

Gamma Sigma Alpha, BGSU partner for nationwide study

BOWLING GREEN, OH.--Gamma Sigma Alpha, the national Greek academic honor society for fraternity and sorority members in North America, and Bowling Green State University's doctoral program in higher education administration are collaborating to study the impact of fraternity and sorority membership on academic achievement in college students.

The three-year partnership involved a nationwide study that is expected to yield information about Greek community and students' academic success.

"We are very excited about this partnership," said Beth Saul, executive director for Gamma Sigma Alpha. "This is the first time an honor society will work in collaboration with a higher education department to produce credible studies on what is our first and foremost priority, that of being a student."

Saul added that BGSU is an appropriate place for the study to be housed because its master's and doctoral programs in college student personnel and higher education administration are ranked among the best in the country.

The partnership called for BGSU and Gamma Sigma Alpha to jointly supervise a BGSU doctoral graduate student for three years. The study was be two-fold. First will be a compilation of existing studies on the relationship between academic achievement and fraternity and sorority membership. The second emphasis was be to engage in a study of areas not covered by the current literature but of significant interest to higher education and the fraternity and sorority community.

Fraternities and sororities are located on more than 800 college campuses in North America, with more than 600,000 undergraduate students enrolled in approximately 5,500 chapters. Approximately 10 percent of the undergraduate student populations at four-year institutions are members of fraternities and sororities, according to the latest data.

Gamma Sigma Alpha, founded in 1989, currently has more than 10,000 initiated members on 150 college campuses. Membership requires a 3.50 cumulative grade point average and junior or senior status.

Factors the Impact Student Achievement & Retention

Note: Correlation and causality are not the same concepts. Positive correlations infer that the higher the level of the known factor, the higher the level of the outcome (in this case, either academic achievement or persistence / retention). Likewise, negative correlations infer that the higher the level of the known factor, the lower the level of the outcome (and vice versa).

Factor	Achievement	Retention	Citation
Academic adjustment programs	POS	POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Living in living-learning centers	POS		Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Grouping students by major in living centers	POS		Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Social integration / involvement		POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Academic student culture	POS		Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)

Social participation	POS	POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Student-faculty interaction		POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Living in residence halls	POS	POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Academic advising	POS	POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Working (part-time or full-time) off campus		NEG	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Working (part-time) on-campus		POS	Pascarella & Terenzini (1991)
Academic self efficacy	POS		Garcia & Hu (2001)
Optimism	POS		Garcia & Hu (2001)
TRIO programs (for African American students)	POS		Blake (1998)
Positive view of own racial group	POS		Allen, et al (1999)
Small group learning	POS		Springer, Donovan, & Stanne (1999)
Transfer shock (from a community college to a 4-year college)	NEG		Diaz (1992)
Mastery learning programs	POS		Kulik, et al (1990)
Progressive relaxation techniques	POS		Moon, et al (1985)
Greek affiliation		POS	Feldman & Newcomb (1973)
Peer group influence	POS	POS	Feldman & Newcomb (1973)
Overestimation of one's own academic ability	NEG		Feldman & Newcomb (1973)
Receipt of merit based financial aid	POS		Astin (1993)
Majoring in education	POS		Astin (1993)
Majoring in the arts & humanities	POS		Astin (1993)
Faculty diversity orientation	POS		Astin (1993)
Receipt of need based financial aid	NEG		Astin (1993)
Majoring in engineering	NEG		Astin (1993)
Attending a public institution (v. private)	NEG		Astin (1993)
Hours spent partying	NEG		Astin (1993)
Working full time	NEG		Astin (1993)
Majoring in Business, Psychology, or other social sciences		POS	Astin (1993)
% of PhDs in the faculty		POS	Astin (1993)
Good time management skills		POS	Astin (1993)
Stress levels		NEG	Astin (1993)
% of institutional resources devoted to student affairs		POS	Astin (1993)
% of graduate students in the student body		POS	Astin (1993)
High intellectual self esteem		POS	Astin (1993)
% of students with need based financial aid		NEG	Astin (1993)

Lack of student community		NEG	Astin (1993)
Materialistic tendencies & importance of social status		NEG	Astin (1993)
More than 80% men in student body		NEG	Astin (1993)
High faculty morale		POS	Astin (1993)
High faculty liberalism		POS	Astin (1993)
% of women in faculty		POS	Astin (1993)
Faculty perception of racial conflict		POS	Astin (1993)
# of student-student interactions		POS	Astin (1993)
Receiving vocational or career counseling		POS	Astin (1993)
Enrollment in honors program		POS	Astin (1993)
Receiving personal or psychological counseling		NEG	Astin (1993)
# of science courses taken		NEG	Astin (1993)
# of math or numerically based courses taken		NEG	Astin (1993)
# of hours spent reading for pleasure		NEG	Astin (1993)

Complete Works Cited:

