

RESEARCH AGENDA

In an era of tight budgets, university leadership is demanding that decisions made in student affairs be evidence-based and data-driven. Conducting research provides data for those decisions, facilitates the advancement of the profession, and helps practitioners advocate for more money and resources. The NACA[®] Research Agenda is a tool for campus activities practitioners to use to guide their work. It offers sample topics that provide a starting point for a project or helps develop a research question to be answered. Campus activities professionals can use the NACA[®] Research Agenda to explore these questions:

- How can campus activities professionals demonstrate the influence and impact between their work and the campus environment?
- How can campus activities professionals demonstrate the specific influence of involvement in campus activities programs on student learning and development in college?
- How can campus activities professionals embrace their roles as educators and facilitate the advancement of the profession?

Benefits of the NACA Research Agenda

- It guides potential research, assessment, evaluation, and scholarship that promotes and supports the NACA mission and vision.
- It guides ongoing research and scholarship related to the campus activities profession.
- It guides priorities for award selection for Advancing Research in Campus Activities Grant recipients.
- It guides priorities for future collaborations with other associations and the future development of research teams that can be guided through their work by NACA.
- It guides prospective authors toward topic areas for potential submissions to the Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship (JCAPS).
- It inspires campus activities professionals to connect emerging scholarship with effective daily practice.



Focus 1: The Impact of Involvement in Campus Activities Programs

This category of research broadens understanding of the influence and impact between the work of campus activities programs and the campus environment.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**—Ways in which campus activities programs contribute to and promote diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just campus cultures
- **Sense of Belonging**—How involvement in campus activities programs influences student and campus culture, reinforces campus traditions, fosters student sense of belonging, and impacts overall student well-being
- **Student Success**—The impact that involvement in campus activities programs has on student persistence, retention, progression towards degree attainment, and resilience
- **Student Engagement**—Ways that campus activities programs contribute to a culture of student engagement (beyond involvement and empowering student agency) in their academic and developmental success

Sample topics for Focus 1 include (but are not limited to):

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

- What is the relationship between demographics of student populations and cultural student organizations on campus?
- How can campus activities programs help build inclusive communities?
- How can campus activities programs avoid marginalizing minoritized student groups?
- How do campus activities programs consider intersectionality of its student leaders and campus populations overall?
- Are campus activities programs catering programmatic offerings to the majority and unintentionally sustaining inequitable power structures and white supremacy in higher education?

Sense of Belonging

- How does campus involvement support construction of a social environment related but not limited to student interactions, campus speech, social justice, and sub-cultures?
- What does sense of belonging look like across different institutional types?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs influence sense of belonging?
- How do campus activities programs contribute to student choices pertaining to healthy behaviors and satisfying lifestyles?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs impact holistic student health and well-being?
- How do campus activities programs' marketing or promotional efforts explicitly or subtly create perceptions of who is or who is not welcome at events or in organizations or offices?

Student Success

- What is the impact of campus activities programs on student persistence and graduation rates?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs impact GPA, persistence to graduation, first- to second-year retention, etc.?
- Do student leaders within campus activities programs experience positive academic success outcomes compared to their peers? Does involvement in any way deter academic success?
- What types of campus activities programs are included in the dialogue of "High Impact Practices," thereby contributing significantly to student retention and persistence?

Student Engagement

- Do campuses scoring high on NSSE, CSSE, or other nationally-normed engagement-measuring instruments include common elements within their campus activities programs?
- How do educators or professionals leading campus activities programs differentiate between and measure student engagement and student involvement as theoretical and assessment frameworks?
- How does meaningful involvement in campus activities programs positively impact resilience, self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and self-direction in academic and developmental success?

Focus 2: Student Learning and Development

This area of research and scholarship identifies the specific influence of involvement in campus activities programs on student learning and development in college.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**—Ways in which campus activities programs impact how students acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and abilities related to cultural competence
- **Post-Graduation Employability and Preparation**—How students acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and abilities through involvement in campus activities programs, and build a capacity to find success after graduation
- **Beyond-the-Classroom Skill Development**—Exploration of transferable skill development that occurs during involvement in campus activities programs, including leadership, teamwork, identity development, conflict resolution, decision-making, communication and listening, strategic planning, cultural competencies, self-discipline, etc.
- **Event Planning**—Processes involved in campus event planning conducted by student leaders and professional staff in campus activities programs and related operations, including but not limited to in-person and virtual programming, market research to impact decision-making, managing volunteers, and inclusivity and belonging
- **Lifelong Dedication to Learning and Development**—Ways in which involvement in campus activities programs encourage an ongoing and lifelong desire to learn, develop, and grow, both professionally and personally

Sample topics for Focus 2 include (but are not limited to):

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

- Do students engage with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in campus activities programs?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs impact students' understanding of their privileged and marginalized identities?
- What cultural competencies do students involved in campus activities programs develop? To what degree?
- What are the outcomes of diversity programming for white, middle-class, able-bodied, traditionally-aged students beyond tolerance?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs impact a student's spiritual or meditative/faith-based awareness?

