

## EXTRA CREDIT AND DECISION-MAKING: UNDERSTANDING COLLEGE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO ATTEND ON-CAMPUS EVENTS

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*This study examines undergraduate students' perceptions of extra credit and its connection to attending events. Because some faculty offer extra credit to students to motivate participation outside the classroom, research is needed to evaluate students' views and attitudes toward extra credit. Few studies examine the incentives that drive participation and to what degree students value them. Of the respondents surveyed, 73% placed significant value on extra credit and viewed it as a motivator. The majority (75%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" all extra-curricular events should have extra credit attached to attendance. More attention should be paid to the idea that extra credit is perceived as an expectation. To best promote experiential learning outside the classroom, faculty are encouraged to embrace the practice of offering extra credit as a means to a pedagogically beneficial end. This study offers new categories faculty and administrators can use to communicate the value of events.*

Colleges and universities often offer a wide range of extra-curricular events to students. The challenge is securing attendance. When faculty encourage their students to attend on-campus events, they are likely to have at least one student ask, "Is there any extra credit?" Why is extra credit associated with out-of-class participation, and what is the value of connecting the two? This study examines extra credit and its relationship to undergraduate students' motivation to participate in on-campus events. Researchers examine whether extra credit is the best way to incentivize attendance or whether faculty should consider new strategies. Based on our findings, we propose three frames that faculty and administrators can use to help categorize events and better communicate an event's value to students.

### THE MODERN COLLEGE STUDENT AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The idea of a "college experience" is constantly changing. Kerstiens & Pauk (1998) highlight these changes, stating, "in the old days, reading meant the reading of the '100 best books' involving what is considered classical literature: novels, poetry, drama, and essays... Today, the emphasis is on reading from textbooks about factual, practical, and descriptive content, sometimes called study reading or reading in the context field" (p. 20). Specialized focuses versus expansive exposure remain in tension when weighing what is and is not deemed valuable in today's undergraduate curriculum. Student involvement is another concept that merits attention when considering what qualifies as a rich "college experience." Astin (1984) explains involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 528). The academic experience applies to inside and outside the physical (or digital) classroom. It includes membership in organizations, engagement with events, and social gatherings.

## ON-CAMPUS EXTRA-CURRICULAR EVENTS

There are roughly seven types of extra-curricular activities: visual and performing arts, music, writing, politics, math and science, sports, jobs, and volunteer work (Peck, 2020). Professional organizations generate participation through gauging interests specific to students' occupational fields, while student government attracts students who aim to gain leadership experience. As noted, there are many types of on-campus extra-curricular events that a modern student can attend. While this research explores a speech competition, scholars should note students may benefit from attending other types of events in addition to the one studied in this project. In other words, both the benefits and motivation for attending events vary by type of event. As a result, it is beneficial to be aware of the various types.

Hughes (2016) claims participation in one or more extra-curricular events leads to higher academic achievement. Academic success can be understood as a direct reflection of student involvement and socialization through extracurriculars (Hughes, 2016). A study with middle school students found a connection between higher academic achievements with student engagement in school activities (Berndt & Keefe, 1995).

One of many challenges to offering events and getting students to participate is determining how to effectively incentivize students to attend. Baranek states that the most effective way to motivate students is to teach them how to become intrinsically motivated (1996). Baranek also states that although it is beneficial for students to learn how to self-motivate and self-reward, reinforcers are also needed to increase the chance of a behavior, such as attending an event, happening again (1996). Stickers, treats, praise, and grades are all used as examples of reinforcers. Yet the question remains, how does one intrinsically motivate a student to attend an academic-related event in addition to attending regularly scheduled classes?

Academics agree that classroom participation is key to a student's success (Rocca, 2010). But, for many decades, scholars have asserted that there is a positive influence on students' wellbeing and cognitive development with regard to out-of-class experiences. It is important to clarify the definition of an out-of-class experience. Primarily, the phrase "out-of-class activity" is used to describe "any organized activity (e.g., club, organization) a student engages in during waking hours outside of formal instruction in a classroom" (Simmons et al., 2018). For purposes of this study, researchers use out-of-class activity or experience to indicate any event or participation in an activity that is not a mandatory requirement for an academic course.

