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*Rowan University*

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**SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY?  
AN EXPLORATION OF INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT-LED CLUBS AND  
ORGANIZATIONS**

by  
Samantha Rylee Harvey

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Leadership, Administration & Research

College of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirement

For the degree of

Master of Arts in Higher Education

at

Rowan University

March 21, 2024

Thesis Chair: Drew Tinnin, Ed.D., Associate Vice President, Student Life

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Tyrone McCombs, Ph.D., Program Coordinator, Associate Professor, Educational  
Leadership, Administration and Research

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## **Dedications**

For the various clubs I have been a part of throughout my life, but especially Drew Pagan Society. DPS gave me such a visceral sense of community and belonging, helped me discover my path, and allowed me to grow as a leader. It finally seems I have come full circle with DPS; I started my college career as a member of the club, led the club during my last two years at Drew University, and now, I can dedicate this research to Drew Pagan Society.

## **Acknowledgments**

It is hard to believe two years have gone by so fast. I want to thank my family, Trish, Larry, Rachel, and Danielle for supporting my endless pursuits of education. It is an honor and privilege to be a first-generation college graduate and now, a first-generation graduate student. To Phoebe and Hank, my two dogs, who need to be thanked because the photos our family sends always put a smile on my face and has kept me going every single day. Thank you to my partner, Kadie, who I met by a completely ridiculous stroke of luck during my first week at Rowan. Thank you for coming to visit me every weekend. Through the ups and downs of the last two years, you have stuck by my side. You have ensured that I never feel alone, I have transportation to a grocery store, someone to call on the walk home from class, and that I am loved unconditionally. This accomplishment is for both of us. A special thanks to Joy, Hannah, and Morgan, my roommates from undergrad. You all have showed me what it takes to write a thesis and after watching you each pour yourselves into your own unique research, I finally felt confident enough to conduct my own. To Dr. Dianna Dale, the first professor I ever had at Rowan, thank you for your endless support throughout my experience at Rowan. Whether it was in class or helping me find an internship, your encouragement helped me continue to pursue this degree, even when I felt like giving up. Lastly, I want to thank William McMillan, my mentor during my senior year of undergrad. You were the first person to explain to me what student affairs is, and I truly would have been lost without your guidance. I am forever grateful for the time you spent reviewing my resume and helping me apply to Rowan. I would not be here without you. I hope that one day I can support students the same way you supported me.

## **Abstract**

Samantha Rylee Harvey  
SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND BELONGING AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY?  
AN EXPLORATION OF INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT-LED CLUBS AND  
ORGANIZATIONS  
2023-2024  
Drew Tinnin, Ed.D.  
Master of Arts in Higher Education

This study explores concepts of community and belonging among students who are involved in clubs and organizations at Rowan University. Through the use of a qualitative survey and the option for an additional interview, participants are able to discuss their personal experiences being involved in a club or organization and if they believe it contributes to their sense of community and belonging, not only in the club or organization, but at Rowan University as an institution. Findings show that involvement in student clubs and organizations has helped some participants feel a sense of community and belonging in the clubs and organizations, as well as at Rowan University. While there were not as strong feelings when discussing a sense of community and belonging at Rowan University, participants did feel that participation in their clubs and organizations contributed to positive feelings.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Higher education in the United States is no longer focused solely on academics. Attention has been brought to the social component of higher education, more specifically, the effects of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. It has been noted that “the classroom is not the sole province of student learning” and that “learning is interwoven throughout the students’ college experience” (Long, 2012, p. 1). The college experience can be defined by lived experiences and a student’s own development as an individual. Student involvement in co-curricular and extracurricular activities can result in finding a sense of belonging and persistence to obtain a degree. In addition, meaningful professional and life skills are developed (Long, 2012).

Co-curricular and extracurricular activities are two broad terms that cover a wide variety of student activities and resources. As a result, there is a wide range of studies that address a variety of topics and student populations, but not the impact of clubs and student-led organizations specifically (Glass & Gesing, 2018; Hopkins et al., 2021; Simmons et al., 2017; van Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2019). There is limited research that focuses on clubs and student-led organizations and how they contribute to a student’s sense of community and belonging on campus (Jones & Morrow, 2022; Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). Club sports and sports related student-led organizations appear to be more popular areas of research (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014; Stelzer, 2012). This study aims to explore other categories of clubs and student-led organizations.

## **Problem Statement**

The history of higher education in the United States of America is riddled with the concept of social ostracism. A more in-depth explanation will be presented in Chapter 2 in the Literature Review, but it can be argued that social ostracism and the desire to enhance the student experience at colleges and universities fueled the need for a variety of campus clubs and organizations. In terms of a modern-day issue, higher education institutions are concerned about the enrollment cliff that is expected to occur in 2026 (Campion, 2020; Campion, 2022). Enrollment at colleges and universities, mainly small to mid-sized institutions are most likely to be impacted the greatest (Campion, 2022). As the 2026 enrollment cliff makes its way closer and closer, it is important to really understand the programs that truly benefit student development (Campion, 2020; Campion, 2022).

To prepare for the enrollment cliff, higher education needs to focus on retention and attracting students. It is crucial to look at the programs that are working and to redesign the ones that are not effective. On a surface level, student activities show influential outcomes for students, but student involvement or sense of belonging means nothing if there are no students left to retain at an institution. So, what is it that inspires students to persist? What is it about student activities that affects their development and motivates them to keep going?

## **Significance of the Problem**

Now more than ever administrators must emphasize the importance of the programs that consistently work for students and through a review of literature, it appears that student activities have many positive outcomes and beneficial effects on students.

Stepping outside of a classroom's walls does not mean learning comes to a halt. Students can learn just as much outside of a classroom as they do within it. Through involvement in variety of extracurricular activities, students are given an opportunity to learn and develop lifelong skills that will stick with them beyond the four years that are typically spent at a higher education institution.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore senses of community and belonging of Rowan University students in clubs and student-led organizations using narrative design. Through an analysis of the data, the reader will gain some understanding as to why these students persist and participate in clubs and student-led organizations.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

It is assumed that participants are being honest in their responses and that their experiences are truthful. Additionally, this study takes place at Rowan University and focuses on the experiences of individual students at this institution and cannot be generalized and applied to other institutions. Furthermore, these experiences cannot be applicable to all clubs and student-led organizations at Rowan University.

### **Important Terms**

1. **Higher education:** additional schooling after high school completion, post-secondary education.
2. **Co-curricular:** activities in tandem with classroom experiences and “complement what students are learning” (Simmons et al., 2017, p. 10).

3. **Extracurricular:** “out-of-the-classroom experiences” that go beyond what classroom situations can provide (Hopkins et al., 2021, p. 37).
4. **Sense of belonging:** “the social behavior of individuals belonging to distinct groups” in relation to any groups, in addition to the institution a student attends (Tajfel, 1979, p. 34).
5. **Sense of community:** viewing a campus as a group of individuals that one can feel they do or do not belong to.
6. **Persistence:** the act of continuation, especially under difficult or challenging circumstances.
7. **Club:** a group of people with one main similar interest that the organization is focused on.
8. **Student-led organization:** like a club but can usually be tied to a department or national organization.
9. **Student activities:** an umbrella term that encompasses a variety of co-curricular and extracurricular engagement opportunities for students, such as clubs, student-led organizations, campus events, etc.
10. **Social ostracism:** the act of excluding one or several groups of people based on race, gender, religion, sexuality, etc.
11. **Enrollment cliff:** a term used frequently for the expected drops in student enrollment by the year 2026.
12. **Lifelong skills:** like transferrable skills, these are general skills that will be beneficial throughout life. Some examples are creativity, critical thinking, interpersonal and social skills.

**Research Question**

1. Does participation in student-led clubs and organizations contribute to a student's sense of community and belonging?

**Organization of Remaining Chapters**

Chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature related to this study.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology of the study. The methodological approach and research design will be discussed further, as well as the data collection, population sample, instrumentation, procedure of gathering data, and how data analysis will be performed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 5 provides a summary and a discussion of the findings. In addition, a conclusion and any future recommendations will be offered.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Higher education in the United States of America has been around for 387 years (Geiger, 2014). First established in 1636, Harvard College was the first American post-secondary institution (Geiger, 2014). College back then was not anywhere near how we know it today. The first higher education institutions in America were founded by the Puritans and only wealthy, White, Christian, straight, cis-gender men were expected to attend (Geiger, 2014). It took almost 200 years before women were allowed to attend college (Geiger, 2014; Palmieri, 1997). With the inclusion of women, opportunity was provided to make more schools co-educational and to even open women's colleges (Geiger, 2014; Palmieri, 1997).

