

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Kyle Flowers for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services Administration presented on April 13, 2016.

Title: Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study.

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Dr. Larry Roper

Involvement has been defined and researched by many student affairs professionals and theorists over the past 40 plus years. While many studies have researched the relationship between involvement and a student's academic success, little research has been done that explores what involvement means to them, and the motivations and factors for being involved. This research was designed to answer those two questions and determine how student affairs professionals can shape their advising and supervising to meet the needs of students who are involved. The study consists of seven participants who self-identified as being a full-time undergraduate student that was involved 20-30 hours a week. As a result of the data collection, five themes were identified to help the researcher make meaning of the participants' experience: involvement-going beyond the basic school requirements, motivation for involvement is individualized, staying organized through calendars, notes, and task lists, benefits and consequences are everywhere, and the importance of reflection. Based on the

findings and discussions recommendations, conclusions, and implications were then made to support students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours as week.

*Keywords:* undergraduate student, involvement, success, involved, over-involvement

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Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study

by  
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APPROVED:

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Kyle Flowers, Author

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Topic of Study.....	1
Operational Definition of Key Terms.....	2
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	4
Involvement.....	4
Involvement and Success.....	5
Can Involvement Be Detrimental? .....	6
Role of Student Affairs Professionals.....	7
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	10
Research Design Overview.....	10
Research Tradition.....	11
Philosophy and History.....	12
Study Site.....	12
The Phenomenon.....	12
Participants and Recruitment Method.....	13
Data Collection.....	14
Data Analysis.....	15
Strategies to Ensure Protection of Participants.....	16
Limitations to the Study.....	17
Ethics of the Study.....	17
Benefits of the Study.....	18

TABLE OF CONTENTS (*continued*)

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion.....	19
Participant Profiles.....	21
Themes.....	25
Involvement-Going Beyond the Basic School Requirements.....	25
Motivation for Involvement is Individualized.....	27
Staying Organized through Calendars, Notes, and Task Lists.....	34
Benefits and Consequences are Everywhere.....	36
Important Reflections to Consider.....	44
Concluding Discussion.....	50
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations.....	51
Discussion.....	51
Implications.....	54
Recommendations.....	56
Conclusion.....	60
References.....	62
Appendices.....	68
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval.....	68
Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Research Protocol.....	69
Appendix C: Verbal Consent Guide.....	79
Appendix D: Initial Recruitment Email.....	82
Appendix E: Interview Questions.....	83

## Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study

### Chapter 1: Introduction

#### Topic of Study

Throughout institutions across the country students find themselves involved in a variety of activities. Whether they work a part time job, act as a president for a student organization, or actively participate in clubs on campus, students experience involvement in a variety of ways. Astin (1984, 1996, 1999) defines involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy an individual devotes during their academic experience in a university. With a variety of opportunities to get involved as a student during their undergraduate years, some students may choose to be involved more so than others. Each individual perceives his/her involvement to be unique and telling to their undergraduate experience, while also having a unique impact on their academic success. Various researchers define what involvement might look like and how it relates to student success. A qualitative study at Green College<sup>1</sup> was implemented to explore the experiences that precede involvement, specifically those who self-identify as being involved between 20-30 hours a week. Students who are in this particular demographic might need assistance in their involvement, their balance of their involvement in relation to academic success, and how they reflect on their experiences. With this research, student affairs professionals can obtain a better understanding of some of the experiences of students who fall in this population. They can also use this research to help guide advising for students who are involved 20-30 hours a week and help them reflect on the involvement opportunities or experiences they are looking to obtain.

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<sup>1</sup> Green College is the institution that this study was conducted at.

### **Operational Definition of Key Terms**

For the purposes of this research, it is imperative to define key terms that will be used in the discussion. While the literature review will show that there are a variety of definitions and research for these terms, the following definitions frame this study.

*Involvement* refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy students devote during their academic experience at a university (Astin, 1984, 1996, 1999). Involvement could vary greatly depending on the student. For the purposes of this study, the researcher specifically focused on exploring the experiences of students who self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week. As a result of participants' interviews, the researcher does not consider studying for classes being included in this 20-30 hours a week. None of the participants included that in their own makeup of involvement.

*Over-Involvement* refers to the phenomenon where students are involved to the point that it begins to have negative effects on their academic success. Goncalves (2013) found that faculty and students at Boston College identified students who are too involved when they no longer have the time they need to spend on their academics and course work. Faculty and staff are able to see students who simply do not have the hours in the day to devote to all of their jobs and classwork are at a point when they need to readdress their commitments. While research dictates that over-involvement might be present in students who are involved more than 20 hours a week alongside their academic experiences, participants' views may differ from that. Since the researcher did not collect involvement data that relates to their academic success, no argument

could be made whether the participants were over-involved. Students' experiences were compared to common themes in the research and similarities and differences were drawn upon.

*Academic Success* refers to the student's understanding on how they will measure their success in college. For the purposes of this research, grade point average (GPA) will loosely be related to involvement to make some initial comparisons. Since no GPA's were pulled from a student's transcript and they are self-reported, no strong relationships were made between GPA and involvement.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

When discussing research, it is imperative to analyze and discuss what is currently stated within the literature. Specifically, it is relevant to discuss different definitions of involvement, the importance and effect involvement has on an individual's well-being, how involvement relates to success, and the role student affairs professionals have when discussing with students' involvement opportunities.

### **Involvement**

While involvement is defined extensively in research, most scholars identify two theorists that have laid the foundation for what is understood as student involvement. Alexander Astin (1984, 1996, 1999), the author of a foundational theory on student involvement, articulated that involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy students devote during their academic experience at a university. He notes that students learn from their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom (Astin, 1984; Astin, 1996; Astin, 1999). This view is also similar to Vincent Tinto's (1993, 1997), who, through his theory of student departure, has outlined that both the academic and social experiences at a university occur. Tinto also outlines that these two experiences are able to intertwine. This is found when students participate in activities that can relate their academic and extracurricular experiences.

It is important to note that while these theories have proven to still be relevant in conversations, sometimes 30 years later, the "traditional" college student has changed. According to Pryor, Hurtado, Saenz, Santo, and Korn (2007), in 1967, 80.5% of first-year students were 18 years old, but by 2006 that percentage dropped to 68.5%. Respectively, there was also a 16% increase in first-year students who identified as being 19 years and older (Pryor et al., 2007). College students have also become more racially and culturally diverse (Pryor et al.,

2007). More women also currently attend college than ever before (Goldin, Katz, & Kuziemko, 2006). Astin, in a recent interview with the Association of College Unions International, also articulated that online learning and increases in proprietary colleges have detracted considerably from the opportunities that students have for the traditional type of engagement (Beltramini, 2012). Astin in this interview does not clarify what these traditional types of engagement are, but his research can give some insight on what he might have meant by that. He does mention in his interview that online learning allows those learners to take up physical and psychological energy outside of their academics through work or other things that take up their time (Beltramini, 2012).

### **Involvement and Success**

With Astin (1984, 1996, 1999) and Tinto (1993, 1997) providing the ground for operational definitions of student involvement, it is possible to hypothesize how the level of involvement might affect a student's overall experience at their university. Kuh et al (1991) argue that involvement positively affects a student's development. They believe "students who are involved in powerful out-of-class experiences are likely to have a much more satisfying college experience than those who do not participate" (pg. 2). A variety of other scholars conclude that there is a positive relationship between student involvement and student learning and persistence (Astin, 1985; Pace, 1984; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students involved in extracurricular activities report developing higher confidence, intimacy, mature interpersonal relationships, and purpose (Hood et al., 1986; Hunt & Rentz, 1994; Williams & Winston, 1985).

Through learning and persistence, students have shown to be academically more successful when they are involved (Pace, 1984). Academic success, like involvement, could be

defined in a variety of ways. Brint and Cantwell (2010), along with Richards and Lutz (1968), defined academic success as obtaining a high grade point average level. Zajacova and Espenshade (2005) believed the accumulation of credits and college retention should also be factored into the academic success of student. A dissertation constructed by Koehler (2014) at Auburn University included duration of study, persistence, and academic challenge as success factors other than GPA and retention. Lastly, public recognition for academic achievement, independent scholarship, membership in honors programs, and faculty and advisor reports have also been included in definitions of academic success (Anastasi, Meade, & Schneiders 1960; Willingham et al, 1985).

Zacherman and Foubert (2014) conducted a study where they tested different levels of involvement and students' academic success. Students who were involved 0-10 and 11-20 hours a week saw an increase in their academic success as defined by an increase in GPA. Bergen-Cico and Viscomi (2013) found a similar relationship, stating that students who participated in 5-14 activities over the course of the semester achieved a higher level of academic success (GPA) than those who participated in little to no activities. Koehler (2014) and Chang and Huang (2004) also found a positive relationship between involvement and academic success. They found that as involvement (as defined by number of hours a week) increases, academic success (GPA) increases as well. Koehler (2014) and Chang and Huang (2004) considered this relationship to be linear.

### **Can Involvement Be Detrimental?**

Upon his research, Astin (1984) outlined that the amount of time a student has is a very precious resource, and involvement allows more development and personal learning. Boes also (1998) outlines that while "large-scale multi-institutional data support(s) the claim that

development, retention, and educational attainment are positively impacted by involvement [Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991]... we seldom question the limits of these findings, particularly for some students who are [over-] involved in co-curricular activities” (p. 32). While involvement creates benefits regarding a student’s success, persistence, and retention, research within student affairs has shown that when students are involved over 20 hours a week these benefits start to diminish (Zacherman and Foubert, 2014; Astin, 1999; Gardner, Koepfel, and Morant, 2010). In a study mentioned previously, Zacherman and Foubert (2014) looked at students who were involved on campus over 20 hours a week. These students, instead of seeing their academic success increase (similarly to their peers at 0-10 hours a week and 11-20), saw their academic success decrease. Astin (1999) has also argued a similar threshold of 20 hours a week in regards to when students should seriously consider the continuing of their involvement. Gardner, Koepfel, and Morant (2010) argue that full-time students who are involved more than 20 hours a week should consider themselves to be in over-involved.

From his research with involved students, McGrath (2002) explored experiences of students who were involved over 20 hours a week. McGrath found that in his research, academics came secondary after becoming ingrained in the campus community. With a full time course load, expectations to spend time outside of their classroom to complete coursework, and navigating other personal, family, and other life commitments, it’s important for student affairs professionals to be conscious of students’ decisions to become over involved.

### **Role of Student Affairs Professionals**

Student Affairs professionals are often tasked to do a great deal of work. NASPA and ACPA (1998) outline seven good practices that professionals should use when working with

students. The Student Learning Imperative (1994) asked professionals to “embrace the current challenges as an opportunity to affirm our commitment to student learning and development (pg. 2).” With that development comes a great deal of responsibility on the part of the student. They are in a setting with complete independence that allows them to navigate through their collegiate experience in the way that they best see fit.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) outlined seven good practices in undergraduate education: student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. All of these align to the success of an undergraduate student. Since students who are involved will typically be working with professionals, it is imperative that professionals ensure that involved students are actively learning, have high expectations for themselves, and are attentive to the work they are doing. Seppanen (2007) outlines the importance of professionals in their role, stating, “Institutions can influence the quality of effort students put into their involvement and thus their potential for success (pg. 9).”

There are a variety of ways student affairs professionals can be involved to help a student navigate through their involvement. Goncalves (2013) found that faculty and students at Boston College identified students who are too involved when they no longer have the time they need to spend on their academics and course work. Andring (2002) outlines seven ways professionals can advise the involved student when extracurricular involvement compromises academic achievement. Advisors should embody these seven characteristics: modify, but continue, student involvement; encourage quality involvement; create balance between academics and extracurricular programs; blend extracurricular interests with the curriculum; provide tools to manage the practicalities; revisit career and major choice; and know campus resources (Andring,

2002). Professionals, often times seen as mentors, are in a unique position to help a student succeed in the involvement opportunities they pursue.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

This study examined the experiences of traditional, undergraduate students who identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week at a large, public, research university. This is defined in more detail in the *participants and recruitment method* section below.

The questions that guided this research include: (a) What are students' experience who are involved 20-30 hours a week? (b) What purpose does involvement have for these students? (c) What strategies do these students use to manage their time?

#### Research Design Overview

This qualitative study was chosen to be designed this way due to the dearth of qualitative studies in this subject area in higher education. Many studies have been conducted that outline definitions of involvement, but few managed to compare and contrast involvement experiences between those who self-identify as being involved on campus 20-30 hours a week. A qualitative study also helped understand some of the motivations for being involved and follow up questions can be asked during the interview process to help fully understand a participant's experience.

This research was conducted from a constructivist perspective. Constructivism is based on observation and scientific study, and more specifically argues that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world by experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences (Duffy & Jonassen, 2013). The researcher identified this perspective as one that would best fit the study. In order to explore the experiences of those who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week, interviews were conducted with open ended questions. Open-ended questions also allowed for a constructivist perspective to arise, which prompted the researcher to pull out significant themes in the data set. This allowed the author to identify patterns, thus developing a better meaning around the phenomenon.

