

7-2013


Academic Engagement of Hospitality Students

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Abstract

Student academic engagement has been researched over the years, drawing limited conclusions and suggestions for improvement. In this study, researchers utilized National Survey for Student Engagement data from a large Midwestern university to examine the academic engagement of hospitality management students and compared their engagement to business students. It was found that 50% of the participating hospitality students spent 11 h or more each week preparing for classes. For both groups, finances were reported as the biggest obstacle to academic progress. The research study provides an examination of hospitality students' academic engagement. Suggestions are presented for hospitality educators.

Keywords

Academic engagement, Curriculum, Education, Study habits

Disciplines

Higher Education | Hospitality Administration and Management

Comments

This is a manuscript of an article from *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education* 13 (2013): 141, doi:[10.1016/j.jhlste.2013.09.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2013.09.004). Posted with permission.

Academic Engagement of Hospitality Students

1. Introduction

Educators, irrespective of discipline, want their students to be academically engaged. The definition for academic engagement incorporates all aspects of a student's schooling, including: class attendance, assignment completion, classmate interaction, and outside influences. Recently, Arum and Roksa in their book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campus*, addressed the academic engagement challenge utilizing results from a large-scale nationwide study. Many college students today lack strong literacy skills and necessary focus (Arum & Roska, 2011), are viewed by faculty as unmotivated or under-motivated (McFarlane, 2010), and are challenged to express themselves in large group settings (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). College students' level of academic engagement has been debated at various universities and colleges, across academic disciplines. No known studies have assessed academic engagement of hospitality management students and then compared their engagement to others. Although, some researchers have examined closely related topics such as general academic studies (Morrison & O'Gorman, 2008), necessary career preparation (Chen & Gursoy, 2007), and program quality (Horng, Teng, & Baum, 2008).

Beyond the academic and curricular issues, industry issues (limited basic skills and lack of experience) have been noted in the research. Tesone (2002) found that undergraduates often are not fully prepared for entry-level positions following graduation due to the gap between education (curriculum-based) and hospitality practice (experience-based). Students who struggle with academic engagement may encounter problems in the workplace and therefore, future implications for the hospitality industry must be considered. Alonso and O'Neill (2011) reported challenges noted by small business owners in finding quality employees regardless of their geographic proximity to a major college campus; generally, these challenges included a lack of basic skills, bad attitude, and poor work ethic. Aspects such as work ethic and integrity, time management and

organization, and communication skills, in addition to the knowledge base developed in classes, are some of the skills developed through coursework and then transferred to a professional career (Alonso & O'Neill, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to determine hospitality students' level of academic engagement as related to study habits, classroom participation, and assignment requirements. Additionally, the academic engagement aspects identified in the study were utilized to compare hospitality students to business students. Using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), hospitality management students were compared to students majoring in business (management, marketing, and finance), as the latter provides the most similar comparisons across academic disciplines. Specifically, the study was established to initially determine hospitality students' academic engagement, consisting of time spent on academic tasks, study habits, and exposure to curricular components within higher education.

2. Literature Review

2. 1. Student Engagement

Arum and Roksa (2011) reported that students are generally entering college campuses, around the country, academically adrift from the requirements, demands, and future direction of their majors and future careers. Meyer, Spencer, and French (2009) found 32% of college students surveyed reported the demands of college academics were easier than they anticipated before beginning college. However, student lack of college preparation, poor writing, and literacy skills often force adjustments in curriculum delivery, general rigor, and academic expectations of professors (Schnee, 2008). Faculty members often contend with student challenges such as lack of maturity, low reading level, substandard academic background, and lack of direction (McFarlane, 2010). "Many students come to college not only poorly prepared by prior schooling for highly demanding academic tasks that ideally lie in front of them, but more troubling still they enter

college with attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors that are often at odds with academic commitment” (Arum & Roska, 2011, p.3). The challenges facing academic institutions today cannot be blamed solely on student behaviors; the nature of the modern collegiate classroom may also be increasing these challenges; for example, the trend toward larger class sizes can create challenges in learning and communication between students and faculty (Mulryan-Kyne, 2010).

Arum and Roksa (2011) examined undergraduate student academic engagement in a nationwide study focused on developing skills in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing. The study included standardized testing assessments using the Collegiate Learning Assessment combined with transcript reviews, student survey responses, and a follow up study with the original participants. All of the participants’ (2,322 students from 24 four-year institutions) data were compiled as the Determinants of College Learning (Arum & Roksa, 2011). Arum and Roksa (2011) found 68% of students from highly selective universities were given both reading and writing assignments in the previous semester, compared to students at selective and less selective institutions (37% and 31% respectively). This disparity potentially places students at a disadvantage, dependent on institution type, depriving them of developing a skill-set needed for advanced academic challenges. If students are not completing significant reading and writing tasks, “It is probably unreasonable to expect them to develop skills to improve on performance tasks that require critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication” (Arum & Roksa, 2011, p.73).