People of color were slowly being admitted to schools, but just because people of color were being admitted does not mean their troubles were over (Geiger, 2014; Wechsler, 1997). Racism was—and still is—an issue in higher education (Verma, 2022). There were many barriers that prevented people of color from attending school and schools were more concerned about having their majority White students stay as opposed to one Black person dropping out (Geiger, 2014; Wechsler, 1997). Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were established so that Black men could still have a more secure opportunity to go to college, but attending an HBCU was not an option for every Black person (Wiggin & Scott, 2015). Many predominantly White colleges and universities were segregated until the 1950s (Geiger, 2014; Wechsler, 1997). In addition, around the time of the World Wars, some higher education institutions were

discriminating against Jewish students (Geiger, 2014; Wechsler, 1997). More recently, gay-straight-transgender alliances have emerged in schools as early as the 1980s (Snively, 2015).

### **Social Ostracism**

Time and time again, throughout American history and throughout the history of higher education there has been a theme of social ostracism. Whether due to sexism, racism, religious discrimination, or homophobia certain groups of people have been excluded from the main narrative of higher education (Geiger, 2014; Palmieri, 1997; Wechsler, 1997). Going back to the Puritan ideal that higher education was for the wealthy, White, Christian, straight, cis-gender men of society was not a very realistic intention (Geiger, 2014). As more and more diverse people advocated and fought for their place in higher education, they realized that just being at college was not enough (Geiger, 2014; Wiggan & Scott, 2015). Students wanted more than solely academics and through student activities students could truly and safely feel like they belonged (Geiger, 2014; Palmieri, 1997; Wechsler, 1997). Historically, most of the campus activities and events were catered to the needs of the wealthy, White, Christian, straight, cis-gender man (Geiger, 2014). If one did not fit those standards, chances are they were excluded (Geiger, 2014; Palmieri, 1997; Wechsler, 1997; Wiggan & Scott, 2015).

### **The Student Experience**

It can be argued that the start of more diverse clubs and student-led organizations was because so many students were socially ostracized and rejected from main extracurricular activities (Geiger, 2014; Palmieri, 1997; Wechsler, 1997; Wiggan & Scott, 2015). While the rejection forced others to focus on their studies, being rejected

was not contributing positively to these students' experiences (Geiger, 2014; Long, 2012). However, one novel argues that the year 1967 marked a crucial milestone for students:

“Students [...] exercised an extraordinary degree of autonomy in shaping their college lives. In this sense [...] they both shaped and reflected broader changes in the country and the world. Thus the campus made an ideal site for a variety of social, political, and cultural developments” (Carter, 2023, p. 88).

This example seen in 1967 was only one instance that was recorded in literature. As time went on, students had more power than they even realized and could make the changes they wanted to see on college campuses. Even though students were being socially rejected from certain activities, students had the ability to create new events and organizations.

This leads back to the research question of this study: does participation in student-led clubs and organizations contribute to a student's sense of community and belonging?

## **Theoretical Framework**

Beginning with a theoretical framework, the idea of a sense of belonging derives from social psychology and the types of social interactions people can have (Tajfel, 1979). Social identity theory deals with “those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” which encompasses self-perception and identity (Tajfel, 1979, p. 40). In terms of higher education, understanding of social identity is the main takeaway from this theory, which is more expansive and encompasses psychological interactions and habits (Tajfel, 1979).

In becoming involved with groups that one identifies with, it leads to a more specific theoretical framework: Student involvement theory (Astin, 1999). Student involvement theory is defined by “the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience” and goes beyond academics by balancing the social experiences associated with higher education (Astin, 1999, p. 518). It quickly became understood that higher education was no longer just about academia as the focus shifted towards “an interest in extracurricular activities to educate the whole student: intellect, spirit, and body” as there was desire for something more than classwork and homework (Long, 2012, p. 3).

### **Outcomes of Student Involvement**

Throughout the years, various studies have been conducted to analyze certain groups of students and the outcomes of their involvement with co-curricular or extracurricular activities (Glass & Gesing, 2018; Hopkins et al., 2021; Jones & Morrow, 2022; Mikulec & McKinney, 2014; Simmons et al., 2017; van Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2019). The earliest of the studies focuses on participation in sports clubs, specifically, equestrian (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). The research showed that participants indicated positive learning outcomes because of their involvement on an equestrian team (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). Some of the outcomes mentioned by participants were that they were able to find others with similar interests, they developed their own set of personal learning outcomes, they developed their personal skills, noted the positive experiences of being on a team, and an overall sense of connection to the institution (Mikulec & McKinney, 2014). An overall sense of connection to the

institution relates to a student's sense of belonging and community and is like some of the other ideas presented in additional research.

Another study focuses on the outcomes of extracurricular involvement of undergraduate engineering students versus the outcomes for general undergraduate students where it was determined that co-curricular and extracurricular activities provide a sense of belonging and inspire persistence among students, regardless of major (Simmons et al., 2017). It is also noted that “how students decide to participate or not participate in out-of-class activities, type of activity, and level of formality may differentially impact a range of academic, personal, and career outcomes” which suggests the versatility and range of outcomes due to co-curricular and extracurricular experiences (Simmons et al., 2017, p. 13). In addition, the study addressed the impacts of Living-Learning Communities (LLCs) and the positive co-curricular outcomes that are experienced because of involvement.

In looking at international students, one study reflected upon the experiences of international students who were involved on campus (Glass & Gesing, 2018). It was determined that international students who were involved in various extracurricular activities felt like they belonged and gained social capital through these experiences. Similarly, to the previous study, there were a variety of outcomes due to the types of interactions with different forms of campus engagement, whether that be through volunteer or community organization, professional or major-based organizations, and cultural organizations (Glass & Gesing, 2018). Students in another study reported that social interactions and extracurricular activities directly influence their sense of belonging (van Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2019). Whether through casual friendly

social interaction or extracurricular activities, students noted that environments where they can converse, receive respect, and share cultural differences solidified a feeling of belonging (van Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2019).

Within classroom settings, professors and faculty can influence a student's sense of belonging and by encouraging students to interact with classmates can also help (van Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2019). Another study found that in addition to providing a sense of belonging, co-curricular and extracurricular activities are significant factors in a student's persistence (Hopkins et al., 2021). When looking at first-generation, upper-class students it showed that involvement in campus activities inspired first-generation students to finish their degree (Hopkins et al., 2021). In contrast, when looking at first-generation, first-year students, results were still similar (Jones & Morrow, 2022). First-generation, first-year students also reported that involvement in campus clubs or activities helped them feel like they belonged and touched on the benefits of LLCs, which is a similar outcome to other findings (Jones & Morrow, 2022; Simmons et al., 2017).

All these studies point to ideals associated with theoretical frameworks, however not all these pieces of literature specifically use theoretical frameworks. A sense of belonging is reflected in all studies and Astin's student involvement theory is specifically referenced in three of the journals, but the essence of involvement is engrained within all of them (Hopkins et al., 2021; Jones & Morrow, 2022; Mikulec & McKinney, 2014; Simmons et al., 2017).

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

These studies have paved the way for additional research on the effects of student involvement and how it impacts student development. In addition, further research can be

conducted when looking at the impact of student-led organizations on creating community and a sense of belonging. A variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities are analyzed, and space is left for examining other student activities and alternative groups of students. The consensus seems to have positive implications regarding different populations of students. While similar outcomes are not guaranteed, the purpose of creating a new study is to gather new and more relevant information to fill in the gaps of previous research.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

#### **Context of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore senses of community and belonging of Rowan University students in clubs and student-led organizations using a narrative design. Through an analysis of the data, the reader will gain some understanding as to why these students persist and participate in clubs and student-led organizations.

This study will be conducted through a survey, using an open-ended questionnaire. Narrative interviews may be conducted, if needed, to obtain further information. These interviews will be considered a follow-up to the survey, and it will be optional for participants. Additionally, the study will focus on the experiences of primarily undergraduate students who are involved in a club or student-led organization on campus.

Lastly, this study is being conducted at Rowan University, a large, public institution, located in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University has approximately 22,000 students and currently has 387 registered student clubs and organizations (Rowan University, n.d.; Rowan University, n.d.-b.).

#### **Research Question**

Does participation in student-led clubs and organizations contribute to a student's sense of community and belonging?



## Methodological Approach

Based on the literature and context of the study, the main research question aims to expand upon existing research. Prior research has focused on specific age groups of students, different types of students, or certain clubs and organizations (Glass & Gesing, 2018; Hopkins et al., 2021; Jones & Morrow, 2022; Simmons et al., 2017; van Gijn-Grosvenor & Huisman, 2019). This study will not limit the focus to one specific club or organization. Participants should be an undergraduate student who is actively involved in a Rowan University club or student-led organization.

