

Student Life Survey: Engagement and Belongingness of Domestic and International Students

Center for the Study of Student Life

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INTRODUCTION

This report explores undergraduate students' involvement at The Ohio State University's Columbus campus based on Student Life Survey data collected during Spring Semester 2016. The report focuses on differences between domestic and international students' levels of engagement and belonging on campus. Specifically, this report examines students' overall involvement in a range of co-curricular activities, their reasons for getting involved, their participation in different types of student organizations, their participation as student leaders and students' sense of belonging at The Ohio State University.

Involvement on campus is crucial to students' development, overall satisfaction and sense of belonging (Simmons, Creamer, & Rongrong, 2017). Evidence from existing literature demonstrates that involvement in co-curricular activities is related to higher GPAs (Bergen-Cico & Viscomi, 2013; Webber, Krylow, & Zhang, 2013), degree completion, student retention and persistence (Derby, 2006), as well as satisfaction with the overall academic experience (Webber et al., 2013). Furthermore, students who were involved in student organizations rated themselves higher on leadership traits and behaviors (e.g., people skills, coping with stress and failure, communication and resolving conflict) as compared with students who were not involved in student organizations (Smith & Chenoweth, 2015). In addition, students who engaged in activities outside of the formal classroom setting tended to experience an increased sense of belonging with peers and academic programs (Carruthers, Busser, Cain, & Brown, 2010). However, scarce research examines the nature of international students' involvement on campus. For international students, engagement in student organizations is an important source of social support (Tsai & Wong, 2012) that protects against social isolation (Lee & Rice, 2007). The purpose of this report is to bridge this gap and examine how domestic and international students differ on engagement and belongingness at The Ohio State University.

METHOD

The data used in this report comes from the Student Life Survey, which is a survey administered annually by the Center for the Study of Student Life. The purpose of the Student Life Survey is to examine trends in student involvement and sense of belonging as well as to improve institutional practices and to address current issues affecting students at The Ohio State University.

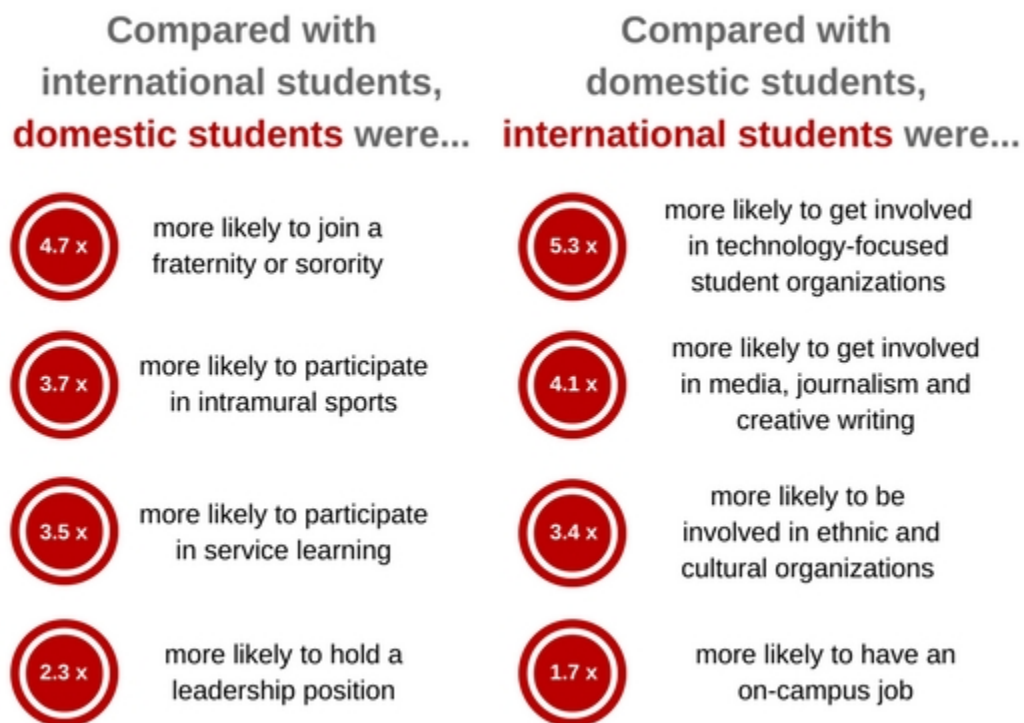
The 2016 Student Life Survey was administered to a random sample of 4,000 undergraduate students on the Columbus campus, 1,000 graduate/professional students and 1,000 undergraduate students from the regional campuses in January 2016. An additional sample of 1,000 international undergraduate students was invited to participate. This report focuses on undergraduate students on the Columbus campus only, which includes both domestic and international students.

