

# Student Life Survey Report 2023

Office of Student Life

*Grand Valley State University*

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[One Page Student Life Survey Report 2023 Summary](#)

# 1. Introduction

This survey was created with the intention of collecting data regarding student opinions and experiences pertaining to the Office of Student Life (OSL) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU).

## Background

The OSL survey has been created and distributed in a number of ways in recent years. Moving forward, the OSL team will work to develop a cohesive strategy for the development, distribution and analysis of the OSL survey in order to gather data that can be compared, analyzed and utilized to guide improvements.

### **2019**

Two different surveys were created. One survey was sent exclusively to students involved in Registered Student Organizations (RSOs) via LakerLink and resulted in 235 responses. The second was sent to a random selection of all students, no matter how involved or uninvolved, and resulted in 353 responses. These responses were compared in order to identify themes, patterns, and distinctions between the two groups.

### **2022**

This survey was sent out to all registered users of LakerLink, gathering 1,585 responses. Consequently, the data collected was only from students involved in RSOs. Uninvolved students were not surveyed, and the survey focused on RSO involvement more than Student Life event attendance.

### **2023 (current survey)**

This year, the survey was sent to all students via the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Laker Weekly Newsletter, giving room for students who are less involved to share their opinions. This methodology allows for direct comparison between involved and uninvolved students, allowing Student Life to more accurately identify areas for improvement and meet the needs of all students.

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## 2. Methodology

The Office of Student Life survey was built through Qualtrics and sent via email to all GVSU students and staff through the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Laker Weekly Newsletter on April 27, 2023. An incentive was offered; students were informed that participating would grant them the chance of winning a prize bag worth \$25. Four winners were chosen via random selection and were notified via email.

The survey questions and structure were developed by Leah Erben (Office of Student Life Marketing Communications Coordinator), Miranda Bette (Marketing Project Manager – OSL student staff), and Emilee Walsh (Digital Marketing Staff Assistant – OSL student staff). Melissa Baker-Boosamra (Associate Director of Student Life for Civic Engagement & Assessment) provided guidance and support. The survey data was analyzed and this report was written by Leah Erben, Braelyn McCalister (Marketing Project Manager – OSL

student staff), and Grace Hasley (Writer – OSL student staff). Review and feedback was provided by Melissa Baker-Boosamra.

Because this survey was sent to all GVSU students, not all respondents were RSO members, and not all respondents attended an OSL event during the 2022-2023 school year. The survey consisted of questions pertaining to demographics, student involvement, and student experiences within Student Life.

This survey was developed with the intention of broadening the focus to include RSOs, Campus Activities Board (CAB) events, Civic Engagement programming, and Fraternity & Sorority Life (FSL). The results of this survey should determine whether or not the Office of Student Life is adequately helping students get involved and feel connected at Grand Valley State University. Additionally, the results will assist the OSL with assessment and strategic planning.

This survey was intended to answer the following questions:

1. Are students involved in Student Life?
  - What students are involved? How many? In what ways are they involved?
2. How is the Office of Student Life impacting GVSU students?
  - Are involved students experiencing a more fulfilling college experience than students who are not involved?
3. How can the OSL get more students involved? Identify areas for improvement.
  - Determine why some students are not involved in Student Life — identify barriers they may be facing and develop ways to address those problems.

## Limitations

It's important to take the limitations of this study into consideration when interpreting the data and reviewing the findings. There were multiple factors that may have impacted the data:

### 1. **Timing**

This survey was sent out halfway through finals week. Students tend to be less responsive around the end of each semester, particularly around exams. If the survey had been sent out earlier, there would have likely been more responses.

### 2. **Demographics**

As displayed in the table below, the students who chose to participate in the survey are not 100% representative of the GVSU student body.

	<b>GVSU Demographics*</b>	<b>Survey Respondent Demographics</b>
<b>Race/ethnic Identity:</b>	78.3% White	75% White
	6.6% Hispanic or Latino	7% Hispanic or Latino
	5.1% African American or Black	6% African American or Black
	2.7% Asian 0.05% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	6% Asian / Pacific Islander
	0.4% American Indian or Alaskan Native	2% American Indian or Alaskan Native
<b>Gender Identity:</b>	61.4% Female	77.1% Female
	38.4% Male	18% Male
<b>Undergrad vs. Grad</b>	85.4% Undergraduate student	87.9% Undergraduate student
	14.6% Graduate student	12.1% Graduate student

**FIGURE 1: Demographic Comparison**

As displayed in **FIGURE 1**, the amount of female to male survey participants did not accurately reflect the gender identity breakdown of the actual university student body. For the survey to be more accurately reflective of all GVSU students, there would have needed to be more male participants.