Wyatt, Saunders, and Zelmer (2005) explored differences in beliefs regarding academic rigor and engagement held by students and faculty. Faculty and students, at one university in the Midwestern United States, were surveyed; 89 faculty responded (36% response rate) and 108 student responded (31% response rate). Discrepancies between student and faculty responses were found; only 22% of faculty participants reported their students were achieving academic potential,

however the majority of students (69%) reported they were achieving their full academic potential (Wyatt, Saunders, & Zelmer, 2005). Often discrepancies, like this, lead to potential academic challenges between faculty and students, which may result in student engagement issues. In another study, Meyer et al. (2009) compared first-year college students' perceptions of the academic realities they faced. Fifty-two freshmen students were interviewed and asked to report their perceptions of, and experiences with, college academics. All 52 respondents expected that college academics would be very demanding, citing information from the media, family, friends, and high school teachers. However, 60% of the respondents reported their college academic experiences were easier than expected.

Given the diversity of students, each may view curriculum as easy or challenging whereby each viewpoint could lead to lack of engagement by the student in a particular course or program. The challenge for educators is to ensure a balanced curriculum for different students, realizing some flourish while others struggle with academic demands and college life adjustments (Meyer, Spencer, & French, 2009).

2. 2. Measuring Student Engagement

The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) through its survey offers colleges and universities a comprehensive way to examine academic engagement while providing institutions an opportunity to collect data and utilize results to improve education (NSSE, n. d.). Each year baccalaureate degree granting colleges and universities across the United States and Canada elect to participate in the NSSE, inviting their first-year and senior level students to complete the survey. In 2012, 584 colleges and universities participated in the NSSE survey. In 2011, 546,719 students participated in the survey across all participating colleges and universities (NSSE, n. d.). The overall purpose of this national survey is to measure student engagement, a combination of student participation and institutional curriculum-related activities. At the selected institution for this study,

the NSSE is an optional survey targeting freshmen and seniors. Electronic invitations are sent to students early in the spring semester, in predetermined years, requesting participation in this optional survey. The students then complete the survey electronically.

2. 3. Hospitality and Business Program Comparison

2.3.1. Hospitality programs. Studies have focused on general academic studies (Morrison and O’Gorman, 2008), quality of programs (Horng et al., 2008), and curricular challenges (Founier and Ineson, 2011) within hospitality programs around the world. However, no known studies have assessed the academic engagement of hospitality students. Program content, quality, and type will have an impact on student engagement. Morrison and O’Gorman (2008) examined the transitions and evolution of hospitality management since its inception as an academic subject in higher education institutions. Hospitality programs were evaluated utilizing several classic educational philosophies, such as St. Benedicts Rule, and were outlined according to five core principles: business, guest, hospitality provision, staffing, and management, which comprised the hospitality programs’ taxonomy. Regardless whether hospitality management had been established historically as an academic area of study, the subject has proven its relevance in higher education (Morrison & O’Gorman, 2008). Morrison and O’Gorman presented support for academic and vocational balance in hospitality management and explained a continuing challenge to blend liberal, reflective, and contemplative educational processes along with vocational ones.

Horng, Teng, and Baum (2008) measured undergraduate hospitality programs’ quality by examining the incorporation of total quality management and context-input-process-products. Academic professors from 34 hospitality management programs, and tourism and leisure programs in Taiwan were studied, with a response rate of 51.8% ($N = 184$) from the hospitality programs and a response rate of 42.8% ($N = 246$) from the tourism programs. Quality hospitality programs were found to have high achievement within six standards established in the study: strategic planning,

curriculum and instruction, faculty, resources, student achievements, and administrative management (Horng et al., 2008). This study highlighted curriculum, teaching and learning concepts as the key aspects of quality educational institutions, while program resources were found least important (Horng et al.).

Hospitality management programs also have challenges that are derived from the curriculum and the link between curriculum and real-world applications. How the curriculum prepares hospitality students for entry-level industry positions is of great concern. Founier and Ineson (2011) examined industry representatives' perceptions on evaluating the foodservice internship competencies in Switzerland. Recommendations were offered for education institutions to increase their focus on the identified skills and competencies of students in order to improve success in internships and entry-level career positions.

2.3.2. Business programs. Many similarities have been found between hospitality management and business school programs explaining the relationship between the programs. Additionally, at some universities, hospitality management degree programs are within a school or college of business. Scott, Puleo, and Crotts (2008), at the time of their study, found 23 U.S. hospitality management programs offered in business colleges that had been accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. These programs each shared similar core business requirements including: marketing, accounting, economics, law, and operations; this suggests a close academic or curricular relationship between hospitality and business programs (Scott, Puleo, & Crotts, 2008).