To examine campus involvement among international and domestic students and to determine any statistically significant differences between the two groups, chi-square tests of independence, logistic regressions and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used.

KEY FINDINGS

- The primary activities that students became involved in on campus were student organizations (**57.8%** of domestic students and **55.7%** of international students) and on-campus jobs (**29.5%** and **45.8%** respectively).
- Domestic students held more leadership positions (**45.0%**) compared with international students (**26.1%**).
- The primary reason for domestic students to become involved was the fact that it matched their interests (**74.7%**) and the primary reason for international students to get involved was to make friends (**75.7%**).
- Both groups were equally likely to join academic organizations (**70.9%** of international students and **67.9%** of domestic students).
- Overall, domestic students had a greater sense of belonging at The Ohio State University than international students. On a five point scale with 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* domestic students scored on average 3.8 and international students scored 3.5, which is a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$).

The following graphic highlights some of the primary differences in involvement between international and domestic students.

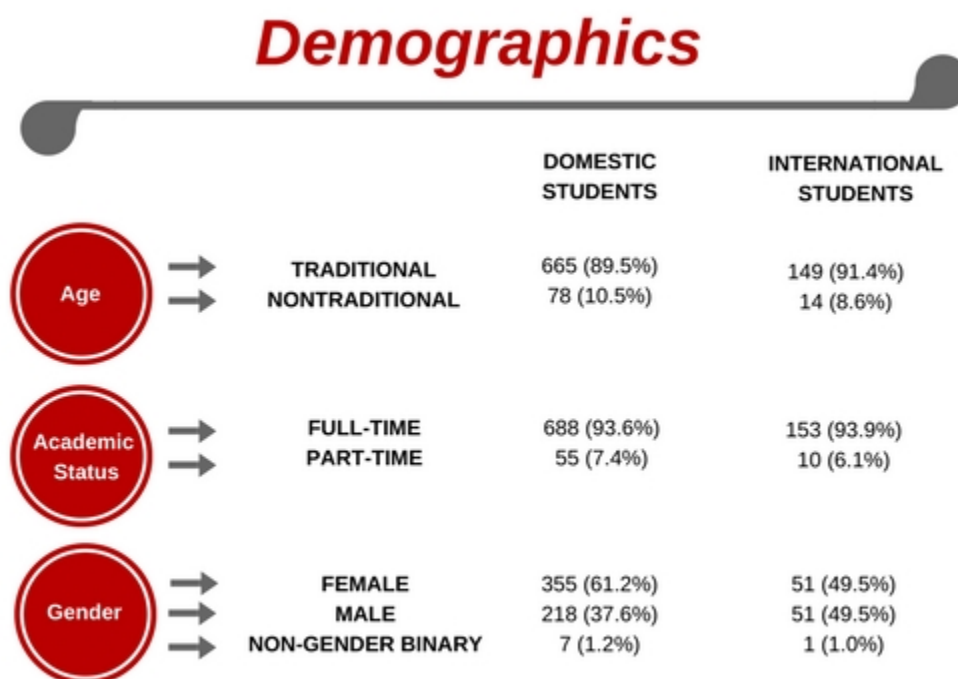


* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 906 undergraduate students on the Columbus campus responded to the survey. Out of 906 participants, 743 (82%) were domestic students and 163 (18%) were international students. The number of international students was calculated by combining the number of students who self-identified as international students with the information in the Student Information System to account for missing data. Specifically, if a student did not respond to the question about international student status in the survey but appeared in the Student Information System as an international student, this student was coded as an international student for the purposes of this report.