### 3. Comparison of Past Surveys

Because this survey was structured differently than past Student Life (see “Background” within the “Introduction” section), the results of this survey were not able to be consistently compared to past results.

## Future Considerations

In the future, sending the survey out earlier and developing a more intentional timeline would strengthen the diversity of responses and create an organized approach at handling large data. It may also be helpful to conduct further in-depth focus groups to collect more data and answer specific questions. Ideally, this survey will remain more consistent in its structure and its content for the next few years so that the data is more easily comparable.

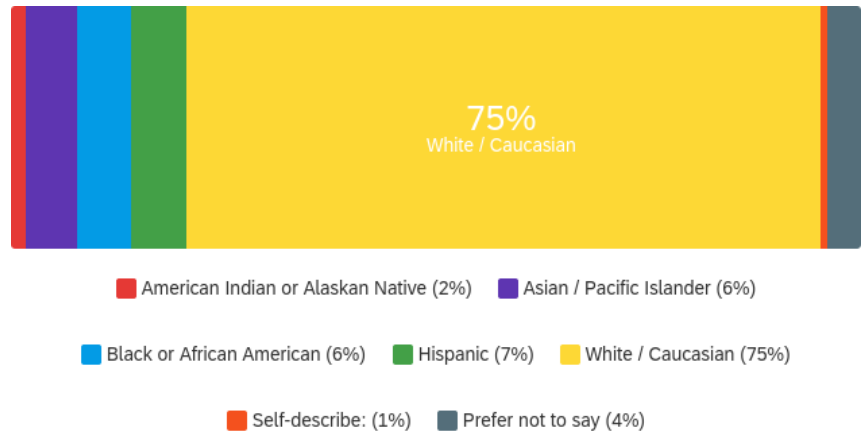
*\*GVSU demographic data collected from the GVSU Office of Institutional Analysis.  
The data displayed is from the beginning of the Winter 2023 semester.*

## 4. Results

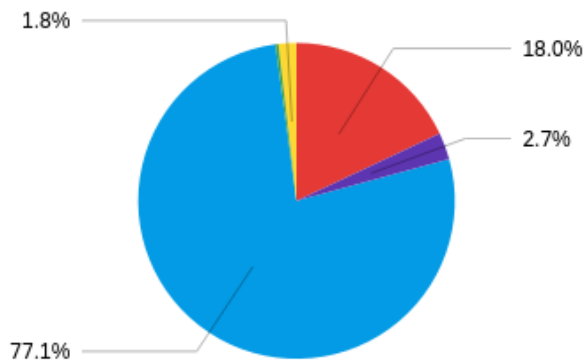
### Demographics

Note: the majority of demographic-related questions were optional.

