Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership

Leadership in Intramural Sports & Club Sports

Examining Influences to Enhance Educational Impact

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NIRSA SM *Leaders in Collegiate Recreation*

M S L Multi-Institutional Study of **Leadership**

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Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

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INTRODUCTION FROM MSL

Since its launch in 2006, the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) has continuously evolved to advance the understanding of how higher education can best contribute to college students' leadership development. This includes the measurement of a wide-array of educational outcomes associated with leadership (e.g., complex cognitive reasoning, resilience, identity) as well as the educational experiences that influence them (e.g., mentoring, involvement in student organizations, research with faculty). MSL continues its goal of contributing to the academic literature of leadership development while simultaneously partnering with schools to provide psychometrically sound, empirical evidence to frame professional practice. These efforts are a result of the shared commitment and investment made by leadership educators across the world. To date we have collected data from over 250 colleges and universities in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Jamaica.

The cumulative knowledge generated from the MSL is captured across myriad publications and presentations accessible via the study website (www.leadershipstudy.net). We encourage you to delve deeply into these resources including summary reports written in accessible language designed for broad dissemination, academic publications, and campus spotlights that showcase how schools are using MSL findings to advance their practice.

This publication represents an exciting partnership with NIRSA to "drill down" into existing MSL data and examine more closely themes related to leadership development among college students participating in club sports and intramural sports. The themes that emerge are explored both in this publication as well as an academic research article that will be submitted to the *Recreational Sports Journal*. This work was generously funded by the NIRSA Foundation for which we are incredibly grateful.

As you examine the themes present in this publication you may find elements that confirm what you already know, challenge assumptions related to your work, and/ or inspire new thinking about how best to cultivate leadership development among NIRSA's constituencies. The beauty of research lies in its potential to confirm what we already know works as well as motivate us to examine more closely areas for improvement. After attending and presenting at the NIRSA 2014 conference one thing was clear to me… there are few others organizations or professionals more prepared for or committed to advancing the leadership development of college students. I was taken by the stories I heard about struggles for acknowledgment on campus for educational contributions as well as the sophisticated and amazing approaches to leadership development already in place. My hope is that this report serves as a source of external validation for the hard work of NIRSA members as well as highlights new pathways for evolving practice.

Finally, the production of this report represents the start of a new partnership with NIRSA. We hope you will consider participating in the next administration of the MSL, which will take place in 2015. The study collects data every three years, so after 2015 the next cycle will not be until 2018. We have worked closely with NIRSA leadership to augment the MSL survey instrument with further questions that will allow for an even greater understanding of NIRSA constituencies and their needs. Recruitment is well under way with over 80 schools in four countries already enrolled. Information can be found on our website and you can also stay in touch with the MSL through Facebook or Twitter (@mslconnection).

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INTRODUCTION FROM NIRSA

Development of leadership skills and qualities has often been touted by employers as among the most valued "intangibles" found in graduates (and even among students who fail to graduate) from institutions of higher learning. As the leaders in collegiate recreation, NIRSA plays an important role in exploring and championing the effect that participating in intramural, club sports, and fitness opportunities have in strengthening the leadership development of students.

NIRSA member professionals, who have the opportunity year-after-year to engage with a large majority of the campus population, see firsthand how the changing demographics of campus communities and the nuances of each generation continue to challenge those who lead and those who aspire to lead. The immediate demands of the higher education landscape coupled with those of a constantly evolving world require from students the ability to adapt amid uncertainty, the capacity to think strategically, and a penchant to act collaboratively—skills that are fostered by meaningful, inclusive participation in intramural, club sports, and fitness opportunities.

NIRSA, as an organization, and collegiate recreation, as a profession, will continue to thrive to the extent that our professionals are well versed in the academic literature of leadership development and are able to tether their school's professional practices with it. To that end, NIRSA identified an opportunity to support leadership development research for the Association and for the hundreds of campus communities NIRSA members serve through Professor John Dugan's examination of data sets collected in the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). The MSL is a cross-departmental, academic research program examining the influences of higher education on college student involvement and leadership development. While NIRSA entered into this partnership after the survey had been administered and the data sets had been collected, Professor Dugan's work represents a key study for leadership development within intramural sports and club sports.

The findings in this publication will be of interest to not only recreational sports professionals and students who serve within higher education, but also college and university administrators, employers, parents, and prospective university students.

NIRSA is excited about future investigations of the MSL that will continue to sharpen the picture of student leadership development as it takes shape while students participate in structured campus recreation activities. In the future versions of the MSL, the questions will be updated to better reflect the types of involvement that students can have within campus recreation. Thanks to NIRSA members like Dr. John Dugan, campus recreation departments and professionals will be better equipped to articulate the value of campus recreation.

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of NIRSA Foundation donors. Through fundraising and stewardship efforts, the NIRSA Foundation works in cooperation with NIRSA to enhance the effectiveness of collegiate recreation programs and facilities by providing its members, dedicated leaders in collegiate recreation, meaningful opportunities for scholarship and research. Learn more about how the NIRSA Foundation is supporting the future of campus recreation at *www.nirsa.org/give*.

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SETTING THE CONTEXT

This research was commissioned through a NIRSA grant and relies on data collected as part of the 2012 cycle of the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL). The MSL is an international research program focused on understanding the influences of higher education in shaping socially responsible leadership capacity and other leadership-related outcomes (e.g., leadership efficacy, cognitive skills, resilience). For more information on the MSL research design please visit: *www.leadershipstudy.net*.

This report presents results from specific analyses examining the leadership development of students participating in two main aspects of campus recreation. The information presented here was designed in an accessible and easy-to-translate manner. A complimentary research article offers much more detail related to statistical analyses and will appear in the *Recreation Sports Journal*. Readers interested in detailed results are encouraged to consult that article along with other academic publications from the MSL available via our online library at *www.leadershipstudy.net/reports-publications/*.

