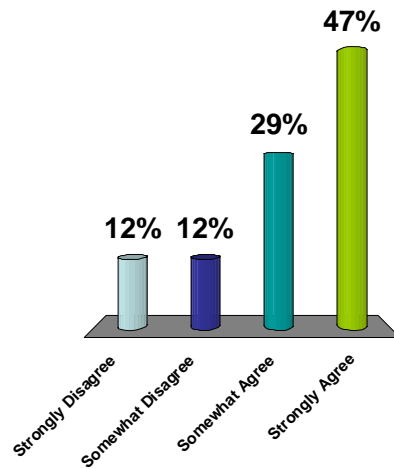
Opportunities existed outside of class for interactions between students and faculty members.

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Somewhat Disagree
3. Somewhat Agree
4. Strongly Agree

**Mean = 3.1176**

Hyper-involved (3.22) felt that more opportunities existed to interact with faculty vs. rest of student population (3.00)

$t_{(1371)}=2.752, p=.006, d = .26$



## Discussion & Implications

**Table 2. Summary of findings regarding student involvement in activities and implications for student affairs professionals.**

**Evidence from the data regarding student activities and involvement**

- Negative correlation between hours per week of participation in student activities and final college GPA.
- GPA for hyper-involved students (with >40 hours per week of activities) was statistically significantly lower than low/no involvement students (with 8 or fewer hours of activities).
- Minority student groups and political issue groups were statistically overrepresented in the subpopulation of hyper-involved students.
- Hyper-involved students have greater awareness of global issues and problems.
- Hyper-involved students have a greater interest in departmental/program opportunities for interaction with faculty members and peers.
- Hyper-involved students felt more resourceful and better prepared for written communications than the rest of the student population.

**Interpretation / Implication for student affairs educators**

- Warn all students of negative connection between possible over involvement in student activities and detrimental implications for academics.
- Advise hyper-involved students to keep up with their classes and avoid overwhelming themselves with too many additional hours of student activities.
- Provides information about what activities that hyper-involved students might be involved in and where student affairs educators might find them.
- Gives another clue regarding possible interests of some hyper-involved students (global awareness could match with interest in political issues groups noted above).
- Empirical evidence that these students enjoy co-curricular activities associated with classroom learning. Partner with academic affairs to capitalize on this information.
- Provides evidence that extreme involvement in student activities has its rewards in resourcefulness and communications skills.



## Thank You!

Final Questions or Comments?

Presentation slides @  
[www.auburn.edu/~diramdc/hyper.pdf](http://www.auburn.edu/~diramdc/hyper.pdf)

Draft paper @  
[www.auburn.edu/~diramdc/too-engaged.pdf](http://www.auburn.edu/~diramdc/too-engaged.pdf)