For this study, narrative design will be implemented. Narrative design allows for a “*life story*” method, in which people describe their life experiences via storytelling” which allows the researcher to unveil a deeper lived experience from the participant and discover how that relates to the research topic at hand (Suter, 2012, p. 369). More importantly, narrative design “captures the voice of the participant and offers a collection of themes” which is something that a quantitative research study does not allow for as it is rooted in a more numerical approach (Suter, 2012, p. 369). It is then the researcher’s task to focus on “restorying, and the challenge for the researcher is to define the elements of the person’s stories (the raw data), identify themes, uncover important sequences, and retell the story in ways that provide insight (the meaning of the story)” which involves a level of authorship and creativity to puzzle together a story that relates to the main research questions and ideals (Suter, 2012, p. 369).

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are determined by whether the data is “trustworthy” and has “credibility” (Suter, 2012, p. 362). As mentioned previously, it is being assumed that participants will respond honestly and truthfully. Ensuring credibility

calls for “focus on the data quality, its analysis, and resultant conclusions” (Suter, 2012, p. 363). Credible data for this study specifically will mean that responses are relevant to the questions provided and can provide some insight. Through a thorough analysis of the responses, a theme can emerge from the data which will aid in the data analysis process, and finally a conclusion can be made.

### **Data Collection**

Using an open-ended questionnaire, participants will be able to share any experiences they may feel are fit responses for the survey. Follow-up narrative interviews might be conducted, if needed, to obtain further information. The questionnaire will be referred to during the data analysis process and in the event, interviews are conducted, interview transcripts will be created and referred to as well. The questionnaire is included as Appendix E.

### **Population and Sample**

Since most of Rowan University’s extracurricular programming is geared towards undergraduate students as opposed to graduate students, attention will be brought to the lived experiences of undergraduate students who are involved in a registered Rowan University club or organization. These data rich stories from participants will be unique to each individual and to this institution. The goal is to see if any common themes or ideas emerge.

Previous research has looked at a variety of specific groups of students. For example, many studies focus on the experiences of first-year students or upper class—typically senior year—students. This study intends to not limit its parameters to one or the other, but rather all undergraduate class years.

A sample will be obtained by publicizing the survey through the Rowan Announcer, Rowan University's daily mailing system, and contacting listed Rowan University club/organization presidents. Since this is a qualitative study, a specific sample size does not need to be achieved as "[it] is determined by the researcher according to how well the chosen sample, whatever its size, generates data sufficient to learn what he or she wants to know" (Suter, 2012, p. 236).

### **Instrumentation**

Qualitative research provides an opportunity to collect participant "stories [which] capture a rich, deep understanding that may not generalize beyond the research setting and unique characteristics of the sample" as opposed to quantitative research because in some instances "educational outcomes and processes are too complex to reduce to numbers" resulting in the use of information rich narratives, observations, interviews, and/or descriptions (Suter, 2012, p. 55).

There are several forms of qualitative research designs that a researcher can utilize. Some researchers use "ethnographies, case studies, and phenomenological studies" or mixed methods (Suter, 2012, p. 309). Qualitative research begins specific, as participants share their experiences, and the researcher is expected to take the essence of the experience and relate it to a more general theme. Analyzing the data requires the researcher to boil down the narrative until a central message or theme is presented.

### **Procedures of Gathering Data**

When it comes to collecting data, the questionnaire will allow for written responses only. The questions will be constructed in such a way that participants cannot simply answer yes or no but will be asked to provide as much detail as they can. The

completed questionnaires will exist as a resource to refer to what the participants stated and will aid in the event direct quotations are needed.

In the event additional interviews will occur, the interviews will take place virtually and will be recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions will be utilized as a resource to refer to what the participants said during the interview. In addition, “making good sense of data as it comes in (its interpretation) is a process of organization, reduction, consolidation, comparison, and reconfiguration” and that “data analysis and data collection occur simultaneously” so taking notes of any emerging ideas or themes will benefit and aid in guiding the next interview (Suter, 2012, p. 360).

Opting for an open-ended questionnaire rather than exclusively conducting interviews allows the opportunity for participants to fill out the survey on their own time and aims to alleviate potential pressures of being interviewed. Interviews will only be conducted if necessary and if further information is needed. Additionally, an open-ended questionnaire gives participants time to reflect and consider how they want to respond to each question.

One disadvantage of this approach is that follow up questions for the participant cannot be asked in real time, but given the timeframe allowed for the research to be conducted in and the availability of participants, this asynchronous method of data collection might encourage more participation.

### **Data Analysis**

Reviewing all the questionnaires and potential transcripts allows for the opportunity to identify any repeating patterns, themes, or ideas. In a way, the theme will emerge by itself. Qualitative research is typically complete once the data is saturated,

when no new information has been obtained or information begins repeating itself (Suter, 2012, p. 362). During this process it is also important to ensure that the data being collected is reliable.

Qualitative research permits researchers to connect with a participant as they share their own story and experiences. In the realm of educational research and as a future higher education scholar and practitioner, it is crucial to understand other student experiences. We all have our own experiences and histories. Everyone's stories and experiences are different. The goal of a qualitative is to examine this information and find the commonalities. Locating these similarities (and differences) will provide the opportunity to discover how to create community among students and whether a sense of belonging is attached to the idea of community.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore senses of community and belonging of Rowan University students in clubs and student-led organizations using narrative design. Through an analysis of the data, the reader will gain some understanding as to why these students persist and participate in clubs and student-led organizations.

#### **Profile of the Population**

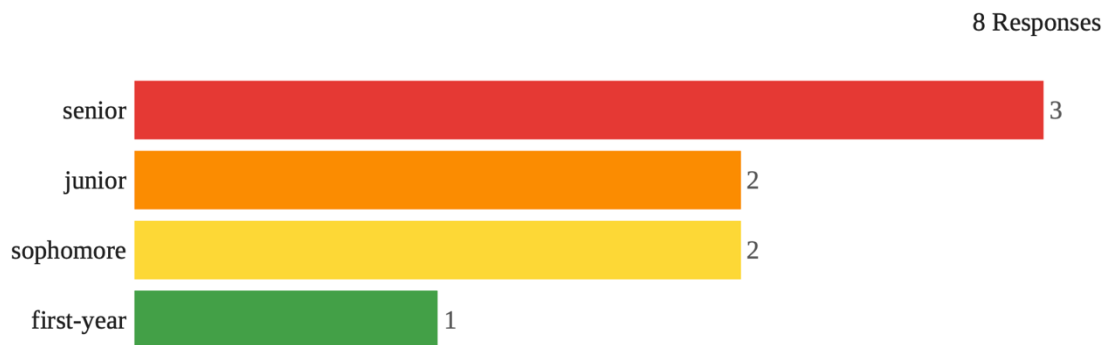
A qualitative survey (Appendix E) was sent out via email to Rowan University's Student Government Association-affiliated organizations and Sport Clubs (Appendix B). In addition, the survey was publicized in the Rowan Announcer (Appendix C). There were eight participants who completed the study fully, one ineligible participant because they were not an active member of a club or organization, and another seventeen participants who did not finish filling out the survey. Only the eight completed surveys will be used. Furthermore, half of the participants consented to potentially participating in a follow-up interview, however, the information they provided in the survey is sufficiently rich with data and as a result, follow-up interviews were not conducted.

There were participants from each class year, and all were traditional age students between the ages of 18-23. Only one participant has an on-campus job and five participants reported participating in Community Service and/or Service Learning activities at Rowan University. Additionally, two out of the eight participants stated that

they were not executive board members of a club or organization. Figures will be displayed to present additional demographic information.

**Figure 1**

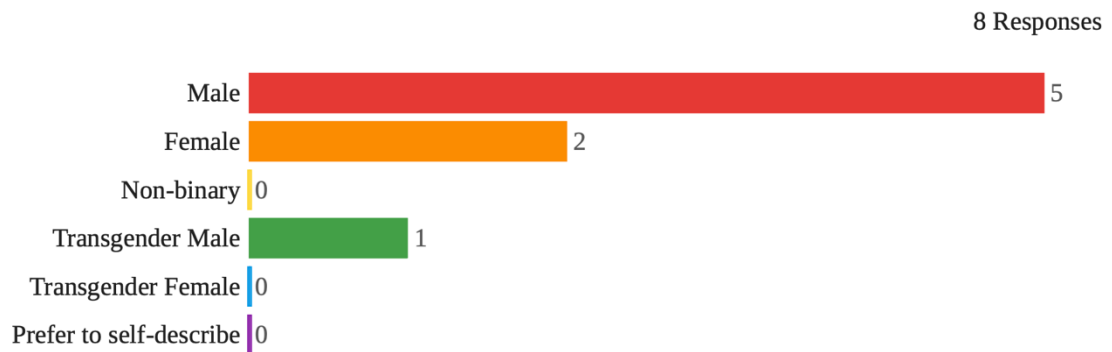
*Class Level*



*Note.* The bar graph shows the reported class levels of the participants.