Throughout the report you will find key *definitions* in call-out boxes. If you are already familiar with terminology you may wish to skip this material. However, they are included for readers who may not be aware of specific content related to leadership development.
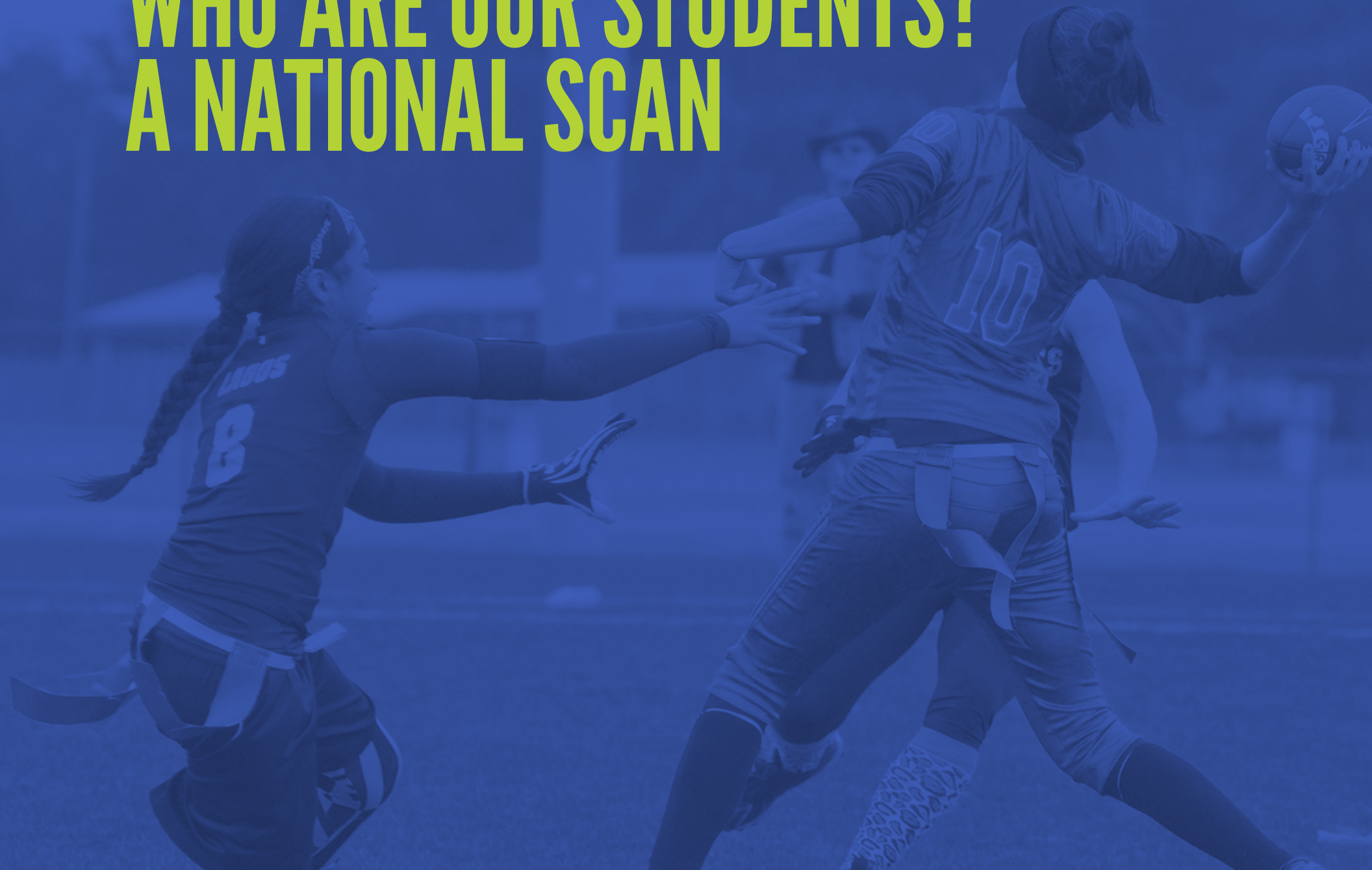
Finally, as an analysis of programs in the aggregate, it is important to remember that results do not suggest that ALL influences are either positive, negative, or absent of effect. Rather, results reflect the broad general impact that these programs have or the "net national effect." That means it is important to identify those programs that do have a positive effects when something lacks influence or is negative. Results point to where we should attend our professional practice.

LEADERSHIP: Defined by MSL as a values-based process in which people work collaboratively with the purpose of creating positive social change (Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009).

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: Defined by Allen and Roberts (2011) as "a continuous, systemic process designed to expand the capacities and awareness of individuals, groups, and organizations in an effort to meet shared goals and objectives" (p. 67).

WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS? A NATIONAL SCAN

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A benefit of the MSL is its large and representative sample. This section paints a picture of rates of participation in campus recreation as well as demographics among these participants using national data from MSL 2012.

The NIRSA student constituency groups used in this report were derived from definitions established for the MSL 2012 survey. This includes:

CAMPUS RECREATION: An umbrella term representing students who participate in recreation experiences broadly.

CLUB SPORTS: Student-run organizations with a shared interest in a particular competitive sport. Club sports are not regulated by the NCAA and do not include intercollegiate or varsity sports. Examples include club hockey and club volleyball.

INTRAMURALS: Both competitive and recreation sport activities participated in for fun, organized solely within a single institution, and that operate for a shorter duration of time. Examples include intramural flag football and intramural Ultimate Frisbee.

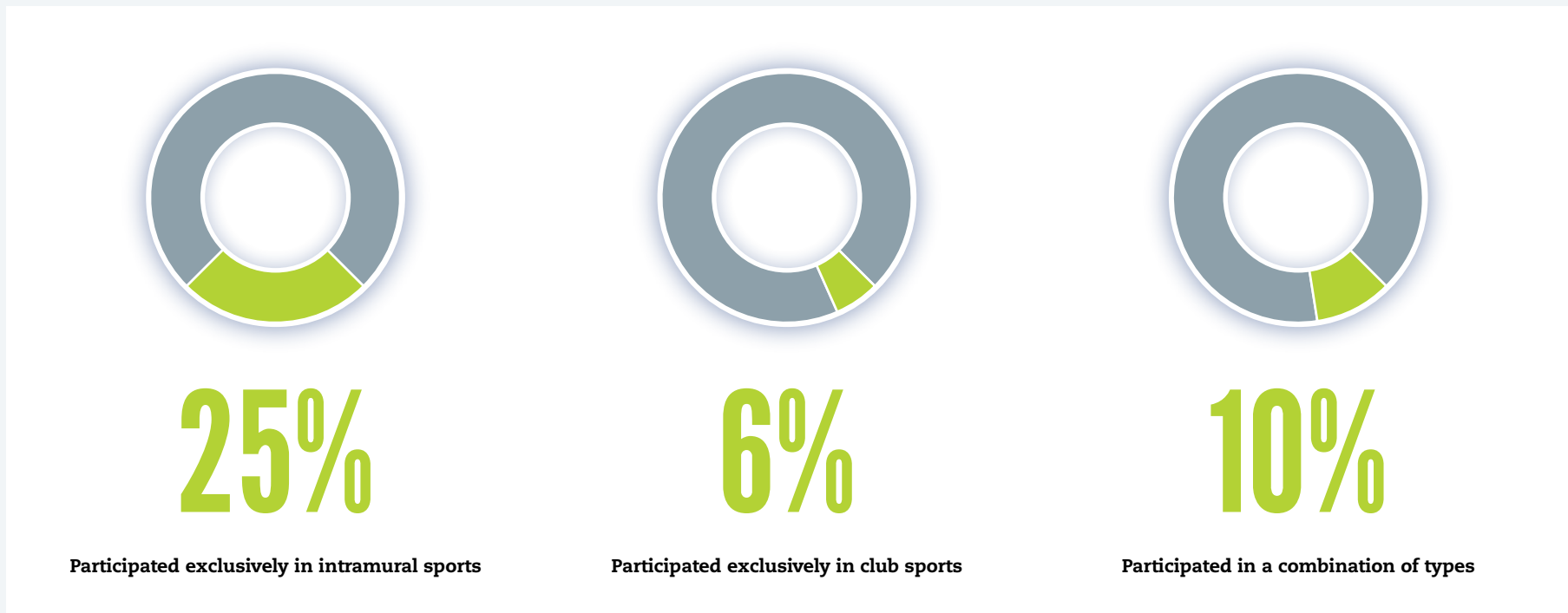**COMBINATION OF TYPES:** Indicates that the participant is involved in both intramurals and club sports.