### **Research Tradition**

This thesis was informed by a phenomenological tradition. Since the amount of time was shorter than optimal to conduct this study, the researcher was not able to fully incorporate all elements of a phenomenological study. An overview of this type of study, however still proves to be helpful since such informed the study. The phenomenological tradition describes the meaning of lived experiences for several individuals as a particular concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Through a phenomenological study, researchers look for common shared experiences between particular phenomena, specifically in this study the experience of traditional, undergraduate students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. Phenomenology also asks the author to bracket their own experiences within the topic, and at the conclusion of the study relate the experiences the participants have with the ones that is experienced by the author.

There are two major types of phenomenology. The first is known as hermeneutic phenomenology, wherein the researcher interviews participants and interprets the *texts* of life-or the individual's experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This study, however, was conducted under the second type of phenomenology - the transcendental lens - where "the researcher...analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes" (Creswell, 2007, pg. 35). This process, otherwise known as horizontalization, allowed the researcher to develop clusters of information that are similar in experience. The researcher then "develop[ed] a textural description...what the participants experienced and a structural description...how they experienced it in terms of conditions, situations, or context" (Creswell, 2007).

### **Philosophy and History**

When conducting a study informed by phenomenology, it is imperative to take some time and discuss the philosophy and history behind it. This type of research draws heavily on the writings of a German mathematician Edmund Husserl, who was known to call the first phenomenology project (Natanson, 1973). Since Husserl, others have contributed greatly to the understanding of phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1982). It is most popular in social and health sciences, and especially used in disciplines such as sociology (Borgatta & Borgatta, 1992; Swingewood, 1991), psychology (Giorgi, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1989), and education (Tesch, 1994; van Manen, 1990). Although there are different reasons for why it is in use today, phenomenology has a few common grounds: research that identifies the lived experiences of people, that these experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 1990), and the creation of summaries and descriptions of these experiences, not necessarily the rationale or understanding of these experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Study Site**

This study was conducted at a large, public research university in the United States. In order to protect the identity for all of the participants, the actual institution that this study was conducted at will not be named. For the sake of the research, this university is referred to as Green College.

### **The Phenomenon**

The researcher sought to conduct research with students who are all experiencing the same phenomenon. While it might have been helpful to seek students who were *involved* in a very specific manner, students may be involved in a variety of different ways. For example: one participant might be working on campus, participating in a club sport, and holding an off campus

job, all while taking a full course load. Another student could be the president of a club, a member of a Greek organization, and might be working on campus. For these reasons, among others, this study explored the experiences of traditional, undergraduate students who self-identified as being involved in out of class commitments/activities 20-30 hours a week. Since they were able to self-identify, the variety of involvement ranged in the researcher's results. Limiting or specifying a particular type of involvement was not of interest to the researcher.

### **Participants and Recruitment Method**

The participants of this study were identified through homogenous sampling. Through purposeful research, departments on campus were identified that might employ student staff who might fit the criteria for the study, and were sent an email outlining the study. Staff and administrators were asked to forward the email to their teams, ensuring students were not singled out for the study. Potential participants then expressed their initial interest by sending an email to the researcher. Following this initial interest email, a survey was sent from the researcher to potential participants to learn more about their involvement. In this survey, the potential participants were asked questions such as their name, year at institution, a description of their involvement, how many hours a week they were involved on campus, current academic standing, and number of credits for which they are enrolled. Seven individuals elected to participate in the study, and all seven were chosen to participate. The seven individuals that were picked from the sample represented a variety of involvement opportunities and did not self-identify as spending more than 30 hours a week being involved. They were selected because many of them through their initial survey of involvement made mention of different involvement opportunities and were diverse in their year in school.

This particularly recruitment method was implemented to eliminate potential bias from staff and administrators identifying students with this set of involvement criteria. Students through this recruitment method were able to self-identify in this study and would not be pressured in anyway. The survey, specifically, aimed to obtain information that could give the researcher a bit of background on the potential participant. This allowed the researcher to identify people who had different backgrounds, years of experience, and genders to diversify the participant pool. Lastly, interviews were conducted to allow the researcher an opportunity to ask follow up questions when needed, be able to interact with the data outside of the initial meeting, and it provided an opportunity for the researcher to establish a relationship with the participant. All of these characteristics allowed the researcher access to a phenomenological study.

While no financial incentives were offered to participate in the study, those who were selected for the study were offered a baked good during the term for which they participated in the study. Requests for the choice of baked goods were offered, but no guarantees of which baked good they would get were made.

### **Data Collection**

For data collection, one-on-one interviews were conducted. Participants were interviewed individually for one hour each, during which participants were able to discuss their involvement experiences. The researcher asked 12 questions and recorded the interviews. These questions can be found in the Appendix. Each interview consisted of the same 12 questions, but a few times follow up questions were asked to better understand a particular point. These questions ranged from understanding their definition of involvement, their motivations and reasons for getting and staying involved, their organizational practices to stay on top of their commitments, benefits and consequences of involvement, and influences they have to talk and or reflect about their

involvement. Participants were asked to reflect at various points throughout the interview to give thought out, true answers that they felt inclined to share. Questions that asked about their processes for becoming involved were also asked throughout the interview. Participants were also emailed after each interview to allow them to add or change any of their answers after they were able to sit and think about what they said.

Bracketing out his own personal experiences, the researcher attempted to interact with the participants and the data in an unbiased manner. More on the precautions that were made in an effort to keep this study unbiased are discussed in the *Research Perspective* section. These interviews served as the primary data collection and were then recorded and transcribed for analysis. While every interview contained the same questions, follow up questions were necessary at times in order to ensure that both what was asked and what was answered was understood correctly. When a participant also explained an experience that contained rich detail, a follow up question was asked as well.

### **Data Analysis**

After the interviews were conducted, they were transcribed, then significant statements that participants made were identified and pulled out to provide an understanding of how they experienced the phenomenon. Through horizontalization, the author developed clusters from these statements to find themes. After, textural descriptions were written to indicate how both the participants and the researcher experienced the phenomenon, separately. Finally, the researcher wrote a composite description that presented the essence of the phenomena in a long paragraph, allowing readers to understand what it may be like for participants to experience these phenomena.

### **Strategies to Ensure Protection of Participants**

The names of the participants interviewed were removed for confidentiality purposes and their answers were changed based on how much specific information participants wanted to share about themselves. The experiences of the participants were not changed in the transcribing process. The institution at which the interviews were conducted was also blinded, and is referred to by a different name in this discussion. To allow participants to feel comfortable and protected, the researcher also allowed participants to pick the location at which their interviews took place.

### **Research Perspective**

It was important for the author to recognize that through this qualitative research and the study, he brought an experience very similar to those interviewed. As a traditional, undergraduate student involved 20-30 hours a week in their undergraduate experience, his academics suffered (specifically their GPA) the more he was involved. The researcher also struggled finding ways to not be so involved, and had trouble saying “no” to leadership opportunities. He also could not effectively manage his time well throughout the entirety of his involvement.

The phenomenological tradition that this study was informed by challenged the researcher to bracket out his experiences and engage with the phenomena as if he was experiencing it the first time. As much as possible, his personal experience was absent in the analysis and interviews, and only showed up in the final discussions. This allowed for him to eliminate bias and engage with the interviews and the participants’ experiences in the purest form. Specifically, the researcher attempted to not share much information between questions and answers in the interviews and attempted to say only “Thank you,” after every answer. The

researcher does not believe that it is possible to completely bracket out his experiences from the research, but he attempted to do it as best as possible.

### **Limitations to the Study**

While this study offered some insight on the experiences of traditional, undergraduate students experiencing 20-30 hours of involvement a week, the researcher did not have as much time as he would have liked to complete the study. Had the researcher had more time to analyze the data and prepare a full phenomenological study, the data may have been more robust. A full phenomenological study would have taken longer than the researcher's given time for his thesis. Two other limitations include that the researcher did not reach a point of saturation of data and the researcher also did not do member checking. Had those two aspects of this research been conducted then this study would have been more complete.

### **Ethics of the Study**

For ethical purposes of the study, the researcher did not want to select students who were involved over 30 hours a week, and only students who were involved 20-30 hours a week. While not selecting students who are involved over 30 hours a week is beneficial to the study's ethics, involving students who, according to research, might be over-involved, is still imperative to discuss. Why is it that the researcher chose to invite participants to engage in a study that will require them to take more time out of their week? A few reasons guided the researcher's decision and thought process. For one, through the interviews, participants reflected on their further involvement, allowing them to make conscious decisions in the future about what strategies they can pursue to ensure their involvement does not diminish their success. Secondly, the researcher ensured the students that the one-hour interview was based off of their schedule and availability first, then the researchers. This allowed the participants to meet at a time that was feasible, and a

location that they chose to meet. Allowing the participants to select the time and location of the meeting minimized the stress of participating in a potentially difficult study. Lastly, the study allowed for removal of one's involvement at any point in time. Participants were fully educated on the requirements of the study and the opportunity to leave if it became too much for them to work around. These precautions were taken to ensure that the participation of another opportunity created the least amount of stress to the involved students already participating.

### **Benefits of the Study**

There are a variety of benefits that informed this study's pursuit. First off, it normalized involvement to students. Students who self-identify being involved 20-30 hours a week might not believe that the rate of their involvement is not common, or have been told by peers, family members, or other external pressures that they are "too-involved." Secondly, it offered students who were involved in the study resources for their success. Depending on the type of experience they were going through, various resources were discussed and given to them. Lastly, this research helped contribute to the work of student affairs professionals. Understanding the motivations, reasons, and support opportunities that students have regarding their involvement helps educate the professionals who work with them in their involvement work. This research helped frame some conversations that professionals can have with their students to help them identify ways to be successful navigating their success at college.

### **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion**

As written and discussed in Chapter 2 in the summary of current literature, there are various definitions of involvement as well as varied opinions about whether it is detrimental to a student. While literature also exists that discusses how student affairs professionals should or should not support the students who are involved, little research has been devoted to explore the experiences of students who self-identify as being involved in various accounts (McGrath, 2002). This study aims to bridge the gap in the research and explore what involvement means to full-time, undergraduate students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. While other topics will be discussed through the research and were found as a result of conducting the study, the three driving questions that guided the study are as follows:

1. What are students' experience who are involved in out of class activities 20-30 hours a week?
2. What purpose does involvement have for students?
3. What strategies do students use to manage their time?

As described in Chapter 3, data was collected through an initial email and one, 60-minute, in-person interview per participant; all of which were held on campus at Green College. Prior to the interview, the participants were asked to submit via email their name, year, GPA, number of credits registered in both fall and winter term, and a list of their involvement as they identified it. After the researcher asked for their availability during week 1 of winter term, the researcher set up the interview in a Library room that was locked at all times.

Each interview was transcribed and coded in order to pull out themes and main points that a variety of participants made (Charmaz, 2006). While maintaining the importance of not generalizing each individual's experience, the researcher gathered the data and identified five

themes that were based on patterns and similar reflections made throughout the interviews. The researcher assigned names to each of the themes that, at times, consisted of wordage from the interviews. The five themes that were identified throughout the research are as follows:

1. Involvement: Going Beyond the Basic School Requirements
2. Motivation for Involvement is Individualized
3. Staying Organized through Calendars, Notes, and Task Lists
4. Benefits and Consequences are Everywhere
5. The Importance of Reflection

The first four themes identified through the research are in direct response to the three questions asked and which will be referred to in this chapter. The later theme will encompass a further discussion, specifically one that will be directed at student affairs professionals, and the need to incorporate reflection with those who are involved. It's imperative for the researcher to outline where professionals can help those who are involved and self-report difficulty either reflecting or managing their time.

These themes also contain sub themes, to further develop and categorize the similarities that individuals' answers contained. Direct language and passages were pulled from each of the seven participants' interviews, all in order to ensure that their language and their lived experiences are adequately portrayed and given attention. The themes will lastly be connected to the discussion in Chapter 2 and the existing scholarship, to both fill in the gaps of what is currently in the research and to show where this research has proved to be helpful for the student affairs field.

### **Participant Profiles**

The following section introduces the participants who self-selected into this study. All participants were given a pseudonym to remove their official name, and various pieces of their description were altered to remove the immediate identification possibility that they could receive at Green College (see Table 1 on page 23 for a quick view of all participants). All of the participants were full-time, undergraduate students at Green College who self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week. A brief description of their involvement along with their major is also listed in their participant profiles. All grade point averages (GPA) are self-reported. The minimum full time credit requirement at Green College is 12 credits. Students need 180 credits to graduate from the institution and manage their various major and minor requirements through their course work.