Post-Graduation Employability and Preparation

- What is the impact on personal development from leadership training opportunities (e.g., efficiency, identity, resiliency)?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs connect to academic coursework?
- What can students expect to learn from their student employment experience that is applicable to their career aspirations?
- Do students who participate in NACA® NEXT show greater knowledge and skill gains than those who don't? Are students who complete NACA® NEXT more likely to understand and self-measure their skill level more accurately than their peers who did not complete NACA® NEXT?
- Does involvement in campus activities programming have any effect on the preparation of students for graduate or professional schools?

Beyond-the-Classroom Skill Development

- What is the difference in transferable skill development between student leaders involved with campus activities programs and their peers who are not involved?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs impact a student leader's capacity for navigating team dynamics?

- In which ways have student leaders clarified their personal identity development due to their involvement in campus activities programs?
- What are the best tools to assess and evaluate general and specific student skill acquisition and development?

Event Planning

- In light of current events and emergencies (e.g., global pandemics, severe weather, political movements), what hardships are campus activities programs experiencing? What hardships are student leaders experiencing?
- How are campus activities programs reengaging with students after virtual-only programming, Zoom fatigue, and other ramifications of COVID-19? What are the long-term effects and impacts?
- What specific knowledge, skills, and abilities do students gain from interactions with associate members and performers?
- What changes, developments, or new best practices have been published in event planning over time?
- What best practices exist in terms of staff, student leader, and volunteer management and supervision in campus activities programs?
- What best practices exist in incorporating accessibility and belonging in campus activities programs' marketing and promotional efforts so as to welcome all?

Lifelong Dedication to Learning and Development

- Longitudinally, are student leaders in campus activities programs more likely to pursue formal education after graduation, including but not limited to further degrees or professional certifications?
- How do students grow and learn after their involvement in campus activities programs?
- Do graduates formerly involved in campus activities programs seek out ongoing professional development, such as free or paid webinars, conferences, or online open courses?
- How do students involved in campus activities programs develop an attitude of lifelong learning after college graduation?

Focus 3: The Professionalization of Campus Activities

As campus activities professionals embrace their roles as educators on campus and the student affairs profession continues to evolve, this focus area investigates the specific experiences and contributions of campus activities practitioners.

- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility**—Ways in which campus activities professionals commit to continued growth and applying new research in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- **Student Organization Advising**—The role of student organization advisors and the overall link between this role and the teaching and learning priorities of an institution, as well as their impact on student learning and development
- **Graduate Preparation**—Connections among pre-professional experiences in graduate programs, curricular inclusions and exclusions of graduate programs, and the realities of employment in campus activities
- **Professional Development**—Ways campus activities practitioners expand their knowledge and skills, as well as how they progress through their careers in higher education and how they manage work-life balance, mental health, overall wellness, and burnout

Sample topics for Focus 3 include (but are not limited to):

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility

- How do campus activities professionals learn about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- In what ways do campus activities professionals from marginalized groups experience burnout differently from their peers?
- How can professional advisors intentionally incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion research and theory into decision-making efforts and hiring or onboarding efforts?
- How does involvement in campus activities programs help meet institutional efforts or mission in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives?
- How can campus activities programs help identify barriers to accessibility in higher education beyond its own programming?

Student Organization Advising

- What best practices exist in terms of supervising and advising student leaders, other professional staff, and volunteers in campus activities programs?
- What types of advising interventions foster certain types of learning?
- How has the student organization advisor role changed over time?
- Can students articulate any differences between experiences working with volunteer organization advisors as compared to advising from campus activities professionals?
- How do faculty who serve as student organization advisors describe ways this role enriches their teaching or their engagement on campus?

Graduate Preparation

- How do students completing student affairs graduate programs learn key aspects of the campus activities profession, such as supervision, event planning, and student organization advising?
- How are graduate students mentored into the campus activities profession?
- How can graduate preparation programs more intentionally integrate knowledge of social justice, inclusion, oppression, privilege, and power into curricula? How can professionals more intentionally integrate the same into their practice?
- How commonly do campus activities professionals pursue and attain a terminal degree? How do doctoral degrees benefit campus activities professionals?
- How do campus activities professionals balance professional obligations with graduate studies?

Professional Development

- What are common career trajectories for campus activities practitioners who progress through a long-term career in higher education?
- How do campus activities practitioners utilize research and scholarship to inform their work?
- How do supervisors encourage the use of research and scholarship in campus activities?
- Do campus activities professionals view themselves as educators? Do their campuses embrace that role?
- How do volunteer roles contribute to the professional growth of higher education administrators?
- In which ways are institutions and individual professionals managing and mitigating burnout of professionals in campus activities programs and other areas of student affairs?



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