- 375 total respondents

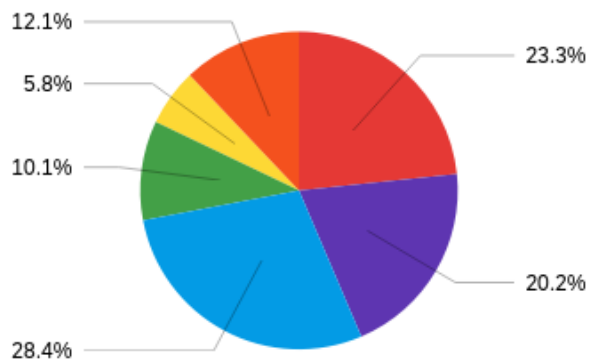


**FIGURE 2: Race/ethnicity**



Male Non-binary Female Self-describe: Prefer not to say

**FIGURE 3: Gender/identity**



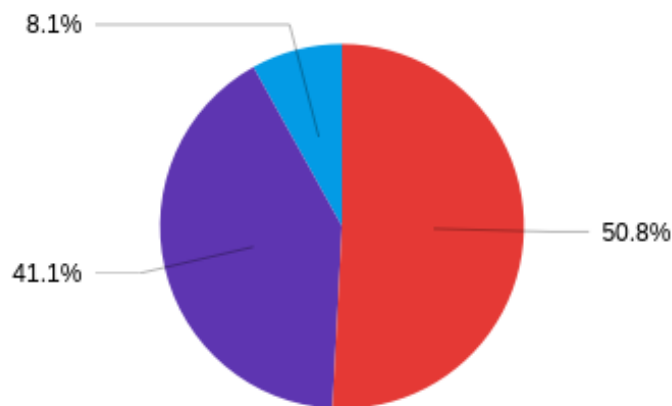
First year Second year Third year Fourth year Fifth year or more  
Graduate student

**FIGURE 4: Class Standing**

- Student status (“select all that apply”):
  - 44.25% commuter students
  - 33.63% transfer students
  - 16.37% nontraditional students
  - 5.75% international students
- Planning on returning to GVSU next semester (of the respondents who are not graduating):
  - 83.66% yes
  - 14.01% no
  - 2.3% not sure

## RSO Involvement

- **Q1: “Are you a member of a club or Registered Student Organization (RSO) at GVSU? (this includes academic/professional, club sports, cultural, fraternities/sororities, honor societies, interfaith, media, performing arts, special interest, service/advocacy, and graduate organizations)”**



■ Yes   ■ No   ■ I was in a RSO at GVSU at one point in time, but not anymore

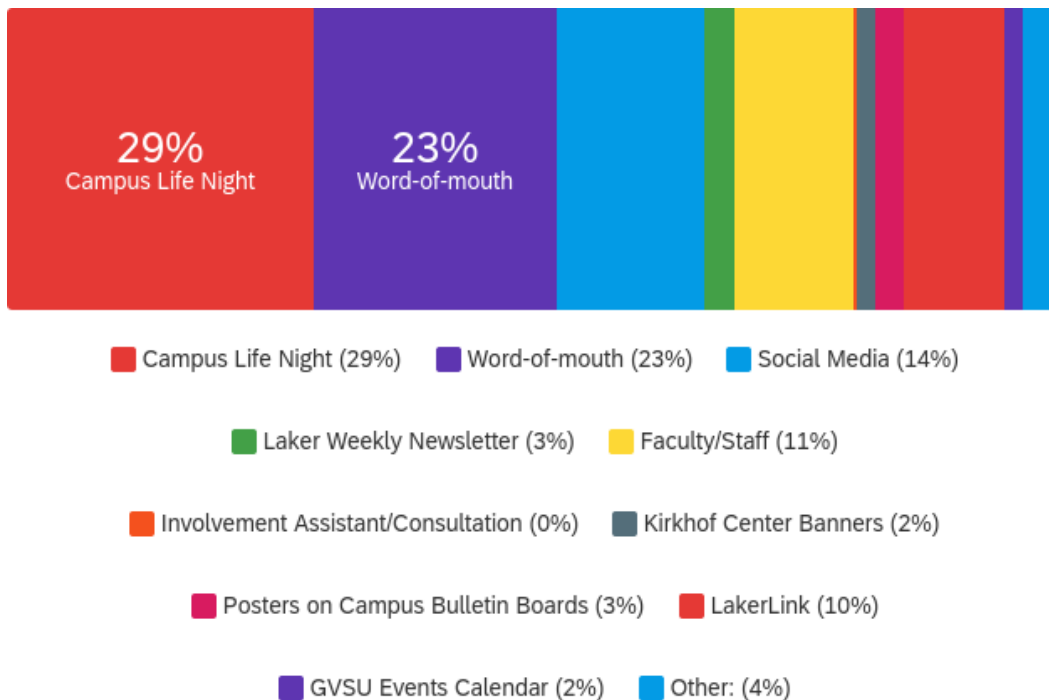
FIGURE 5: RSO Involvement

### COMPARISON:

Data from “GVSU Student Life Survey 2022”

- 45.1% of participants were members of at least one RSO **(5.7% increase)**
- Of the respondents who reported that they are currently involved in 1+ RSO(s):
  - **Q2: “How many organizations are you involved in?”**
    - 52% involved in 1 RSO
    - 25.7% involved in 2 RSOs
    - 14.9% involved in 3 RSOs