**TJ.** TJ at the time the study began was a fifth-year, full-time student at Green College, and was an Agricultural Sciences major with two minors in various departments. Originally from a community college, TJ transferred in as a third-year student and immediately found involvement through a university athletics program. It was at Green College's new student orientation program the summer before her enrollment that allowed her to find out about the sports team and found a community as a result. After competing in the program for a year and a half, TJ found her involvement in a new student orientation program to be a better use of her time, and decided to commit herself more so to their leadership position and job on campus. This year, TJ identifies as being "heavily involved in various clubs and organizations." She holds "two different student employment positions, is currently an officer in 3 different school clubs, and participate in leadership development" while being "appointed to represent the university in

an ambassador position.” She was enrolled in 14 credits in fall term, registered for 15 credits in spring term, and has self-reported a GPA of 3.6.

**Jessica Jones.** Jessica Jones at the time of the study reported as being a fourth-year student involved in a variety of activities. She indicated wanting to use two names for this research, knowing that other participants might only use one name. She self-reported as being, at the time of the study, a part of Climbing Club (which she committed 4-5 hours a week to), the student government’s House of Representatives (4 hours), and worked as the Housing and Dining Student Program Assistant (20 hours a week). Jessica Jones reported involvement going back to her first year at Green College, where she started being involved in the campus’ Residence Hall Association and thereafter becoming a Resident Assistant. She has attended all four years at Green College and anticipates graduation at the end of their fourth year. She self-reported a cumulative GPA of 3.74 and took 19 credits in fall term and registered for 15 in winter term. Jessica Jones is also a double major in English and Political Science.

**Brandon.** Brandon, at the time the study was conducted, was a third-year student in the Pre-Mechanical engineering major at Green College. Along with being an active member of Greek Life, Brandon reported working at the campus’ late-night transportation service as a supervisor for 16-20 hours a week and serving as a Senator for the student government, requiring him to work 2-4 hours a week. While enrolling in 17 credits in fall term and registering for 13 credits in winter term, he has been working on a full course load while being involved for 20-30 hours a week. Throughout his interview, Brandon reiterated the usefulness of his involvement in a variety of ways, and reported that involvement has not affected his academics in a negative way while attending Green College. He self-reported a cumulative GPA of 2.83 as of his fall term in his third year.

**Kyle.** Kyle, at the beginning of the study, was a second-year at Green College, working and being a part of a variety of organizations on campus. Kyle mentioned prior to his interview, “I am a resident assistant on campus. I work roughly 12-15 hours a week (there). I am also involved with MEChA, a student sponsored organization on campus. I am deeply involved with the department of Diversity and Cultural Engagement where I try to attend as many cultural resource center events as I can.” As a full-time student and an English major, Kyle reported registering for 15 credits both fall and winter term, and self-reported a cumulative GPA of 2.68. Throughout his interview, Kyle stressed the importance of attending events as part of being involved, and made mention of this in his answers to how he approached his involvement. He also made other important notes of how external factors have motivated him to continue staying involved and makes the most out of his experience while at his institution.

**Kierstin.** Kierstin, at the time of the study, reported being a third-year student majoring in Graphic Design. Along with maintaining a reported 3.36 GPA, she informed the researcher that her involvement consisted in working on campus, participating in a club, and being an active member of her sorority. While the amount of hours she worked on campus depended on her work load for that specific week, she indicated that her weeks always consisted her being involved 20-30 hours a week. Kierstin also mentioned that her involvement influences the amount of credits she takes per term, indicating that at times she feels busier than others. She registered and completed 13 credits in her fall term and anticipated taking 12 credits in winter term. Most of these credits involve studio courses, which are three hours long and require time outside of class.

**Daniel.** At the beginning of the study, Daniel reported being a second-year, full-time student at Green College. Coming from a family that was involved in their community, Daniel

arrived at college excited to participate in involvement opportunities. As a second year student, Daniel served as a Resident Assistant (where he worked 12 hours a week), was a member of the student government House of Representatives (5 hours a week), was a student ambassador (1-2 hours), and served as the Vice President of an organization (4 hours a week). Throughout his interview, Daniel shared many reflections about the importance of his involvement. While he reported a 3.5 GPA and was enrolled in 15 credits in fall term and 17 in winter term, he talked specifically about the process of understanding how his involvement had influenced his success in his academics. He also talked about a variety of benefits and consequences that involvement has, in particular throughout his time at Green College. Daniel is a Pre-Civil Engineering student in the Honors College.

**Antonia.** As a third-year student at the time of the study, Antonia believed that involvement for her has given her a variety of opportunities to grow as an individual and learn more about herself. When asked about her involvement, Antonia discussed her employment at the on campus civic engagement department, her Ambassador position for a college on campus, and her leadership positions in her sorority. Depending on the week, she reported her involvement taking up anywhere from 20 to 30 hours of her week. While taking 12 credits in fall term and enrolling in 14 credits in her spring term, Antonia reported a 3.36 GPA. While majoring in Agricultural Sciences and French, she also talked in great lengths about her organizational system, and used various techniques to balancing her involvement and her course load.

Table 1

Name	Gender	Year	Major
<b>TJ</b>	Female	5 <sup>th</sup> Year	Agricultural Sciences
<b>Jessica Jones</b>	Female	4 <sup>th</sup> Year	English and Political Science
<b>Brandon</b>	Male	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Pre-Mechanical Engineering
<b>Kierstin</b>	Female	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Graphic Design
<b>Kyle</b>	Male	2 <sup>nd</sup> year	English
<b>Daniel</b>	Male	2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	Pre-Civil Engineering
<b>Antonia</b>	Female	3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	Agricultural Science and French

### Themes

**Theme 1: Involvement-Going Beyond the Basic School Requirements.** The first question of each of the participants' interview inquired about their own definition of involvement. While very different in their specific responses, all of the participants outlined involvement similarly. Jessica Jones reported involvement as "...actively participating in things that are beyond just basic requirements of just going to school. So it could be working on campus or participating in clubs or any of the various like non-school like activities that come along with being in college." Along with clubs, Kierstin included working, being a part of groups, and actively participating in organizations: "Involvement to me is obviously participating, and participation in either groups, clubs, I consider my work involvement because that is on campus....I guess participating in things with other people; it's taking up your time, it's a part of your life." If basic requirements, as Jessica Jones stated, consists of attending classes, then these

clubs, organizations, and working on campus all constitute as involvement. As Daniel stated, when asked about his definition of involvement, “Involvement has a prerequisite for going beyond what’s expected of us.”

Participating in clubs and organizations was something that was differentiated within the research and interviews of participants. When talking about his involvement, Kyle talked about what he defines participation as:

Being involved and my overall definition of involvement is kind of just being not well known or seen but just being active around the community or whatever community you are a part of or identify with and that can be in a variety of ways. Just offering services to someone or just being active and participating in events going on throughout your community.

Being seen and a part of communities was another common theme with participants, as TJ mentioned that as a huge part of her own definition of involvement. She stated in her interview, “...involvement, especially at a university level, is finding what connects you to your institution.” She further defines what this “connection” might look like: “...If that means you’re a part of a club that knits hats on the weekends, that’s your involvement... There are also little pieces of involvement that connects a huge population of students at institutions by like going to sporting events or studying in these cool study rooms with other people.” Examples of involvement were also noted throughout the interviews. Participants identified a variety of clubs, organizations, work opportunities, and outside places to find communities and build connections.

It appears throughout these interviews that while the simple definition innately was the same throughout the responses, one individual stood out to the researcher in their answer. Antonia was the only participant who verbally expressed the need to include classes and just

“being on campus” when describing her own definition of involvement. While TJ, Kierstin, Daniel, Brandon, Jessica Jones, and Kyle all found involvement outside of academics, Antonia was able to find a community through her classes at Green College. These communities and connections were also noted as a reason for their motivations, which will be discussed in the Theme 2 section.

Relating this theme to the research that was outlined in Chapter 2, Astin’s (1984, 1996, 1999) definition of Involvement can be applied to each of the participants. Since Astin specifically outlines that involvement does *vary depending on each student*, the research from the interviews supports this theory. Students also find involvement meaningful and individualized depending on their experiences. Each of the definitions mentioned inherently shapes the participants’ involvement opportunities and the specific opportunities they seek. Their peers, mentors, or professors, as stated by many of the participants, could also influence the potential opportunities they seek next.

**Theme 2: Motivation for Involvement is individualized.** When interviewing the participants for this study, the researcher found two distinct areas for why people are involved on campus. While similarities existed between them, participants found reasons for initially why they *started* to be involved, and then they articulated motivations for *staying* involved. This theme will be categorized in two sections and will specifically outline similarities and differences between the participants’ answers within these two overarching frameworks.

**Factors for Getting Involved.** Participants self-reported a great deal of specific reasons for why they chose to get involved at Green College. Some sought connection through sports, friends, or to mission of an organization, while others wanted to find ways to make a valuable contribution or better suit themselves for jobs in the future. It is important to note that these

individual experiences were very impactful to their development as a student, and these participants expressed some very telling parts of their story that will be necessary to quote directly.

*Finding Connections.* TJ expressed a great deal of uncertainty when arriving at Green College, especially after transferring from somewhere that had a connection already.

As a transfer, I played volleyball at my other institution, and I honestly was terrified to come to Green College without a connection. Because I've always been connected to my institution by sports. And so I knew I needed a structure to be successful. I'm just one of those people who need structure, I just always thought it would be in an academic team setting.

In a vulnerable moment, TJ found it necessary to find an area of connection on Green College's campus. It was through this connection she saw stability and comfort, all important things she identified as needing in order to be successful. Daniel and Antonia also began involvement by finding a connection, but they sought to connect with an involvement opportunity that's mission resonated with them. Antonia stated that when she should found one of her involvement opportunities, she "just really identify(ed) with them," which prompted her to get involved with that organization. Daniel, when reflecting on the factors he had for getting involved, stated:

I think a definite factor has been you know how do I feel about whatever the position is; how do I feel about the organization. I think there are a lot of opportunities to get involved especially in a college campus but anywhere I think for it to really work you have to be invested in it in some way shape or form where you have to believe in it.

The “belief” that Daniel outlines and the identification that Antonia articulates relates to the reasons that TJ stated. Connections drove their beginning involvement stages.

Other participants found involvement as an opportunity to make friends and build connections with other people. Kierstin identified “making friends” as the biggest factor for why she wanted to get involved. Brandon, similarly, said in various parts of his interview how much he likes to meet people, and found after meeting people that he wanted to make more friends and connections in other jobs and areas on campus. These two participants outlined the importance of building connections through friendships.

*Money.* Another common response heard from the participants in the interviews was the need for money. Antonia and Kierstin both identified the need for income to supplement their education. Antonia identified her job on campus to be “...a fairly good solution to needing some income to help my parents pay the bills.” Kierstin went as far as saying “If I didn’t need the money, if I didn’t need the experience, I probably wouldn’t do it (get involved).” The researcher found in these two responses that while involvement to some could be an opportunity to just make friends and meet people, others do it because it may be the only way they can move through college. Money provides security, and a job on campus can give students the opportunity gain experience while also being financial stable in college.

*Influences.* Jessica Jones in her responses documented why she began to be involved in her interview:

So the reason I went into housing as an RA (resident assistant) is because of my RA my freshmen year. I had a really hard time...I was really home sick my first 3 or 4 weeks at Green College because I didn’t know anybody I came from high school with...My RA was like hey, join hall council.

While Jessica Jones reported having a really tough time in her transition, she sought a community (similar to TJ), and someone who was already involved in a position already motivated her to get involved. The RA provided Jessica Jones with an opportunity to cope with her homesickness and find other avenues to help her succeed as a college student. Participants disclosed important influences in their life throughout their interviews, which all appeared to have a significant part in their involvement and success.

*Motivations for Staying Involved.* Participants articulated that while they had initial reasons for getting involved, their motivations for staying involved differed. Some of these motivations included wanting to impact people and/or become mentors/role models and staying connected to previously made relationships.

*Impacting People.* In some of their more heartfelt reflections, Jessica Jones, Daniel, and Kyle all expressed a desire to impact people around them as a result of being involved. In her RA position, Jessica Jones shared that she “get(s) a lot of chances to work with people and help first year students kind of integrate in the OSU community more.” Daniel, similarly, found that through his involvement he was able to interact with people that had a great effect on him.

(Through involvement), you have interactions with people that change you not just in learning new skills or getting new experiences, but recognizing this person; there’s something about them that attracts me to them. There’s something about them that you know I want to be like this person...you really want to be like this person, and you found the way that they became like that was through involvement. Or the reason that they are like that is because they are involved. And eventually you become involved, become like them.

Daniel's motivation to be involved is to become similar to his role models, and then be able to impact people around him. He finds the motivation to stay involved is something greater than skills, and greater than gaining new experiences.

Kyle expressed in his interview a motivation to impact others around him, and always wanting to do more for those around him. He stated:

One of the things that really motivates me is just my family. Just because I'm always thinking of them when I'm going different sorts of events and activities and everything. So for me just being a first generation student it kind of helped to push me to be an RA here on campus because I felt like it would be nice to have that connection with someone if they were coming into school as a first generation student.

For Kyle, having the opportunity to impact his family, and also the students who may identify similarly to him at Green College, is what drives him to stay involved.