2. 4. Educator and Student Challenges

Faculty and student successes and challenges often directly affect a student's engagement with a specific course or program. As university faculty around the world face new challenges in their jobs, the potential for student discouragement may occur while achievement gaps and lack of

engagement are increasing (Arum and Roksa, 2011). A new generation of students (Millennials), increasing faculty demands, large class sizes, and varying student expectations are just some of the challenges present in the modern higher education environment.

Elam, Stratton, and Gibson (2007) explained desires and challenges of Millennial students as they entered and continued in higher education; a comparison was made to previous generations. Strange (2004, as cited in Elam, Stratton, & Gibson) described Millennial students as highly motivated, obedient, sheltered, team-oriented, talented, and confident. Educators were encouraged to work closely with Millennial students to accomplish common educational goals rather than make educational decisions on early generational stereotypes; these stereotypes include a reliance on technology and an education primarily through rote learning thus causing a lack of essential critical thinking skills (Elam, Stratton, & Gibson 2007).

McFarlane (2010) discussed challenges faculty members face and offered suggestions for managing unmotivated and under-motivated students. In addition to the already noted challenges, faculty members encounter student challenges such as, lack of maturity, low reading level, low academic background, and lack of direction. Suggestions were provided for faculty and administrators in higher education including: customizing the syllabus, adding extra projects, adjusting the course plan or agenda, and attempting to cater to diverse interests (McFarlane, 2010). Specifically, if faculty members are unable to address the challenges addressed by McFarlane, the risk for disengagement may occur. Alberts, Hazen, and Theobald (2010) examined the incivilities and challenges experienced by U.S. institutions' pre-tenured faculty. Respondents reported the classroom incivilities they had to manage were inattentiveness (27.6%), disrespectful behavior (75.8%), and hostility (21.3%) (Alberts, Hazen, & Theobald, 2010).

Mulryan-Kyne (2010) examined faculty and students' challenges and opportunities with large (increasing) class sizes in higher education classrooms. In a large class, students and teachers

are challenged with learning and communication issues, which in turn, impact course objectives and outcomes. Mulryan-Kyne recommended faculty focus on reducing the potential impact of large class sizes by interacting with students and providing feedback.

Chen and Gursoy (2007) studied leisure, recreation, and tourism students' expectations and compared them to professionals' expectations. Student expectations were similar to the ideals expressed by professionals, and both groups believed the current academic structure of the program lead to adequate field preparation. Both groups also agreed that academic programs needed to prepare students for unexpected circumstantial and career events (Chen & Gursoy, 2007).

Likewise, S. Clinebell and Clinebell (2008) explained the critical need to develop and include both a strong academic and real-world experience to develop student skills needed for success.

Related to developing a broader foundation for curriculum and student engagement and knowledge development, Alexander, Lynch, and Murray (2009) indicated hospitality programs should still employ training restaurant concepts as a strong method to teach students critical skills necessary for success in the hospitality industry because many students are not obtaining employment to gain the necessary skills and practice. These initial experiences, earlier on in a student's academic career, help students meet their future employers' expectations and provide an engagement opportunity in classes and programs. While students have defined career and the ability to narrow career choices, there are no variations noted over time between a lack of students' expectations and commitment, suggesting students' career decisions are made early in their education and do not fluctuate (Chuang, Goh, Stout, & Dellman-Jenkins, 2007).

Kirkness and Neill (2009) examined first-year hospitality students' literacy and vocabulary by asking them to study the language demands of a selected textbook chapter and journal article and then evaluated the experience utilizing an adult literacy and vocabulary profile test. The students scored in the top quartile on both literacy and vocabulary tests, indicating students needed a high

level of literacy and comprehension for the selected classroom reading materials (Kirkness & Neill, 2009). Kirkness and Neill suggested methods to ensure hospitality instructors select appropriate materials for their classes, and cautioned against selecting materials above students' academic capabilities.

Students with jobs either on or off campus have unique challenges. Jogaratnam and Buchanan (2004) studied hospitality students working part-time and reported students who were female, freshmen, or full-time had greater exposure to stress factors compared to their peers. In general, all participating students acknowledged they had too many things to do at once, too much responsibility, and struggled to meet their own academic standards. In another study, interviews were conducted with 45 working college students. These students were challenged with poor working conditions affecting educational studies, the need for extended time (beyond traditional timeframes) to complete their education, being stuck in low paying jobs until educational goals could be completed, and an increase in dropout rate resulting in uncompleted degrees and increased debt (Tannock & Flocks, 2003). Curtis (2007) explained both positive and negative consequences working had on students' academic studies; tired in lectures and rushed assignments were the most often reported negative effects, while improved interpersonal skills and confidence were the most often reported positive effects. Tannock and Flocks (2003) suggested the need for better training and the development of quality support organizations within the secondary and post-secondary school settings to help these young workers achieve success.