- 7.4% involved in 4 or more RSOs
- **Q3: “What category does your organization(s) fall under?”**
  - 32.1% Academic & Professional
  - 15.3% Special Interest
  - 8.4% Interfaith
  - 8% Club Sports
  - 6.6% Cultural
  - 6.6% Performing Arts
  - 4.7% Honor Society
  - 3.7% Fraternity & Sorority Life
  - 3.7% Other/Unsure
  - 2.9% Graduate Organization
  - 2.6% Fraternity - Professional
  - 0.7% Media
- **Q4: “How did you hear about your organization(s)?”**



**FIGURE 6: RSO Marketing**

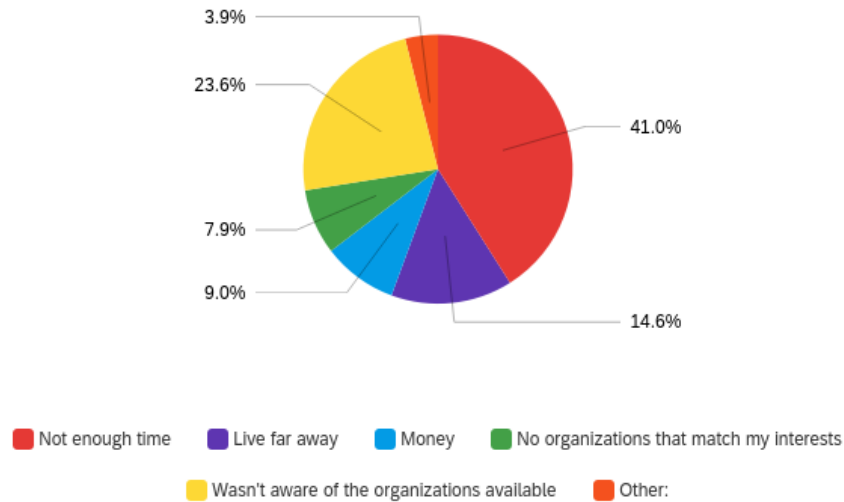
**COMPARISON:**

Data from “GVSU Student Life Survey 2022”

- The top three ways respondents found out about RSOs (in order) were Campus Life Night, word-of-mouth, and social media (**no change**)

- Of the respondents who said they are not a member of an RSO:

- **Q5: “Why are you not in a Registered Student Organization (RSO)? Select all that apply.”**



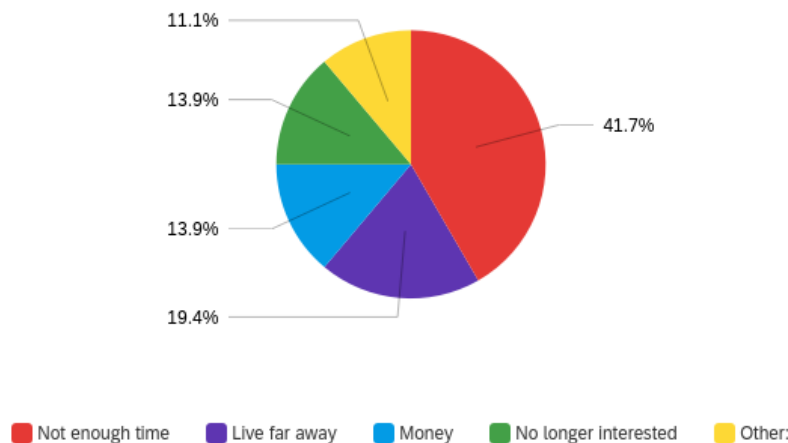
**FIGURE 7: Why Are You Not in an RSO?**

- **Q6: “Are you interested in joining a Registered Student Organization (RSO) in the future?”**

- 44% maybe
    - 19.9% no
    - 19.9% yes
    - 16.3% not returning to GVSU (graduating, transferring, etc.)

