

## INTRODUCTION

In order to gain a better understanding into students' perceptions of extracurricular programs at OSU, the Office of Student Affairs Assessment included questions in the annual OSU poll. Undergraduates and graduate/professional students were asked about their attendance of and satisfaction with campus events and programs. They were also asked a series of questions about how they learn or prefer to learn about events and to provide suggestions for improving extracurricular events and programs. With this information, the institution can not only gain a deeper understanding of how extracurricular events and programs are being viewed, but also how programmers may strengthen their offerings to better meet the needs and interests of students.

The OSU Poll is an annual survey of The Ohio State University, Columbus campus community. The primary purpose of the Poll is to provide a platform for university departments/units to have strategic planning data gathered for their use in developing and assessing their programs and services. The 2001 OSU Poll was conducted by the OSU College of Social and Behavioral Sciences' Center for Survey Research (CSR) during winter quarter.

### **Methodology**

The sampling pool for the populations consisted of OSU Columbus campus undergraduates and graduate/professional students and was drawn from databases provided by the University Registrar. These data files were reviewed and cleaned to ensure that a random selection was conducted on only those cases in which the student was involved on the Columbus campus and for which contact information existed.

The poll was conducted using a multi-mode approach. Prospective respondents who had an e-mail address were first solicited through this means. This e-mail solicitation included a link to a web site developed by the CSR, as well as a user name and password enabling the respondent to enter the site and complete the survey. Following a two-week period of web-based data collection, attempts were made to contact by telephone those individuals who failed to respond to the e-mail solicitation or who logged into the site and completed only a portion of the survey. Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing conducted this phase of the poll.

A total of 600 randomly selected undergraduate student names and associated contact information were sampled from the undergraduate population of 32,608. These 600 cases were used to obtain 317 completed undergraduate student surveys. The overall 95% confidence interval level sampling error for the undergraduate student sample is plus or minus 5.5 percentage points.

A total of 600 randomly selected graduate and professional student names and associated contact information were sampled from the graduate student population of 10,533. These 600 cases were used to obtain 322 completed graduate student surveys. The overall 95% confidence interval level sampling error for the graduate student sample is plus or minus 5.4 percentage points. The sample (both undergraduates and graduate/professionals) totals 639.

## Limitations

Examining the demographics of the sample, one should acknowledge the potential sampling bias common to survey research. In that a sample that perfectly reflects the composition of the total student population cannot be reconstructed, there are inevitably shortages and surpluses of certain groups. In addition, all surveys are subject to other potential sources of imprecision and bias which may be associated with the question wording and/or ordering, the response rate, and the quality of the interviewers, for example, which could lead to somewhat different results from the present findings. Furthermore, this handful of questions only begins to illuminate the topics and issues surrounding campus events and activities.

## Demographics

Of the 639 graduate/professional and undergraduate respondents:

- GENDER: 52.7% were female; 47.3% were male
- RANK: of undergraduates, 21.8% were first years; 24.3% were second years; 23.3% were third years; 30.6% were fourth years. Of graduates students, 42.5% were master's students; 32% were Ph.D. students; and 25.5% were professional students
- RESIDENCE: 18% lived in the residence halls; 2.3% lived in married student housing; 42.7% lived in an off-campus apartment; 35.1% lived in some other off-campus housing; 1.9% refused to answer
- RACE/ETHNICITY: With regard to race/ethnicity, students responded in the following ways:
  - 68.9% identified as White/Caucasian
  - 14.1% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander
  - 5.6% identified as African American/Black
  - 4.1% identified as multiracial
  - 3.8% either refused to answer or stated they did not know
  - 1.6% identified as Hispanic American/Latino(a)
  - 1.3% identified as 'Other'
  - 1.1% identified as Alaskan Native/ American Indian

## FINDINGS

### Attendance of and Satisfaction with extracurricular events and programs

Students were asked how many extracurricular events and programs they had attended in autumn quarter (see Table 1.0).

- Almost 40% of all students stated that they had attended from one to three events during the quarter
- Comparing the two student groups, the results are similar with 42.5% of graduate and 37.2% of undergraduate students indicating that they had attended between one and three events in autumn quarter.
- However, undergraduates were more likely to attend a greater number of events than graduate/professional students with 38.2% attending 4 or more events (compared to 23.3% of graduate/professional students).