UNINVOLVED: No involvement with any club sports or intramurals experience at any point during college.

COMPLETELY UNINVOLVED: No involvement in club sports or intramurals experiences or any other type of peer-based, student activities (e.g., student governance, identity-based organizations, varsity sports).

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The total sample employed in these analyses was comprised of 73,168 undergraduate students from the United States. Of this group, a full **41% reported some level of involvement in two aspects of campus recreation (intramural sports or club sports)**. The breakdown of participation rates across campus recreation types was as follows:

25%

Participated exclusively in intramural sports

6%

Participated exclusively in club sports

10%

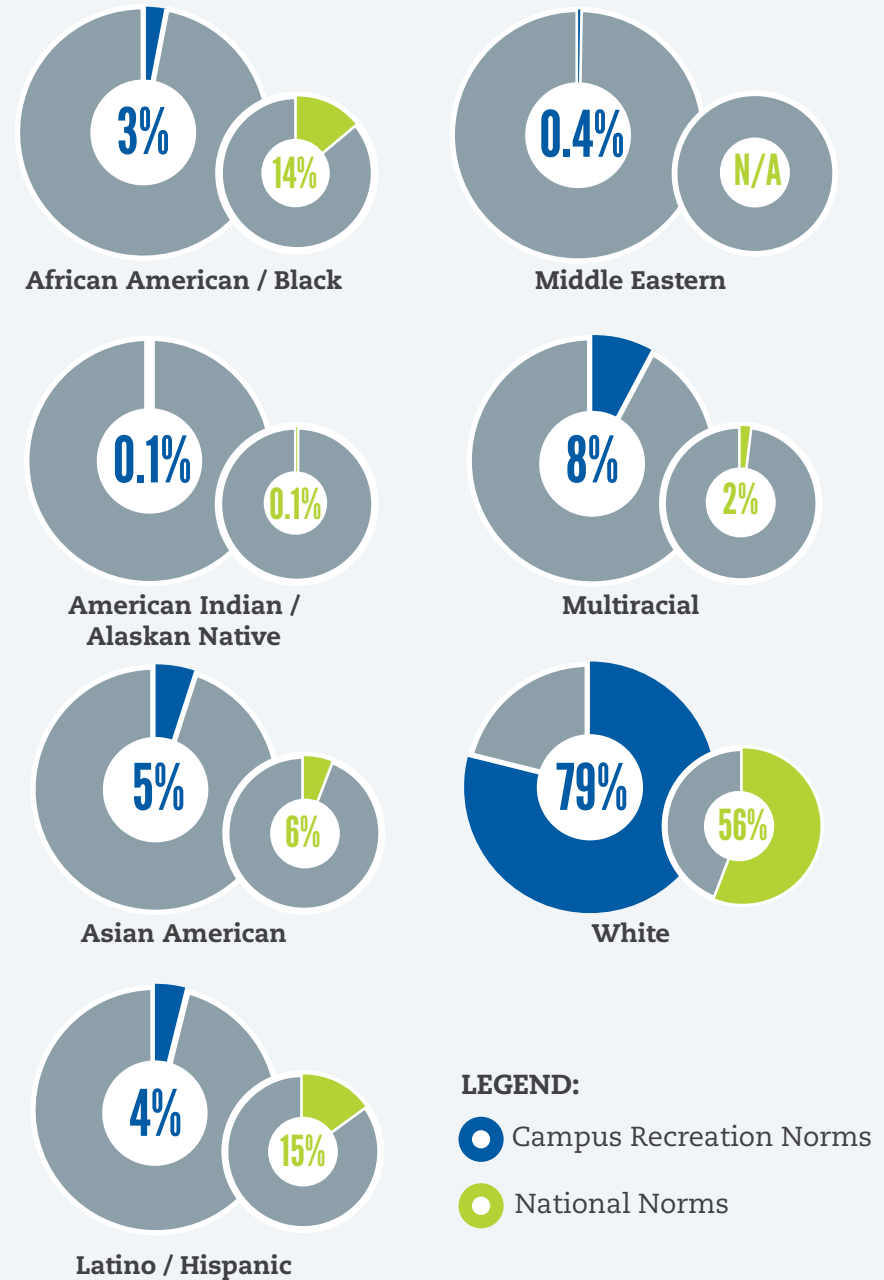**Participated in a combination of types**

FIGURE 1: Percentage of students participating in two aspects of campus recreation (intramural sports or club sports) experiences among the total population of students in MSL

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An examination of demographics did not yield many differences between types of campus recreation (club sports, intramural sports), but the following trends did emerge:

- **Measurable gains in participation rates from first-year through senior year for students participating in intramural sports or a combination of campus recreation experiences versus a steady participation rate (~25%) among those participating only in club sports;**

- **Distribution rates by gender that mirror national enrollment trends;**

- **Participation rates of about 10% for first-generation college students;**

- **Stronger rates of participation from traditionally-aged college students (M = 21 years old) and those who live on campus (61%).**

The demographic representativeness based on race of campus recreation participants yielded results that may represent individual campus norms, but are not reflective of national compositional norms.