- Of the respondents who said they were in an RSO but are no longer involved:

- **Q7: “Why are you no longer involved in a Registered Student Organization (RSO)? (Select all that apply)”**

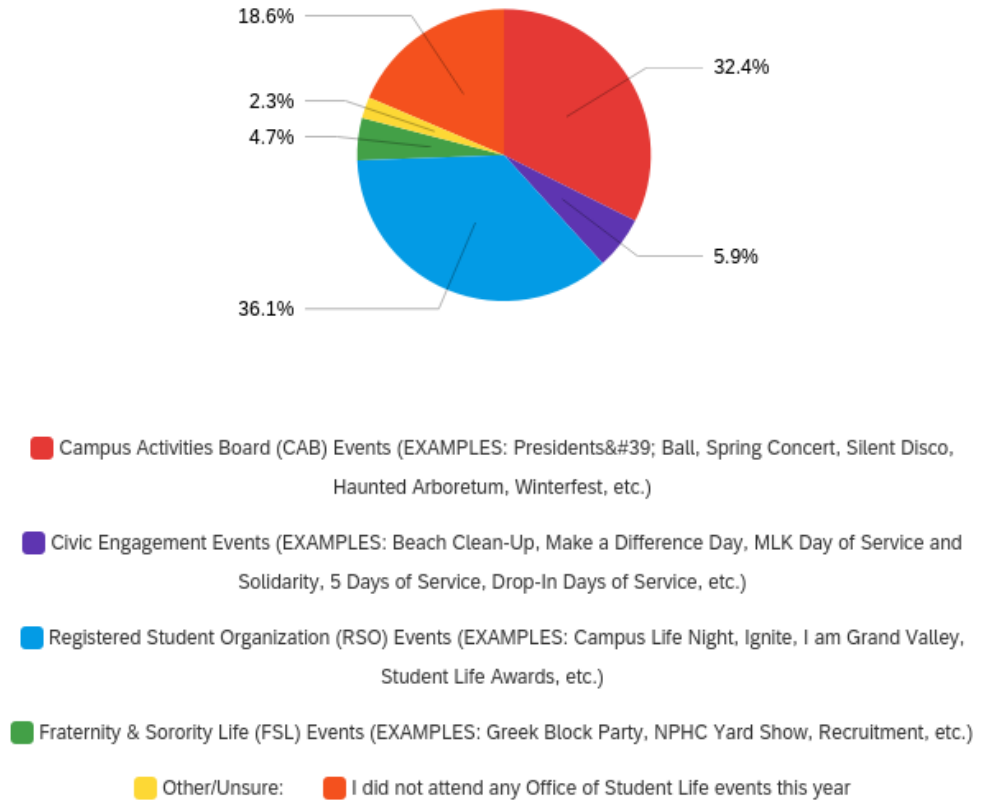


**FIGURE 8: Why Are You No Longer in an RSO?**

## Involvement in OSL Events

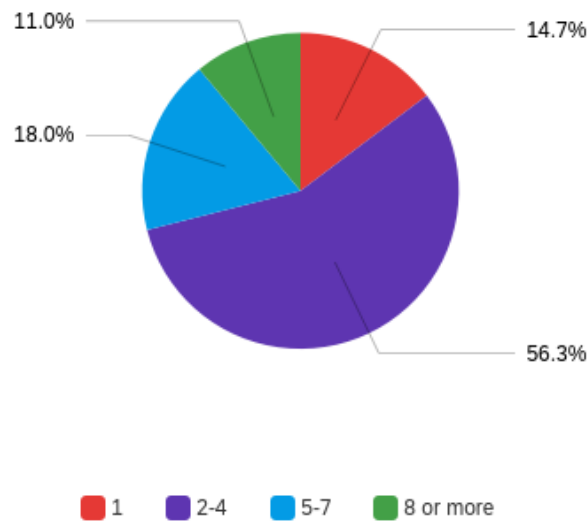
There were a large variety of Student Life events hosted throughout the 2022-2023 school year (**RSO, CAB, Civic Engagement, and FSL**).