- Allen, M., Bradford, L., Grimes, D., Cooper, E., Howard, L., & Howard, U. (1999, November). *Racial group orientation and social outcomes: Summarizing relationships using meta-analysis*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Communication Association, Chicago, IL.
- Astin, A. W., (1993). *What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco.
- Blake, J. H. (ed) (1998). *The full circle: TRIO programs, higher education and the American future*. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 67(4), 329-454.
- Diaz, P. E. (1992). *Effects of transfer on academic performance of community college students at the four-year institution*. *Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice*, 16(3), 279-291.
- Feldman, K. A., & Newcomb, T. M., (1973). *The impact of college on students*. Jossey-Bass: London.
- Garcia, B. F., & Hu, L. (2001). *Academic self efficacy and first-year college student performance and adjustment*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(1), 55-64.
- Kulik, C. C., and others (1990). *Effectiveness of mastery learning programs: A meta-analysis*. *Review of Educational Research*, 60(2), 265-299.
- Moon, C. E., and others (1985, March). *Relaxation and educational outcomes: A meta-analysis*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How College Affects Students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Springer, L., Donovan, S. S., Stanne, M. E. (1999). *Effects of small-group learning on undergraduates in science, mathematics, engineering and technology: A meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 69*(1), 21-51.

The impact of Greek membership on academic achievement and persistence in college: A meta-analysis of research findings

Common themes across the research areas include:

- The academic achievement of members of Greek letter organizations (GLOs) seems to be more associated with local campus grade point average (GPA), local campus student culture, and individual chapter culture than any national organization's scholarship program or simply the effects of membership.
- The academic achievement of fraternity men has gone through several changes. In the studies prior to 1956, there seem to be no differences between the GPAs of fraternity men compared to non-fraternity men, while in the time period between 1956 and 1972, the findings differ, showing in some studies that Greek men achieved higher GPAs than non-Greeks, and in other studies Greek men achieved lower GPAs than non-greeks. Most recently, in the studies that have been done since 1972, fraternity men have been found to perform academically at the same level, or slightly below their non-Greek counterparts.
- GLOs seem to have the ability to assert both positive and negative influences on individual members in regards to values, academic achievement, study habits, leadership and social skills, and aspiration toward graduate school.
- High achieving chapters seem to attract high achieving students while low achieving chapters seem to attract low achieving students.
- While it seems that results are widely varied based on both individual chapter and campus culture, Greek men (collectively) seem to earn GPAs that fall slightly below all campus averages on their respective campuses and Greek women (collectively) seem to earn GPAs that fall slightly above the all campus average on their respective campuses. The disparity between the Greek men's and women's GPAs is reflective of the disparity between non-Greek men's and women's GPAs, whereas membership in a Greek organization has no significant effect on academic achievement.
- Any negative effects that pledging may have on GPA seem to be worse for men than for women.
- While very few studies have been conducted in this area, students who waited until after their first year to pledge a GLO did not have higher GPAs for the term in which they pledged than those who joined during their first semester. Likewise, deferred recruitment seems to have had a negative impact on GPA for the pledge term due to the disruption of pre-developed academic patterns.
- Members of GLOs seem to be more likely to admit to unethical academic practices (e.g., cheating) than their non-Greek counterparts.
- Throughout the literature, fraternity membership and taking residence in the chapter house have significant, positive effects on persistence and retention.
- While the research in this area is dated, studies show that Greek men are more socially integrated into campus culture and they achieved the same level of GPAs as their non-

Greek, residence hall counterparts.

- Studies conducted at private colleges seem to reflect similar patterns as those done at public schools (which are in the vast majority throughout this analysis of research).
- Studies conducted on a multi-campus level show normative effects, which blur the distinctions between campuses and suggest that data need to be collected at the individual campus level to ensure that decisions are made based on applicable research.
- While again, very little research has been done in this specific area, members of historically non-white GLOs seem to achieve higher academically than their white Greek counterparts.

Areas of Study

The **annotated bibliography** covers over 100 studies, thesis, dissertations and other articles. While very complete, there are some areas of achievement that the bibliography does not cover.

Below is a list of areas that are gaps in our knowledge about Greek achievement. This list represents some of the more interesting areas of achievement in fraternities and sororities.

Study Questions

Note: All questions addressing “achievement” are to be understood as the academic achievement of Greeks, and particularly their grade point average and continual rate of progress toward a degree (matriculation).

- What effect(s) does deferred recruitment have on achievement when deferring recruitment until:
 - 1) Mid-semester,
 - 2) Second semester
 - 3) Second year
 - 4) Etc...
- What is the impact of residency on achievement:
 - 1) In campus-owned Greek houses?
 - 2) In alumni-owned Greek houses?
 - 3) In chapter-rented Greek houses?
 - 4) On a Greek floor in a residence hall?
 - 5) In houses with quiet hour policies?
 - 6) In newer or more elaborate housing facilities?
- What is the effect of a “live-in advisor” (i.e. graduate students, house parents, etc...) on achievement?
- How do chapters recruit potential scholars to become members?
- What are the characteristics (i.e. enforcement of academic standards, recruitment based on academic potential, cumulative grade point average, etc...) of high and/or low achieving chapters on a given campus or within a given national fraternity or sorority, and is there any correlation between chapters with high or low incidences of alcohol abuse, hazing, and other discipline problems and achievement?
- What are the effects of college and/or university scholarship policies, such as achieving a minimum chapter or individual GPA each term?