Between Daniel, Kyle, and Jessica Jones, involvement has shown to really impact others around their lives. They work, volunteer, and take time out of their day to help others and ensure that they can have a better place at Green College. These impacts go far beyond the work they do, and really benefit the community around them.

*Staying Connected.* Throughout their interviews, Brandon, Antonia, TJ, and Kierstin all reflected about the appreciation of staying connected to their friends and relationships while staying involved. Brandon in his interview talked about the importance that his friend group had for staying involved. Since he knew a lot of people, he got close to some of people who worked and was involved with and "wanted to stay within those groups." Antonia expressed similar motivations, stating that she really enjoyed being a part of her sorority, specifically, and wanted to keep participating in that involvement. It was due to her relationships with the people she was

involved with that she had “ambitions of moving up in leadership positions.” Not only did good relationships keep her involved, but she wanted to further her involvement and leadership as a result of the positive connections she had built. Kierstin, while still similarly was looking for connections in order to stay involved, saw life-long friendships stemming from her involvement. She reported these great relationships with both her work and her involvement in her sorority.

TJ shared a very informative set of remarks in her interview, talking about the importance of connection in her involvement. While the first response when asked about motivations for involvement was for opportunities, she followed that by saying:

Honestly, the answer I think that is more striking and is what we are looking for is the connection piece....Like, that's what drives me-I need to field connected. So if like I'm not connected, I don't know what I'm doing necessarily. I don't really know and who I am either. Like that's a big question.

This statement was very telling. TJ sought out involvement so much that she was unable to identify what she would do without it. The motivations and involvement had made such an important stamp on her collegiate career at Green College that she was unsure of how to picture life without it.

These reflections shared by the participants were very informative for the researcher's main questions. The participants showed that, while there were common themes, the specific motivations and factors for getting and staying involved varied slightly depending on the individual. It's important for mentors, supervisors, and advisors who work with these students to identify these motivations and factors in conjunction with the students with whom they work in order to build opportunities for reflection. Some of the participants shared that this was their first time reflecting on their involvement, which might need to be changed in order for them to make

sense of the work they are doing. A discussion will be made later on in Chapter 5 to illustrate more insight on why this should change.

**Theme 3: Staying Organized through Calendars, Notes, and Task Lists.** Since these participants were all self-reporting spending 20-30 hours a week being involved, it was important for the researcher to inquire about their process of balancing full course load at Green College and their involvement opportunities. The researcher found this important due to his own experience, along with the what research has said about students who are involved over 20 hours a week. When asking the participants how they stay organized, various different resources and processes were mentioned. Of those, phones, calendars, lists, planners, sticky notes, and the process of “checking it off” were the most commonly reported. Table 2, below, shows the breakdown of who reported using that resources or process when staying organized. As a note, this was not asked via a survey where they were asked which ones to choose from, but instead self-reported the ones that they use. An “X” indicates that they reported using that resources or process.

Table 2

	Phone	Calendar	Lists	Planner	Sticky Notes	Check-off
Brandon	X					
Kierstin	X		X		X	X
Antonia	X	X	X	X	X	X
TJ	X	X		X		
Kyle	X	X			X	
Jessica Jones				X		X
Daniel		X				

While categorized into a particular type, it should be noted that these resources could be utilized in various ways. TJ, for example, uses a calendar differently than Antonia, because TJ uses an electronic, Google calendar to organize all of her involvement opportunities and Antonia uses a printed out weekly calendar to know when her commitments are. An individual's phone can also be utilized differently, whereas Kierstin uses it for reminders and Kyle uses it to check one of his calendars that he uses.

Analyzing the popular responses from the participants, Antonia appeared to stay organized through a variety of resources. She outlined the importance of having multiple organizational techniques "so that not everything is in one resource." After summarizing her organization, she stated the following:

And like before I go to bed every night, I write out what I need to do the next day and then I check that in the morning and take it with me. And then at the end of the day I like cross of what I have done or what I haven't done and then transfer it to the next day's lists.

While self-reporting staying involved 20-30 hours a week, Antonia has prioritized the need for organizing her time and ensuring that her responsibilities and obligations are completed and/or documented each and every night. If not for staying organized this way, she reportedly "...would lose (her) mind." Her involvement and homework is causing enough stress to put pressure on her ability to function well at Green College.

Kyle was another participant who acknowledged the need for multiple resources in order to stay organized between his involvement and academics. To provide a better scope of his organizational strategies, here is an excerpt from his interview:

I have a ton of calendars. I carry my planner with me in my backpack and then I have my school calendar and my work calendar synced to my phone, and then I have my white board calendar that's up in my room, a paper one that's up in front of my desk, and my schedule that's right next to that calendar so I can schedule things and know times. A ton of sticky notes are on a lot of those calendars.

After replying "Wow" after this statement, the researcher recorded Kyle saying, "I don't know how I keep track of it all but I do that." Similar to Antonia, Kyle experiences a great deal of organizational need to keep track of all that he does. By using calendars, he is able to document the commitments and obligations he has while attaining to his school work.

A couple other important notes were made when asked about their organizational strategies. Kierstin, Antonia, and Jessica Jones all reported the need to check things off their lists, tasks, or sticky notes when they complete them. Not only is this an organizational technique that individuals can use to keep track of what they do, but also reportedly gives people a sense of completion, fulfillment, or even joy, depending on their working style. Kierstin especially made this point clear in her interview. When referring to notifications on her phone, she made this statement:

It's helpful because it will keep reminding you until you do it and it's like okay, okay. It will keep popping up on your phone and you'll keep checking your phone and you need to get it off your phone and you want to get that check mark off of it. It's really satisfying.

Those who operate similarly to Kierstin use these to do lists and task lists as motivation to get their tasks done. The simple action of crossing off something off of her phone or list gives her satisfaction.

While organization can change depending on the individual, it's important especially for those who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week to develop some sort of way to manage their time and organize their commitments including classes and involvement. The researcher would assume that if they aren't able to stick to organizational techniques then they might not be able to feel a sense of security and ability to get their things done. It also prompts a thought regarding involvement and organization; is it healthy to have so much involvement that it requires a certain organizational system in order for them to feel adequately supported to accomplish their tasks? Is that something students should be striving to achieve while they are in college?

**Theme 4: Benefits and Consequences are Everywhere.** Through the research, participants identified various benefits and consequences that they have found in their experiences as being involved. This theme is broken down into two sections: benefits and consequences, and then further broken down based on general similarities that was found while analyzing the data.

***Benefits.***

*Relationships.* Through the interviews, many references were made in regards to relationships when thinking about the benefits of involvement. Particularly, some relished the opportunity to network through their involvement and build new friends and relationships through their experience. Five of the seven participants made specific reference to making new connections through their roles. Antonia made mention of the importance of networking in her interview:

I think a benefit is that I'm building a really strong base of people that can speak to my character. So my supervisor at CCE has in fact, her letter of recommendation was a big

part of me becoming an ambassador because that's like an application and interview process. So being able to like establish a really good working relationship with her has reaped benefits and she's going to continue being a really good reference... Like networking is all about who you know.

A couple others also mentioned the importance of meeting people. Brandon articulated, "(Involvement)...has helped me network in ways that I've made some really good friends in a lot of different groups." Kyle appreciated meeting "a lot of really cool people and get(ting) to know a lot of different stories that those people hold and kind of build that relationship where they feel like they trust you enough to share it with you." While Brandon and Kyle appreciated the opportunity to meet various people, Jessica Jones took it a step further, and mentioned that if it was not for her involvement opportunity, she would not have had the chance to work with over 300 people that she never would have met. This is just one of the many benefits that people outlined in the interviews about their involvement.

Others just appreciated the chance to work with a group of really impactful people, and acknowledged that working with others who appreciate them and make them feel comfortable makes their involvement opportunities so much better. Daniel, especially articulated this very well in his interview:

I think the benefits are really just the fact that I can work with some really amazing people around campus. And that gives me great life experiences, it gives me good role models or peer mentors, you know, people who are also involved who encourage me when I'm having trouble or who inspire me when I need to be inspired.

The appreciation of coworkers, supervisors, and mentors are not taken lightly by Daniel's statement. Understanding the value that they bring to an individual's involvement can lead to a

huge benefit for an individual. TJ also spoke very highly of the people she had the chance to work with in her involvement. While she was going through a particularly hard time in her personal life, she had people who were there as a support system; people who were able to understand some of the life experiences she was going through. Being involved and working with people who could relate to her was really crucial for her development.

Particularly relating to one of the researcher's questions, these are just two examples of how critical a resource support system could be, and how that could relate to the role of a student affairs professional in an individual's involvement. The research is showing that relationships built by individuals who are involved make their involvement opportunities ones worthwhile, and ones that they will continue being a part. While discussed more in Chapter 5, it's important to note here the importance of relationships between professionals/staff members and students are in their development.

*New Skills and Experiences.* Another benefit that was discussed in the research was the opportunity to gain new skills and experiences that are helpful for their future and relatable experiences. Jessica Jones said that involvement opportunities help students practice "time management skills" and build their "work ethic and professionalism." Her and Brandon both believed that skills that they were learning through their involvement opportunities were all very necessary for their future work and good for employers to see. Along with that, Kyle discussed the benefit it has been to learn more about "different communities and different histories" of which he had previously not been a part.

Daniel made mention of a few comments that were very helpful in understanding the benefits of new experiences and skills as well. He not only found that involvement helped boost one's resume, but the skills he was gaining helped him create a "subculture in whatever you're a

part of.” He found the importance for building the culture of an organization a huge and impactful experience for himself, and finding ways to incorporate things that he had experience with was helpful for the organization’s development. He also equated his involvement experiences with his academic ones, and truly believed them as co-curricular. An excerpt from his interview follows;

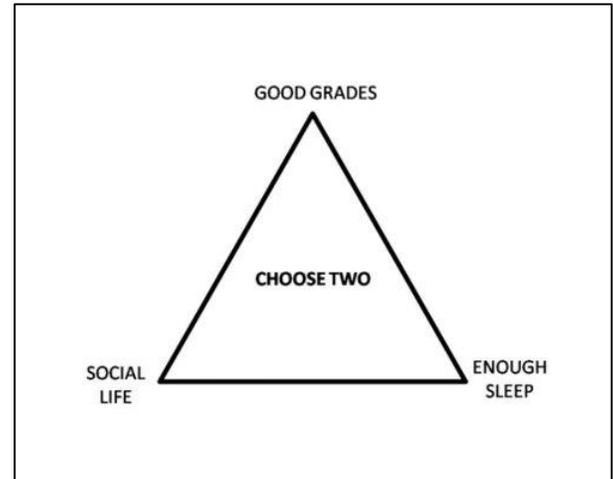
(Sometimes) you have to remember primarily that you’re coming here for education. But it also is part of your decision on what you want your education to look like. And an education can look like transcripts and the classes you take but I think that a lot of time we forget that an equal part of your education can be jobs that you’ve had and experiences you’ve had. And those are less readily quantifiable, you know? I’m not taking 10 credits of extracurriculars but I think that they come with life experience and valuable skill sets that are equitable to taking a class or majoring in a degree.

This quote contains much insight to his approach to involvement. Daniel not only was on similar terms in regards to what others said to the benefits of involvement, but he truly saw the experiences he was getting as life long and ones that equate to what he is learning in class. While involvement is “less quantifiable,” as he states, it is what one does with the experience to articulate it, to reflect on it, and to identify on how that will help them down the future. While involvement creates these benefits for students, it’s up to the individual to really understand how they can help share their own personal development.

*Consequences.* While various benefits were outlined through the interviews, some consequences were apparent in their answers and their reflections. These consequences were categorized into three major areas: sleep, less time focusing on academics, and the inability to be able to relax due to constant stress.

*Sleep.* While research dictates some differences in the amount of sleep an individual needs per night, scholarship finds that getting at least 6 hours of sleep allows individuals to obtain restorative sleep (Ferrara & De Gennaro, 2001; Tsai, 2004; Forquer, Camden, Gabriau, and Johnson, 2008; Baldwin & Daugherty, 2004). Three out of the seven individuals made reference to losing sleep as a result of being involved

Figure 3



20-30 hours a week. Antonia talked about her lack of sleep through what she referred to as the college triangle, illustrated in Figure 3. While she did mention that it was “kind of a joke” she was serious in spending time trying to get good grades and defined her social life as hanging out with friends casually and her campus involvement. She stated: “And I mean I’m a junior, so upper division classes and I’m a double major so I sacrifice a lot.” Kyle also disclosed to me that he doesn’t get enough sleep, and self-reported only getting about 3-4 hours a sleep a night. This is clearly not an adequate amount of sleep, and doesn’t allow a busy college student to function at a high level all the time.

Kierstin, while also documenting that she doesn’t get enough sleep, believed that sleep was very important to her own health. She documented her day generally and when she gets a chance to sleep:

I’ll get to school you know at 8 or 9 in the morning, and then be on campus all day until at least 5pm. Going to classes between work, working between classes, and then if I have chapters and then things sorority related then it goes till 7 or 9. So you go home and have dinner and maybe work out and then you have get to get up and do it all over again.