- **Q9: “What Office of Student Life events did you attend this year? (Select all that apply)”**



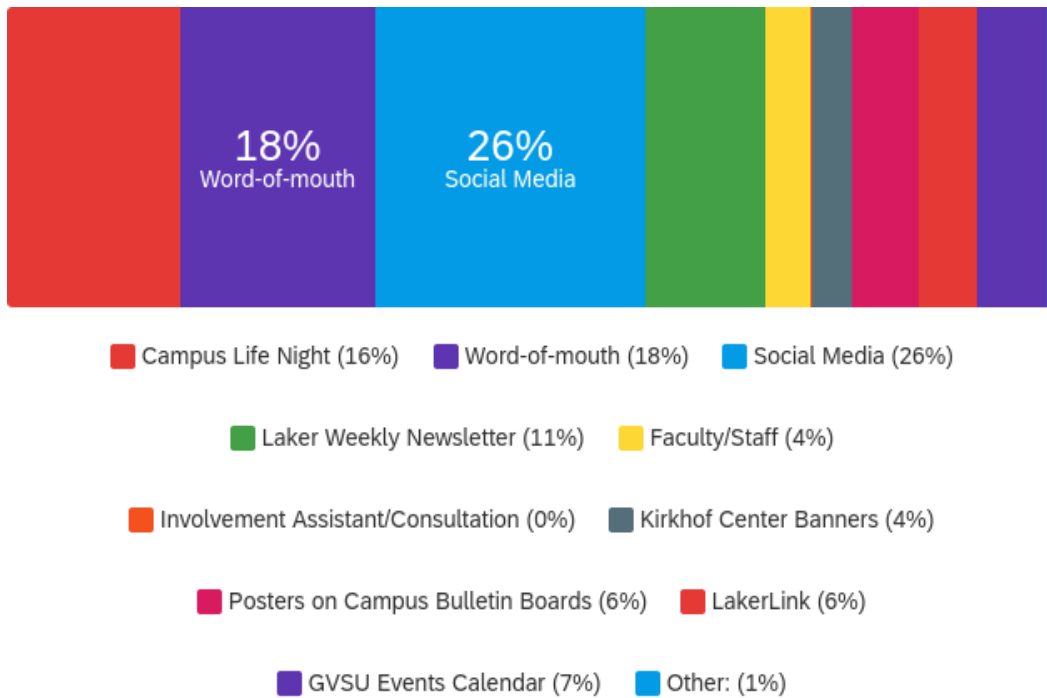
**FIGURE 9: Event Attendance**

- Of the respondents who said they did attend at least one OSL event this year:
  - **Q10: “Approximately how many events did you attend this year?”**



**FIGURE 10: Quantity of Events**

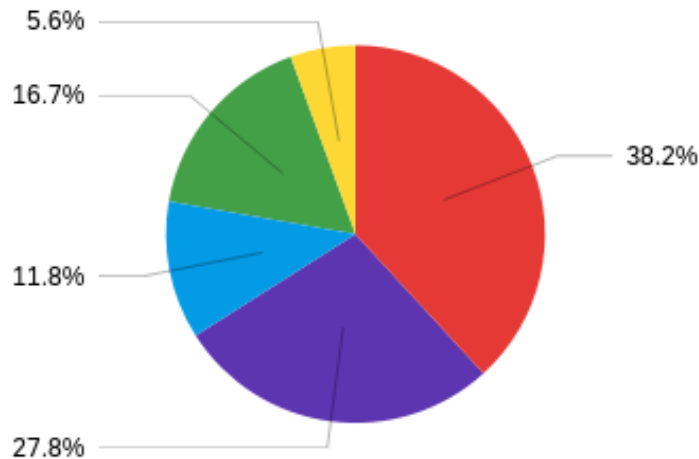
○ **Q11: “How did you hear about these events? (Select all that apply)”**



**FIGURE 11: Event Marketing**

● Of the respondents who said they did not attend any OSL events this year:

○ **Q12: “Why did you not attend any events? (Select all that apply)”**



**FIGURE 12: Why Did You Not Attend Events?**

- **Q13: “Are you interested in attending Student Life events in the future?”**
  - 42.6% Maybe
  - 22.3% I am not returning to GVSU
  - 18.1% No
  - 17 % Yes