- What are the effects of national fraternity/sorority scholarship policies (such as achieving a minimum GPA each term)?
- What is the efficacy of academic incentives (rewards to members for good scholarship)?
- What is the efficacy of requiring minimum GPA's for initiation? Do the effects recede over time? Why?
- What are the effects of membership on achievement in ethnic Greek letter organizations?
- What are the effects of alcohol-free or substance-free chapter houses on the achievement of members who live in the house? On members who live outside elsewhere?
- What are the effects of Greek membership on the academic achievement of first-generation college students?
- What is the relationship between Greek membership and the aspiration toward the pursuit of advanced degrees?
- What are the effects of published chapter achievement scores on 1) recruiting? 2) pledging? 3) eventual membership?
- What is the correlation between time spent participating in Greek-related events and achievement?
- What is the efficacy of mandatory study tables on achievement?

Controls for Studying Achievement

As others study Greek achievement, it is important to control for certain factors that have been shown to impact the outcome of such studies. First is the need to **control for academic ability** (predicted GPA). This has shown to be a significant factor, so much so, that without controlling for the ability of study participants, the study outcomes would be not nearly as powerful.

Other factors that we suggest are considered in any study:

- 1) Fraternities vs. sororities (wherever possible, study the two separately)
- 2) Year in school (Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors)
- 3) Campus type (residential vs. commuter, public vs. private)
- 4) Campus size
- 5) Size of the Greek systems being compared (number of chapters, number of students involved)
- 6) Institution focus (research, comprehensive, regional, liberal arts)
- 7) Groups housed in university-owned vs. privately-owned facilities (where both exist)

- 8) Members who live in the house, in a regular residence halls on-campus, or in off-campus / unaffiliated housing
- 9) General members and officers of the organization

DeBard, R., Lake, T., & Binder, R. S. (2006). Greeks and grades: the first-year experience, *NASPA Journal*, 43(1). <http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol43/iss1/art4>

ABSTRACT:

After reviewing institutional records for more than 3,000 students, the authors consider how new members of Greek organizations at a Midwestern university performed academically when compared to non-Greeks, in terms of their predicted versus actual grade point averages and whether joining during the first or second semester made a difference in their performance. Implications for improving the first-year experience of Greek members are explored.

Eberhardt, D., Rice, N. D., & Smith, L. (2003). Effects of greek membership on academic integrity, alcohol abuse, and risky sexual behavior at a small college, *NASPA Journal*, 41(1), <http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol41/iss1/art7>

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this study was to examine differences in alcohol abuse, sexual behaviors, and academic integrity among Greek and non-Greek students at a small, churchaffiliated, liberal arts campus; and further, to compare any differences between Greek men and Greek women. The results of this study were then compared to previous findings at larger, public universities. Results indicated that Greek students tend to experience more problems related to alcohol abuse, were more likely to fabricate sources, but were similar to non-Greek students in their neglect of safe-sex behaviors and in their frequency of cheating on exams. Both Greek men and Greek women reported more alcohol use than their non-Greek counterparts, and Greek men reported more use and more negative secondary effects of alcohol than Greek women. The results provide partial support for considering institutional context when examining the effects of student subcultures such as Greek organizations.

Zuckerman, R. A., and Kretovics, M. A. (2003). Member acquisition and retention model, *NASPA Journal*, 41(1), <http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol41/iss1/art8>

ABSTRACT:

The authors propose a model that describes the process of acquiring and retaining new members in an established group or organization. The model also provides a means of analyzing processes and "tools" employed to attract and inform nonmembers. In addition, analysis of processes and tools can be used to optimize their effectiveness for the purposes of acquiring and retaining membership. The model may be employed to analyze a variety of situations where nonparticipating individuals become willing participants, increasing the likelihood of their becoming members.

Pace, D., and McGrath, P. B. (2002). A comparison of drinking behaviors of students in Greek organizations and students active in a campus volunteer organization, *NASPA Journal*, 39(3), <http://publications.naspa.org/naspajournal/vol39/iss3/art1>

ABSTRACT:

The drinking habits of students who are members of Greek organizations and a student volunteer organization were compared using the Core Survey, a survey developed by the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention (1999) and administered widely to students in higher education. Three hundred and twenty-one students from a midwestern university participated in the study. Results

indicated that Greeks drink more than volunteering students. However, there were no significant differences between Greeks and volunteers on certain specific negative side effects of drinking.