**Table 1.0: How many extracurricular events and programs did you attend?**

% of responses	Graduate students (n=322)	Undergraduates (n=317)	Total (n=639)
0 events	34.2	24.6	29.4
1 to 3 events	42.5	37.2	39.9
4 to 7 events	15.8	21.5	18.6
8 to 11 events	4.3	7.6	5.9
12 or more events	3.1	9.1	6.1

Undergraduate and graduate students were asked about their satisfaction with programmed activities on campus during the autumn quarter (see Table 1.1).

- The largest percentage of students (34.4%) were “somewhat satisfied” with events.
- Generally undergraduate students were more satisfied than graduate/professional students with 32.8% indicating that they were “very satisfied” compared to only 13.4% of graduate students.
- Similarly, only 11% of undergraduates had “no opinion” about program satisfaction, whereas as over a quarter of graduate/professional students (25.2%) stated so. Such differences arguably point to graduate/professional students’ lack of involvement on campus, lack of opportunities to engage in campus life and/or a lack of time to participate.

**Table 1.1: How satisfied are you with the extracurricular events and programs being offered?**

% of responses	Graduate students (n=322)	Undergraduates (n=317)	Totals (n=639)
Very Satisfied	13.4	32.8	23.0
Somewhat Satisfied	33.9	35.0	34.4
Neither Satisfied Nor Dissatisfied	22.0	17.4	19.7
Somewhat Dissatisfied	5.0	2.2	3.6
Very Dissatisfied	0.6	1.6	1.1
No Opinion	25.2	11.0	18.2

### Learning about campus activities and programs

Respondents were asked to comment about how well informed they were about programmed activities (see Table 2.0).

- Both graduate and undergraduate students (41.0%) largely felt “somewhat informed.”
- There were marked differences between the groups, however. Graduate students were more likely to voice feelings of being “very uninformed” (16.5%) than were undergraduates (8.2%).

**Table 2.0: How informed do you feel you are about the extracurricular events and programs on campus?**

% of responses	Graduate students (n=322)	Undergraduates (n=317)	Totals (n=639)
Very informed	7.1	19.6	13.3
Somewhat informed	41.0	41.0	41.0
Somewhat uninformed	26.7	27.1	26.9
Very uninformed	16.5	8.2	12.4
No Opinion	8.7	4.1	6.4

Respondents were asked how they learn about programs and activities (see Table 2.1).

- Graduate students (46.3%) stated email was the most typical method of hearing about campus events
- Campus flyers appear to be more effective in reaching undergraduate students than graduate students with 65.0% of sampled undergraduates reporting that they were likely to learn of events by this method (compared to 44.7% of graduate students).
- *The Lantern* also proved effective in reaching both graduate students (44.7%) and undergraduates (49.5%).

**Table 2.1: Currently, how do you typically learn about extracurricular events and programs on campus?**  
(multiple responses possible therefore totals exceed 100%)

% of responses	Graduate Students (n=322)	Undergraduates (n=317)	Totals (n=639)
Campus flyers or posters	44.7	65.0	54.8
<i>The Lantern</i>	44.7	49.5	47.1
<i>On Campus</i>	17.1	23.0	20.0
<i>OSU Today</i>	11.5	5.0	8.3
An OSU Web page	16.1	13.6	14.9
Mailings	11.5	2.8	7.2
Emails	46.3	36.3	41.3
<i>The Dispatch</i>	10.6	2.5	6.6
Radio	7.8	3.5	5.6
TV news	6.2	2.8	4.5
TV ads	1.9	1.3	1.6
Residence hall staff member	0.9	19.9	10.3

In Table 2.1, the data examined the manner in which students typically learn about campus events; in Table 2.2, data are presented regarding how students would *prefer* to gain this information.

- Most respondents stated that email is the method each group preferred (54.5%). Also prominent was the use of *The Lantern* as a method of delivery (45.7%).
- Students also felt that TV advertisements (2.7%) and news (4.4%) were not preferable methods of learning about events and programs.

**Table 2.2: How do you prefer to get information about upcoming events and programs on campus?** (multiple responses possible therefore totals exceed 100%)

% of responses	Graduate Students (n=322)	Undergraduates (n=317)	Totals (n=639)
Campus flyers or posters	33.2	47.6	40.4
<i>The Lantern</i>	42.5	48.9	45.7
<i>On Campus</i>	14.0	16.4	15.2
<i>OSU Today</i>	12.1	5.4	8.8
An OSU Web page	25.2	16.4	20.8
Mailings	14.9	13.2	14.1
Emails	58.1	50.8	54.5
<i>The Dispatch</i>	8.7	2.2	5.5
Radio	6.8	5.4	6.1
TV news	5.3	3.5	4.4
TV ads	2.5	2.8	2.7
A residence hall staff member	0.9	15.1	8.0

Lastly, respondents were asked to indicate which of the methods of delivery they found most credible (see Table 2.3).