The graphic below depicts demographic differences between domestic and international students.

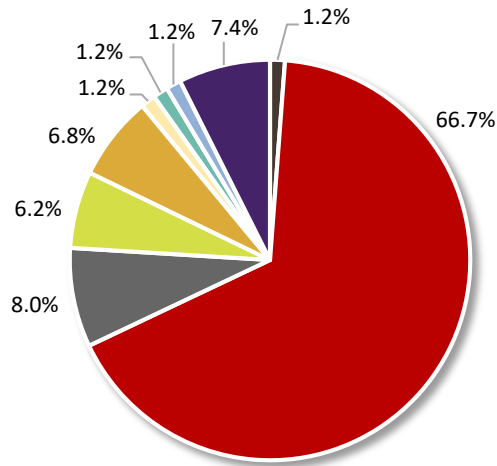


The Student Information System was used to report each student's age and academic status (i.e., full-time or part-time). Traditional age was considered to be 18-23 years of age and nontraditional age was considered to be 24 years of age or older.

Students were further identified by their country of origin. Students' countries of origin were calculated by combining students' self-reported countries with the information in the Student Information System. Specifically, if a student identified as international and their country of origin wasn't listed in the Student Information System, their self-identified country was used for the purpose of this report. The following chart depicts this data.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

National Origin (n = 162)



- Canada
- China
- India
- Republic of Korea
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- Other

Country of origin was identified for 162 out of 163 international students. The majority (66.7%) of international students were from China followed by India, Malaysia and Republic of Korea. In the “other” category, half of the students were from countries in Asia.

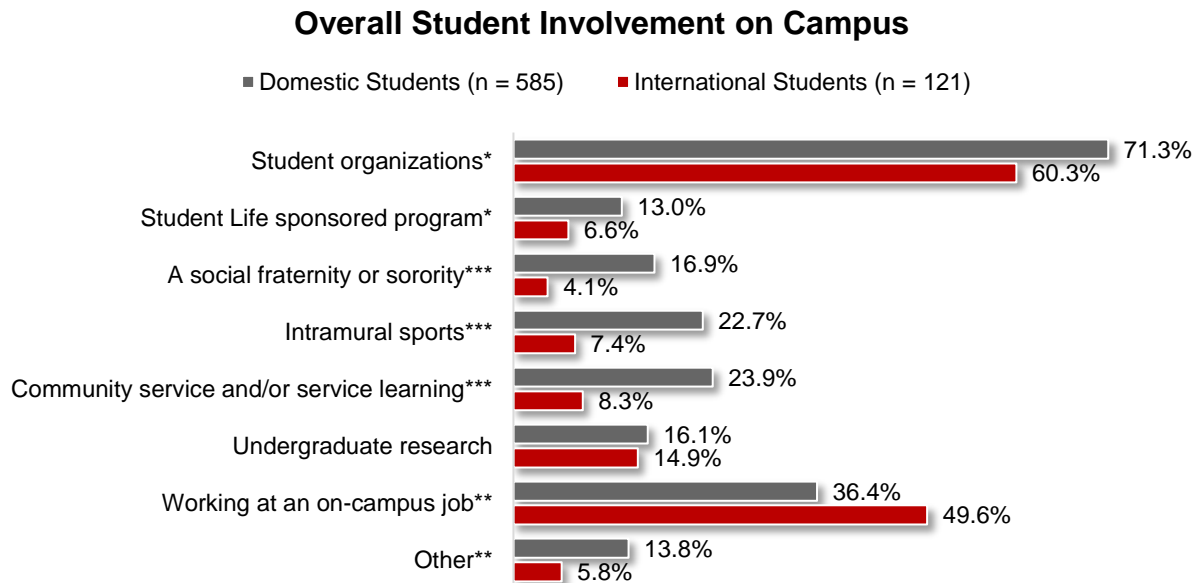
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

FINDINGS

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ON CAMPUS

Overall Involvement

The following chart examines students' overall involvement on campus and represents domestic and international students separately.