FIGURE 2: Demographic representativeness by race

African American / Black — 3% / 14%

Middle Eastern — 0.4% / N/A

American Indian / Alaskan Native — 0.1% / 0.1%

Multiracial — 8% / 2%

Asian American — 5% / 6%

White — 79% / 56%

Latino / Hispanic — 4% / 15%

LEGEND:
- Campus Recreation Norms
- National Norms

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Summary

These results point to a number of important considerations associated with the high volume of college students reporting some level of engagement through campus recreation. These include:

1. **With almost half of college students participating in campus recreation, it should be viewed as a potent vehicle through which to target learning opportunities.**

Intramurals offer a particularly powerful platform through which to reach students given the proportion who report some level of involvement. Few programs, offices, or experiences can replicate this high volume of students, but are we capitalizing on it adequately?

2. **Attention should be directed toward shrinking the gaps in participation levels in campus recreation reported among African American/ Black and Latino/ Hispanic students.**

Degree of representative participation may vary from campus to campus, so professionals are encouraged to look closely to identify any potential gaps. Are we working adequately to create inclusive environments in campus recreation that foster the involvement of all students?

INFLUENCES OF CAMPUS RECREATION ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Examining *only* demographics and rates of involvement in aspects of campus recreation paints an insufficient picture. Of greater importance is understanding the influences of these experiences on critical college outcomes such as leadership development. For those working in campus recreation this impact is seen daily through interactions with students. However, anecdotal information must be coupled with empirical evidence. **Perhaps nothing is more important in the contemporary, resource-scarce environment of higher education than aligning the work of campus recreation with the educational mission of our institutions and demonstrating the powerful ways in which it contributes to student learning.**
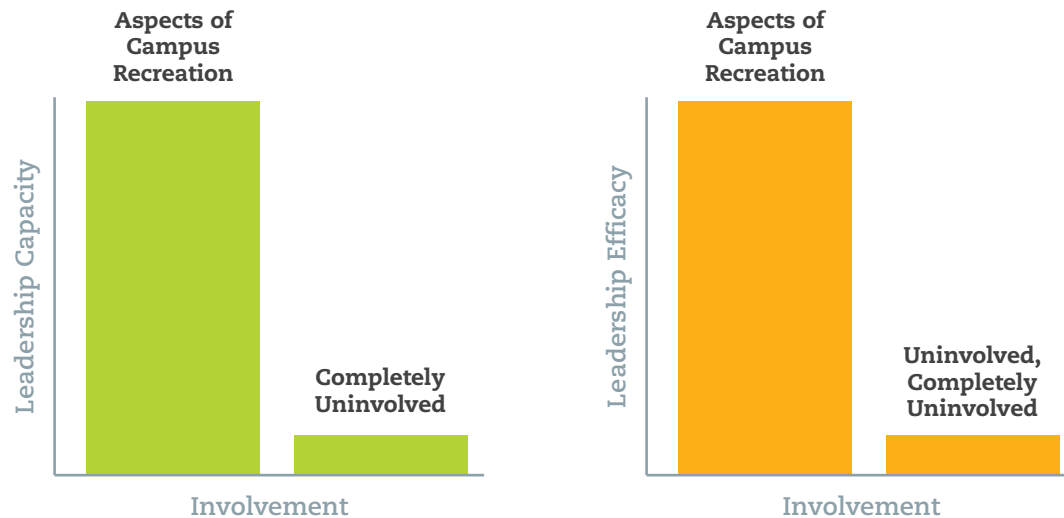
MSL data were used first to examine whether there were statistical differences across leadership domains between students who participated in aspects of campus recreation (e.g., club sports, intramurals, combination) and peers who had no involvement in campus recreation and/or other types of student activities (e.g., student government, intercollegiate sports, identity-based student organizations). Results found statistically significant differences with small effect sizes between the following (in other words measurable difference to which we should attend):

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY: The knowledge, skills, and attitudes associated with the ability to engage in leadership (Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008).

LEADERSHIP EFFICACY: One's internal belief in the likelihood that they will be successful when engaging in leadership (Bandura, 1997; Hannah et al., 2008).

RESILIENCE: The characteristics that enable one to persist in the midst of adversity and positively cope with stress (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE-TAKING: The ability to take another person's point of view and/or accurately infer the thoughts and feelings of others (Gehlbach, 2004; Underwood & Moore, 1982)

FIGURE 3: Campus recreation and leadership domains

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Analyses then explored whether there were statistical differences across leadership domains across the sub-groups that comprise campus recreation (e.g., intramurals, club sports, or a combination of campus recreation activities). Results found statistically significant differences with small effect sizes only between the following (in other words measurable difference to which we should attend):
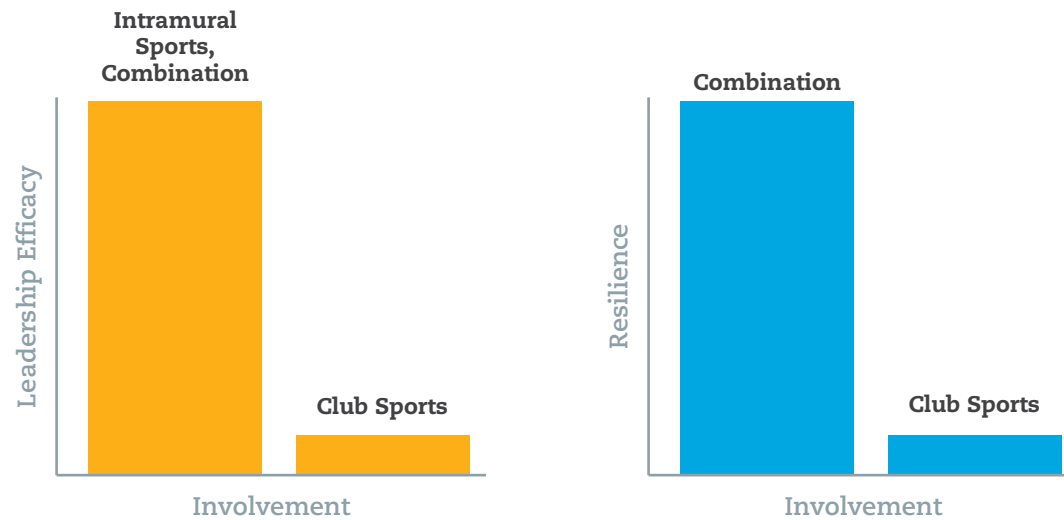
FIGURE 4: Campus recreation sub-groups and leadership domains

Summary

Collectively, these results offer key insights into the influences of aspects of campus recreation on college student leadership development. These include:

1. **Students who participate in aspects of campus recreation demonstrate higher leadership capacity and efficacy than many of their peers.**

The positive influence on leadership efficacy is of particular importance given it is both difficult to cultivate and the single greatest predictor of leadership capacity.

2. **Students in club sports scored lower than peers involved in intramural sports and/ or a combination of intramural sports and club sports on both leadership efficacy and resilience.**

Attention should be directed at identifying what contributes to this and how to bolster leadership efficacy and resilience among those participating in club sports.