Academic engagement challenges can be prominent with students at every level of academic performance and within every institution. Although family and educational backgrounds often play a significant role in a student's development, overall engagement disconnects can be seen throughout the country (Arum & Roska, 2011). Colleges and universities are challenged to successfully relate to new Millennial generation of students, address increasing class sizes, develop

new technological resources, and promote faculty and student relations. What educators cannot control is a student's background: socioeconomic, previous schooling, and parents' educational backgrounds. One significant area for identifying academic engagement may be time students spend completing assignments and other work outside of class. Arum and Roska (2011) found, on average, students spent approximately 12 hours per week studying; while 37% reported spending less than five hours per week. Academic rigor and engagement topics span across academic disciplines in higher education with no institution or program exempt from these challenges. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine hospitality students' academic engagement, as well as, comparing hospitality students to those students in a business college. The following research questions were examined:

- How much time do students spend on activities outside of class and work?
- What types of learning and assessment activities do students report most often?
- What are students' experiences with their professors and advisors?
- Are there differences in academic engagement between hospitality students and non-hospitality students?
- What are work-related obstacles impeding academic progress?

3. Methods

This study assessed longitudinal data collected for seven years (2003, 2005-2009, & 2011) at a large Midwestern university with a hospitality management program. Secondary data, collected using NSSE, were analyzed. Using national assessment or survey studies has some identified challenges, but offers a strong and supportive instrument to evaluate students at various academic institutions within the same parameters (Arum & Roska, 2011). Initially, hospitality student data were compared independently and then subsequently, hospitality student data were compared with data from students majoring in business programs. The objective was to detect differences or

similarities between the two student groups (hospitality students and business students) in terms of their academic engagement. Variables such as class attendance, assignment completion, classmate interaction, and outside influences were analyzed.

3. 1. Sample

For this study, the hospitality management program chosen was one of three major programs within a department housed in a non-business college. The goal of the program is to develop leaders in foodservice and lodging industries. For fall 2012, when these data were analyzed, the hospitality management and events management programs included approximately 500 undergraduate, enrolling approximately 75 new, entry-level and transfer students each fall. The department was comprised of seven tenure-track faculty members and three non-tenure-track faculty, for the same period.

Business students in this study enrolled in majors offered by the College of Business. The goal of the college is to share research and prepare tomorrow's business leaders to face the challenges of the 21st century. The College of Business offers majors in a variety of programs, including: accounting, finance, international business, management, management informational systems (MIS), marketing, and logistics and supply chain management. For fall, 2011, enrollment for the College of Business was 3,470.

3. 2. Data Collection and Analysis

Following review board exempt-approval of the study, NSSE data were requested and provided for all participating years of collection in the past decade. All items included in the NSSE data set were nominal variables. Examples of scales include: poor to excellent, hardly ever to always or nearly always, never to very often, and categorized numeric responses. Nine years of data were provided, though upon closer review of the data, 2001 and 2002 were eliminated due to changes in the NSSE survey; these changes did not allow for the identification of student majors.

Thus, seven years of data were used in this study (2003, 2005-2009, and 2011), as the institution did not participate in the NSSE two years during the past decade (2004 and 2010). A separate dataset was issued for each year resulting in seven separate datasets. There were approximately 11,500 completed NSSE surveys during the seven years of data collection; these were from all majors, not just hospitality and business.

All seven data sets were then reviewed and hospitality student and business student data were merged into one data set; every student was identified by his or her major (hospitality or business). Each student's general information and specific test taking/completion line number were recorded, allowing students to be identified in the original data set if needed. This identification and collapsing process was first applied to hospitality students, and later to business students, providing independent data sets for each program and a combined student data set separate from all other university majors or programs. Accuracy of data set culling and merging was done with random spot checks between original and final data sets. All statistical computations were performed using JMP Pro 9 Statistical Discovery Software.

4. Results

The identification of hospitality students and business students from the original data sets for the seven year selected period resulted in a combined data set of 1,466 ($N = 88$ hospitality undergraduate students and $N = 1,376$ business undergraduate students) representing 12.8% of the entire population for the selected seven-year period. The majority of hospitality students were female (73.9%), while there were slightly more male (51.3%) than female (48.7%) business students (see Table 1). More than 90.0% of both student groups were between 17 and 25 years of age. More than half of the hospitality students and more than half of the business students were seniors (51.1% and 59.6% respectively) and more than 95.0% of participants from each program were enrolled on a full-time basis.

4.1. Time Spent Outside of Class or Work

Hospitality students and business students spent their time throughout the academic semester on various activities beyond attending class and working, these included: studying, participating in clubs and organizations, and relaxing or socializing (see Table 2). The largest percentage of both hospitality students and business students spent between 6-10 hours per week preparing for classes (30.7% and 28.2% respectively); the second largest percentage spent between 11-15 hours (21.6% and 21.5% respectively). While 12.5% of hospitality students and 13.0% business students spent between 21 and 30 hours per week preparing for class and 3.4% of hospitality students and 2.7% of business students spent more than 30 hours.