## Student Outcomes

**Q14: “Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:”**

		<b>RSO Involvement</b>				
		“I feel like I belong at Grand Valley.”	“I have developed leadership skills at Grand Valley.”	“I have accomplished personal development at Grand Valley.”	“I feel supported at Grand Valley.”	“I have Laker pride.”
<b>Of respondents involved in 1+ RSO(s)</b>	<i>Strongly agree or somewhat agree:</i>	<b>79.4%</b>	<b>82.9%</b>	<b>90.3%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>80.6%</b>
	<i>Neither agree nor disagree:</i>	<b>7.4%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>
	<i>Somewhat disagree or strongly disagree:</i>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
<b>Of respondents not currently involved in an RSO</b>	<i>Strongly agree or somewhat agree:</i>	<b>76.1%</b>	<b>64.8%</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>77.4%</b>	<b>73.6%</b>
	<i>Neither agree nor disagree:</i>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>
	<i>Somewhat disagree or strongly disagree:</i>	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>

**FIGURE 13: Student Outcomes Table – Students in RSOs vs. Students not in RSOs**

A comparison was done between students involved in at least one RSO during the 2022-2023 academic year and students who were involved in no RSOs during the 2022-2023 academic year. Their responses to the provided prompts revealed the following data about students who were involved in at least one RSO:

- “I feel like I belong at Grand Valley.”
  - 3.3% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I have developed leadership skills at Grand Valley.”
  - 18.1% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I have accomplished personal development at Grand Valley.”
  - 1% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I feel supported at Grand Valley.”
  - 10.6% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I have Laker pride.”
  - 7% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”

**OSL Event Attendance**

		“I feel like I belong at Grand Valley.”	“I have developed leadership skills at Grand Valley.”	“I have accomplished personal development at Grand Valley.”	“I feel supported at Grand Valley.”	“I have Laker pride.”
<b>Of respondents who attended 1+ OSL events</b>	<i>Strongly agree or somewhat agree:</i>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>74.7%</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>85.4%</b>	<b>81.5%</b>
	<i>Neither agree nor disagree:</i>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>16.7%</b>	<b>7.3%</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>12.9%</b>
	<i>Somewhat disagree or strongly disagree:</i>	<b>5.2%</b>	<b>8.59%</b>	<b>3.4%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>
<b>Of respondents who attended no OSL events or selected “Other/unsure”</b>	<i>Strongly agree or somewhat agree:</i>	<b>69.5%</b>	<b>71.6%</b>	<b>85.3%</b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>66.3%</b>
	<i>Neither agree nor disagree:</i>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>
	<i>Somewhat disagree or strongly disagree:</i>	<b>10.5%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>10.53%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>

**FIGURE 14:** Student Outcomes Table – Students who attended OSL events vs. students who didn't

A comparison was done between students who attended at least one Student Life event during the 2022-2023 school year and students who did not attend any Student Life events during the 2022-2023 school year. Their responses to the provided prompts revealed the following about students who did attend at least one Student Life event:

- “I feel like I belong at Grand Valley.”
  - 16.1% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I have developed leadership skills at Grand Valley.”
  - 3.1% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I have accomplished personal development at Grand Valley.”
  - 3.1% more likely to select “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree”
- “I feel supported at Grand Valley.”
  - 7.5% more likely to select “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”
- “I have Laker pride.”
  - 15.2% more likely to select “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree”

**Q27: “Please elaborate on what factors have contributed to your responses to the statements above (Free response)”**

*NOTE: the below data includes responses from all participants, not just those who were involved. Consequently, there are a large variety of factors that may have impacted participants’ responses, and not all of them relate to the Office of Student Life.*

Q27 Responses: Factors that students attribute to a positive sense of belonging and Laker pride (identifiable themes)

- Support from staff/faculty/department (35 related responses)
- RSO involvement (24 related responses)
- Community (18 related responses)
- Campus Events (8 related responses)
- Academic program (4 related responses)
- Campus employment (4 related responses)
- Athletics (2 related responses)

Q27 Responses: Factors that students attribute to a negative sense of belonging and Laker pride (identifiable themes)

- Negative staff/faculty/department experience (5 related responses)
- COVID-19 (5 related responses)
- Too busy to get involved (4 related responses)
- Non-traditional student / “too old” to get involved (4 related responses)
- Commuter student (4 related responses)
- Not enough events/orgs tailored to me/my community (4 related responses)
- Grad student, not enough involvement opportunities for grads (3 related responses)

## Notable Free Responses

Positive:

- Events
  - “The many events allowed me to meet people and spend time with a lot of friends. My favorite event of the year was the silent disco!”
- RSOs
  - “GVSU offers a lot of clubs and places to meet other students so that I am able to feel like I belong and am supported.”
- Other
  - “I feel connected to others here. Great environment.”
  - “Laker for a lifetime, enough said!”
  - “I think [Student Life] already [does] a wonderful job, so I have no suggestions.”