3. **Aggregation of aspects of campus recreation experiences may mask important distinctions in both educational outcomes and their influences.**

Differences across leadership domains between intramural sports, club sports, and combinations of these experiences suggest that future research and assessment should examine them separately rather than clustered together.

4. **There is room to bolster the influence of participation in campus recreation on resilience and social perspective-taking.**

These are critical components of leadership development as well as important educational outcomes in their own right.

FOSTERING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN CAMPUS RECREATION

Of critical importance is the identification of leverage points for fostering leadership development. Prior MSL research established a series of high impact practices, but also acknowledged that variations in influence likely exist across student sub-populations (Dugan, Kodama, Correia, & Associates, 2013).

Thus, these practices along with those emerging in other research were examined collectively to identify predictors of leadership development among students participating in campus recreation (Dugan, 2011).

Each graphic that follows identifies predictors on a particular leadership domain for students who participated in intramurals, club sports, and a combination of the two activities.
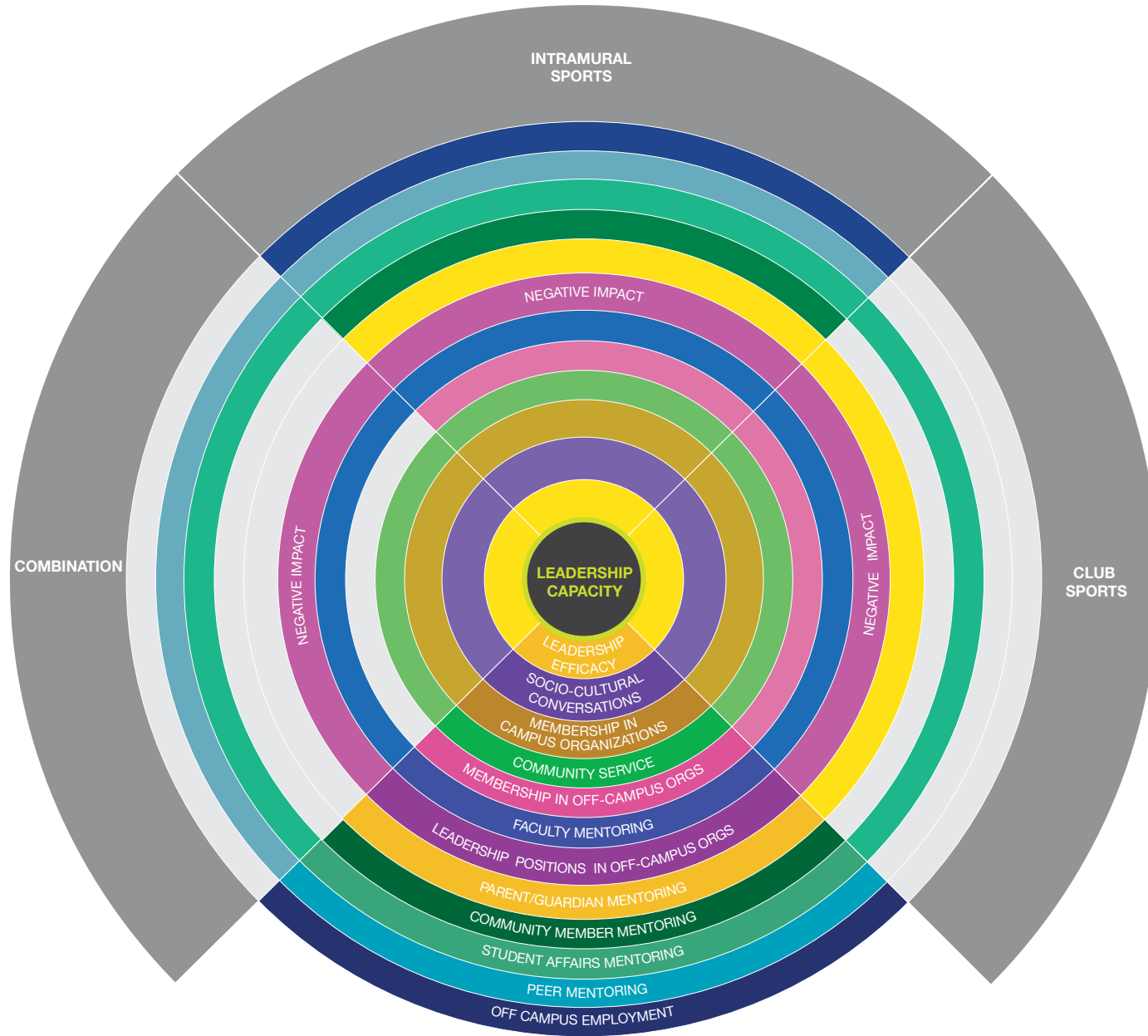
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INTRAMURAL SPORTS