**Figure 2**

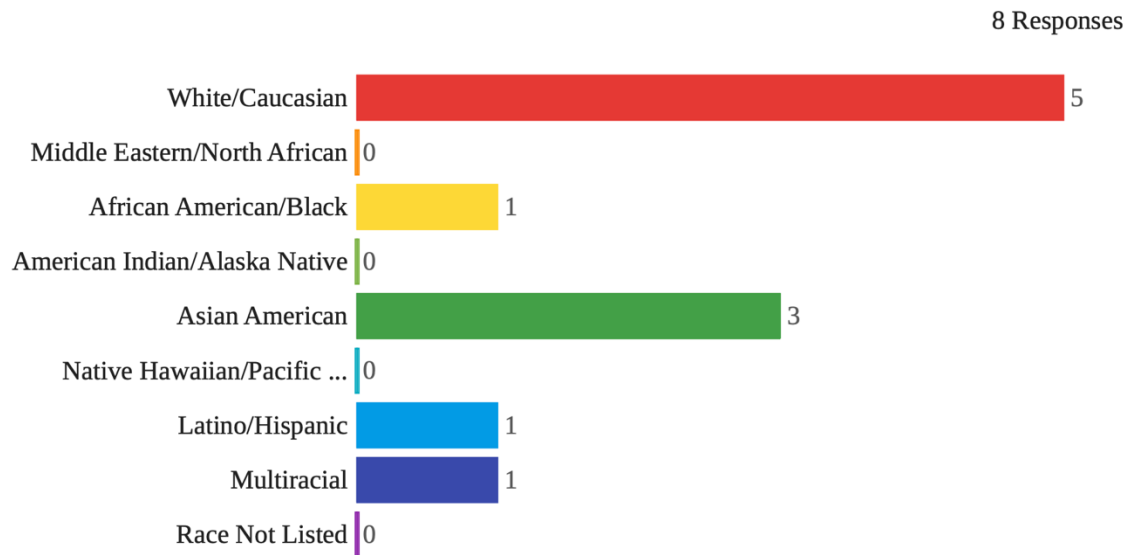
*Gender*



*Note.* The bar graph presents the reported gender of the participants.

**Figure 3**

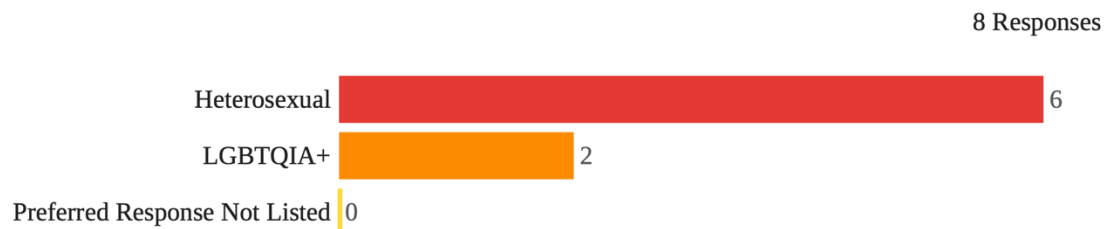
*Race*



*Note.* The bar graph displays the reported races of the participants. Participants were able to select more than one option.

**Figure 4**

*Orientation*



*Note.* The bar graph exhibits the reported orientations of the participants.



**Table 1***Participant Clubs and Organizations*

<b>Participant Clubs and Organizations</b>	<b>Choice Count</b>
3D Printing Club	1
Minority Association of Premedical Students	2
Pre-Health Society	2
Anime Club	2
Asian Cultural Association	1
Biomedical Art and Visualization Club	1
Japanese Culture Club	1
Rowan Music Industry Developers and Innovators	1
Student Government Association	1
Students for Sensible Drug Policy	1
Rowan Badminton	1
Rowan Environmental Action League	1
Rowan University Student Planning Organization	1
Rowan GEO Club	1
Basketball Club (Women)	1
Cheerleading Club	1
Club Softball	1
Rugby Club (Women's)	1
Soccer Club (Women's)	1
Swimming Club Team	1
Wrestling Club	1
Commuters at Rowan	1
Birding Club	1
Pre-Vet Club	1
South Asian Students Association	1

*Note.* The chart depicts the reported clubs and organizations the participants are members of. Participants were able to select multiple options and write in an organization if it was not listed. Some participants are members of the same club/organization, so the choice count reflects the number of participants in the club.

## **Findings**

The survey allowed space for participants to describe their experiences in the club or organization. In addition, participants were asked why they joined the club/organization, what the club/organization means to them, and if they believe the club/organization benefits the people who participate in it.

Next, participants are asked to describe their sense of community and belonging to the club/organization they are involved in, how they would describe their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University, and whether they believe participation in the club/organization contributes to their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University.

The final questions are geared towards areas of improvement. Participants are asked what their club/organization could improve on, what Rowan University can improve on, and whether they would like to provide any additional information about their experiences as a member of the club/organization. After reading through the complete interviews, common themes emerged within the responses.

### ***Interest***

Five participants specifically used the word interest in their responses. Some participants noted that one of the reasons they joined a club or organization was because of interest in the club/organization, the topic it is associated with, or the types of events the club/organization hosted. Yet, having interest in something purely subjective. During the survey, when asked what this club/organization means to you, one participant, Nate (pseudonym) responded with:

Since I am [a board member], I would say that the Pre-Health Society means a lot to me. I have been a part of the club since my freshman year, and it seemed like the last 2 years the club has been slowly losing members/interest. When I became [a board member], I wanted to [bring] that interest back by being as active as possible.

While Pre-Health Society might be losing member due to reasons of interest, Nate implies that the lack of interest might be due to the club being less active than it has been in past years.

Still, participants have noted that their participation has helped them meet others with similar interests. Some participants have even said that meeting others with similar interests has helped them make friends and contributed to community building.

### ***Friendship***

As mentioned prior, meeting others with similar interests is one of the ways participants have made friends. One participant, Awawawa (pseudonym) wrote that friendship is something a club/organization can provide to its members. In fact, Anonymous (pseudonym) responded similarly, stating that one thing clubs/organizations can provide to the members who participate is “a space to relax and make friends with similar interests.” However, it seems that some participants joined a club/organization simply because their friends were already in the club.

One participant, Steve (pseudonym), expresses that one of the main reasons they joined the club was due to the fact they had friends in the club. When responding to what the club/organization means to them, Steve wrote:

Any club that I join is an opportunity for me to spend time around people I am comfortable with, or become comfortable with a new set of people. I enjoy the independence of being able to attend meetings as I please - this helped mostly when I was more timid. Now I'm quite extroverted and glad to throw myself into unsure situations, much as a result of participating in clubs. Having more structured time to spend with my friends has allowed me to investigate myself and my relationship with others more deeply.

Steve's response can even be tied into the concept of meaningful, as it has helped them develop, which will be discussed further.

### ***Meaningful***

Some participants, such as Steve, have not outwardly described their experiences as meaningful, but have described the ways the club or organization has helped them evolve. In Steve's case, they were able to explore themselves and further develop as a person, stating "since that time, I have, for various reasons, evolved a lot as a person and now find myself happily in a leading role in the organization. It has become a significant social outlet for myself." Similarly, when writing about their experiences, Wrestling princess (pseudonym) explained that "[the clubs] mean everything to me" and "I feel more comfortable [and] confident."

Other participants simply described their experiences as fun and that participation in a club/organization provides them a sense of purpose. It gives me something to do and look forward to throughout the week. Awawawa expressed that "[participation] also gets me out of the house rather than staying in my dorm for hours on end doing nothing."

Anonymous provided an additional perspective claiming that the club/organization they are involved in “allow for a chance to relax and get your mind off of college stress.” Yet, this was not the first time the concept of stress appeared in a response. John B (pseudonym) shared contrasting thoughts about the club they are involved in, stating “it has been stressful trying to get our club organization up and running.” After reading all of John B’s responses, it seems they have recently started a new club, which is why they are stressed.

Lastly, some participants wrote about meaningful and unique opportunities that club involvement has provided them. One response that stood out was from Nate. Nate explained:

The club's “why” gives me the opportunity to plan events that really benefit people and their future. That is probably the biggest reason why I keep pushing to plan meaningful meetings. Are the meetings the most fun? No. But will you always learn something from them? Yes. That's my goal. One example is the info sessions we do from medical schools. The admissions representatives provide a lot of valuable insight, and I always hope that students learn something [from] them that they can apply to their applications. In addition, our last meeting we went to a cadaver lab. This was an experience that lots of students never have the opportunity to do, and the people who came really enjoyed the experience.

Nate’s response also related to sentiments from other participants responses. Nate was not the only participant to make a note of the informative nature that some clubs and organizations possess.

### *Informative*

The next theme that emerged from the responses is that participants viewed the club/organization meetings as informative, whether that was through education, advocacy, or making change on campus and within the community. Anonymous wrote about their experiences in Pre-Vet Club and Birding Club, stating they were both “very informative.” Nate also provided a response with a similar sentiment about the educational nature of the clubs they are involved in, saying, “I believe it provides [members] a place to learn things and ask questions.”

