



## Extracurricular Activities

# BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

### Extracurricular Activity

An extracurricular (extra academic, co-curricular) activity is an activity, performed by students, that falls outside the realm of the normal curriculum of school, college or university education. Extracurricular activities exist for all students.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, many colleges and universities have a broad educational mission: to develop the "whole student." On college campuses, extracurricular involvement is a key tool in this personal development. For the majority of college and university students, involvement in extracurricular activities plays an integral role in the collegiate experience. Students become involved in extracurricular activities not only for entertainment, social, and enjoyment purposes, but most important, to gain and improve skills. A wide and diversified range of extracurricular activities exists on U.S. campuses, meeting a variety of student interests.



### Benefits of Participation

Research reveals that 70% of college students are involved in some form of extracurricular activities. Other studies have shown that being involved in extracurricular activities reduces the likelihood of dropping out of school, likelihood of committing a criminal offense, and leads to higher educational retention. Involvement in extracurricular activities enhances success and achievements in school work. It also decreases anti-social behaviors and helps students to be more successful in communication and relationships.

Involvement in after campus clubs, student organizations, and other extracurricular activities is beneficial in a variety of ways. They offer a place to form relationships and foster learning. Research shows that students involved in extracurricular activities were more likely to have friends than those who were not involved. It has been shown that extracurricular activities facilitate socialization, increase positive self-development, and foster higher self-esteem.

“The top benefits of engaging in extracurricular activities outside of class: They encourage social growth. They promote emotional wellbeing. They make individuals more responsible. They relax the mind. They help develop better time management skills. They help in exploring personal interests. They improve confidence levels. They build and improve interpersonal relationships.”

-Arun Thakur

### Impact on Students

The importance of extracurricular activities on college campuses is well established. The primary goals of extracurricular activities focus on the individual student level, the institutional level, and the broader community level. These activities exist to complement the university's academic curriculum and to augment the student's educational experience. Almost any type of student involvement in college positively affects student learning and development. Extracurricular activities provide a setting to become involved and to interact with other students, thus leading to increased learning and enhanced development. Specifically, a student's peer group is the most important source of influence on a student's academic and personal development. By identifying with a peer group, that group may influence a student's affective and cognitive development as well as his or her behavior.

As the development of the well-rounded individual is a principal goal of extracurricular activities on college and university campuses, the numerous experiences these activities afford positively impact students' emotional, intellectual, social, and inter-personal development. By working together with other individuals, students learn to negotiate, communicate, manage conflict, and lead others. Taking part in these out-of-the-classroom activities helps students to understand the importance of critical thinking skills, time management, and academic and intellectual competence. Involvement in activities helps students mature socially by providing a setting for student interaction, relationship formation, and discussion. Working outside of the classroom with diverse groups of individuals allows for students to gain more self-confidence, autonomy, and appreciation for others' differences and similarities.

Students also develop skills specific to their career path and imperative for future job success. Students have opportunities to improve their leadership and interpersonal skills while also increasing their self-confidence. Extracurricular involvement allows students to link academic knowledge with practical experience, thereby leading to a better understanding of their own abilities, talents, and career goals. Future employers seek individuals with these increased skill levels, making these involved students more viable in the job market. Specifically,

participation in extracurricular activities and leadership roles in these activities are positively linked to attainment of one's first job and to managerial potential.

Student involvement in extracurricular activities also positively impacts educational attainment. Research indicates that extracurricular involvement has a positive impact on attaining a bachelor's degree and on educational aspirations. Students who are actively engaged are more likely to have higher educational ambitions than uninvolved students. Extracurricular activities also focus on institutional goals, such as building and sustaining community on campus as well as student retention. As campuses become more diverse, students desire an environment in which they feel connected to others and to the university. Extracurricular activities provide a place for students to come together, discuss pertinent ideas and issues, and accomplish common goals. Within this community, where students feel comfortable with one another, learning and development are enhanced and student retention is positively impacted. According to research, students will be more likely to persist in college if they feel they have had rewarding encounters with a college's social and academic systems. Through extracurricular participation, students frequently interact with peers who have similar interests, providing social integration into the college environment. As a result, involved students view their college years as a positive experience and feel they are a vital part of the university, resulting in higher retention rates.