This involvement does not solely relate to one's in-classroom experience, but also includes engagement with events and membership in student organizations. Some of the benefits of involvement are clear. A student who actively engages in the college experience is less likely to drop out of college, may develop more affinity toward the institution, develop higher self-esteem, and experience more overall satisfaction (Astin, 1984). Overall, students will develop interpersonal skills and experience cognitive development with involvement on campus.

Laird et al. (2008) further identified two reasons why it is essential for administrators and faculty to strongly consider out-of-class activities and to encourage student engagement outside the traditional classroom. First, students may feel more connected as activities help in "shrinking the psychological size of the institution," and second, the involvement helps with retention rates at universities (Laird et al., 2008). However, there are more than two benefits for administrators and faculty to consider. Attending events and being part of a college or university community may have more benefits than one originally imagined. It is suggested there are "eight categories of outcomes: academic and social engagement; career and professional development; communication skills and leadership development; intellectual development; intercultural competence; personal and social development; satisfaction with college; and college belonging, connectedness, and persistence" (Simmons et al., 2017). In Simmons et al.'s (2017) study, out-of-class experiences impacted intellectual development among engineering students more than any of the other seven categories. Also, previous research (Knoster & Goodboy, 2020) argues that out-of-class activities may positively affect students, which helps offset the stressors college students encounter. Even so, the question of what motivates students to attend these activities remains.

## UNDERSTANDING STUDENT MOTIVATION

Motivation can be defined in a number of ways. This paper uses the term liberally to describe “an individuals’ behavior and the effort applied in different activities” (Cavas, 2011, p. 32). Brophy (1998) defines motivation as an impulse that guides or influences one’s actions. Attendance at an event on campus serves a variety of purposes, from achieving academically to developing socially (Simmons et al., 2017). In this regard, researchers are analyzing the various factors that inspire an undergraduate student to attend extra events in addition to traditional classes as their attendance benefits them in many ways.

Motivating factors can span from the necessity of information to subject curiosity. Yilmaz et al. (2017) surveyed motivational factor ranking throughout multiple studies. They found that the highest-ranked motivators for students were teaching methods and strategies, teacher communication skills, the use of instructional technologies, and making topics interesting. With studies showing that the most important factor in students’ motivation falls under the teacher’s influence, we can assume that professors offering extra credit to students who attend extra-curricular activities would be an effective motivator.

Social group status has been shown to drive a student’s motivation for attending out of school activities or after-school activities. Athletics is a high-status activity, music is a moderate-status activity, leaving debate and hobby clubs to be considered a low-status activity (McNeal, 1995). From this, one can conclude that peer interaction is not simply a motivational factor stemming from a desire to socialize with those sharing similar interests but the desire to receive inclusion from groups considered to be a high-status group.

Although it has been found that students who participate in a variety of extracurriculars are the highest achievers academically, not all extra-curricular activities lead to the same level of academic success. Previous research (Eccles & Barber, 1999) grouped extracurriculars into five groups: prosocial activities, sports teams, performing arts, school involvement, and academic clubs. The study simultaneously surveyed students on their college plans, GPA, alcohol usage, drug usage, and class attendance. Students who described themselves as involved in school-involved extracurriculars had the highest amount of plans for college compared to the rest of the extra-curricular groups and had the same amount of participants who performed well in school as those who participated in academic clubs. Regular drinking and drug usage were highest among those who participated in sports teams. Their extra-curricular and skipping class was tied for the highest-ranked between performing arts and school involvement extracurriculars (Eccles & Barber, 1999).

Although these groups contain a variety of activities, they all share a common element of socialization. With social group status being a significant factor for student motivation and socialization, one can conclude that the desire to attend extra-curricular events stems from the desire to attain a specific social status or image. With Hughes’ study referenced above, we know that socialization has been shown to lead to higher academic achievement. As a result, we can assume that students involved in any of these five groups of extracurriculars are performing better than their peers who choose not to participate in any extra-curricular activities.