In terms of advocacy, another participant, Oliver Smith (pseudonym) discusses their experience in Commuters at Rowan. Oliver wrote that “[the board members] are also an advocate for commuters, and we do our best to ensure that commuters are not forgotten when it comes to things such as university policy and the issues with parking lots.” Oliver’s response ties into the idea of making change as well.

Both Steve and John B specifically stated that the clubs and organizations they are involved in focus on making change within the Rowan University Community and improving certain areas. When asked why they joined a club/organization, John B wrote, “I wanted to make campus safer and provide my peers with opportunities.” John B continued by describing what the club/organization means to them by stating, “it means that I can make a difference in my community.” With that in mind, John B was not the first person to utilize the word community in a response. Community came up frequently in participant responses and as a result, community emerged as a common theme.

## ***Community***

Recalling the purpose of this study, the aim is to explore senses of community and belonging of Rowan University students in clubs and student-led organizations. Through an analysis of the data, it appears the participants have defined community as making connections, interacting with others, and collaborating. In addition, all the participants have described their own experiences with community and belonging in their clubs and organizations, as well as at Rowan University.

Community was defined in three different forms. First, participants were asked about their sense of community and belonging in the clubs/organizations they are members of. Next, participants were asked to describe their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University. Finally, the two forms were combined. Participants were asked if they think participation in the club/organization contributes to their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University.

When it came to sense of community and belonging in a club or organization, all participants reported positive levels of community. Students responded with feelings of strong connection to the club or others in the club. Nate admitted that they personally feel a sense of community and belonging to the club, but critiqued the club stating, the board members could improve upon “creating that sense of community. Because of the emphasis on learning, we don't do as many fun activities that build community.” Others, such as John B, described their sense of community and belonging in the club/organization as “tight knit.” Oliver passionately wrote, “Commuters at Rowan is the first organization I joined. It has become a major part of my life, and I truly feel at home

when I go to events or help...E-Board members plan. And now that I am [a board member] I feel an even higher sense of community and leadership.”

When describing sense of community and belonging at Rowan University, the answers become more mixed. The answers were split evenly. Half the participants reported positive senses of community and belonging while the other half reported mixed feelings. John described Rowan University as home and John B stated their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University is “great because I am on the men’s varsity basketball team.” When it came to the mixed feelings about Rowan University, Nate approached the question with a critical interpretation. Nate wrote:

I have grown to appreciate everything that Rowan has to offer. I have a lot of opportunities here, and those things have allowed me to create a little community inside of Rowan. However, I wouldn't say that there is a strong sense of community at Rowan. I hope that changes in the future.

Awawawa expressed that they do not feel connected and believe it might be due to the fact they do not work or do service projects at Rowan University. When asked to describe their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University, Steve simply responded “pretty mid,” meaning it is not good or bad, but rather somewhere in the middle. Lastly, Oliver voiced their concerns as a commuter. Oliver’s sense of community and belonging at Rowan University can be viewed as a work in progress. They wrote, “I’m working on it. I do feel as though I belong at Rowan, but it is discouraging when there are fun events and organizations on campus that I cannot join because of the issues associated with commuting to Rowan.”



Finally, participants were asked if they think participation in the club/organization contributes to their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University. Two participants provided unclear responses to this question. Five participants replied with a clear yes, they believe participation in the club/organization contributes to their sense of community and belonging at Rowan University. One participant responded with “Not really, I'd say that I know a lot of people at Rowan, but I don't feel like I necessarily feel like I belong directly to Rowan. They feel different.”

Some of the participant responses, such as the last one, really stood out. These experiences are unique to each participant, yet their words carry meaningful weight. Some lived experiences have the power to intrigue individuals, connect people, help develop, and build community. Some lived experiences do not have those powers. That is what makes this research so interesting. Reading the experiences of students at Rowan University helps provide that insight.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore senses of community and belonging of Rowan University students in clubs and student-led organizations using narrative design. Through an analysis of the data, the reader will gain some understanding as to why these students persist and participate in clubs and student-led organizations.

A sample was obtained by publicizing the survey through the Rowan Announcer, Rowan University's daily mailing system, and an email was sent out to listed Rowan University club/organization presidents. The survey was open to all undergraduate students who were active members of a Rowan University club or organization. Participation was voluntary and participants were asked to fill out a twenty-two-question survey that gathered demographic information and qualitative short-answer responses. The responses of eight students were used for this study. The responses were complete, and all the participants identified as active members of one or more clubs/organizations at Rowan University.

Participants described their experiences as members of Rowan University clubs and organizations and if they believe it contributed to their sense of community and belonging on various levels. Reflecting on the prior research presented in Chapter 2, it is believed that student activities have many positive outcomes and beneficial effects on students. Additionally, through involvement in variety of extracurricular activities,

students are given an opportunity to learn and develop lifelong skills that will stick with them beyond the four years that are typically spent at a higher education institution. It seems that participants in this study have shared similar sentiments.

## **Discussion of Findings**

### ***Research Question***

1. Does participation in student-led clubs and organizations contribute to a student's sense of community and belonging?

Considering the theoretical framework that guided this study, Tajfel's social identity theory (1979) and Astin's student involvement theory (1999) work together to form the research question. As mentioned in Chapter 2, social identity theory focuses on "those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging" which encompasses self-perception and identity (Tajfel, 1979, p. 40). The concept of community and belonging is totally subjective. Participants in this study provided eight unique descriptions of their ideas on community and belonging, whether it be to the club/organization of their choosing or Rowan University as a whole.

Moving to student involvement theory, it is defined by "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" and goes beyond academics by balancing the social experiences associated with higher education, such as clubs and organizations to give a relevant example (Astin, 1999, p. 518).

Participants responded with a myriad of ideas and thoughts about their own experiences being involved in Rowan University clubs and organizations. All participants could list at least one thing they believed their club/organization could provide to those who

participated in said club/organization. Additionally, most participants observed things they believed their club/organization could improve on, as well as things Rowan University could improve upon to further aid their students and even help them feel a stronger sense of community and belonging.

## **Conclusion**

It appears that after an analysis of literature in Chapter 2 and analysis of data in Chapter 4, participation in student clubs and organizations does have the ability to contribute to students' sense of community and belonging. Involvement in student clubs and organizations has helped some participants feel a sense of community and belonging in the clubs and organizations, as well as at Rowan University. While there were not as strong feelings when discussing a sense of community and belonging at Rowan University, participants did feel that participation in their clubs and organizations contributed to more positive feelings.

## **Recommendations**

Below, recommendations for future research and for Rowan University will be provided. While this study helped gather some insight, there are some things that could be done differently in future attempts. Additionally, participants of this study were asked to share potential thoughts they had about any improvements Rowan University can make. Those quotes will be shared in the designated section.

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

This study was unique in the sense that it interviewed participants qualitatively through the means of a survey. No additional face-to-face interviews were conducted, as some participants did not consent to them, and others provided sufficient detail in their

survey responses. In total, twenty-six responses were recorded, but only eight of them were eligible.

A survey of this type and length certainly has its benefits and drawbacks. Some participants did not consent to face-to-face interviews, but felt comfortable sharing their experiences through their writing. This approach allowed for more participation without the added stress of speaking with someone they are unfamiliar with. At the same time, the reason there were so many incomplete responses might be due to the volume of writing required by the survey.

The time frame for data collection felt short and rushed. Due to when the study was approved by Rowan University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), there was only about a month for data collection. In the future, more time can be spent recruiting participants and gathering data. Though there were a variety of clubs and organizations represented in this study, most of the participants in this study were White, or heterosexual, or male (Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Table 1). As mentioned in Chapter 2, social ostracism is one of the arguments made for the creation of more diverse and inclusive clubs on college and university campuses. To further explore that argument in the future, there can be more research specific to students from minoritized populations.

### ***Recommendations for Rowan University***

The recommendations for Rowan University were collected from participants as one of the final questions on the survey. Participant responses will be used and quoted as needed since seven out of eight participants provided unique insight based on their own lived experiences as Rowan University students.

John wrote about how their club is working on outreach and recruiting more non-engineering majors to 3D Printing Club. They state that their club could improve upon fundraising and gaining more funds. At the same time, John believes that Rowan University should be providing more funding to the clubs and organizations on campus.

Nate appeared more perplexed in their response. They had a clear idea about what their club could improve upon, which is building a better sense of community among members. When asked what they believe Rowan University could improve upon, Nate wrote: “Truthfully, I don’t know. I know that Rowan holds a bunch of events to bring students together. I believe that’s all they can do, and then hope that in time, the community begins to form.” It seems that Nate believes it is Rowan University’s job to provide additional opportunities for community building to occur.

Awawawa commented Rowan University’s communication with members of the campus community. One thing Rowan University could improve upon is “being able to fix issues quicker and being able to reliably tell the public about an issue quicker.”