## Importance of Diversity



Diversity in clubs and extracurricular activities plays an important role in adolescent lives and futures. Exposure to diverse groups can help promote students becoming socially intelligent and responsible adults. However, being immersed in diverse populations is not enough, as it is only beneficial if members engage with each other. More meaningful interactions with a diverse range of peers allows people to acquire traits such as more socially responsible leadership skills. Furthermore, participating in ethnic clubs allowed minority groups to feel more connected to their cultures and allowed others to gain knowledge and understanding of other cultures. This has two key benefits: first, minority groups have a safe place to feel a sense of belonging to their cultural roots and background, and second, people of differing ethnic backgrounds have an opportunity to learn more about other

cultures, thus becoming more culturally competent. Correlational studies showed positive relationships with involvement in ethnic/cultural clubs and intellectual and psychosocial development, multicultural competence, interpersonal skills, and leadership. Additionally, in school settings, interracial friendships positively impacted the individuals involved and the school culture as a whole. This demonstrates the importance of implementing multiculturalism into school environments, both academically and in extracurricular activities. It is important to continue research on incorporating multiculturalism and ethnic/cultural clubs into schools. Creating a multicultural competent environment for diverse student populations allows them to engage with others, openly discuss possible biases and stereotypes, and form meaningful intergroup relationships. If this is implemented at a young age, it is more likely to carry into adulthood, thus molding a more socially and culturally competent adult.



## Extracurricular Activities: Just as Important as Academics

It is important to receive good grades during your college career; however, being involved in extracurricular activities and getting work experience, like an internship, is valued more.

Extracurricular activities and work experience allow you to get hands-on experience in the field you will be working in, make connections with different people, improve your social skills, and it can really show someone your valuable work ethic. Having hands-on experience is more important than focusing completely on academics because it means you have less to learn when you start a new job. Most employers want to avoid wasting as much time as they can by not having to train a new person.

Most interview questions for college graduates have nothing to do with grades. The questions focus more on your personal qualities and about past job experience. When you're involved in extracurricular activities, not only do you get that experience, you get the chance to meet different people through the process. Nowadays, employers care about who you know instead of what you know. Being social and having good interpersonal skills are deemed very important for anybody in the career world because employers want to make sure they hire people who have the ability to communicate well and will not harm their reputation by lacking it.

Having prior work experience and being highly involved in extracurricular activities can really show to future employers your positive work ethic. Yes, receiving good grades in school can prove that you worked hard, but will it really matter 10 years down the line that you always turned in your homework?

To impress employers you'll need to be able to demonstrate how you applied your classroom learning in real world settings. You'll need to show how you extended your education beyond the classroom. In addition to your academic achievements, you can show how you took the time to be involved in a club or to help tutor other students while maintaining good grades. This can show to future employers your valuable work ethic.

If you were the leader of an organizational group or club, it shows that you have leadership skills and know how to take control of things. If you devoted your time to help tutor someone or if you were even a teacher's assistant, it shows your commitment and dedication to your work, and that you're someone that can make a difference. Mostly, extracurricular activities show that you have time management skills because you were able to balance a number of different things. That may not sound like it's as important, but it takes much more work to receive good grades while being involved on campus and perhaps having a job, rather than just using all your time to focus on one particular thing. It's impressive if you can prove that you are able to handle more than one task at a time.

While it is important to maintain good grades in college, having work experience, knowing people, and having developed social skills, along with having a valuable work ethic, is much more important in the long run.



## Examples of Extracurricular Activities

Student Government  
Greek Organizations (Fraternities, Sororities)  
Academic Clubs (Math, Psychology, English, Business)  
Entrepreneurial Club  
Environmental Club  
Academic Societies Honor Societies Professional Societies  
Concert/Lectures/Films  
Performing Arts (Theatre/Music/Dance)  
Poetry Club/Poetry Slam  
Art Club  
Hobby Related Clubs  
Tutoring/Mentoring  
Publications (Magazine/Newspaper/Yearbook)  
Book Group/Literary Club  
Chess Club  
Quiz Bowl/Scholars Bowl/Trivia Bowl  
Academic Competition Teams  
Sports/Athletics  
Recreation/Fitness  
Fan Clubs  
Gamers Clubs  
Political Action Clubs  
Religious Organizations  
Social Issues/Social Activism Clubs  
Cultural Organizations  
Ethnic Organizations  
LGBTQ Organization  
Marching Band/Concert Band/Jazz Band  
Choir/Glee Club  
Model United Nations  
Moot Court  
Debate Club  
Volunteer Fundraising/Event Planning (Non-Profits, Charities)  
Volunteer Community Service (Humanitarian/Philanthropic)  
Internship/Co-op