COMBINATION

CLUB SPORTS

NEGATIVE IMPACT

NEGATIVE IMPACT

NEGATIVE IMPACT

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

LEADERSHIP EFFICACY

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

MEMBERSHIP IN CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS

COMMUNITY SERVICE

MEMBERSHIP IN OFF-CAMPUS ORGS

FACULTY MENTORING

LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN OFF-CAMPUS ORGS

PARENT/GUARDIAN MENTORING

COMMUNITY MEMBER MENTORING

STUDENT AFFAIRS MENTORING

PEER MENTORING

OFF CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT

FIGURE 5: Leadership Capacity

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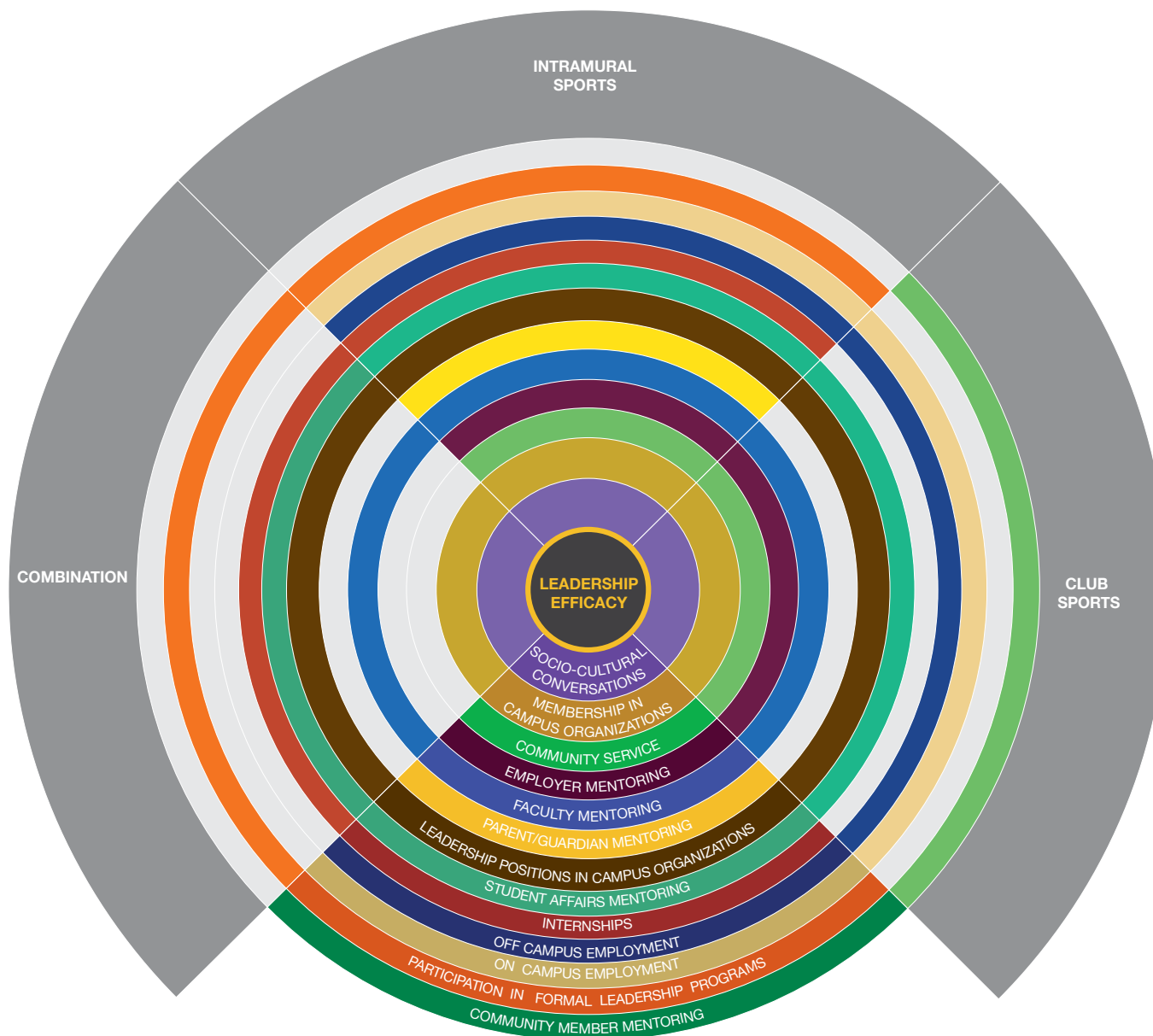
FIGURE 6: Leadership Efficacy

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FIGURE 7: Resilience

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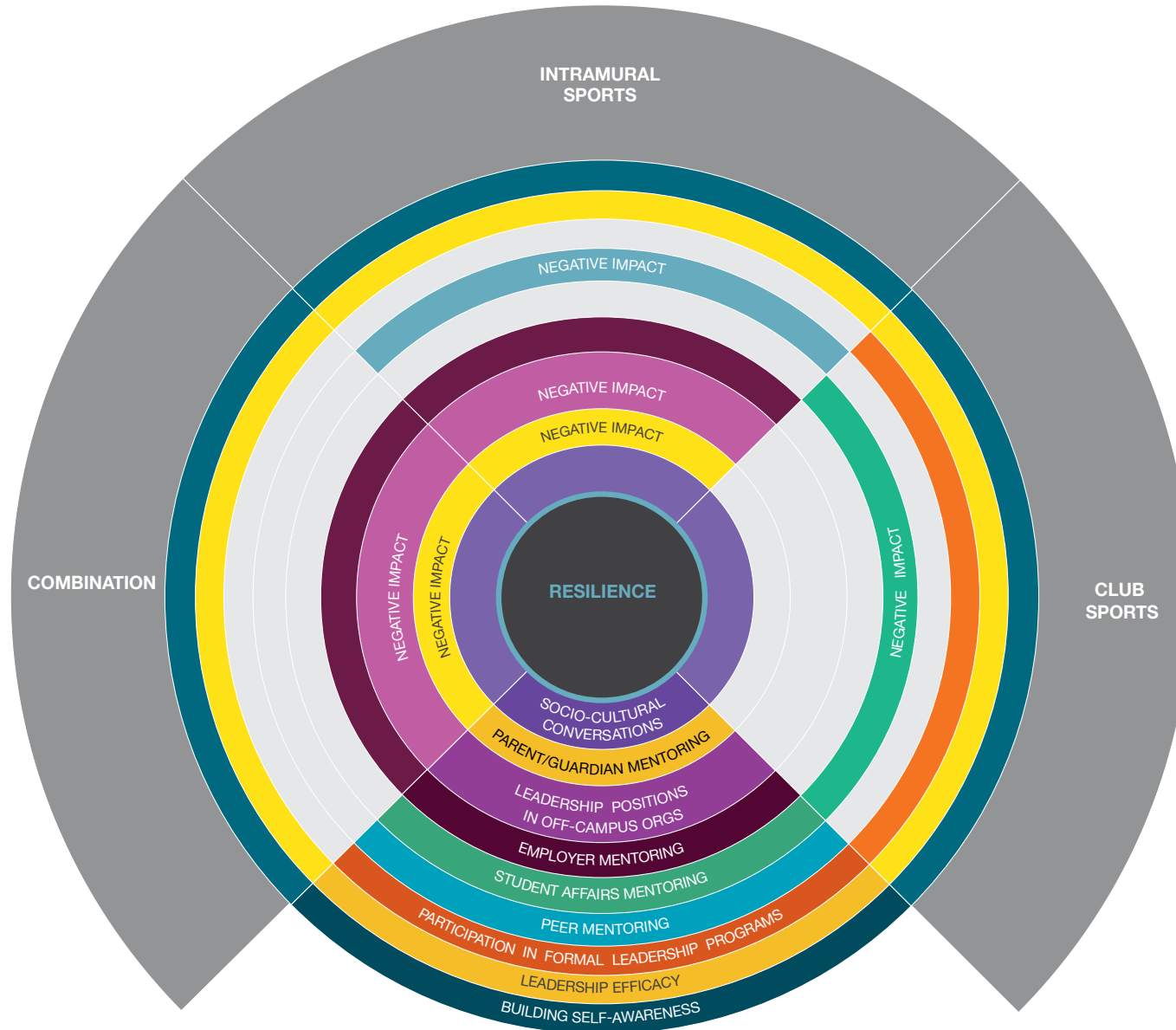
FIGURE 8: Social Perspective-Taking