The majority of hospitality students and the majority of business students spent between 1-10 hours participating in co-curricular activities, including on-campus clubs and organizations (64.9% and 53.1% respectively). Although, 19.0% of hospitality students and 29.0% of business students did not participate in any co-curricular activities. For the activity relaxation and socialization, both hospitality students and business students reported spending between 6-10 hours per 7-day week with the greatest frequency (28.4% and 28.0% respectively). More than 5% of both student groups reported spending more than 30 hours relaxing and socializing during the week (6.8% of hospitality students and 5.4% of business students).

4.2. Learning and Assessment in the Classroom

Hospitality students and business students reported being exposed to a number of classroom learning activities and assessments, including: presentations, papers, and projects (see Table 2). Only eight (9.2%) hospitality students and 150 (10.9%) business students reported never preparing a class presentation. The majority of hospitality students (73.5%) and the majority of business students (75.4%) had written a paper or project that required the integration of various sources of information as often or very. The majority of hospitality students (67.0%) and business students

(65.2%) reported never writing a paper of 20 pages or more; although the majority of students both hospitality students (57.5%) and business students (52.9%) did report writing one to four papers that consisted of five to 19 pages.

The majority of business students did not participate, while the majority of hospitality students did, in a community-based or service-learning project as part of a course (65.5% and 39.1% respectively). For participation in community service activities the chi-square statistic was statistically significant $\chi^2 (3, N = 1,460) = 10.52, p < .015$, indicating a difference between the ratings of hospitality students and business students. A large percent of hospitality students (52.9%) had already done some community service at the time of the survey compared to business students (40.7%). Additionally, 15.8% of business students did not plan to participate in community service compared to only 4.6% of hospitality students (see Table 3).

4.3. Experiences with Professors and Advisors

The majority of hospitality students (51.7%) reported that they sometimes talked about their career plans with either a faculty member or an advisor; this was similar to business student responses (49.8%). However, 22.2% of business students have never spoken about their career plans compared to 16.1% of hospitality students. The majority of hospitality students (66.6%) and the majority of business students (67.9%) rated their experiences with faculty members favorably (see Table 2).

The majority of hospitality students (68.2%) and the majority of business students (68.8%) believed institutional emphasis was placed on providing students with help to succeed academically as either quite a bit or very much. However, the majority of hospitality students (68.2%) and the majority of business students (73.7%) believed that institutional emphasis was not highly placed on helping students cope with non-academic responsibilities (work, family, or other challenges). Both hospitality students and business students responded that they received most of their advising from

within their college or department (61.1% and 49.2% respectively) and the majority of students (63.9% and 68.2% respectively) rated the quality of the academic advising they received from their college or department as good or excellent.

4.4. Academic Engagement-Related Comparisons

Some major differences in academic engagement between both hospitality students and business students were identified in the current study and statistically significant differences were found (see Table 3). Already identified in the above section were the differences between participation in community-based projects and primary reason for working. For academic quality the chi-square statistic was statistically significant $\chi^2 (4, N = 1,077) = 19.92, p < .001$, indicating a difference between the ratings of hospitality students and business students. A higher percent of hospitality students (7.0%) rated the quality of their major program as poor compared to business students (1.6%). Additionally, hospitality students (22.5%) rated the quality of their major program as fair compared to business students (11.1%). Regarding working with faculty members on projects and activities not related to their coursework, the chi-square statistic was statistically significant $\chi^2 (3, N = 1,457) = 10.91, p < .012$, indicating a difference between the ratings of hospitality students and business students. Business students reported they had never worked with faculty on out of class projects compared to hospitality students (54.8% and 36.8% respectively).

Hospitality students and business students showed some differences in the engagement (or planning to engage) in internships, community service, and study abroad programs. The chi-square statistic for internship experience was shown to be statistically significant $\chi^2 (3, N = 1,465) = 13.26, p < .004$, indicating a difference in internship participation. Only 2.3% of participating hospitality student did not plan to participate in an internship experience, while 14.9% business students did not plan to do so. For study abroad programs the chi-square statistic was statistically significant $\chi^2 (3, N = 1,463) = 12.56, p < .006$, indicating a difference in planned participation between hospitality

students and business students. Thirty-seven and a half percent of hospitality students planned to participate in a study abroad program compared to 22.0% of business students. Though significant differences between hospitality students and business students were not found for all study variables, a number of differences were determined.