Similarly to John’s response John B writes about how Rowan University can further aid campus clubs and organizations. John B believes that Rowan University should be providing more help and support to clubs who are just getting started.

Steve provided a very honest response. They think their clubs/organizations could improve upon “essentially every aspect.” In addition, when asked about Rowan University, Steve wrote:

Alerting students of important resources, such as the commuter lockers and commuter microwave in the student center. Most people don't seem to know this exists. But we know every time [the President’s] hot sauce is on sale.

Prioritization of information could be done so much better. The email is a mess.

Most kids don't even look.

Steve touched upon Rowan University's methods of communication which is also a point Awawawa made.

Wrestling princess stated that Rowan University should be "making the wrestling club an actual team for men and women" which demonstrated Wrestling princess' passion for and commitment to the Wrestling Club.

Oliver had expressed some concerns about walking to their car at night when they are on campus and when asked what Rowan University could improve upon, Oliver provided a clear and concise response:

Parking lots. There is not enough space for commuters who go to Rowan. Rowan needs to stop creating new buildings and prioritize expanding parking lots and parking availability. It is not exactly fair that I have to wake up at 6 a.m. every day just so that I can park while on-campus students can sleep in until they need to go to class.

Oliver was the final participant to provide a recommendation for Rowan University.

Each participant touched on an issue they saw at Rowan University and as a result, a range of issues were mentioned. Moving forward, Rowan University has a great deal of ideas to consider. Some participants thought about things Rowan University could do to help their clubs and organizations, while other participants noticed things Rowan University could be doing to help the community at large. Students should continue to discuss and advocate for, not only their clubs and organizations, but for themselves. Whether or not any of these issues get resolved or changed, only time will tell.

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## Appendix A

### Recruitment Flyer

## Student Activities

*Are you interested in participating in a research study about involvement in student-led clubs and organizations?*

*Are you an undergraduate Rowan University Student?*

*Are you an active member of a Rowan University club or organization?*

We aim to explore student's experiences in student-led clubs and organizations.

This study will take roughly 10 minutes and include an online survey via Qualtrics. If additional information is necessary, the study will include an interview lasting roughly 30 minutes.

This study will be conducted at Rowan University via online survey ([https://rowan.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0SvN6ujAhj9zZRQ](https://rowan.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0SvN6ujAhj9zZRQ)) and if additional interviews are needed, virtual meetings will be arranged with participants.

Participation in this study is voluntary and participants will not be compensated for participating.

For additional information, contact Drew Tinnin, Ed.D. ([tinnin@rowan.edu](mailto:tinnin@rowan.edu)) and Samantha Harvey ([harvey92@students.rowan.edu](mailto:harvey92@students.rowan.edu)).

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-397)

## **Appendix B**

### **Recruitment Email**

Email Subject/Letter Heading: Survey about student organizations

Hello,

I am writing to you about a volunteer opportunity to participate in a research study titled: Sense of community and belonging at Rowan University? An exploration of involvement in student-led clubs and organizations. This research study is investigating if participation in student-led clubs and organizations contribute to a student's sense of community and belonging.

There may not be any direct benefits for participating in this study. Results of our study may help enhance our ability to better understand lived experiences in relation to Rowan University's clubs and organizations. The results of this study may benefit society and future studies with a similar focus.

You may volunteer to participate in this study if:

- you are an undergraduate Rowan University student,
- aged 18 years or older,
- and are an active member of Rowan University club or student organization.

Your participation will require you to complete a survey ([https://rowan.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0SvN6ujAhj9zZRQ](https://rowan.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0SvN6ujAhj9zZRQ)). The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Follow-up interviews may be conducted, if necessary, to gather additional information. Participation in an interview is optional. Virtual follow-up interviews will be scheduled with participants if they are needed and will only last about 30 minutes. This research study will take place at Rowan University via online survey. If needed, follow up interviews will take place at Rowan University via Webex.

Contact Drew Tinnin, Ed.D. ([tinnin@rowan.edu](mailto:tinnin@rowan.edu)) and Samantha Harvey ([harvey92@students.rowan.edu](mailto:harvey92@students.rowan.edu)) about this research study.

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-397)

Sincerely,

Samantha Harvey

[harvey92@students.rowan.edu](mailto:harvey92@students.rowan.edu)

## Appendix C

### Recruitment Rowan Announcer

Listserv Header/Subject: Student organization survey

***Are you interested in volunteering to participate in a research study about exploring if participation in student-led clubs and organizations contribute to a student's sense of community and belonging?***

***Are you an undergraduate student at Rowan University, aged 18 years or older, and a member of a Rowan University club or organization?***

If so, please complete this survey

[https://rowan.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0SvN6ujAhj9zZRQ](https://rowan.col.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0SvN6ujAhj9zZRQ)

There may not be any direct benefits for participating in this study. Results of our study may help enhance our ability to better understand lived experiences in relation to Rowan University's clubs and organizations. The results of this study may benefit society and future studies with a similar focus.

As a volunteer participant, you will complete a survey. The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Follow-up interviews may be conducted, if necessary, to gather additional information. Participation in an interview is optional. Virtual follow-up interviews will be scheduled with participants if they are needed and will only last about 30 minutes. This research study will take place at Rowan University via online survey. If needed, follow up interviews will take place at Rowan University via Webex.

Contact Drew Tinnin Ed.D. ([tinnin@rowan.edu](mailto:tinnin@rowan.edu)) and Samantha Harvey ([harvey92@students.rowan.edu](mailto:harvey92@students.rowan.edu)) about this research study.

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-397)

## **Appendix D**

### **Informed Consent**

You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Student Activities. You are included in this survey because you are an undergraduate student who is a member of a Rowan University club or organization. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be a maximum of 25.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. Follow-up interviews may be conducted, if necessary, to gather additional information. Participation in an interview is optional. Virtual follow-up interviews will be scheduled with participants if they are needed and will only last about 30 minutes.

The purpose of this research study is to explore if participation in student-led clubs and organizations contributes to a student's sense of community and belonging. Participants will respond to an open-ended questionnaire.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand why students participate in student-led clubs and organizations. Higher education in the United States is experiencing levels of lower enrollment. It is crucial to look at the programs that are working and to redesign the ones that are not effective. Through this study, we aim to learn more about student involvement in clubs and organizations.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can email the Principal Investigator at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Drew Tinnin, Ed.D. (tinnin@rowan.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, PRO-2023-397.

## Appendix E

### Instrument

# Student Activities

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#### Start of Block: Online Survey Consent Form

Consent Form You are invited to participate in this online research survey entitled Student Activities. You are included in this survey because you are an undergraduate student who is a member of a Rowan University club or organization. The number of subjects to be enrolled in the study will be a maximum of 25.

The survey may take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate in this survey, do not respond to this online survey. Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey. Follow-up interviews may be conducted, if necessary, to gather additional information. Participation in an interview is optional. Virtual follow-up interviews will be scheduled with participants if they are needed and will only last about 30 minutes.

The purpose of this research study is to explore if participation in student-led clubs and organizations contributes to a student's sense of community and belonging. Participants will respond to an open-ended questionnaire.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with this survey. There may be no direct benefit to you, however, by participating in this study, you may help us understand why students participate in student-led clubs and organizations. Higher education in the United States is experiencing levels of lower enrollment. It is crucial to look at the programs that are working and to redesign the ones that are not effective. Through this study, we aim to learn more about student involvement in clubs and organizations.

Your response will be kept confidential. We will store the data in a secure computer file and the file will be destroyed once the data has been published. Any part of the research that is published as part of this study will not include your individual information. If you have any questions about the survey, you can email the Principal Investigator at the address provided below, but you do not have to give your personal identification.

Drew Tinnin, Ed.D. (tinnin@rowan.edu)

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at (856) 256-4078– Glassboro/CMSRU.

This study has been approved by the Rowan IRB, PRO-2023-397.

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Consent Form Please complete the checkboxes below.

☐

To participate in this survey, you must be 18 years or older, and an undergraduate member of a Rowan University club or organization. (1)

☐

Completing this survey indicates that you are voluntarily giving consent to participate in the survey (2)

End of Block: Online Survey Consent Form

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Start of Block: Demographics

Q1 Please provide a pseudonym you would like to be used in the study to protect your identity. A pseudonym is a fictitious name, not your actual name.

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Q2 What is your class level?