## THE ROLE OF EXTRA CREDIT

Offering additional points to students to complete an additional, voluntary assignment or learning engagement may be considered by some in academia as unnecessary, yet there are benefits to it. Kenner (2009) argues that extra credit helps generate students’ interest in a subject because it allows them to feel satisfaction in earning something extra. Existing research (Harrison et al., 2011) examining the connection between grades and extra credit found students engaging in extra credit activities are generally those with already higher grades, and those with lower grades tend not to take advantage of the opportunity. There remains a need for more examination about how students perceive extra credit and how it can be used successfully to incentivize students performing on various academic levels. To better understand the role extra credit plays in extra-curricular events on campus, we pose the following research questions:

RQ1: What factors motivate students to attend on-campus events?

RQ2: To what extent does extra credit motivate undergraduate students to attend extra-curricular events on campus?

## METHODS

To examine students' perceptions of extra credit in connection to attending on-campus events, researchers disseminated a survey during an on-campus event at a mid-sized university located in the Southeastern United States. Students were able to access the survey using a QR code projected on a screen. Paper copies of the QR code were distributed as well. The event was the university's annual speech contest hosted by the university's Center for Public Speaking. The event was open to all students, staff, and faculty. To qualify for participation, respondents met the following criteria: 1) 18 years of age or older and 2) enrolled in the university. The survey was anonymous, and the university's IRB approved this study.

Upon entering the event, attendees swiped their university-issued identification cards. The records reflect 377 attendees swiped their cards and had access to the survey. Within 48 hours of the event, a link to the survey was emailed to the attendees with registered emails who swiped their identification cards in case they did not take the survey at the event, totaling 218 email addresses. The survey yielded a total of 131 responses (N=131).

## SURVEY DESIGN

The complete survey is included as appendix A and consisted of twenty-four questions. Most questions were designed using the Likert scale, and participants were allowed to indicate multiple answers to questions. In addition to extra credit, factors included in the survey included personal interest, personal knowledge of a participant, or if free food or items encouraged them to attend. Researchers wanted to gauge participant interest, how they learned about the event and their perceptions toward incentive and motivation.

The specific questions pertaining to extra credit are reflected in questions 11-16 and 22. Question 12 was a prompt advising participants on the nature of the next set of questions. Participants were asked what factors influenced the decision to attend the event, their opinions about extra credit for on-campus events, whether they would attend an event if there was no extra credit option, and in general, the type of events they attended. Participants were asked to rank factors that influenced their decision to attend the event. Seven questions were directly related to demographic information, five related to extra credit and the importance of the same, and the remaining 11 questions pertained to marketing and event-specific details. This study pertains only to the questions asked on extra credit.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Participant Demographics (N=131)

| Category                   | Total Selections (n) | Percent Total (%) | Category          | Total Selections (n) | Percent Total (%) |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Gender</b>              |                      |                   | <b>Class Rank</b> |                      |                   |
| Female .....               | 99                   | 71.7              | Freshman .....    | 24                   | 18.3              |
| Male .....                 | 39                   | 28.3              | Sophomore .....   | 44                   | 33.5              |
| <b>Race</b>                |                      |                   | Junior .....      | 38                   | 29.0              |
| White .....                | 108                  | 73.9              | Senior .....      | 25                   | 19.0              |
| Black .....                | 14                   | 9.5               | <b>Age</b>        |                      |                   |
| Amer. Ind./AK Native ..... | 1                    | 0.6               | 18 .....          | 19                   | 14.0              |
| Asian .....                | 7                    | 4.7               | 19 .....          | 43                   | 31.8              |
| Other .....                | 16                   | 10.9              | 20 .....          | 32                   | 23.7              |
|                            |                      |                   | 21 .....          | 14                   | 10.3              |
|                            |                      |                   | 22 and over ..... | 16                   | 14.               |

Of the participants surveyed, 35% most commonly attended academic lectures/guest speakers. The second most popular category was recreational events, representing 24% of the total selections made by respondents. Sporting events were chosen by 20%, and artistic performances or showcases were 19% of total responses. “Other” events represent 1.5% of respondents’ selections. It is important to note that survey participants could choose multiple selections, and findings suggest by a wide margin that the overall most popular type of on-campus events at the institution where participants were surveyed were academic lectures/guest speakers.