So while acknowledging that health and sleep is important for her own success, she doesn't make any changes to her involvement based on this known consequences. She mentioned shortly after: "I don't want to drop anything off my list of things to do because I want to do them all." Later, in the interview, she also made of her what appeared to be her reasoning and philosophy for why she is so involved:

... Involvement is important and as much as it stresses you out and as much as it might hinder your health sometimes, sometimes I feel like that's what college is about and that's why I'm doing it? Though like I wouldn't drop any of the things I'm doing, there's like no point. Like I would rather be doing them and rather be sleep deprived and stressed out then not do them.

The researcher makes a special point to bring this particular aspect of Kierstin's interview because it is very telling. Sleep appears to be a consequence, but losing it in her view is not a result of inefficiently using her time, it is knowingly being too involved and not preferring herself to be less involved. She states in her interview, "it will be worth it in the long run." Between Antonia's, Kyle's, and Kierstin's interview, losing sleep is a consequence they are willing to live with while being involved 20-30 hours a week.

*Less time focusing on academics.* Four of the participants identified having less time to focus on academics as a consequence for being involved. Jessica Jones outlined that consequences "does take up a lot of time so it does take away from other things you could be doing; so studying or pursuing personal interests." Kierstin along with what was said above discloses being anxiety prone, and has so many responsibilities that she's committed to; all of which require her attention. Antonia, similarly, navigates her academics while balancing the two other aspects of the "college triangle;" sleep and social life (involvement).

Daniel, in his interview and reflections, also made note of his involvement at one point negatively impacting his academics. In his first year, he took on a great deal of involvement opportunities, and self-reported prioritizing his involvement opportunities than his academics.

It's sometimes a lot easier to say I want to work on this problem because I have a passion for it you know. It's do I want to organize a party or a community service project or other things because that sounds more fun to me than doing my math homework.

He goes on afterwards saying that he realized as he was consciously choosing to prioritize involvement, he was making a decision to get a worse grade in a particular class. It is important to understand how much time your involvement is taking up and the need to prioritize your academic obligations. While it appears that participants have acknowledged involvement taking up more time, thus giving them less time to focus on academics, not all of them have actively worked to create a system to complete all of their obligations to the level of completion they expect it to be.

*Inability to relax and constant stress.* The last of the broader consequence themes outlined in this chapter includes information on participants' experiences with stress and relaxing on their own. Brandon described this phenomenon as the "lack of me time" and struggled finding time for his own relaxation and opportunity to de-stress, because he was always committed to something and had to do homework afterwards. Kierstin expressed a constant level of stress that she is working with, but acknowledges as mentioned in the previous section, a level of understanding that she is stressing out for a good reason.

TJ agreed in her interview that stress was a factor as a result of being involved, but talked a great deal about the impact a personal change can have on your life as a result of already being stressed out. She stated the following in her interview:

I think as being involved as you can be is awesome but when things go wrong, they'll go wrong everywhere. Fall term (2015) was hard. It was the first term I took on a lot at Green College and you know, when a personal change happens, it effects a lot of different avenues of mine and I think a lot of people's lives, but my life especially.

The personal change greatly affected her ability to perform her duties in her roles and be present in all facets that she could be in her academics. TJ self-disclosed a great deal of stress that was brought upon her through this personal change.

The later part of TJ's reflection brings up a very important point. Involvement appears to take up a great deal of time, stress in addition to causing a reduction in sleep, but if an individual is so busy-how can they cope or handle any external influences or experiences that they are unexpectedly needing to deal with? Should an individual who isn't able to handle all of their commitments and externalities be considered over-involved, as the definition in this research is defined to be? The operating definition of over-involvement in this paper defines it as being a "detriment to their success," and if success is applied to a student's overall well-being, these types of students would considerably be regarded as over-involved.

***Other notes about benefits and consequences.*** It is important to note in the research that not all benefits and consequences that were expressed and identified in the interviews were mentioned. Along with that, one participant did not feel as though his balance between academics and involvement was one difficult to navigate, and contradicts one of the aspects of the consequences. The main themes were pulled and wrapped up together to help readers understand the scope of the research that was accumulated. Overall, benefits and consequences were identified in all of the participants and were important reflections for them to have through the research.

**Theme 5: Important reflections to consider.** To go along with the participant profiles and research that is outlined above, there were moments in the interviews that were important enough to mention but didn't fit particularly well anywhere in the previous four themes or were set aside to discuss them in greater detail. The researcher has outlined one point of the interviews that fits very well with the overall questions of the study and is necessary to mention for further analysis.

*Kyle.* One of the broad questions of this study was to better understand how participants self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week, and seeing the potential differences and similarities those participants mentioned in their interviews. Kyle was the only one who articulated in his interview that attending events was a big part of him being involved on campus. When asked about his involvement and what it means to be involved 20-30 hours on campus, he reported that working on camps is “more than half of my involvement on campus,” but then states:

But I am also very active in attending events on campus and being seen at those events whether they are small events like welcome back events for the term or events going on through the cultural resource centers and those sort of things. Or events going on throughout the residence halls and all that stuff so that's a large part of my involvement on campus.

This reflection is something very useful for this research, because as noted in the earlier chapters, involvement can differ for everyone. Involvement, as a result of understanding and working through this research, is not only considered working, holding a leadership position, or being a part of an organization; but also actively participating in other events and activities on campus that are not part of your own. This is important for the student affairs community to

recognize and understand when working with students on their campuses due to the complexities that involvement can create in an individual's life. When student affairs professionals ask students: how their term is going and how is "balancing" involvement and their academics; professionals might not be thinking about aspects of an individual's involvement that can be effecting them. They could only be thinking about their work, their extracurriculars, and their classes.

*Antonia.* When interviewing Antonia, a lot of great reflections were made in regards to her involvement, how it impacts her, and a variety of other topics that were helpful for the researcher. She did make an important note that could impact students across college and give a better understanding of why students choose to work on campus versus working a part time job off campus. When discussing her factors for being involved, she mentions the following about her job on campus:

It's helpful (to have a job on campus) because off campus jobs don't always reflect the necessity of a flexible schedule of a student. So being able to schedule my office hours around my classes and other commitments is really helpful.

This reflection is important because it, for one, outlines the carefulness that students have when thinking about how their involvement might influence their academics, but also why it's important to create involvement opportunities that are flexible for students' schedules. Antonia chooses to not locate a job (that helps her financial-as noted previously) off campus, and might have limited options on campus that help with her primary factor for staying involved – money. Especially with the changing student schedule, particularly with a degree that might require a student to take classes at a certain time or day of the week, on campus jobs will generally understand that flexibility needed more so than an off campus business. These types of

motivations and factors for getting involved or staying involved are primarily helpful for student affairs professionals to be aware of.

**Brandon.** The research that Brandon provided with his interview was particularly helpful in the analysis of this study. Throughout his reflections, he mentioned that importance had on his time management. When asked if his academics have ever been effected by being involved, he stated:

I think they've actually gotten better because I have kind of a reason to keep on top of myself. When I wake up each morning I'll be like I have to go to these classes and I have this homework to get done before I can go to work and hang out with those friends that I've made...it's kind of helped me a lot to budget my time better and the more responsibility I think has actually helped me as well.

Brandon was the only participant in the study that reported getting better at their time management skills while increasing his involvement load. While new research indicates that there is a curvilinear relationship between involvement and GPA - where GPA increases until a certain amount of hours per week is met, and then GPA decreases (Bergen-Cico and Viscomi 2013; Zacherman and Foubert 2014), Brandon reports feeling more confident in his academics as his involvement has increased. While there might certainly be something to be said about involvement helping you focus more, it's interesting that he is the only participant out of this pool that indicates that. He reports that his time management skills weren't very good in the beginning of his time at Green College, so perhaps they have increased relative to where it was previously.

**TJ.** In her interview, TJ reported a great deal of reflections, all worthy enough to be mentioned in this research. One of her more important ones, however, were the times discussing

how she began to be involved. After joining a sports team, she became involved in a student athletic advisor council.

So I got a position on SAAC, and then I met Claire (name removed), who is an amazing woman that basically is in charge of all student athletes extracurriculars...And she started offering me other opportunities and she would send us emails of like job opportunities on campus and little things like that and one of the emails was from the new student orientation program for their leader opportunity. And I don't think that I read the email thoroughly; I just saw that it was (available) and I enjoyed my new student orientation experience so I filled out the application and sent it in. By the time my application submission was in I had been on Green College's campus for like...not even one full term...I had been turned down at a lot of other opportunities because I had no experience...So Abby (Name omitted), what I tell lots of people is Abby took a chance on me. I had no experience at Green College. I filled out the application and she just took a chance.

While a lengthy excerpt, this reflection emphasizes the importance that student affairs professionals had on TJ's experience getting involved. It was moments when her advisors and future supervisors provided her with the opportunity that she was able to begin her involvement. The fact that a staff member "just took a chance" on her made an impact on her so great, that she talks about it to other people often. This opportunity gave her the means to find a community, build her experiences, and provide her with a leadership position later down the line. She even made note of it later in the interview that because she was involved in her role in new student orientation it opened up a door to a future job, and that future job lead to her promotion at that job. She really stressed the importance that opportunities have on your future growth.

*Kierstin.* Another important reflection was found through Kierstin's interview. When discussing her process for taking on a new involvement opportunity, she outlined the usefulness of breaking down what she's involved in by times and how many hours a week that obligation requires her to work on it. This would include classes, her involvement, and also other things that are occupying her mind. When thinking about running for a leadership position in her sorority, she specifically outlined the following:

So if I know that I can only set so much in a timeline for that class (an independent study course), handle my graphic design class, and then be okay with not doing extremely stellar work in (another) class, then I should be able to run for a leadership position... It just depends. I always check time, I check classes, and sometimes this time of year too, like doing something extra in fall and spring is a lot harder than doing something extra in winter because I feel like something extra in fall and spring is crazy and winter is like a little bit more relaxed because nothing is really going on.

This anecdote from her interview outlines a different type of relationship between involvement and academics, one that can change depending on the time of year and the level of commitment certain classes might take over others. The process for her decision makes sense, but her commitments may change on a term basis and/or on a shorter basis. If that is the case, it might prove to be difficult to sign up for new involvement opportunities that are longer commitments. While Kierstin also has a process, and one that is particularly structured for taking on a new involvement opportunity, not all participants expressed a process as thorough. This is another important aspect that students who are involved should be considering.

*Jessica Jones.* Another important reflection that should be considered is a student's inability to reflect on various aspects of their involvement. Jessica Jones disclosed in her

interview that she specifically tries not to reflect on her involvement. When asked why, she stated the following:

Because I start thinking about how much I've committed to and I tend to get overwhelmed. But if I take things by how I need to do them in this hour, what do I need to do in this day, what do I need to do this week, that tends to be better than what am I doing this month in terms of involvement because I see this wave of 80 hours of job and however many hours of class and like all my other things going on. So I tend to think about it in terms of what am I doing in the present not what I am doing this term in terms of involvement.

For her, Jessica Jones finds the process of reflecting not one she is willing to do. It's seeing the end point but not seeing the process of getting to the end point that allows her to work through and stay concentrated on her involvement opportunities. The process appears to overwhelm her, which is an important reflection to note. The researcher assumed that students who reflected more would be more capable of understanding and processing their involvement, but for some students that might prove to be more stressful than not doing.

*Daniel.* The last of the important reflections made is one that Daniel had through his interview. After being asked if there are resources or tools that would be beneficial to have when you're involved on campus, he noted the following:

I'd say maybe some outreach to students who are involved just because I know for myself it's kind of hard for me to ask for help. I'm use to giving help not necessarily receiving help...I'd say its difficult to necessarily have resources for people who are specifically involved because I think every person will bring in a set of different circumstances and its not necessarily one factor that you can say where we are going to

help you address this. But I think just maybe saying just it's okay for you to have hard time too...part of our personalities are we help people who are going through a hard time. And we are so use to being the person helping that sometimes we forget that it's okay for us to be helped to.

This reflection is one that is quite helpful to the research and particularly the questions that were addressed in the study. As an individual who self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week, Daniel disclosed the need for students who are also as involved as he is to receive help and aid, but especially aid that is catered to each individual based on their experiences. As he mentions it's not helpful for there to exist one resource to help all students going through this, but instead understanding and acknowledging that it may be okay that one is having a hard time. This strengthens the reasoning for why it is important to analyze and research this particular topic, and gives professionals an insight on how to best support them.