Constructive:

- Events
  - “There really is a lack of resources for commuter students. I tried to engage in campus events but I would either get notice of the event too late or it wouldn’t work with my class schedule.”
  - “It would be nice to know when and where the President’s Ball and other events are a few months out due to having to work around employment.”
  - “Events that are geared towards the older students at GVSU and online students would be helpful.”
  - “Have weekend activities for those who work full time.”
- RSOs

- “More grad-interest organizations? As far as I know, the only one is a catch-all for grad students.”
  - Marketing
    - “The best way to draw in college students is with free food and prizes.”
    - “Reach out more! Through several platforms as well (email, text, Facebook, PEW campus, etc.)”
  - Other
    - “Don’t let Covid happen again.”
- 

## 5. Analysis

### How Getting Involved Impacts the Student Experience

(see **FIGURE 13** and **FIGURE 14**)

Survey respondents were asked about their sense of belonging, leadership development, personal development, sense of support, and Laker pride during their time at Grand Valley.

**Overall, the data reveals that involved students are more likely to have a positive, fulfilling experience at Grand Valley.** Additionally, students who weren’t involved tended to respond with a higher rate of indifference by comparison.

### Addressing Involvement Barriers

(See **FIGURE 7** and **FIGURE 12**)

The top three reasons why students did not join an RSO were as follows:

- Not enough time (41%)
- Wasn’t aware of the organizations available (23.6%)
- Live far away (14.6%)

The top three reasons why students did not attend Student Life events were as follows:

- Not enough time (38.2%)
- Live far away (27.8%)
- Didn’t know about campus events (16.7%)

Students may believe that they don’t have enough time to get involved because they see RSOs and OSLE events as “just-for-fun” activities. While getting involved is fun, it also increases students’ sense of belonging, helps build leadership skills, and promotes personal development (see **FIGURE 13** and **FIGURE 14**). An intentional focus on better publicizing the deeper significance and impactful benefits of getting involved may increase student involvement.

Some respondents said that they'd like to see more events catered to commuter students, more events geared towards specific communities, and more events scheduled at different times (according to the "Notable Free Responses" section). It may be beneficial to conduct further marketing research (surveys, focus groups, etc.) to learn more about what events students would like to see in the future.

## Addressing Marketing Concerns

(See **FIGURE 6** and **FIGURE 11**)

The top three most common ways students heard about RSOs were as follows:

- Campus Life Night (29%)
- Word-of-mouth (23%)
- Social Media (14%)

The top three most common ways students heard about events were as follows:

- Social media (26%)
- Word-of-mouth (18%)
- Campus Life Night (16%)

For RSOs specifically, it may be beneficial to consider how students can continue to learn more about RSO opportunities after Campus Life Night. The OSL Marketing Team has plans to feature more student organization spotlights on social media throughout this upcoming school year, and that may help increase RSO awareness. Additionally, more spotlights and shoutouts could be included in the DSA Laker Weekly.

Social media promotions, in general, have been incredibly successful. Continuing to use social media regularly and strategically will help the OSL continue to grow. Additionally, some of the comments in the "Notable Free Responses" section suggest that starting marketing efforts earlier (specifically for OSL events) could potentially increase involvement.

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## 6. Conclusion

It's evident that getting involved in Student Life positively impacts Grand Valley students and helps them feel more connected to the GVSU community. RSO involvement has increased this year, and students have very positive things to say about their RSO involvement. Students enjoy and benefit from attending Student Life events, and even attending just one Student Life event can positively impact a student's sense of belonging.

These survey results showcase how impactful the Office of Student Life is; it's an important part of the student experience, and without it, students would feel less fulfilled at Grand Valley. Further marketing research could be conducted to address specific concerns, address areas for improvement, and determine how the OSL can

best publicize the importance of getting involved to all GVSU students.

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