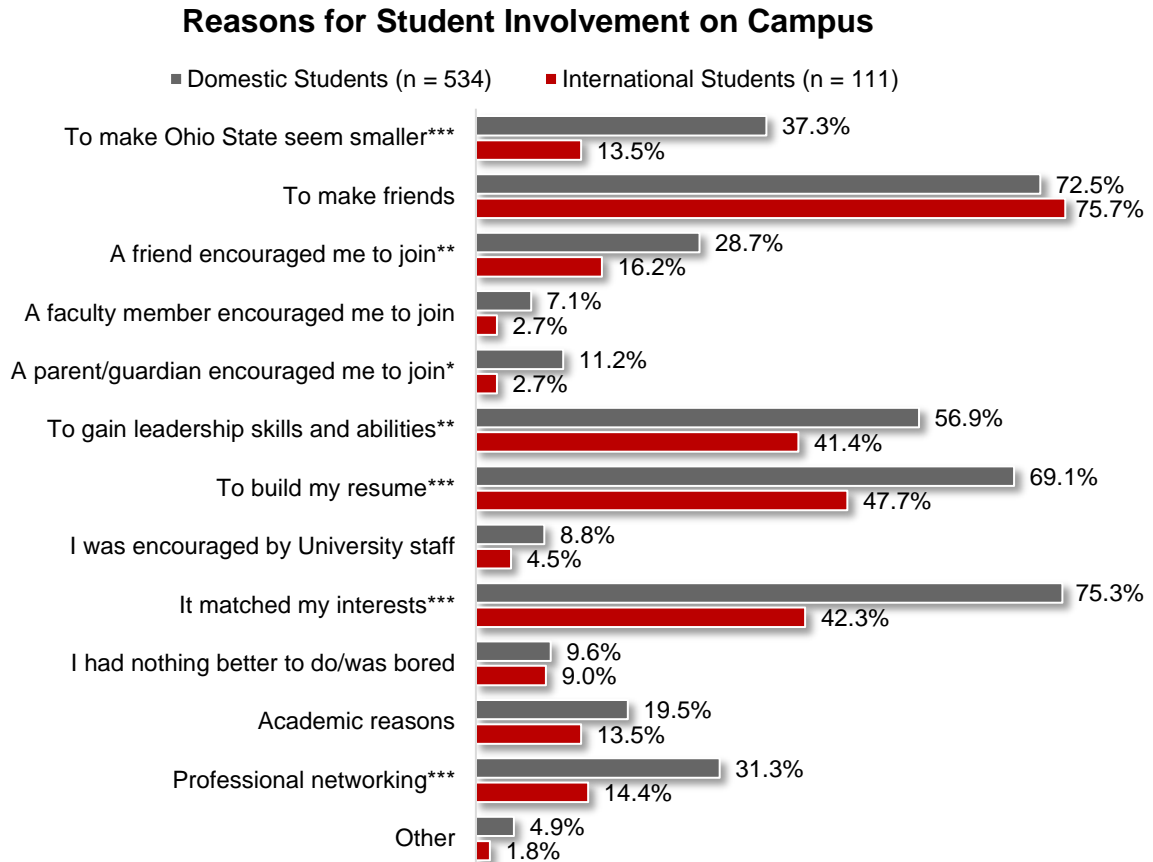


Students significantly differed in their involvement on campus. On average, domestic students were involved in 2.14 student organizations and international students were involved in 1.57 student organizations, which is a statistically significant difference ($p < .001$). Domestic students were 3.5 times more likely to participate in a community service, 3.7 times more likely to participate in intramural sports and 4.7 times more likely to join a fraternity or sorority. Finally, domestic students were 1.6 times more likely than international students to get involved in a student organization and 2.1 times more likely to get involved in a Student Life sponsored program. International students were 1.7 times more likely to have an on-campus job.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Reasons for Students' Involvement

The reasons for getting involved on campus differed between international and domestic students. The following graph summarizes reasons why students got involved on campus.