☐ first-year (1)

☐ sophomore (2)

☐ junior (3)

☐ senior (4)

---

Q3 Gender

- ☐ Male (1)
  - ☐ Female (2)
  - ☐ Non-binary (3)
  - ☐ Transgender Male (4)
  - ☐ Transgender Female (5)
  - ☐ Prefer to self-describe (6)
- 

Q4 Race

- ☐ White/Caucasian (1)
  - ☐ Middle Eastern/North African (2)
  - ☐ African American/Black (3)
  - ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native (4)
  - ☐ Asian American (5)
  - ☐ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (6)
  - ☐ Latino/Hispanic (7)
  - ☐ Multiracial (8)
  - ☐ Race Not Listed (9)
-



Q5 Orientation

- ☐ Heterosexual (1)
  - ☐ LGBTQIA+ (2)
  - ☐ Preferred Response Not Listed (3)
- 

Q6 Age

- ☐ Traditional (Under 24) (1)
  - ☐ Non-traditional (24 or older) (2)
- 

Q7 On-Campus Job

- ☐ Yes (1)
  - ☐ No (2)
- 

Q8 Do you participate in Community Service / Service Learning activities at Rowan University?

- ☐ Yes (1)
  - ☐ No (2)
- 

Q9 Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your participation in clubs/organizations further?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

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*Display This Question:*

*If Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to discuss your participation in clu... =*  
Yes

Q9.5 Please provide your email address to potentially schedule a virtual follow-up interview.

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End of Block: Demographics

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Start of Block: Clubs and Organizations

Q10 What clubs and/or student organizations are you involved in at Rowan University?

- ☐ 3D Printing Club (1)
- ☐ Accounting Society (2)
- ☐ Active Minds (3)
- ☐ Advertising Club (4)
- ☐ African Student Association (5)
- ☐ Alpha Alpha Alpha, Delta Tau Chapter (6)
- ☐ Alpha Chi Rho- Iota Chi Phi Chapter (7)
- ☐ Alpha Delta Kappa Collegiate Club (8)
- ☐ Alpha Epsilon Phi (9)
- ☐ Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated (10)
- ☐ Alpha Nu Omega Sorority, Inc. (11)
- ☐ Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (12)
- ☐ Alpha Phi Delta (13)
- ☐ Alpha Phi Omega Nu Theta (14)
- ☐ Alpha Phi Sigma (Law and Justice Honors) (15)
- ☐ Alpha Psi Omega: Rho Nu Chapter (Theatre Honors) (16)

- ☐ Alpha Sigma Alpha Sorority (17)
- ☐ Alpha Sigma Tau (18)
- ☐ American Chemical Society Student Chapter (19)
- ☐ American Choral Directors Association (20)
- ☐ American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (21)
- ☐ American Institute of Chemical Engineers (22)
- ☐ American Marketing Association (23)
- ☐ American Medical Women's Association (24)
- ☐ American Society of Civil Engineers (25)
- ☐ American Society of Highway Engineers (ASHE) (26)
- ☐ American Society of Mechanical Engineers (27)
- ☐ American String Teachers Association Student Chapter (28)
- ☐ Anime Club (29)
- ☐ Applied Behavior Analysis Club (30)
- ☐ Arabic Culture Club (31)
- ☐ Archery Club (32)

- ☐ Asian Cultural Association (33)
- ☐ Association for Computing Machinery (34)
- ☐ Association for Computing Machinery's Committee on Women (35)
- ☐ Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (36)
- ☐ Association for Supply Chain Management (37)
- ☐ Association for Women in Mathematics (38)
- ☐ Athletic Training Club (39)
- ☐ Avant Literary Magazine (40)
- ☐ Ballroom Club (41)
- ☐ Baseball Club (42)
- ☐ Basketball Club (Men's) (43)
- ☐ Basketball Club (Women) (44)
- ☐ Beauty in Distress (45)
- ☐ Beekeeping Club (46)
- ☐ Beta Alpha Psi (47)
- ☐ Beta Gamma Sigma (48)

- ☐ Biology Club (49)
- ☐ Biomedical Art and Visualization Club (50)
- ☐ Biomedical Engineering Society (51)
- ☐ Birding Club (52)
- ☐ Black Cultural League (53)
- ☐ Black Empowerment Leaders (54)
- ☐ Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (55)
- ☐ Bowling Club (56)
- ☐ Breast Cancer Meal Care (57)
- ☐ Bureau of Business Associations (58)
- ☐ Campus Players (59)
- ☐ Catholic Campus Ministry (60)
- ☐ CHAARG (61)
- ☐ Chabad at Rowan (62)
- ☐ Cheerleading Club (63)
- ☐ Chess Club (64)

- ☐ Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship (65)
- ☐ Chi Sigma Alpha Alpha Lambda Chapter at Rowan University (66)
- ☐ Chi Sigma Iota- Zeta Pi Chapter (67)
- ☐ Chi Upsilon Sigma National Latin Sorority INC. (68)
- ☐ Cinema Workshop (69)
- ☐ Club Softball (70)
- ☐ College Democrats (71)
- ☐ Colleges Against Cancer (72)
- ☐ Collegiate Entrepreneurs Organization (73)
- ☐ Commuters at Rowan (74)
- ☐ Coptic Orthodox Campus Ministries (75)
- ☐ Cybersecurity Club (76)
- ☐ Dae Bak (77)
- ☐ Dance Extensions (78)
- ☐ Dance Team (79)
- ☐ Delta Alpha Pi Honor Society (80)

- ☐ Delta Phi Epsilon (81)
- ☐ Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, Theta Chi Chapter (82)
- ☐ Disc-Golf Club (83)
- ☐ Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging in Business (84)
- ☐ Early Childhood Club (85)
- ☐ Education Student Association (86)
- ☐ Emergency Medical Services (87)
- ☐ Engineers Without Borders (88)
- ☐ Equestrian Club (89)
- ☐ Esports Club (90)
- ☐ Exercise is Medicine (91)
- ☐ Fencing Club (92)
- ☐ Field Hockey Club (93)
- ☐ Financial Management Association (94)
- ☐ Fishing Club (95)
- ☐ French Club (96)



- ☐ Glassworks (97)
- ☐ Golf Club (98)
- ☐ Graduate Student Government Association (99)
- ☐ Greek Cultural Organizations Council (100)
- ☐ Habitat for Humanity (101)
- ☐ Hammocking Club (102)
- ☐ Health and Physical Education Club (103)
- ☐ Health and Science Communication Club (104)
- ☐ Health and Wellness Careers Club (105)
- ☐ Hillel (106)
- ☐ Ice Hockey Club (Men's D2) (107)
- ☐ Ice Hockey Club (Men's D3) (108)
- ☐ Ice Hockey Club (Women's) (109)
- ☐ ImmunoClub (110)
- ☐ Indian Students Association (111)
- ☐ Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (112)

- ☐ Inter-Fraternity Council (113)
- ☐ International Club (114)
- ☐ Introduction to Dungeons and Dragons Club (115)
- ☐ Iota Phi Theta Fraternity Incorporated, Phi Chapter (116)
- ☐ Iranian Student Association (117)
- ☐ It's On Us (118)
- ☐ Italian Culture Club (119)
- ☐ Japanese Culture Club (120)
- ☐ Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. (121)
- ☐ Kappa Delta Pi- Eta Psi Chapter (Education Honors) (122)
- ☐ Kappa Sigma Nu Iota (123)
- ☐ Karate and Self Defense Club (124)
- ☐ Lacrosse Club (Women) (125)
- ☐ Lambda Pi Eta (National Communication Honor Society) (126)
- ☐ Lambda Sigma Upsilon, Latino Fraternity, Inc. The eXtraordinary Xaragua Chapter (127)
- ☐ Lambda Tau Omega Sorority Inc. (128)

- ☐ Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc. (129)
- ☐ Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. (130)
- ☐ Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity Inc. (131)
- ☐ Love & Luxe Collegiate (132)
- ☐ Love Blue Rowan Chapter (133)
- ☐ Management Information Systems Club (134)
- ☐ Materials Research Society (135)
- ☐ Math Team (136)
- ☐ MEDLIFE Rowan (137)
- ☐ Men of Color Alliance (138)
- ☐ Minority Association of Premedical Students (139)
- ☐ Mixed Martial Arts Club (140)
- ☐ Model Diplomacy Organization (141)
- ☐ Mu Sigma Upsilon Sorority, Incorporated (142)
- ☐ Music Therapy Club (143)
- ☐ Muslim Student Association (144)

- ☐ Mycology Club (145)
- ☐ National Art Education Association Student Chapter (146)
- ☐ National Association for Music Education (147)
- ☐ National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (148)
- ☐ National Girls and Women in Sports Day Committee (149)
- ☐ National Panhellenic Conference (150)
- ☐ National Society of Black Engineers (151)
- ☐ Navigators (152)
- ☐ Neurodiversity Club (153)
- ☐ New Life Ministry (154)
- ☐ Nowar Color Guard (155)
- ☐ Nutrition Care Club (156)
- ☐ Omega Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (157)
- ☐ Omega Psi Phi (158)
- ☐ Order of Omega (159)
- ☐ Out in STEM (160)