### **Concluding Discussion**

The findings of this study reflect the complexity of students' lives who self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week. While there are unique attributes to each individual's experience through their involvement, each participant was able to bring up points that related to another participant's experience. Involvement seemed to overwhelmingly be a positive experience for each individual, but the amount of support that each individual wanted to have varied. While in this chapter various similarities and differences were discussed, areas exist that require more attention of student affairs professionals and particularly the student affairs community to understand in regards to involvement. The data in this study supports this conclusion. Whether it's the organizational strategy they use, the process for taking on new involvement opportunities, or other aspects of their involvement, students need professionals to

understand where they are coming from. The chapter that follows uses the themes and findings to explore the potential implications and recommendations that can be taken in relation to the topic based not only upon the data that has been accumulated through this research from the participants, but also from the researcher's own reflections and analysis.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the final chapter, the researcher will continue to discuss the experiences of the seven participants who self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week, as already noted and documented through the first four chapters. To start, the researcher will go over a brief summary of the study's findings and present an overview of some of the analysis performed in chapter 4. Next, the researcher will discuss the implications that these findings have on the general scope of student affairs and higher education, particularly on involved students' support. Lastly, based off of the various findings and themes that were identified through the study, recommendations will be made to the student affairs practice and the support of those who have self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week. A brief mention of opportunities for continual research will also be made.

#### **Discussion**

Through a single, 60 minute interview, Brandon, Kyle, Antonia, TJ, Daniel, Kierstin, and Jessica Jones (seven participants) were asked in detail about their involvement and to reflect on questions including their organizational strategies, benefits and consequences they see, their current state of involvement, and the motivations and factors they have for getting involved. Through their responses, participants indicated motivations and factors including, but not limited, to finding connections, money, influences, wanting to impact people, and seeking to stay connected to friendships built. Some of these motivations prove to be out of pure desire

(connections, wanting influence, impacting people, friendships) while others, such as money, could be out of necessity. An individual's socioeconomic status might impact their future involvement out of paying rent, needing to pay bills, their tuition, etc., and therefore might not see the benefits as much as another individual might. This provides a different type of support for student affairs professionals than what is more commonly known, and is outlined later in this chapter.

They also discussed in detail various definitions of involvement, organizational strategies including using phones, calendars, lists, planners, and sticky notes, and different benefits and consequences for involvement. These themes were all examined to better understand students who self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week, and specifically driven to better understand their experiences, the purpose that students have for being involved that amount, and also strategies and resources they use to organize their time and balance their academics.

Relating to some of the research that defines involvement (Astin, 1984, 1996, 1999), all of the participants in some regard discussed involvement as "going beyond the basic school requirements." The understanding from the participant's interviews is that involvement is considered outside of academics, and specifically the time you spend working, in a leadership position, attending club meetings, volunteering, attending events, or even being a part of an organization. These involvement opportunities all require an individual to either physically be somewhere during their academic experience or psychologically be aware of curricular opportunities. The participants' definitions are very similar to what the research outlines and indicates.

An individual's motivations and factors had some overlap, but varied enough to analyze differently in this research. All of the participants' motivations to continue included some

mention of it improving their overall college experience, and they also reported enjoying their involvement. This is similar to research that outlines the powerful out of class experiences and the more satisfying impact they have on students compared to ones who aren't involved (Kuh et al., 1991). Daniel, Kierstin, TJ, and Antonia, specifically, were very articulate in reporting the purpose that involvement has also played in their life, which is part of the reasons they are motivated for staying involved. These four participants' experiences related to research that's found in various places in a higher education context (Hood et al., 1986; Hunt & Rentz, 1994; Williams & Winston, 1985; as reported by Evans, Forney, and DiBrito, 1998).

While benefits were also reported independently of their discussion of motivations and factors staying/getting involved, consequences were defined and mentioned throughout their interviews. Sleep, mentioned by Antonia, Kyle, and Kierstin, was one of the major consequences for students who self-reported being involved 20-30 hours a week. Other participants made mention of constantly being stressed and not being able to relax based on their tough balance of being involved and taking classes, which in terms leads to questions of students' being able to persist and succeed in comparison of those who aren't as involved (Boes, 1998). Since research dictates a curvilinear relationship between involvement and academic success (Bergen-Cico and Viscomi 2013; Zacherman and Foubert 2014), it's important to at least make mention that these students can be considered "over-involved," as the study outlines in its operational definition of key terms. The participants in this interview are involved more than the threshold that is thoroughly vetted in the research for when academic success begins to decrease (Zacherman and Foubert, 2014; Gardner, Koepfel, and Morant, 2010; McGrath, 2002). While only one of these participants (Kierstin) categorized herself as being over-involved, it could be questioned if these participants should all be considered as being over-involved. If the researcher in a further study

wanted to specifically look at over-involvement, some measure of academic success would need to be factored in.

Another important piece of data that should be further discussed are the ways in which students organize their time, and the strategies they use to succeed. Overall, six different strategies were mentioned among all of the participants, all of which are helpful time management and priority skills that could be useful in their goals to becoming a successful student. Since success can be a term varied in meaning, the researcher mentions this in relative terms, where an individual's success would improve based on where they previously were as a result of better utilizing various strategies. These strategies that were mentioned in this study were disclosed by the participants in a better effort to articulate the usefulness of them and the helpfulness they have had in their college years.

One final note of discussion is that the students in this study only referred to the physical aspects of involvement, and not the psychological ones that Astin stated in his theory of involvement. Students in their self-identification process exclusively referred to the physical aspects of involvement. This could be attributed to the areas of campus the researcher solicited students to self-identify out of, but students also may not easily identify particular psychological factors that could influence one's involvement.

### **Implications**

Given the findings presented in Chapter 4 and in the discussion above, the researcher believes that the study has strong implications for student affairs professionals who work closely with and support students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. It is imperative to discuss the mention that Daniel, in particular, made of resources that individuals who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week should utilize while they are involved.

Student affairs professionals could serve as resources who have conversations with students about their involvement and the impact that it is making on their own current success (however they interpret that). As Kyle mentioned in his interview, it would be not helpful for a student to only have structured meetings that feel very scripted with a supervisor, mentor, or advisor. Instead, professionals should find time to have individualized conversations with the students they work with to better understand their current state of involvement and success. This is especially important for students who fall in this 20-30 hour range, as Daniel mentioned, because those who self-identify in that range are “often the ones giving advice, not receiving it.” They might not know how to utilize resources or seek advice when needed.

Professionals are able to see how often students are working and are often advising them in roles on campus, and potentially able to identify a moment when they can reflect and discuss their involvement (Goncalves, 2013). Since students have such individualized experiences in their campus work, jobs, internships, activities, etc., it is important for professionals to understand various ways to advise students (Andring, 2002). Since a college degree is often a very important moment in students’ lives, it is imperative that resources are available for them to use at moments of need. The challenges and areas that the participants identified in this study are all areas that could be discussed with advisors, faculty, professionals, and/or supervisors. Recommendations are made in the next section of this chapter about some of these topics and issues.

Professionals should also be cognizant of ways to advise students regarding their particular involvement at specific times. Since some students require additional attention than others, it’s important to also reach out to them and prioritize the help that they might solicit from

professionals. With these important take a ways in mind, the researcher offers recommendations as a place to start supporting students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week.

### **Recommendations**

As a few scholars once said, “The function of research in higher education is, ultimately, to enhance practice” (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). The researcher outlines these recommendations as a result of understanding and analyzing the data from this study. These recommendations are based off of his own observations through the study and suggestions offered by the participants through the interview process. It should be noted that these recommendations should be made to professionals who work with students who might self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week.

**Prioritizing 1 on 1 conversations with students who are involved.** If not already structured into their work, professionals who work with students in this demographic need to find time to meet with their students regularly on a one-on-one basis. This should be in any sort of involvement setting; whether job, leadership position, organization, or other pieces of involvement that was stated earlier in the research. These one on one meetings can provide spaces for professionals to discuss students’ needs, current involvement commitments, and an opportunity to reflect on how much they are involved. As discovered through the research, participants acknowledge the need to reflect on their involvement more than they currently are.

The researcher recommends that these meetings are not pre-structured. There should not be a list of questions that are required to be answered during the meeting, but instead be focused by topics. For instance, professionals containing an idea of wanting to do an overall check in, ask about their work, about their balance with the involvement, and the support they need is a relatively simple yet effective approach to helping a student out and finding out where they are

at. If students are asked a series of questions that are standard every time they meet, they will find the process mechanic and not individualized. The students will not feel as though their answers will dictate the conversation and their experience with the professional will not be as helpful to the student.

While having one on one meetings would be very helpful to have set, it is also imperative for professionals who work with these students to be aware of how the students they work are perceiving their involvement and balancing other commitments they have. If professionals are only available for their students to meet with at regularly structured times, students might not feel supported adequately. The researcher also recommends professionals are visible, available, and check in informally as much as possible. Professionals should also check in with students at points of high stress. This could be moments of transition, tough times in their academic commitments, and even moments when their personal lives are being effected. These check ins will make sure the students feel supported and will create a relationship between the supervisor and student for future involvement reflections and conversations.

**Hold caution when nominating students for involvement opportunities.** Along with having one-on-one conversations, it's imperative for professionals to be careful of nominating students in this demographic for further opportunities for their involvement. While professionals are great resources for students to identify involvement opportunities, they must be cautious of overwhelming a student. Professionals should be relatively aware of a student's responsibilities and commitments. Since they are such an influence on students' lives, they must take responsibility for if an individual becomes over-involved.

Professionals, as a result of being aware of various things happening on their campuses, are usually ones to send out emails, notifications, and suggest new jobs or leadership

opportunities for their students. Instead of freely doing this, the researcher recommends being more cautious and intentional about whom they discuss the opportunity with, and whether it is a good idea for them to take on a new opportunity. Asking students about where they are with their involvement, if and how they are finding a balance with their academics, and what they are getting out of their involvement in the one on ones will help them in understanding what the students' needs are.

**Provide care to students who are involved 20-30 hours a week.** It is also recommended for services around campus to give attention to students who need more care. Through this research, it should be noted that individuals who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week all showed signs of needing support, or needing help balancing their academics or involvement opportunities at point or another. While perhaps not necessarily defined in previous research, it should be understood that students who are in this study are in need of care, and should receive specific attention to the struggles they are facing. Services around campus should consider creating more resources for students who are in this demographic and are in need of continued support.

Some of the resources that could be of use for students who fit these criteria are trainings on organizational techniques (creating a "master calendar"), mentoring programs with students who have been in situations similar to theirs, and advising in departments that help students various issues they are having. If institutions have services similar to these, it would be beneficial for them to do specific marketing to departments that may have students who could use this type of support. This would ensure that students who may need the extra resources are able to receive the support.

It is also imperative that supervisors and advisors are aware of different ways to work with students. The researcher wants to make it clear that there is no “one size fit all” approach to advising students in moments of need, but instead recommends that professionals become educated and aware of how students might respond to certain ways they advise. The more experience they can get advising students, the more successful they will be at supporting students who are potentially experiencing issues of processing their involvement.

**Continue researching of this topic.** The last recommendation in this study is the need for more research. This study did not define what an individual who is involved 20-30 hours a week would be involved in, and more research to explore the phenomenon would be ideal. It would also be interesting to conduct research that takes specific types of involvement such as these and see how GPA would change for an individual over a period of time. A student’s involvement could change depending on the term –as alluded to in the study – and the effect their GPA could have as a result of the involvement change would be interesting to identify and research.

This, of course, only assumes one definition of academic success. While success could be specifically defined, it could also vary for the student. Students might identify success as passing classes while others might define success as receiving honors and awards for the work they are doing in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Other research related to success could include what specific pieces of involvement have on other individuals and the motivations and factors for getting involved in a particular area. The researchers of those future studies can compare that data to this one and identify similar themes, observations, and areas that differ as well.

It also would be of benefit for future researchers to identify ways for professionals to support and advise students who are in a lower socioeconomic status. If students are indeed involved in order to pay bills and afford college and rent, students might not have the luxury to stop being involved because it is detrimental to their success as a student. Professionals at that stage might need to shift their advising and support from a “what can you do to alleviate stress?” to a “what can you do to work through your stress?” framework.

If the researcher were to continue analyzing and researching this topic, nontraditional students would be identified as participants in this study. All of the participants were full time, traditional undergraduate students, which may have influenced the data that was received. It would also be beneficial to explore the more psychological aspects of involvement that Astin mentions, and identify what those psychological aspects might be, how they affect an individual’s experience at a university, and if and how it impacts their academic success. This would be of interest to the researcher to explore, especially with students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week.

### **Conclusion**

Through this study, the researcher hopes to give professionals and the student affairs community more insight on what students’ experiences are who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. Readers as a result of this study were, hopefully, able to see particular motivations and factors for being involved, various aspects of what involvement could look like, and also strategies that are useful when looking to manage an individual’s time between academics and involvement. While the experiences of the participants were not insignificant, their experiences only shed a bit of light into the world of involvement and specifically involvement for their particular demographic. Experiences could differ varying on institution

type, size, and background and influences of individuals. As more opportunities are available for students at universities across the nation, and the need for curricular skills as transferrable skills for jobs increases, more students will become more involved. It is imperative that institutions and their professionals are ready to be able to support them as best as they possibly can in their future development.