For domestic students, the most important reason for getting involved was the fact that it matched their interest (75.3%), but it was also important to make friends (72.5%) and to build their résumés (69.1%). For international students, the most important reason for getting involved was to make friends (75.7%), to build their résumés (47.7%) and because it matched their interests (42.3%).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

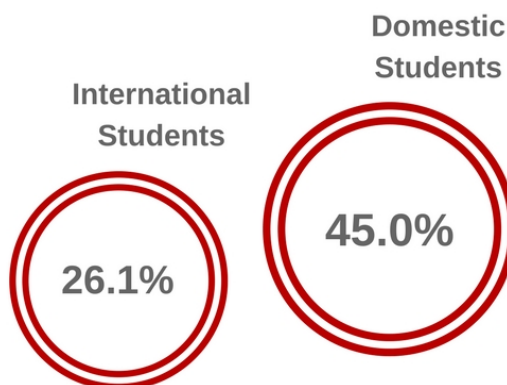
Students' involvement on campus significantly differed between international and domestic students for seven reasons. Please refer to the chart below for more information.

Compared with international students, domestic students were...

- 4.6 x more likely to **get involved** as a result of encouragement by a parent/ guardian
- 4.1 x more likely to **get involved** because it matched their interests
- 3.8 x more likely to **get involved** to make Ohio State seem smaller
- 2.7 x more likely to **get involved** in order to engage in professional networking
- 2.4 x more likely to **get involved** to build their resume
- 2.1 x more likely to **get involved** when encouraged by a friend
- 1.9 x more likely to **get involved** to gain leadership skills and abilities

Students' Involvement in Leadership

Students' involvement on campus was further examined by asking students whether they held a leadership position in on-campus activities. See below for a visual representation of the results.