4.5. Work and Work-related Obstacles

Students reported working on campus and off campus in paid positions. Thirty-six percent of hospitality students and 33.0% of business students worked on campus (see Table 4). Similarly, 41.0% of hospitality students and 43.0% of business students worked off campus. Hospitality students spent 11-15 hours per week (13.6%) and 16-20 hours per week (11.4%) working on campus, while business students spent 6-10 hours per week (7.3%), 11-15 hours per week (11.8%), and 16-20 hours per week (7.5%). Hospitality students working off campus spent 1-5 hours per week (9.2%), 6-10 hours per week (6.9%), or 16-20 hours per week (6.9%); business students spent 11-15 hours per week (8.0%), 16-20 hours per week (10.0%), or 21-25 hours per week (6.7%). Eight percent of participating hospitality students reported working more than 30 hours per week off campus.

When asked their biggest obstacle to academic progress, hospitality students and business students selected money, work, or finances most frequently (35.2% and 36.8% respectively). More than 16% indicated a lack of motivation as their biggest obstacle to academic progress and more than 25%, in both groups, indicated they had no real obstacles toward their academic progress. For business students the most frequently selected reasons for working were to earn extra money for basic necessities or spending money (65.8%). However, for hospitality students, the most frequently selected reasons were to earn extra money and to gain knowledge, skills, or experience (69.0%). For the primary reason to work off campus for pay, the chi-square statistic was statistically significant $\chi^2(4, N = 1,065) = 10.94, p < .0272$, indicating a difference between the ratings of

hospitality students and business students. The largest percent of hospitality students (22.5%) rated to gain knowledge, skills, and experience as their primary reason compared to business students (10.6%).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study showed hospitality students and business students share a number of noticeable similarities and differences in the responses they provided. Challenges to student academic engagement, notably classroom experiences and outside influences, support the concept that students today can easily be adrift academically (Arum & Roska, 2011). Many similarities are found between hospitality students and business students, which supports other noted similarities between the two groups of students and their academic and professional disciplines (Scott et al., 2008).

This study showed students spend their time outside of class in a variety of activities, including: preparing for class, participating in various activities, and enjoying socialization activities. The majority of hospitality students (52.3%) and 49.7% of business students spent between six and fifteen hours per week preparing for classes. In addition, the majority (64.9%) of hospitality students spent some time (1-10 hours per week) participating in co-curricular activities, such as university sponsored clubs and activities; however 19.3% did not join any of these types of activities. Recognizing that almost 40.0% of the sample were freshmen, some students may not have had the opportunity or desire to join these during their transitional freshman year of college.

Students reported completing a number of different curricular activities, including presentations, papers, and class projects. While the majority of hospitality students and business students had not written a paper of more than 20 pages in length, they had written at least one paper of between five and 19 pages. However, this lack of substantial writing assignments seems to support the writing and literacy challenges reported in previous literature (Arum & Roksa, 2011;

Kirkness & Neill, 2009). Perhaps hospitality management programs should focus more on developing students' literacy and writing skills early in their curricula and continue to enhance these skills as students progress through their academic studies. This however has implications for educators as they balance large class sizes and resource constraints (Cuseo, 2007).

The majority of hospitality students who participated in the study (51.7%) are attempting to prepare for their futures, having discussed career plans with either a faculty member or a program advisor. It is concerning that some students reported never discussing their career plans. Overall, student reported positive experiences with faculty members, 66.6% of students giving high ratings for these experiences. Though educator challenges were not measured in this study, research findings indicate many faculty are challenged by the new generation of students (Elam et al., 2007; McFarlane, 2010; Mulryan-Kyne, 2010). These favorable student responses illustrate that positive relationships between students and faculty members are being achieved despite educator challenges. Unfortunately, though students are showing initiative in discussing their career plans with faculty, many may not be preparing for their future adequately by gaining valuable experience.

Less than half of the participating hospitality students reported they worked on or off campus (36.4% and 41.3% respectively), though it is unknown if the results are caused by any carry-over participation. However, the low frequency number of employed students may support the concerns of the hospitality industry employers regarding students being ill prepared for employment following graduation (Tesone, 2002; Alonso & O'Neill, 2011). Alonso and O'Neill (2011) reported small business owners in a college town were unable to find workers with the necessary basic skills and a positive work ethic to fill vacant positions. Thirty-five percent (35.2%) of hospitality students in this study, reported money, work, or finances were their biggest, outside the classroom, obstacle toward academic progress. By working a part-time job in the hospitality industry, students can improve their financial situations while gaining valuable experience, which

could greatly benefit their future careers. Additionally, along with earning money, hospitality students reported they were employed to gain knowledge, skills, or experience, which could help as they graduate and begin entry-level industry jobs. Many hospitality undergraduates are not adequately prepared for the demands of entry-level career positions in industry due to gaps in academic and real world based experiences (Tesone, 2002).

This research offers an overview of modern hospitality student academic engagement. The results should allow hospitality educators to better understand who their students are outside the classroom and highlight where support may be needed in order to help them succeed (Tannock & Flocks, 2003). As hospitality programs continue to evolve and work towards strengthening the preparation of future managers and leaders, they must also recognize student challenges occurring inside and outside the classroom. While faculty members must facilitate development of students' literacy and communication skills, they must also continue to expand and adopt real-world based activities to prepare students for their future careers.