The majority (73%) of respondents placed significant value on extra credit, reporting it as a motivating factor when deciding whether or not to attend an on-campus event. “Extra credit” was chosen at a higher percentage than any other motivating factor presented as an option. Nearly 75% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” all on-campus extra-curricular events *should* have extra credit attached to attending. Not only do students want extra credit, they want it offered in more diverse settings. In contrast, when a survey question “Would you attend an extra-curricular academic event without the possibility of earning extra credit” was presented, 69.9% of respondents indicated in the affirmative direction. The remaining 29% of respondents indicated they were either ambivalent or would not likely attend events without extra credit.

**Table 2.** Q13: Extra Credit is an important factor in my decision to attend extra-curricular events.

|   | <b>Total Selections (n)</b> | <b>Percent Total (%)</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> .....          | 12.....                     | 9.09                     |
| <i>Somewhat Disagree</i> .....          | 7.....                      | 5.30                     |
| <i>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</i> ..... | 16.....                     | 12.12                    |
| <i>Somewhat Agree</i> .....             | 41.....                     | 30.30                    |
| <i>Strongly Agree</i> .....             | 57.....                     | 43.18                    |
| TOTAL.....                              | 133.....                    | 100                      |

  

| <b>Min.</b> | <b>Max.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Dev.</b> | <b>Var.</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1.00        | 5.00        | 3.93        | 1.25             | 1.57        |

Approximately 74% of respondents “strongly agreed” or “somewhat agreed” that extra credit is an important factor when deciding to attend an event, suggesting extra credit has a strong influence on decision-making. The majority placed significant value on extra credit. Additionally, 23% of respondents cited extra credit as one of the factors motivating their decision to attend the event, a higher percentage than any other motivating factor presented as an option (see appendix for the list of options). Over half (55%) of respondents indicated they believed “to some degree” that extra credit should be offered as an incentive for attendance at all on-campus events.

Hypothesis one predicted that students would respond above the ambivalence threshold to the idea of extra credit as an important motivating factor. Results of a t-test support this hypothesis,  $t(126) = 9.03, p < .01$ . Hypothesis two predicted that students would still respond above the ambivalence threshold to the idea of attending events without the offering of extra credit. Results of a t-test support this hypothesis as well,  $t(127) = 9.8225, p < .01$ . Note that the sample sizes for each t-test are slightly smaller than the total sample to adjust for incomplete responses. These findings have implications for examining student expectations in future research and practical implications for institutions, which are discussed below.

When looking at different factors influencing a student’s decision to attend an event, researchers asked about four broad categories: extra credit; materially driven motivation (e.g., free food, t-shirts, prizes); an interest in the subject/sounded interesting; and an interpersonal connection with participation. See Table 2 above. These results are supported in Question 22, which asks participants to rank factors of their attendance in order of importance. The ranked preference shows perhaps a diminished effect here, as students were equally as likely to select “Free Food/ Free T-Shirt” as their second most important factor. The data collected provides a robust amount of support for our claim

that extra credit is a powerful incentive in students' decision-making process to attend extra-curricular activities. This is reflected across all metrics of measurement used. However, additional patterns emerge which suggest extra credit is not the sole incentive. Personal interest also provided itself as a significant factor in this decision-making, upsetting commonly held beliefs in academia that students only attend events due to the availability of extra credit.

Extra credit was the most-selected response when participants were asked to identify their motivation for attending the event at which the survey took place, with 23.7% of total selections made. The second most selected option in response to the question of motivating factors was personal interest, with 19.7% of total selections made. This is remarkable not in itself, but in comparison to the extra credit factor, with only a three-percent difference between the two. This is to say that while extra credit reigned supreme as a motivator for participation in extra-curricular events, it is important to note that this question allowed for multiple factors to be selected. Other factors presented as options were: knowing a participant (9.2%), free food or gifts (15.8%), prizes (15%), interest in public speaking specifically (9.9%).