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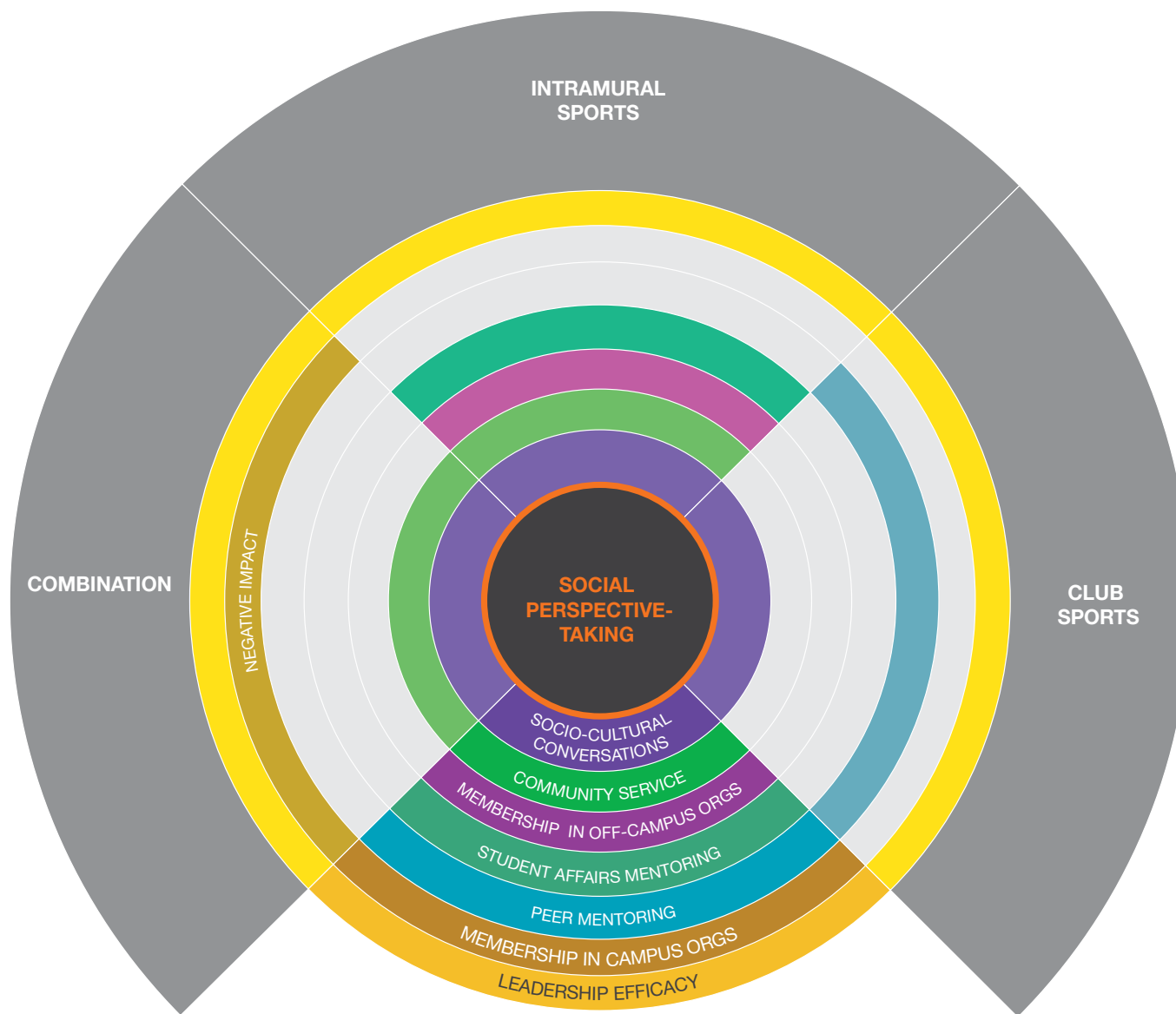
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Summary

The identification of predictors of leadership development demonstrated variation in influences as well as by campus recreation types. Themes across these findings include:

1. **Previously identified high-impact practices for leadership development emerged as similarly influential for campus recreation participants.**

Highly potent predictors such as socio-cultural conversations with peers, efficacy-building experiences, community service, participation in on- and off-campus organizations, and mentoring relationships all should be integrated into the education and training curricula of campus recreation programs.

2. **Participation in positional leadership roles can have both positive and negative influences depending on the outcome being measured and should be carefully structured to mitigate negative effects.**

Professionals should attend to ways in which positional role attainment may cause students to fall back on command and control models of leadership that run counter to the values of shared and team leadership approaches.

3. **The impact of mentoring relationships on leadership development is inconsistent and varied for students participating in aspects of campus recreation.**

This signals a need to better understand the degree to which those serving as mentors are prepared for these roles. If they do not understand the nuanced differences between leadership domains, it makes it difficult to intentionally work with students to cultivate these abilities.

4. **There is a limited range of influences on social perspective-taking for students in campus recreation.**

Greater attention should be paid to the ways in which social perspective-taking skills are cultivated in campus recreation programs.

TRANSLATIONS TO PRACTICE

This report offers compelling evidence that campus recreation is a powerful vehicle for leadership development. Both the sheer volume of students who participate and positive relationships between participation in campus recreation and educational outcomes are a testament to the important contributions to the mission of higher education.

Each of the three major sections of this report have provided Summary comments highlighting critical insights related to campus recreation and leadership development. A number of implications for practice flow from these. However, there are four insights that merit specific attention. For those looking for immediate ways to translate these findings to practice, we would encourage you to start here.

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RECOMMENDATION #1
Expand Efforts to Cultivate Leadership Efficacy

Just because someone can do something doesn't mean that they actually will. The concept of leadership efficacy explains in part why this is. We are unlikely to attempt tasks for which we don't think we can be successful. Put another way, leadership efficacy may be the determinant of whether students are even willing to engage in the first place. If I don't think I would be successful in leading an outdoor adventure trip, participating on an intramural team, or serving as an officer of a club sport, I may simply opt out of the very experiences that would aid in cultivating my leadership development. The vast majority of leadership education focuses on fostering leadership capacity, which is a necessary but insufficient approach. We must shift our thinking to also consider the ways in which we can cultivate leadership efficacy.

Students participating in aspect of campus recreation score higher than most peers on leadership efficacy. The report also articulates a number of specific predictors of leadership efficacy for campus recreation participants. Educators must now triangulate these findings to identify and expand access to the types of experiences that will cultivate leadership efficacy among campus recreation students broadly.