5.1. Limitations and Future Research

This study is not free of limitations and has the potential to be expanded with future research. Results may be similar at other institutions, however; the sample included college students enrolled at one university, thus, results may not be generalized. The unequal sample sizes of hospitality students compared to business students may be of concern. Ideally, the researchers would like an equal sample size for each group, however, at the institution this research was conducted, this was not possible. The nominal nature of the variables led to less variability in some responses, such as age or hours spent studying, than would be ideal. Additionally, the information collected through the NSSE is self-reported by the students, thus there are challenges in the collection of accurate information and the development of a complete student profile. Future research may look to expand the sample of hospitality programs, as other universities across the

country participate annually in the NSSE. Hospitality students could be compared to students across all university academic programs, instead of just from a closely related program, such as business. Ultimately, the goal would be to develop and utilize strategies to promote academic engagement.

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Table 1

Sample Profile

Variable	Hospitality Students (<i>n</i> = 87-88) ^a		Business Students (<i>n</i> = 1373-1378) ^a	
	<i>n</i>	% ^b	<i>n</i>	% ^b
Gender				
Male	23	26.1	707	51.3
Female	65	73.9	671	48.7
Age				
17 – 20 years old	40	46	518	37.7
21 – 25 years old	42	48.3	737	53.7
26 – 36 years old	2	2.3	92	6.7
37 – 49 years old	1	1.1	21	1.5
50 – 62 years old	2	2.3	5	0.4
Race & Ethnic Background				
Asian	9	10.2	111	8.1
Black or African American	2	2.3	35	2.5
Hispanic	4	4.5	24	1.7
White	69	78.4	1133	82.4
Multiracial	1	1.1	18	1.3
Other	0	0	21	1.5
Prefer Not to Respond	2	2.3	33	2.4
College Classification				
Freshman	35	39.8	406	29.5
Sophomore	6	6.8	117	8.5
Junior	1	1.1	33	2.4
Senior	45	51.1	821	59.6
International Students				
No	80	90.9	1269	92.2

Yes	8	9.1	107	7.8
Enrollment Status				
Less than full-time	3	3.4	60	4.4
Full-time	85	96.6	1317	95.6
Attended a Community or Junior College				
No	66	75	973	70.6
Yes	22	25	405	29.4

^a*n* varies due to non-response

^bPercent may not total to 100 due to rounding

Table 2

Student Activities and Time Spent

Variable	Hospitality Students (<i>n</i> = 88)		Business Students (<i>n</i> = 1374-1377) ^a	
	<i>n</i>	% ^b	<i>n</i>	% ^b
Preparing for classes (e.g. studying, doing homework)^c				
0	2	2.3	4	0.3
1-5	15	17.0	272	19.9
6-10	27	30.7	388	28.2
11-15	19	21.6	296	21.5
16-20	11	12.5	198	14.4
21-25	9	10.2	116	8.4
26-30	2	2.3	63	4.6
More than 30	3	3.4	37	2.7
Participating in co-curricular activities (on-campus organizations, clubs, student government)^c				
0	17	19.3	392	28.5
1-5	41	46.6	515	37.5
6-10	16	18.3	215	15.6
11-15	6	6.8	115	8.4
16-20	4	4.5	63	4.6
21-25	3	3.4	22	1.6
26-30	0	0.0	18	1.3
More than 30	1	1.1	34	2.5
Relaxing and socializing^c				
0	0	0.0	3	0.2
1-5	12	13.6	275	19.9
6-10	25	28.4	386	28.0
11-15	23	26.2	308	22.4
16-20	12	13.6	199	14.5

21-25	8	9.1	95	6.9
26-30	2	2.3	37	2.7
More than 30	6	6.8	74	5.4
Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course				
Never	34	39.1	899	65.6
Sometimes	36	41.4	354	25.8
Often	15	17.2	86	6.3
Very often	2	2.3	32	2.3
Made a class presentation				
Never	8	9.2	150	10.9
Sometimes	30	34.4	579	42.2
Often	28	32.2	426	31.1
Very often	21	24.1	216	15.8