When examining the broad categories of motivations, extra credit is outweighed by material motivations and interest level. Material motivations such as prizes, free food, and free t-shirts eclipse extra credit with a combined total of 31%. This has broad ramifications for faculty, which are discussed below. When combining responses about personal interest and wanting to know more, the overall total was 29.5%.

**Table 3.** Factors Influencing Student Attendance at Event

| <b>Factors</b>   | <b>Total Selections (n)</b> | <b>Percent Total (%)</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Extra Credit Opportunities</i> .....                          | 73 .....                    | 23.68                    |
| <i>Know a Participant</i> .....                                  | 28.....                     | 9.21                     |
| <i>Sounded Interesting</i> .....                                 | 61.....                     | 19.74                    |
| <i>Free Food/T-Shirt</i> .....                                   | 58.....                     | 15.75                    |
| <i>Prizes</i> .....  | 47.....                     | 15.13                    |
| <i>Interested/ Want to Know More About Public Speaking</i> ..... | 30 .....                    | 9.87                     |
| <i>Other</i> .....   | 11.....                     | 3.62                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b> .....   | <b>308</b> .....            | <b>100.0</b>             |

\*Respondents were allowed to select multiple answers in response to this question.

Four categories of motivation emerged: extra credit/academic motivation, material motivation, personal motivation, and social motivation. These categories can be extrapolated from the clustering of data mentioned previously. In this case, almost all responses fall into one of these four categories, with the portion of responses making up the “other” category being the sole indeterminate outlier. As applied to the data presented in this research, the categorical framework has a two-fold consequence: the traditional importance of extra credit is diminished. Still, it provides a more complex and complete picture of student involvement in extracurriculars.

**Table 4.** Q14: I would attend on-campus events even if there was no extra credit offered.

|   | <b>Total Selections (n)</b> | <b>Percent Total (%)</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> .....          | 3 .....                     | 2.26                     |
| <i>Somewhat Disagree</i> .....          | 10 .....                    | 7.52                     |
| <i>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</i> ..... | 26.....                     | 19.55                    |
| <i>Somewhat Agree</i> .....             | 59 .....                    | 43.61                    |
| <i>Strongly Agree</i> .....             | 36 .....                    | 27.07                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b> .....                      | <b>134</b> .....            | <b>100</b>               |

  

| <b>Min.</b> | <b>Max.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Dev.</b> | <b>Var.</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1.00        | 5.00        | 3.86        | 0.97             | 0.94        |

These categories are further demonstrated in the variance seen between questions, as all five of the questions presented about extra credit seem to suggest that they are deeply intertwined. The view of extra credit as a motivation remains robust, but as a sole motivator, it appears obsolete. Like any other consumer, students have complex tastes that can be satiated or appeased in multiple ways by attending the same event. Results that would seemingly negate each other are easily reasoned when applying this logic. For example, a majority of students (69.9%) indicated that they would attend extra-curricular events without the offering of extra credit as an incentive. Hypothesis 3 predicted that a majority of the surveyed population would respond over the ambivalence threshold to the idea of offering extra credit at all on-campus events. A t-test supports this idea,  $t(126) = 5.17, p > .01$ .

**Table 5.** Q15: I think all on-campus events should provide extra credit for attending.

|   | <b>Total<br/>Selections (n)</b> | <b>Percent<br/>Total (%)</b> |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>Strongly Disagree</i> .....          | 9 .....                         | 6.77                         |
| <i>Somewhat Disagree</i> .....          | 18.....                         | 13.53                        |
| <i>Neither Agree Nor Disagree</i> ..... | 31.....                         | 22.56                        |
| <i>Somewhat Agree</i> .....             | 48 .....                        | 36.09                        |
| <i>Strongly Agree</i> .....             | 28 .....                        | 21.05                        |
| TOTAL .....                             | 134 .....                       | 100                          |

  

| <b>Min.</b> | <b>Max.</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std. Dev.</b> | <b>Var.</b> |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1.00        | 5.00        | 3.51        | 1.16             | 1.34        |