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### Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval

 Institutional Review Board Office of Research Integrity   Oregon State University 8308 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, OR 97331-2140 Telephone (541) 737-8008 irb@oregonstate.edu   <a href="http://research.oregonstate.edu/irb">http://research.oregonstate.edu/irb</a>		<b>EXEMPT DETERMINATION</b>	
Date of Notification	11/23/2015		
Study ID	7141		
Study Title	Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study		
Principal Investigator	Larry Roper		
Study Team Members	Kyle Flowers		
Submission Type	Initial Application	Date Acknowledged	11/23/2015
Level	Exempt	Category(ies)	2
Funding Source	None	Proposal #	N/A
PI on Grant or Contract	N/A	Cayuse #	N/A

The above referenced study was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and determined to be exempt from full board review.

**EXPIRATION DATE:** 11/22/2020  
*The exemption is valid for 5 years from the date of approval.*

Annual renewals are not required. If the research extends beyond the expiration date, the Investigator must request a new exemption. Investigators should submit a final report to the IRB if the project is completed prior to the 5 year term.

- Documents included in this review:
- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruiting tools | <input type="checkbox"/> External IRB approvals        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consent forms                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Test instruments | <input type="checkbox"/> Translated documents          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assent forms                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment A: Radiation     | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment B: Human materials |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alternative consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative assent          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other:                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of support             | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/contract              |  |

**Comments:**

**Principal Investigator responsibilities:**

- Certain amendments to this study must be submitted to the IRB for review prior to initiating the change. These amendments may include, but are not limited to, changes in funding, , study population, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment material, sites of research, etc. For more information about the types of changes that require submission of a project revision to the IRB, please see: [http://oregonstate.edu/research/irb/sites/default/files/website\\_guidancedocuments.pdf](http://oregonstate.edu/research/irb/sites/default/files/website_guidancedocuments.pdf)
- All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study team members have completed the online ethics training requirement, even if they do not need to be added to the study team via project revision.
- Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- The Principal Investigator is required to securely store all study related documents on the OSU campus for a minimum of three years post study termination.

**Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Research Protocol****RESEARCH PROTOCOL***November 23, 2015*

1. Protocol Title: Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study

**PERSONNEL**

2. Principal Investigator: Dr. Larry Roper
3. Student Researcher(s): Kyle C. Flowers
4. Investigator Qualifications

Dr. Larry Roper currently serves as a Professor in the School of Language, Culture, and Society while also serving as the Coordinator for the College Student Services Administration program. As a product of Dr. Roper's history with research in the field of student affairs and higher education, he is well trained in the process of conducting ethical research in alignment with the expectations set forth by OSU.

5. Training and Oversight

The PI and student researcher will meet frequently in the preparatory stages to ensure that the research methodology and all associated materials and plans follow best practices. The PI will work closely with the student researcher throughout the study's process and provide insight and guidance throughout the process to ensure that the process is executed in accordance with the methods outlined.

In addition to frequent communication with the PI, the student researcher will draw upon knowledge gained from a course on research methods and assessment.

**FUNDING**

6. Sources of Support for this project (unfunded, pending, or awarded): This project is unfunded.

**DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH**

7. Description of Research

This study aims to explore the experience of students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. The research will be informed by a phenomenological methodology and, as a consequence, focus on developing an understanding of the experience of students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week (Creswell, 2006). Student participants will take part in one individual interview where they will be asked to reflect on and respond to questions around their involvement and success in their academic courses. The project and its findings based on the data collected from the interview will contribute

to the student researcher's master's thesis in the College Student Services Administration program.

## 8. Background Justification

When discussing a topic such as this one, it is imperative to focus on a variety of topics within the literature. Specifically, it is relevant to discuss different definitions of involvement, the importance and effect involvement has on an individual's well being, how involvement relates to success, and the role student affairs professionals have when discussing with students involvement opportunities.

While involvement is defined a lot in research, most scholars identify two theorists that have laid the foundation for what is understood as student involvement. Alexander Astin (1984, 1996, 1999), the author of a foundational theory on student involvement, articulated that involvement is the amount of physical and psychological energy that students devote during their academic experience at a university. Astin notes that students learn from their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. This way of thinking is also similar to Vincent Tinto (1993, 1997), who through his theory of student departure has outlined that both the academic and social work at a university should be intertwined. This is found when students participate in activities that can relate their academic and extracurricular experiences.

It is important to note that while these theories have proven to still be relevant in conversations sometimes 30 years later, the "traditional" college student has changed. According to Pryor, in 1967, 80.5% of first year students were 18 years old, but by 2006 that percentage dropped to 68.5%. Respectively, there was also a 16% increase in first year students being 19 years and older ([Pryor, 2007](#)). Along with the change in age, college students have become largely racially and culturally diverse (Williams, 2014). More women also currently attend college than ever before (Williams, 2014). Astin, in a recent interview with the Association of College Unions International, also articulated that online learning and a lot of proprietary colleges have detracted considerably from the opportunities that students have for the traditional type of engagement (Beltramini, 2012)). These are important factors to consider when working with these definitions.

With these two theorists providing the ground for student involvement, it is possible to hypothesize how the level of involvement might affect a student's overall experience at their university. Kuh et al (1991) argue that involvement positively affects a student's development. They believe "students who are involved in powerful out-of-class experiences are likely to have a much more satisfying college experience than those who do not participate. (pg. 2)" A variety of other scholars conclude that there is a positive relationship between student involvement and student learning and persistence (Astin, 1985; Pace, 1984; Tinto, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students involved in extracurricular activities report developing higher confidence, intimacy, mature interpersonal relationships, and purpose (Hood et al., 1986; Hunt & Rentz, 1994; Williams & Winston, 1985; as reported by Evans, Forney, & DiBrito, 1998).

With a more satisfying experience through often times student learning and persistence, students have shown to be academically more successful through involvement. Academic success, specifically, could be defined in a variety of ways. Brint and Cantwell (2010) along with Richards and Lutz (1968) defined academic success as obtaining a high grade point average level. Zajacova and Espenshade (2005) saw there being more than just GPA when defining academic success, and believed the accumulation of credits and college retention should also be factored into the picture of student. A dissertation constructed by Koehler (2014) at Auburn University included duration of study, persistence, and academic challenge as success factors other than GPA and retention. Lastly, public recognition for academic achievement, independent scholarship, membership in honors programs, and faculty and advisor reports have also been included in definitions of academic success (Anastasi, Meade, & Schneiders 1960; Willingham et al, 1985).

Zacherman and Foubert (2014) conducted a study where they tested different levels of involvement and student's academic success. Students who were involved 0-10 and 11-20 hours a week saw an increase in their academic success. Bergen-Cico and Viscomi (2013) found a similar relationship, stating that students who participated in 5-14 activities over the course of the semester achieved a higher level of academic success than those who participated in little to no activities. Koehler (2014) and Chang and Huang (2004) also found a positive relationship between involvement and academic success.

Upon his research, Astin (1984) outlined that the amount of time a student has is a very precious resource, and involvement allows more development personally and learning. Boes also (1998) outlines that while "large-scale multi-institutional data support(s) the claim that development, retention, and educational attainment are positively impacted by involvement [Astin, 1993; Kuh et al., 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991]... we seldom question the limits of these findings, particularly for some students who are [over-] involved in co-curricular activities" (p. 32). While involvement creates benefits regarding a student's success, persistence, and retention, research amongst student affairs has shown that when students are involved over 20 hours a week these benefits start to diminish. In a study mentioned previously, Zacherman and Foubert (2014) looked at students who were involved on campus over 20 hours a week. These students, instead of seeing their academic success increase (similarly to their peers at 0-10 hours a week and 11-20) saw their academic success decrease. Astin (1999) has also argued a similar threshold of 20 hours a week in regards to when students should seriously consider the continuing of their involvement. Gardner, Koepfel, and Morant (2010) argue that full-time students who are involved more than 20 hours a week should consider themselves to be in over-involved.

From his research with involved students, McGrath (2002) created two student archetypes that exemplified the majority of students who were involved over 20 hours a week. Kevin was an individual who was involved in a variety of organizations on campus, and was assured by his supervisors and advisors that he was doing a great job balancing a large amount of responsibility. He seemed to work well under a great deal of pressure, but when it came to academics fell short of his expectations. Meagan, on the other hand, had a tough time saying no. Academics came secondary after becoming ingrained in the campus community. With a full

time course load, expectations to spend time outside of their classroom to complete coursework, and navigating other personal, family, and other life commitments, it's important for student affairs professionals to be conscious of students' decisions to become more involved.

Student Affairs professionals are often tasked to do a great deal of work. NASPA and ACPA (1998) outline seven good practices that professionals should use when working with students. The Student Learning Imperative (1994) asked professionals to "embrace the current challenges as an opportunity to affirm our commitment to student learning and development." With that development comes a great deal of responsibility on the student. They are in a setting with complete independence that allows them to navigate through their collegiate experience in the way that they best see fit.

Chickering and Gamson (1987) outlined seven good practices in undergraduate education: student-faculty contact, cooperation among students, active learning, prompt feedback, time on task, high expectations, and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning. All of these align to the success of a undergraduate student. Since students who are involved will be working with professionals, it is imperative that professionals ensure that involved students are actively learning, have high expectations for themselves, and are attentive to the work they are doing. Seppanen (2007) outlines the importance of professionals in their role; "Institutions can influence the quality of effort students put into their involvement and thus their potential for success."

There are a variety of ways student affairs professionals can be involved to help a student navigate through their involvement. Goncalves (2013) found that faculty and students around Boston College identified students who are too involved when they no longer have the time they need to spend on their academic and course work. Faculty and staff are able to see students who simply do not have the hours in the day to devote to all of their jobs and classwork are at a point when they need to readdress their commitments. Andring (2002) specifically outlines seven ways professionals can advise the involved student when extracurricular involvement compromises academic achievement. Advisors should embody these seven characteristics; Modify, but continue, student involvement, encourage quality involvement, create balance between academics and extracurricular programs, blend extracurricular interests with the curriculum, provide tools to manage the practicalities, revisit career and major choice, and know campus resources (Andring, 2002). Professionals, as often times seen as mentors, are in a unique opportunity to help a student succeed in the involvement opportunities they pursue.

## 9. Subject Population

- A description of participant characteristics: Due to the focus of the research, the participant population will be limited to undergraduate students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week.
- Total target enrollment number: No more than 10 participants will be interviewed as a part of this study.

- Description of any vulnerable population(s): All participants will be adults above the age of 18, and will be asked to consent as a part of the study.
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria: To be eligible for enrollment in this study, participants must be current, undergraduate students who are enrolled as a full-time student, and self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. Additionally, participants will be selected according to their availability to attend one interview session.
- Recruitment: Participants will be recruited using homogenous sampling. As a part of this, potential participants will be identified using recommendations from Oregon State University professional staff and faculty members of students who, to the best of their knowledge, meet the study's criteria. Student affairs departments will be asked to send an informational email regarding the study to participants. This initial group of students will be recruited using an email invitation, which will provide a brief introduction to the research project and the role of participants. The initial group of students will also be asked to forward along the email to other students who meet the study's criteria. More specifically, the email that participants will receive will include:
  - a. Title of the study
  - b. Name of the PI as well as the student researcher
  - c. Clear statement that this is research
  - d. Information on informed consent
  - e. Contact information for interested individuals
  - f. Primary criteria that will be used to determine eligibility for the study
  - g. Time or other commitment required of the subjects

Prior to collecting the following information, informed consent will be obtained. Those who are interested in the study will respond to the researcher with the following information:

- a. Name
- b. Year at institution
- c. Brief description of their involvement (including number or hours on average a week they work and where they are involved)
- d. Current academic standing
- e. Number of credits enrolled in

Students who do not meet the criteria that is outlined in the recruitment email will be thanked for their time and will be considered a screen fail. In an effort to protect the confidentiality of potential participants, all students who respond will be coded and any documentation or files associated with the study will be stored on the student researcher's private computer and password protected.

If more than 10 students are identified for the research, the researcher will pick a group of individuals who possess various involvement experiences. These involvement

experiences will be university regulated and sponsored clubs and organizations. After interest of students and selection of participants, respondents will receive an electronic copy of the study's consent guide. The consent guide enables potential participants to review the criteria for eligibility associated with the study and confirm their interest in participation. Verbal consent will be acquired prior to the start of the first interview. Based on the number of participants acquired through the initial email invitation, participants may be asked to identify and recommend other students who meet the study's criteria and may be interested in contributing to the research. In which case, the same procedure would be followed.

Chronological Sequence:

- Recruit interview participants
- Conduct audio-recorded interviews with participants
- Code audio interviews to maintain privacy of participants

#### 10. Consent Process

- **Verbal Consent.** Because the research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required, participants will indicate their consent verbally.
- **Describe where and when consent will be obtained.** Participants will receive an electronic copy of a statement regarding the research for their review via email upon indicating their interest in participating in the study. Verbal consent will be acquired and documented in the student researcher's notes prior to the start of the first interview in a private setting.
- **Assessment of comprehension.** Participants will receive an electronic copy of a written statement regarding the research to review in advance and will be encouraged to follow up with any questions or concerns they ay have about participating.