- Both undergraduates and graduates responded that emails (48.8%) and *The Lantern* (57.9%) were the most credible sources of information.
- As well, they found TV advertisements (3.1%) and TV news (6.6%) to be the least credible.

**Table 2.3: Similarly, what sources of information about campus events and programs do you find most credible?** (multiple responses possible therefore totals exceed 100%)

% of responses	Graduate Students (n=322)	Undergraduates (n=317)	Totals (n=639)
Campus flyers or posters	22.4	36.6	29.4
<i>The Lantern</i>	52.8	63.1	57.9
<i>On Campus</i>	11.2	14.2	12.7
<i>OSU Today</i>	15.8	9.1	12.5
An OSU Web page	35.1	26.2	30.7
Mailings	15.8	13.9	14.9
Emails	50.9	46.7	48.8
<i>The Dispatch</i>	15.8	9.5	12.7
Radio	8.7	6.6	7.7
TV news	8.7	4.4	6.6
TV ads	2.2	4.1	3.1
Residence hall staff member	0.9	13.9	7.4

When comparing Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 (how students typically learn of events, how they prefer to learn about events and what they think are the most credible source of information), we find the following: (see Table 2.4)

- Graduate students stated that emails are the means they most typically learn of events, and are how they prefer to learn of events while they view *The Lantern* as the most credible source of information about campus events.
- Most frequently, undergraduate students stated that they typically learn of events through campus flyers or posters (65.0%). Over half stated that they would prefer to learn of events through email (50.8%), while they viewed *The Lantern* (63.1%) as the most credible source of information.

**Table 2.4: Comparison of information sources**

	Graduate Students	Undergraduates
Typically learn of events	Emails (46.3%)	Campus Flyers or posters (65.0%)
Prefer to learn of events	Emails (58.1%)	Emails (50.8%)
Most credible source of information about events	<i>The Lantern</i> (52.8%)	<i>The Lantern</i> (63.1%)

### Suggestions for improvement of extracurricular activities

Students were also asked to comment on changes that could improve events and programs. Students offered a wide variety of suggestions. These data were coded into five main categories (see Table 3.0).

**Table 3.0: Suggestion for improving events and programs**

% of responses	Graduates students	Undergraduates	Totals
Advertising	21.7	29.7	25.7
Improvements, Structural	13.5	12.8	13.3
Improvements, Substantive	6.4	6.8	6.6
Targeted events	6.8	4.7	5.9
No suggestions, miscellaneous	60.2	52.3	56.3

Respondents mentioned that events could be improved through increased and better-utilized publicity. Over 25% of the suggestions from both groups concerned the use of advertising, either in general terms (i.e. more advertising in general), or specifically through different medias including email, television and newspaper.

There were also a variety of improvement-oriented suggestions. These are broken down into structural and substantive improvements. Structural improvements included changes in the general organization of the event. Suggestions included improved parking availability/affordability, lower prices for certain events and an improved process for allocating student tickets to events.

Substantive changes represented 6.6% of the total suggestions for improvements. Within this category are issues concerning the actual content of the event. As such, respondents mentioned issues such as an increased focus on diversity in programming, more concerts and live shows, more nationally known acts, more emphasis on non-sporting events, and more arts programs. Students also suggested a lecture series and an expansion of the intramural sports program.

A change in the target population of events was another category of suggestions for programs and events on campus. These suggestions represented 5.9% of total responses and include comments suggesting more events targeted to graduated students, commuter students, international students, West Campus students and families.

Of all the categories, by far the largest percentage of responses offered no suggestions (56.3%) for improving campus events and activities. Less than 5% stated that there were no improvements needed. Others (4.1%) stated that they had no time for extracurricular activities and thus offered no suggestions for improvements. The largest percentage of respondents (44.6%) simply offered no suggestions.

When comparing graduate/professional students and undergraduates (see Table 3.0), there were both differences and similarities in their suggestions for improvements. More undergraduate

(8%) than graduate students noted the need for increased advertising for events. More graduate students (2.1%) than undergraduates suggested that targeted events would be an improvement. More graduate students (7.9%) offered no suggestions compared to undergraduates.