Table 2 – continued

Student Activities and Time Spent

Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources				
Never	2	2.3	25	1.8
Sometimes	21	24.1	312	22.7
Often	37	42.5	638	46.4
Very often	27	31.0	399	29.0
Number of written papers or reports of 20 pages or more				
None	59	67.0	898	65.2
1-4	26	29.5	404	29.3
5-10	2	2.3	50	3.6
11-20	0	0.0	15	1.1
More than 20	1	1.1	10	0.7
Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages				
None	11	12.6	242	17.6
1-4	50	57.5	728	52.9
5-10	20	23.0	320	23.3
11-20	5	5.7	69	5.0
More than 20	1	1.1	17	1.2
Number of written papers or reports fewer than 5 pages				
None	0	0.0	35	2.5
1-4	22	25.3	400	29.1
5-10	28	32.2	497	36.1
11-20	22	25.3	296	21.5
More than 20	15	17.2	148	10.8
Worked with other students on projects during class				
Never	5	5.7	116	8.5
Sometimes	34	39.1	626	45.6
Often	37	42.5	453	33.0
Very often	11	12.6	177	12.9
Worked with classmates outside of the class to prepare				

class assignments				
Never	5	5.7	56	4.1
Sometimes	29	33.3	430	31.3
Often	31	35.6	506	36.9
Very often	22	25.3	381	27.7
Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor				
Never	14	16.1	304	22.2
Sometimes	45	51.7	683	49.8
Often	17	19.5	264	19.2
Very often	11	12.6	121	8.8

^a*n* varies due to non-response

^bPercent may not total to 100 due to rounding

^cHours per week spent on activity

Table 3

Student Group Differences: Academic and Experience Aspects

Variable	Hospitality Students (<i>n</i> = 71-88) ^a % ^b	Business Students (<i>n</i> = 1006-1377) ^a % ^b	Total (<i>n</i> = 1077-1465) ^a % ^b	χ^2	<i>P</i>
Academic quality of major program				19.92	<.001
Poor	7.0	1.6	2.0		
Fair	22.5	11.1	11.9		
Good	42.3	49.8	49.3		
Excellent	26.8	34.3	33.8		
No major yet	1.4	3.2	3.1		
Worked with faculty members on activities not related to coursework				10.91	.012
Never	36.8	54.8	53.7		
Sometimes	40.2	29.9	30.5		
Often	16.1	11.0	11.3		
Very often	6.9	4.4	4.5		
Participate in an internship or field experience				13.26	.004
Have not decided	8.0	8.4	8.3		
Do not plan to do so	2.3	14.9	14.1		
Plan to do	53.4	51.4	51.5		
Done	36.4	25.3	26.0		
Participate in community service or volunteer work				10.52	.015
Have not decided	9.2	12.4	12.2		
Do not plan to do so	4.6	15.8	15.1		
Plan to do	33.3	31.1	31.2		
Done	52.9	40.7	41.4		
What is your primary reason for working for pay (either on or off campus)					
I don't work for pay	15.5	22.1	21.7	10.34	.035
For something to do	0.0	1.5	1.4		

To earn extra spending money	15.5	17.0	16.9		
Earn money for basic expenses	46.5	48.8	48.6		
Gain knowledge/skill/experience	22.5	10.6	11.4		
Participate in a study abroad program				12.56	.006
Have not decided	13.6	17.1	16.9		
Do not plan to do so	37.5	51.1	50.3		
Plan to do	37.5	22.0	22.9		
Done	11.4	9.8	9.9		

^a*n* varies due to non-response

^bPercent may not total to 100 due to rounding

Table 4

Student Employment: Time Spent and Reasons for Working

Variable	Hospitality Students (<i>n</i> = 87-88) ^a		Business Students (<i>n</i> = 1374-1377) ^a	
	<i>n</i>	% ^b	<i>n</i>	% ^b
Spent working for pay on campus^c				
0	56	63.6	921	67.0
1-5	2	2.3	58	4.2
6-10	7	8.0	100	7.3
11-15	12	13.6	162	11.8
16-20	10	11.4	103	7.5
21-25	1	1.1	12	0.9
26-30	0	0.0	4	0.2
More than 30	0	0.0	15	1.1
Spent working for pay off campus^c				
0	51	58.7	783	57.0
1-5	8	9.2	65	4.7
6-10	6	6.9	51	3.7
11-15	4	4.6	109	8.0
16-20	6	6.9	137	10.0
21-25	2	2.3	92	6.7
26-30	3	3.4	44	3.2
More than 30	7	8.0	92	6.7
Which describes your biggest obstacle to your academic progress?^{d,e}				
Money, work, finances	25	35.2	365	36.8
Family obligations	3	4.2	44	4.5
Difficulties getting courses	9	12.7	57	5.8
Lack of motivation	12	16.9	183	18.4
Lack of good academic advising	0	0.0	48	4.8
Poor academic performance	1	1.4	42	4.2

No real obstacles	21	29.6	253	25.5
What is the primary reason for working for pay?^{d,e}				
To gain knowledge, skills, experience	16	22.5	105	10.6
To earn extras money for basics	33	46.5	485	48.8
To earn extra spending money	11	15.5	169	17.0
For something to do	0	0.0	15	1.5
I don't work for pay	11	15.5	220	22.1

^a*n* varies due to non-response

^bPercent may not total to 100 due to rounding

^cHours per week spent on activity

^d*n*=71 due to question not included in 2003 survey and non-response

^e*n*=992-994 due to question not included in 2003 survey and non-response