Students will have a second opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns with the researcher prior to obtaining verbal consent. At this time, the student researcher will reiterate that participants have the option to withdraw from the project. Additionally, participants will be notified that, with their consent, audio recording and notes will be collected throughout the interview. All documents and recordings collected will be stored as password protected files using pseudonyms. Any information with personal identification will be stored in a different file and location.

Participants will be notified that they have the freedom to not respond to a question if they do not wish and may withdraw from the study at any time. The student researcher will inform participants that if they choose to withdraw from the study at any point, the researcher may retain the information they provided and this information may be used in the analysis or reporting of the study.

#### 11. Eligibility Screening

- Initially, eligibility requirement will be indicated within the email outreach sent to potential participants. After obtaining verbal consent, the researcher will review the study's eligibility criteria with the participants to ensure that they meet each of the requirements and are able to participate in an interview. The students who do not meet the criteria that is listed in the recruitment email will be thanked for their time and considered a screen fail.
- Prior to the start of the interview, the student researcher will explain the purpose of the study, the method of the interview, the approximate duration of the interview, and that audio recorded and hand-written notes will be taken during the interview.
- In the case that a participant does not meet the requirements, all electronic or paper communication will be removed. Electronic forms or communication will be deleted permanently from the student researcher's computer. Any paper forms or evidence will be shredded and disposed of using a confidential disposal site at OSU.

## 12. Methods and Procedures

- The study will take the form of a qualitative analysis and will be informed using a phenomenological methodology, which aims to understand and represent the "essence or basic structure" (Merriam, 2009, p. 25) of an individual's experience as it relates to a particular phenomenon. Patton (2002) asserts that the primary pursuit of phenomenological research is discerning the "meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people" (p. 104). Thus, a phenomenological approach was selected to inform the study because of the emphasis on experience. This approach lends itself to the study's aim to understand the relationship between the participants' experience as both a full-time student seeking to succeed academically and their involvement. As a result of the study's phenomenological approach, readers should have a better understanding of the experience of undergraduate students and their involvement.
- The following procedure will be followed in the data collection process:
  - As detailed in question 9, the subsection titled "recruitment", a preliminary email invitation will be sent to a group of students recommended by OSU professional staff and faculty. No more than 10 participants who meet the required criteria will be selected to participate in one, semi-structured interview. It is not anticipated that the interview will exceed sixty minutes.
  - Upon confirming participants' eligibility and obtaining verbal consent, the student researcher will facilitate one semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews where participants will be asked to explore their experience as a student who self-identifies as being involved 20-30 hours a week.
  - For confidentiality purposes, participants will self-select a pseudonym as a part of

the consent process. This will be used for the remainder of the research process.

- The interview will consist of questions that prompt participants' reflection on their background and experiences thus far and self-identified sources from which they receive (or lack) support, particularly those provided by their respective institutions, if at all.
- Based on participants' responses to the initial questions, the researchers will determine if follow up questions are necessary. Additional questions will be used for clarification purposes and previous responses only and will not include planned questions. Students will have the freedom to decline responding to any of the questions asked.
- The following procedure will be followed in the data analysis process:
  - Upon the completion of the interview, the student researcher will transcribe the audio-recordings to Word document files. After the transcriptions have been completed, participants will be asked to review the transcripts and confirm that the documents reflect their contribution to the interview and suggest changes or feedback as necessary. Participants will be given three days to look over the transcriptions and make suggestions or changes to what has been recorded. As suggested by Lather (2003), as cited in Jones, Torres, & Arminio (2014), any feedback that the researchers receive as a result of member checking will be treated as additional data and considered in the data analysis process. If participants do not respond, the data will be used as recorded.
  - The student researcher will use an open coding approach to identify the initial ideas and themes contained within the data. The initial reading of the data will assist the student researcher in determining the "essential themes" (Creswell, 2004, p. 59) that illustrate students' lived experience. The information and details contained within the essential themes will be used to write a collective description of students' experience as over-involved undergraduate students and it's relationship with their academic success.

### 13. Compensation

Participants will be compensated for completing this study by receiving a baked good of their choice.

### 14. Costs

There are no costs associated with this project.

### 15. Anonymity or Confidentiality

- Throughout the research process all documentation associated with the study will be coded and stored in password-protected files. In compliance with [OSU policies](#)

[pertaining to records retention](#), data associated with the study will be kept by the PI for three years post study termination.

- The first and last name of the participants, in addition to their email addresses will be stored apart from any records pertaining the interviews in a password-protected document. No direct identifiers will be retained following the conclusion of the interviews. Aside from those listed, no outside researchers will have access to participants' information or the identifiers used to code participants.
- Participants will self-select a pseudonym to assist with the protection of students' confidentiality. The student researcher, in the process of transcribing the audio files from the recorded interviews to Word document files, will use these pseudonyms. Transcription will take place in a private room, using headphones to reduce the risk of information disclosed during the interview being overheard. Once transcribed, the Word documents will be saved as password-protected files. The PI and student researcher will have sole access to the passwords associated with the study's files.
- The researchers will access all data files and documentation and conduct any email communication using private, password protected computers or OSU computers requiring password logins. No public computers will be used to access any materials pertaining to the project.

#### 16. Risks

- The potential physical, psychological, legal, economic, or social risk to participants as a consequence of their participation in this study is minimal. Additionally, participants may choose not to respond to any of the questions posed and have the ability to withdraw from the study at any point in the study's process.
- In an effort to reduce this risk, all participants will select pseudonyms that will be used throughout the research process and all subsequent analyses and discussion of results. There is a chance that the researcher and/or principle investigator disclose information that identifies the participants.
- As a part of the recruitment process, the researcher will be using email to communicate with prospective participants. Although measures will be taken to minimize the risk, there is a chance that information disclosed through an electronic format may be intercepted, lost, or destroyed. Thus, no private information will be exchanged between the researchers and prospective participants. Email will only be used to solicit participants, send consent forms, and schedule initial interviews.

#### 17. Benefits

- There are a variety of benefits that informed this study's pursuit. First off, it normalizes involvement to students. Students who self-identify being involved 20-30 hours a week might not believe that the rate of their involvement is not common, or have been told by peers, family members, or other external pressures that they are too-involved.

Secondly, this research helps contribute to the work of student affairs professionals. Understanding the motivations and reasons why students get involved helps educate the professionals who work with them. This research helps frame some conversations that professionals can have with their students to help them identify ways to be successful navigating their success at college.

18. Assessment of the risks and benefits.

- Participants will never be asked to participate in ways that place them in positions of undue risk. Additionally, participants have the option to withdraw their participation at any point. Due to the qualitative, exploratory nature of the research, participants' perspective is highly valued. The risks inherent to the study have been minimized for the protection of participants' wellbeing.

## Appendix D: Verbal Consent Guide

### EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

<b>Project Title:</b>	Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Dr. Larry Roper
<b>Student Researcher:</b>	Kyle Flowers
<b>Version Date:</b>	October 20 <sup>th</sup> , 2015

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**Purpose:** This study aims to explore the experience of students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. The research will be informed by a phenomenological methodology and, as a consequence, focus on developing an understanding of the experience of involved students on campus as a traditional, undergraduate student (Creswell, 2006). The project and its findings based on the data collected from the interviews will contribute to the student researcher's master's thesis in the College Student Services and Administration program.

You are being invited to take part in this study because you meet the following requirements:

- You are a full-time student who is taking at minimum 12 credits
- You self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week

**Activities:** The study consists of one, one hour individual interview facilitated by the student researcher in which you will respond to a series of questions aimed at asked to reflect on your experiences being involved. The questions and content of the interview will be transcribed in an effort to build a robust, cohesive understanding of your experience.

The interview will take no more than an hour. You will have the ability to select a time in partnership with the student researcher when you have sufficient time to complete the required interview. Following the interview, you will receive the option to review a transcribed copy of your responses and provide changes or feedback as necessary.

Audio recordings are a required aspect of this study. You should not enroll in this study if you do not wish to be recorded. Please indicate that you agree to be audio recorded.

**Time:** The interview will take no more than an hour. You will have the ability to select a time in partnership with the student researcher when you have sufficient time to complete the required interview. Following the interview, you will receive the option to review a transcribed copy of your responses and provide changes or feedback as necessary.

**Risks:** There is a potential risk that the interview may bring forward personal reflections that cause emotional reactions or discomfort. Additionally, there is a minimal risk that you may be

identified based on your interview responses. First, all participants will select a pseudonym that will be used during the study from this point forward. Please choose a pseudonym for the records of this study. We will minimize the risks by maintaining confidentiality.

**Benefit:** An immediate benefit of this research is that it will contribute to a gap in the existing literature around the relationship between students who self identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week. Additionally, this study may provide professional staff, advisers, and instructors with insight as to the challenges facing over-involved students ways to offer support.

Although the study has foreseeable benefits in understanding and supporting students who are involved 20-30 hours a week, this study is not designed to benefit you directly.

**Payment:** You will not be paid for being in this research study.

**Confidentiality:** The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Federal regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Some of these records could contain information that personally identifies you. If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public.

To help ensure confidentiality, you are giving verbal consent so that no signatures or unnecessary documentation exists to associate you with the research. Additionally, the pseudonym that you selected will be used from this point forward throughout the research process. All documents and materials associated with the interview, including audio recordings from interviews and notes, will be securely stored and only accessible by the researchers. Digital information will, similarly, be secured using passwords only accessible by the researchers. No public computers will be used to access any materials pertaining to the project.

**Voluntary:** Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

If you choose to fully participate in the study, all questions included in the interview are optional. If at any point you are asked a question that you do not want to answer, you are free to skip the question.

Your decision to take part or not take part in this study will not affect your grades, your relationship with the researchers, or your standing in the University.

**Study contacts:** If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: [Dr. Larry Roper, Larry.Roper@oregonstate.edu](#) or [Kyle Flowers, flowersk@onid.oregonstate.edu](#). If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](#)

### Appendix D: Initial Recruitment Email

Dear OSU Faculty and Staff,

I hope you all are having a great start to your week! I am currently beginning to recruit participants for my master's research, and believe that you all might be working with students who fit the criteria for my research. For my master's thesis, I am conducting research to explore the experiences of **full time, undergraduate students who self-identify as being involved on campus 20-30 hours a week**. Please see the attached file that outlines the Informed Consent as well for more information about the study. Would you all be willing to forward the message below to students you believe might fit the criteria? I'd also need you to attach the Informed Consent document in the same email if you send this to your students. If you also are aware of other faculty or staff members who might know students who fit in this criteria, please feel free to forward it along to them as well.

Please let me know if you have any questions about my study! I am looking for participants who are willing to meet with me for an hour during Weeks 1 or 2 of winter term.

All the best,  
Kyle

My name is Kyle Flowers, and I am second year graduate student in the College Student Services Administration program. For my master's thesis, I am conducting research to explore the experiences of full time, undergraduate students who self-identify as being involved on campus 20-30 hours a week. Your email was identified because a faculty or staff member believed you to fit the criteria for the research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who self-identify as being involved 20-30 hours a week.

Participation in this study involves:

- A time commitment of 1, one hour long session in the beginning of winter term
- Coming to the OSU campus for meeting

If you are interested in this study, please see the attached informed consent and send an email to [kyle.flowers@oregonstate.edu](mailto:kyle.flowers@oregonstate.edu) indicating that you are interested in participating. For more information about this study, please contact the principal investigator, Dr. Roper, by phone at 541-737-2759 or email at [Larry.Roper@oregonstate.edu](mailto:Larry.Roper@oregonstate.edu). If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at [\(541\) 737-8008](tel:5417378008) or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu).

Thank you,  
Kyle Flowers, CSSA Graduate Student

**Title of the study:** Exploring Involvement: A Qualitative Study

**Name of the Principal Investigator:** Dr. Larry Roper, PhD, [larry.roper@oregonstate.edu](mailto:larry.roper@oregonstate.edu)

**Estimated participant time commitment:** 1 hour

**Benefits:** There are a variety of benefits that informed this study's pursuit. First off, it normalizes involvement to students. Students who self-identify being involved 20-30 hours a week might not believe that the rate of their involvement is not common, or have been told by peers, family members, or other external pressures that they are too-involved. Secondly, this research helps contribute to the work of student affairs professionals. Understanding the motivations and reasons why students get involved helps educate the professionals who work with them. This research helps frame some conversations that professionals can have with their students to help them identify ways to be successful navigating their success at college.

**Appendix E: Interview Questions**

1. What does “being involved” mean to you? In other words, what is your definition?
2. You self-identified as being involved 20-30 hours a week. Tell me more about
3. What factors have impacted your decision on being involved?
4. What benefits or consequences do you see as being involved?
5. What motivates you to continue being involved?
6. Where do you find out about involvement opportunities?
7. Tell me about how you stay organized with your involvement and academics?
8. Have your academics been affected by you being involved? If so, how so?
9. How do you decide to take on a new involvement opportunity or not?
10. Do you reflect on your involvement?
11. Are there resources or different tools you would want to know more about?
12. What else should I know about in terms of your involvement?