Two things to do now:

1. **Adopt Developmental Advising Approaches:** For students with whom we have direct advising or supervisory responsibility we must adopt developmental relationships. This means moving beyond technical management or skill-building/ training to ask more personal and powerful questions. What limitations are students putting on themselves? What do they fear most about taking risks? What do they not see in themselves that others do?

2. **Sponsor Hesitant Students:** In much of our work we identify motivation and confidence as indicators of readiness. We then promote and sponsor students who exhibit these traits and in the process often end up polishing diamonds rather than doing the important work of development. We should be interpreting hesitancy as untapped potential and then advocating and sponsoring these students into experiences that offer sufficient challenge to push their learning and build their leadership efficacy.

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RECOMMENDATION #2
It's All About Socio-Cultural Conversations

Time and time again socio-cultural conversations with peers emerge in research as one of the most powerful predictors of leadership development (Dugan, 2011). They represent a pedagogical approach that centers student interactions, values exploration and clarification, the skills of dialogue, and building tools for social relationships.

Despite consistent evidence regarding the power of socio-cultural conversations, educators still struggle to integrate them into leadership training, education, and development programs. This may be in part because of a hesitancy to "dive too deep" with students, but this is a misnomer. Socio-cultural conversations run along a continuum in complexity of content. In fact, most conflict and disagreements present opportunities to dialogue around differences as the learning most typically emerges from the discussion of the process of exploring differences not the content itself. Educators in campus recreation are encouraged to think of the logical places in which the processing of socio-cultural conversations can be embedded.

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS: Socio-cultural conversations consist of formal and informal dialogues with peers about differences (e.g., topics which elicit a wide range of perspectives) as well as interactions across differences (e.g., with people who have different backgrounds and beliefs than oneself). Topics include, but are not limited to, race/ethnicity, lifestyles and customs, social issues, political values, and religious beliefs.

Two things to do now:

1. **Learn the Techniques of Deliberate Dialogue:** Our own lack of preparation as professionals to structure and facilitate socio-cultural conversations frequently emerges as a rationale for not including the approach. We must actively seek out opportunities to build this skill set for ourselves from the many programs that teach on topics of intergroup dialogue and group processing. It is difficult to see where and how to integrate socio-cultural conversations if we don't fully understand the process of engaging with them ourselves.

2. **Model and Diffuse:** The reality is that not every platform will necessarily lend itself to socio-cultural conversations. For example, weaving this into intramural volleyball may be impossible. However, we can model the process of socio-cultural conversations for our student employees, leaders, and advisees with the hope they will then cultivate them with their peers. This is often referred to as the "halo effect." We create the space to target the use of socio-cultural conversations among students with whom we can have a direct effect and then newly learned skills are modeled and diffused through peer networks.

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RECOMMENDATION #3
Fully Capitalize on Peer Mentoring

Decades of research supports that peer relationships are among the most powerful influences on student learning and development (Astin, 1993; Dugan, 2013; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Perhaps no other area of campus is as poised to capitalize on these peer relationships as campus recreation where students often share similar interests and even become engaged based on peer networks.

However, results from this research indicated that peer mentoring was only a positive predictor for students participating in intramural sports or a combination of experiences on leadership capacity and students participating in club sports on resilience. It also emerged as a negative influence on students' resilience for those in intramural sports. This drives home the notions that not all mentoring relationships have the same effects… if they have one at all. That peer mentoring did not demonstrate consistent, measurable, and positive effects on leadership development in a context where it seems primed to do so suggests an area to direct significant attention.

MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: The MSL defines a mentor as "a person who intentionally assisted the student's growth or connects the student to opportunities for career or personal development."

Two things to do now:

1. **Train for Generativity:** Increasingly, peers need to be trained to see one another as sources of powerful mentoring and prepared to engage with one another in this way. The influences of peer mentoring cannot be left to chance. Professionals should integrate training on how to mentor for leadership development (and to build leadership efficacy in particular) into all aspects of work with students in campus recreation.

2. **Create Structures that Support Peer Mentoring:** Students may have the capacity and motivation to serve as peer mentors, but if opportunities to do so are not available then it does little good. Professionals must create both formal and informal platforms from which students can enter into peer mentoring relationships. This means using peer education as a form of delivery for trainings, emphasizing the importance of peer mentoring, and designing interventions that can serve as a catalyst to start these types of relationships.

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RECOMMENDATION #4
Be Cautious with Positional Leadership Experiences

Research suggests that positional leadership opportunities (i.e., elected or selected formal leader roles such as an officer of a club or captain of an intramural sports team) typically serve as positive influences on leadership development (Dugan, 2011). The results of this study are more complicated and contest the universal benefits of formal leadership roles on leadership development. In this research positional roles were a positive predictor of leadership efficacy for all campus recreation students. However, they were a negative predictor of resilience for those involved in intramural sports or a combination of activities. Additionally, positional leadership roles in off-campus organizations were a negative influence on leadership capacity. Otherwise, they lacked influence for other groups and across other outcomes.

These results situate positional leadership roles as a potential catch-22. Although they contribute to leadership efficacy, their broader influences may be inconsequential at best and harmful at worst. What might it be that contributes to this conundrum? First, positional role obtainment may increase efficacy and/or confidence, but it could also reinforce command and control models of leadership that diminish students' capacities for shared leadership. Second, if students do not feel successful in positional roles it may decrease resilience and the willingness to engage in the future. Finally, positional roles often pressure students to conform and/ or assimilate to what is normative. This can cause added pressures for women in male-dominated environments, students of color in predominantly white environments, or any marginalized group asked to navigate what is normative. To tap into the positive contributions of positional leadership roles, professionals must attend to each of these considerations.

Two things to do now

1. **Avoid Over-Reliance on Positional Leadership:** Many campus experiences target the majority of their leadership efforts toward positional leaders. Professionals should think carefully before assuming that this is a universally positive means for leadership development as this is often not the case. Nor are positional leadership roles the most powerful conduit for leadership learning. The research here offers insights into a multitude of other predictors that have beneficial influences on leadership development for students in campus recreation. Rather than pushing students into positional roles or working to create more positional roles, attention should be directed at establishing a variety of educational interventions from which campus recreation students can select.

2. **Monitor Carefully Those in Positions:** The potentially negative influences of positional leadership roles are related to leadership capacity and resilience. Advisors and supervisors should carefully monitor positional leaders to ensure that they are not defaulting to command and control models, are managing self expectations as well as those from others, and not internalizing unproductive assumptions about what a leader should look like or do. At times we assume that students in positional leader roles have "made it" or "get it" as a rationale for re-focusing developmental advising approaches to students who "need our attention more." This research suggests the need to carefully monitor those in positional roles and maintain developmental approaches to advising and supervision.

REFERENCES & RECOMMENDED READINGS

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