## DISCUSSION

Results demonstrated the complicated relationship between an on-campus event and generating attendance. Our findings demonstrate how attendance-related incentives need to parallel students' interests. The majority of the types of events attended by this study's participants were academic lectures/guest speakers, which faculty would agree is important to students' academic development. This information is not surprising based on previous research relating to the importance of events on a students' intellectual growth (Simmons et al., 2017). Because extra credit was the strongest incentive to encourage attendance, serious consideration needs to be made toward the potential benefits of offering extra credit in connection to extra-curricular events. This is particularly true in light of studies supporting the enhanced level of satisfaction felt by a student when earning additional points (Kenner, 2009).

Because the majority of students prefer all events to include an extra credit component, it is crucial for professors and administrators to seriously consider whether they want to connect it to their event. Extra credit could be used as a motivating factor. This finding serves as a potent reminder for all in academia that to achieve desired attendance, particularly at an important academic event, one should consider adding an extra credit element. Further, suppose administrators hope to improve retention at their universities. In that case, extra credit may be the way to encourage students to attend events, feel more connected, and ultimately decide to stay at the institution (Laird et al., 2008). The data support the commonly held belief that students value extra credit above all other factors when deciding whether to attend an extra-curricular academic event, yet results support it is not the only motivating factor. In addition to extra credit, key motivators for attending events included material incentives and having a personal interest. It is important to consider how "personal interest" may be linked to the likelihood of earning extra credit. Practical implications are discussed in the following section.

There is room for further research in this vein analyzing specific groups of students within the subset; for example, the polarization of the effects discussed when comparing rate of participation, socioeconomic background, racial or sexual identities, or membership in on-campus student organizations. This work is an important stepping stone in identifying general categories of student motivation to be more precisely applied in all event contexts on campus.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Because extra credit was reported as a significant motivator yet not the sole motivating factor for attendance, faculty and student affairs, as well as administrations, should consider using the following categories to help communicate the benefits of attending a specific event: material gain, interpersonal gain, intellectual gain, and grade performance gain.

As a way to utilize the category “interpersonal connection to a participant,” the event host might consider highlighting the key participants, especially if they are students. Students are motivated to attend events by material interests such as free food, t-shirts, and prizes. Those promoting these events should attempt to budget for “giveaway” items and include these incentives in promotional material. If material giveaways drive the current generation of college students, one should highlight it in marketing materials to achieve maximum attendance.

Participants are likely to attend an event if they are interested in the subject matter or desire to learn more; thus, event marketing should appeal to the targeted consumer who has demonstrated previous interest in the subject matter or similar events. For example, an academic lecture given by a biology instructor clearly should be advertised to science majors. Carefully crafted material incentives can also be prepared for the target audience. As academic lectures and guest speakers are ranked as the most popular events by participants, before a university hires an outside speaker, administrators should examine these motivation categories and examine how they can create advertisements that will appeal to the student body population based on these categories.

Further, extra credit has served as a matter of ethical dilemma for educators due to the argument that extra credit results in grade changes based on education done outside the classroom and class time (Handelsman & Woody, 2014). The results of the study offer options for effective motivational tactics for students; thus, if an educator feels extra credit in itself is unethical, there is empirical evidence suggesting other motivation tactics that can be utilized to facilitate learning external to the classroom environment. With extra credit not being the sole motivating factor for students, the argument that students are only motivated by grades is deemed false as multiple motivating factors can be used. Stronger relationships between instructors and event coordinators with the integration of the various motivational factors discussed can aid student learning exponentially and serve as a factor in providing students a better education.

This research may also be applied to and within the relationship between professors and non-instructional administrative staff who coordinate student programming. For example, administrators might promote events that award students with extra credit as a reward for their attendance. This would provide a material gain to the professor in the form of outside opportunity for academic content (thus enhancing the robustness of material offered in a course) and intellectual and material gain for the student. All of the benefits mentioned above in some way turn into a material gain for the administrator, as attendance for events would increase along with a sense of support and increased performance from the instructor and their students.