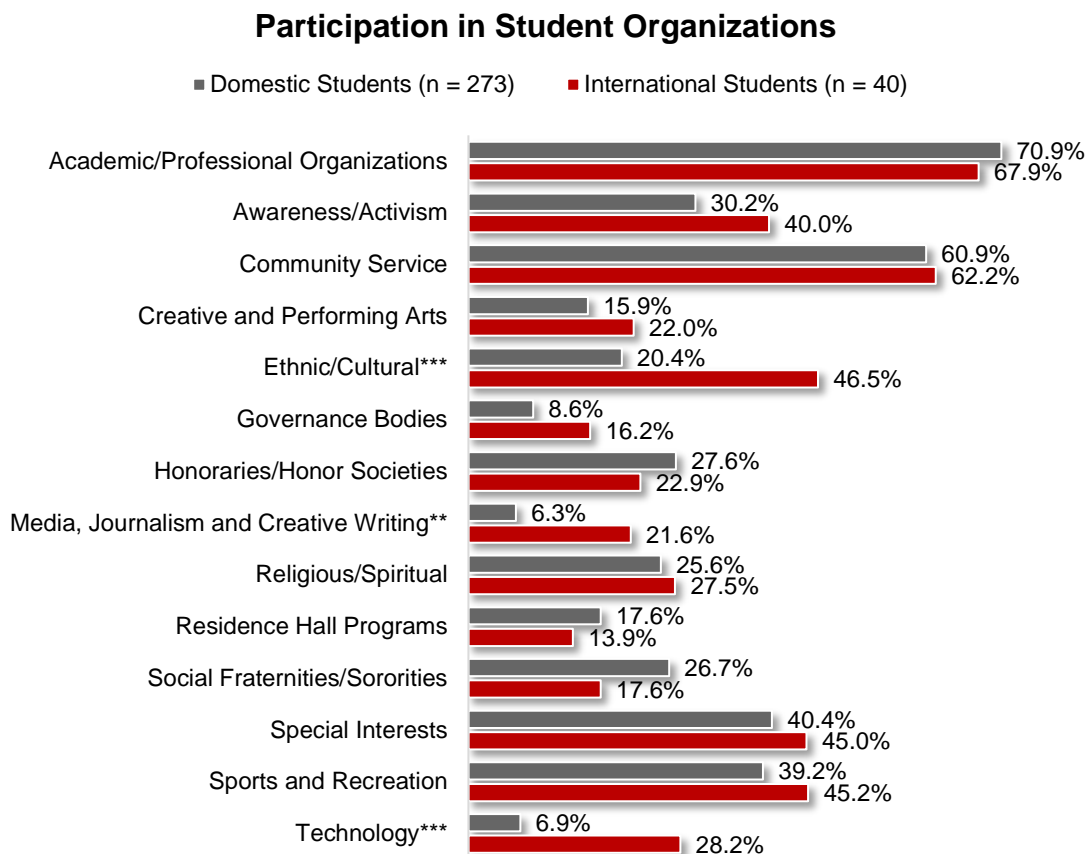


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There was a statistically significant difference between domestic and international students holding a leadership position in on-campus activities. Only a quarter of international students held leadership positions on campus (26.1%) and almost half of domestic students held leadership positions on campus (45.0%). Domestic students were 2.3 times more likely to hold a leadership position when compared with international students.

Participation in Student Organizations

Domestic students and international students differed in terms of the type of student organizations in which they became involved. The following chart depicts these differences.

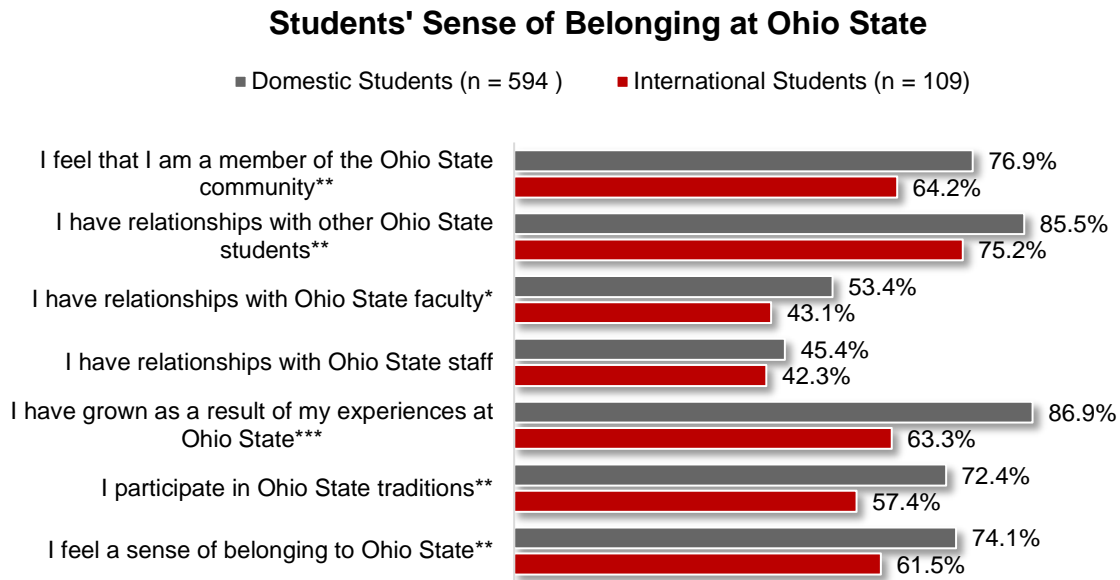


Both groups were equally likely to join academic student organizations (70.9% of international students and 67.9% of domestic students) and community service student organizations (60.9% and 62.2% respectively). Compared with domestic students, international students reported being 3.4 times more likely to be involved in ethnic and cultural organizations, 4.1 times more likely to be involved in media, journalism and creative writing organizations and 5.3 times more likely to be involved in student organizations centered around technology.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING AT OHIO STATE

The chart below portrays the percentage of domestic and international students who either agreed or strongly agreed with statements identifying their sense of belonging at The Ohio State University.



Overall, domestic students felt a greater sense of belonging at The Ohio State University compared with international students. With the exception of staff relationships, differences between domestic and international students were all statistically significant (all p 's < .05).

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

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