- ☐ Outdoors Club (161)
- ☐ Paintball Club (162)
- ☐ Parkour Club (163)
- ☐ Phi Alpha Theta, Psi Iota Chapter (164)
- ☐ Phi Beta Sigma (165)
- ☐ Phi Chi Theta (166)
- ☐ Phi Kappa Psi (167)
- ☐ Phi Kappa Sigma (168)
- ☐ Phi Mu Alpha (Sinfonia) (169)
- ☐ Phi Sigma Pi (170)
- ☐ Philosophy Club (171)
- ☐ Photography Club (172)
- ☐ Physics and Astronomy Club (173)
- ☐ Poetic Justice (174)
- ☐ Powerlifting (175)
- ☐ Pre Physician Assistant Club (176)

- ☐ Pre-Dental Club (177)
- ☐ Pre-Health Society (178)
- ☐ Pre-Law Society/Phi Alpha Delta (179)
- ☐ Pre-Vet Club (180)
- ☐ Prism (181)
- ☐ Profecy A Cappella (182)
- ☐ Progressives at Rowan (183)
- ☐ Psi Chi (184)
- ☐ Psi Sigma Phi Multicultural Fraternity Incorporated: Eternal Omicron Chapter (185)
- ☐ Psych and Law Club (186)
- ☐ Psychology Alliance (187)
- ☐ Public Health Club (188)
- ☐ Public Relations Students Society of America (189)
- ☐ Racquetball Club (190)
- ☐ Red Cross at Rowan (191)
- ☐ REFORMED UNIVERSITY FELLOWSHIP (192)

- ☐ Robotics and Automation Society (193)
- ☐ Rock Climbing Club (194)
- ☐ Roller Hockey Club (195)
- ☐ Roundnet Club (196)
- ☐ Rowan Aikido (197)
- ☐ Rowan Alternative Music (198)
- ☐ Rowan Badminton (199)
- ☐ Rowan Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights Student Association (200)
- ☐ Rowan Circle K International (201)
- ☐ Rowan Composers' Collective (202)
- ☐ Rowan Cru (203)
- ☐ Rowan Environmental Action League (204)
- ☐ Rowan Food Recovery Network (205)
- ☐ Rowan Gaming Club (206)
- ☐ Rowan GEO Club (207)
- ☐ Rowan Intramural Recreational Sports Association (208)

- ☐ Rowan Lab Theatre (209)
- ☐ Rowan Mens Club Lacrosse (210)
- ☐ Rowan Mock Trial Club (211)
- ☐ Rowan Music Group (212)
- ☐ Rowan Music Industry Developers and Innovators (213)
- ☐ Rowan Quizbowl (214)
- ☐ Rowan Rangeela (215)
- ☐ Rowan Running Club (216)
- ☐ Rowan Student Investment Group (217)
- ☐ Rowan Television Network (218)
- ☐ Rowan University Army ROTC (219)
- ☐ Rowan University at Camden Alliance of Student Activities (220)
- ☐ Rowan University College Republicans (221)
- ☐ Rowan University Early Childhood Demonstration Center (222)
- ☐ Rowan University Inter Greek Council (223)
- ☐ Rowan University National Pan-Hellenic Council (224)



- ☐ Rowan University Philippine American Coalition (225)
- ☐ Rowan University Student Chapter of the Association for Women in Mathematics (226)
- ☐ Rowan University's Hoofers Club (227)
- ☐ Rowan Vocals A Cappella (228)
- ☐ Rowan's Vinyl Music Club (229)
- ☐ Rugby (Men's) (230)
- ☐ Rugby Club (Women's) (231)
- ☐ Running With Einstein (232)
- ☐ Saving Mothers at Rowan University (233)
- ☐ Saxophone Club (234)
- ☐ Sigma Alpha Epsilon (235)
- ☐ Sigma Beta Rho Fraternity, Inc. (236)
- ☐ Sigma Delta Pi (237)
- ☐ Sigma Delta Tau (238)
- ☐ Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. (239)
- ☐ Sigma Iota Rho (240)

- ☐ Sigma Pi (241)
- ☐ Skateboarding Club (242)
- ☐ Ski & Snowboard Club (243)
- ☐ Soccer Club (Men's) (244)
- ☐ Soccer Club (Women's) (245)
- ☐ Society for Human Resource Management (246)
- ☐ Society for the Advancement of Management (247)
- ☐ Society of American Military Engineers (248)
- ☐ Society of Automotive Engineers (249)
- ☐ Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (250)
- ☐ Society of Women Engineers (251)
- ☐ Sociology & Anthropology Club (252)
- ☐ South Asian Students Association (253)
- ☐ Street Hockey Club Team (254)
- ☐ Strong Tower Family (255)
- ☐ Student Alumni Association (256)

- ☐ Student Government Association (257)
- ☐ Student History Association (258)
- ☐ Student Organization for Caribbean Awareness (259)
- ☐ Student Planning Organization (260)
- ☐ Student Scholars Symposium (261)
- ☐ Student University Programmers (262)
- ☐ Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (263)
- ☐ Students for Sensible Drug Policy (264)
- ☐ Swimming Club Team (265)
- ☐ Table Tennis Club (266)
- ☐ Tau Beta Pi (267)
- ☐ Tau Delta Phi (268)
- ☐ Tau Epsilon Phi Fraternity (269)
- ☐ Tau Sigma (270)
- ☐ Tennis Club (271)
- ☐ Tertulia hispana (272)

- ☐ The Black Student Union (273)
- ☐ The Episcopal Church at Rowan University (274)
- ☐ The Gallery Publication (275)
- ☐ The Hidden Opponent Chapter at Rowan University (276)
- ☐ The Image Yearbook (277)
- ☐ The Improfs (278)
- ☐ The Whit (279)
- ☐ The Women of Color Alliance (280)
- ☐ Theta Nu of Theta Chi Fraternity (281)
- ☐ Theta Phi Alpha (282)
- ☐ Ultimate Frisbee Club (283)
- ☐ Unified Sports Club (284)
- ☐ United Latinos Association (285)
- ☐ Upsilon Pi Epsilon (286)
- ☐ USITT (287)
- ☐ Vertical Flight Society (288)

- ☐ Vietnamese Student Association (289)
  - ☐ Volleyball Club (Men's) (290)
  - ☐ Volleyball Club (Women's) (291)
  - ☐ Wiffleball Club (292)
  - ☐ Women in Business (293)
  - ☐ Women Inspiring a New Generation of Scientists (294)
  - ☐ Women's Physique Club (295)
  - ☐ Women's Ultimate Club (296)
  - ☐ Wrestling Club (297)
  - ☐ Writing Arts Club (298)
  - ☐ Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (299)
  - ☐ Other: (303)
- 

-----

Q11 Are you an executive board member of a club/organization? (Ex: president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, etc.)

- ☐ No (1)
  - ☐ Yes - Please explain your role: (2)
-

---

Q12 Describe, in detail, your experiences in the club/organization.

---

---

Q13 Why did you join the clubs or organizations mentioned above?

---

---

Q14 What does this club/organization mean to you?

---

---

Q15 Do you believe this club/organization benefits the members who participate in it? Why or why not? Provide any personal examples/experiences you can think of.

---

---

Q16 What do you believe this club/organization provides to the members who participate in it if anything?

---

End of Block: Clubs and Organizations

---

Start of Block: Sense of Community and Belonging

Q17 How would you describe your sense of community and belonging to the club/organization you are involved in?

---

Q18 How would you describe your sense of community and belonging at Rowan University?

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Q19 Do you think participation in the club/organization contributes to your sense of community and belonging at Rowan University? Why or why not? Provide any personal examples/experiences you can think of.

---

Q20 What is something your club/organization could improve upon?

---

Q21 What is something Rowan University could improve upon?

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Q22 Would you like to provide any additional information about your experiences as a member of a club/organization?

---

End of Block: Sense of Community and Belonging

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## **Appendix F**

### **Consent Form Addendum**

#### **ROWAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM**

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Drew Tinnin. We are asking for your permission to allow us to include optional procedure such as audiotape as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team.

The recording(s) will include subjects name, but recording will not include facial pictures. Recordings will be conducted through Webex and participants will be asked to turn their cameras off, so their face is not recorded. Subjects name will be recorded, but not used in the study. Subjects will only be referred to by pseudonyms.

The recording(s) will be stored in a private Google Drive folder protected by Rowan University and labeled with subjects' pseudonyms and will be destroyed upon publication of study results.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.



## **Appendix G**

### **Follow-Up Interview Script**

#### **ROWAN UNIVERSITY**

##### **SCRIPT FOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Questions for the follow-up interview will be guided by the questionnaire. In the event any follow-up interviews are conducted, the goal will be to expand on previously answered questions.

1. What organization are you a member of?
2. Can you describe, in detail, your experiences in the club/organization?
3. Why did you join the organization?
4. Can you describe what the club/organization means to you?
5. Can you describe some personal experiences you have had in this organization?
6. Do you believe the organization benefits the members who participate in it? Why or why not?
7. What does a sense of community and belonging mean to you?
8. Do you think participation in the club/organization contributes to your sense of community and belonging at Rowan University? Why or why not? Can you provide any personal examples/experiences?