Additionally, this research has broader implications for the types of events offered on campus. Universities might consider encouraging faculty to further incorporate academic-related events that are offered during their actual class time. Our data show students perceive value in academic-style seminars such as job talks and other educational events, so weaving them into class time might generate deeper discussions, evaluative-based assignments, and perhaps lead to rich connections between one’s course and what students continue to refer to as “real world” exposure.

## CONCLUSION

One limitation of this study was the survey was disseminated during one major event that involved student-speakers and free prizes. Results may have differed if the survey had been distributed during a different event. Additionally, because the majority of respondents were majoring within the College of Business, it is essential to consider how motivation may vary across the disciplines.

Research reflects extra-curricular events benefit students’ academic performances and sense of belonging within



their campus community. However, to benefit from these events, they need to attend them, hence the value in examining what motivates student attendance. To effectively encourage attendance, our data show extra credit is the most influential factor.

Our study benefits professors and university administrators invested in generating more interest in extra-curricular learning opportunities for their student body. Based on the results of our data, we suggest embracing the practice of offering extra credit as an incentive to encourage attendance. Future research should include a survey examining how students perceive their academic performance in connection to on-campus events. Additionally, researchers should replicate this study and the survey tool at different on-campus events and compare results. Another issue to examine in future studies is faculty members' motivation for offering (or not offering) extra credit to students. Suppose there was a doubt about how powerful extra credit was in terms of serving as a motivator. In that case, this study's findings show just how great of an impact it can have on generating interest and driving attendance.

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## APPENDIX A: SURVEY

### Q1 - 2 *Informed Consent*

Q3 *In what year were you born? Please enter in the format (YYYY).*

Q4 *What is your gender?*

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Prefer Not to Say
- Gender Fluid

Q5 *What is your race? Check all that apply.*

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Other

Q6 *Are you a faculty/staff member at [Institution Name]?*

- Yes
- No

Q7 *Are you a [Institution Name] Student?*

- Yes
- No

If yes:

Q8 *What is your class rank?*

- Freshman (0-27 credits)
- Sophomore (28-59 credits)
- Junior (60-89 credits)
- Senior (90+ credits)
- Graduate Program
- I do not know my class rank

Q9 *Please state your major(s). If none, please enter "N/A".*

Q10 *How did you hear about this event? Please select all that apply.*

- Faculty Member/Class
- Word of mouth (friend, classmate, etc.)
- Flyer/Promotional Materials

- Visiting the Speech Center
- Other

**Q11** *What factors influenced your decision to attend this event? Please select all that apply.*

- Extra Credit Opportunities
- Know a Participant
- Sounded Interesting
- Free Food/Free T-Shirt
- Prizes
- Interested in/want to learn more about Public Speaking
- Other

**Q12** *The following questions regard your opinions on extra credit and on-campus events. Please select the answer which best reflects your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.*

**Q13** *Extra credit is an important factor in my decision to attend on-campus events.*

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

**Q14** *I would attend on-campus events even if there is no extra credit offered for the event.*

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

**Q 15** *I think all on-campus events should provide extra credit as an incentive for attending.*

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

**Q16** *What types of on-campus events do you typically attend? Please select all that apply.*

- Sporting Events
- Artistic Performances/Showcases
- Academic Lectures/Guest Speakers/Seminars
- Recreational Events (Spartan Productions)
- Other

**Q17** *Are you currently enrolled in a speech class?*

- Yes
- No

**Q18** *Have you previously taken a speech class at the [Institution Name]?*

- Yes
- No

**Q19** *Would you be interested in or are you planning to take a speech class in the future?*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

**Q20** *Have you heard of the Center for Public Speaking?*

- Yes
  - No
- If yes:

**Q21** *Have you used its services?*

- Yes
- No

**Q22** *Please rank the factors that influenced your decision to attend this event in order from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important).*

- Extra Credit Opportunities
- Personal Interest
- Relationship to Participant
- Free Food/Free T-shirt
- Prizes
- Other

**Q23** *In a few words, please summarize what you liked most about this event:*

**Q24** *In a few words, please summarize what you liked least about this event:*