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**Title of project:** The Impact of Student Involvement on Leadership and Academic Achievement of First-Generation Undergraduate Students

**Research questions explored through the study:**

1. What are first-generation undergraduate students' perceptions of their leadership and extent of involvement in campus activity programs?
2. How does engagement in campus activities relate with student awareness of their leadership capacity, their motivation to develop their leadership skills, attitudes towards leadership development and practice, their leadership experiences, and academic achievement?
3. How does student engagement in campus activities predict student leadership and academic achievement?

**Significant findings/discussion:** The study employed a survey-based approach to study design. The survey was distributed to 4206 first-generation undergraduate students with the adjusted population of 4173 (removed due to inapplicability, opted out, bounced, failed, etc.). The survey was completed by 862 students with the overall response rate of 20.7%. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data in SPSS (v.28). Majority of respondents identified themselves as female (71.3%, n=556) and 26.5% identified as male (n=207). They were predominantly White/Caucasian (56.0%, n=437), followed by Asian (9.7%, n=76) and Black or African American (6.9%, n=54). The 'Other race' category was selected by 12.9% (n=101). Over half of the respondents were between 18 and 23 years of age (60.9%, n=473), with 18.8% (n=146) reported being between 24 and 30 years old. The average GPA of participants was 3.24 (SD=0.61).

When asked whether a student viewed themselves as a leader, 62.9% (n=538) indicated 'probably yes' and 'definitely yes', with an average of 3.65 (n=855) on the 5-point Likert scale (1 – 'definitely not' and 5 – 'definitely yes'). Half of the respondents (52.7%, n=452) are not currently engaged in any campus activities, whereas 28.2% (n=242) are occasionally involved and 11.9% (n=61) were actively involved. No involvement in campus activities in the past was indicated by 80.8% of respondents (n=365). Participation in educational events was selected by 160 respondents (18.6%), followed by hobby-based and social clubs (18.1%, n=156) and multicultural activities (11.8%, n=102). Nearly half of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that COVID-19 impacted their participation in campus activities (50.4%, n=457), whereas 22.1% (n=189) indicated no impact of COVID-19 on their campus involvement.

There was a weak positive relationship between respondents' current involvement in campus activities and their views of themselves as leaders ( $r(855) = .16, p < .001$ ), although their involvement moderately positively related with their on-campus involvement as a leader of student-centered activities ( $r(220) = .31, p < .001$ ). Respondents' current involvement on campus also had a moderate positive relationship with their involvement in planning of campus activities as a leader in the future ( $r(855) = .38, p < .001$ ).

In addition, when examining the relationship between respondents' involvement on campus and student capacity to be a leader, their motivation to develop their leadership skills, attitudes towards leadership development and practice, their leadership experiences, and academic achievement, there

was a moderate positive relationship between participants' involvement on campus and their motivation to be a leader ( $r(672) = .37, p < .001$ ) and positive attitude towards their own leadership ( $r(653) = .35, p < .001$ ). No statistically significant relationship between respondents' present participation in campus activities and their academic achievement (GPA) was found. Simple linear regression was also used to test if respondents' current participation in campus activities significantly predicted academic achievement (GPA). The overall regression was statistically insignificant ( $R^2 = .001, F(1, 769) = .39, p = .53$ ).

**Any findings that you feel NACA will find particularly pertinent:** this study has potential implications for NACA in respect to creating opportunities for first-generation students' engagement in different types of campus activities (see above). Considering that first-generation students' involvement on campus related with their motivation to be a better leader and positive attitude towards leadership, consideration of campus engagement strategies focusing on furthering student motivation and positive outlook towards leadership and engagement in general is warranted. Last, additional analysis is suggested to explore these findings based on gender, age, and year in college.