STUDENTS ON THE MOVE

Students’ Perspectives on Participating in Co-Curricular Activities
Wondering what type of impact participation in co-curricular activities can have on your life? Read about four students who will tell you in their own words why it was one of the best decisions they made in college.
Through participation in these clubs, I have had the opportunity to develop my public speaking skills and the ability to think quickly. Furthermore, participating and investing in Chinese Culture Club and Koinonia has pushed me outside of my comfort zone and given me chances to do things I would otherwise be uncomfortable with - networking with strangers, advocating for a cause I believe in, and creating a space that encourages growth.

Co-curricular involvement has definitely helped me with leadership and organizational skills. I’ve never had to manage such large organizations before and work with so many different levels of authority. My experiences have also helped me to zero in on what I really care about because we need to compete for resources and exposure. It’s also helped me figure out how to work under pressure - in particular, pressure from club members who may not be on board with my vision.

Co-curricular activities add depth to any student’s college experience. Lectures and dorm life are great, yet living in college community can sometimes isolate you from real world issues and possibly hinder you from making connections between your academic work and real life. Student involvement helps bring real life perspective to your college years.”

“Participating in co-curricular activities gave me the opportunity to apply the skills I learned in the classroom and actively contribute to the Wheaton community. My involvement allowed me to have practical experience and make friends within the dance community all while pursuing something I loved. This experience both fostered relationships and provided transferable career skills.

“While at college, it’s often easy to feel overwhelmed by work. For me, co-curriculars served as a way to de-stress, build relationships outside of the classroom, and become part of something greater than myself. Taking care of personal wellness includes engaging in activities simply because you enjoy them, because they restore your soul.

“These opportunities left an impact on me by reminding me that I can make a difference even at a young age. During my junior
year, I co-wrote an article originally published in the Wheaton Record. The article was republished in The Washington Post and from there it garnered significant media attention. I received emails from people across the country thanking me for writing. I was asked to speak at conferences, including the Interfaith Youth Core in Atlanta, Georgia, where I spoke about my passion for justice and my Christian faith. This all began at the Wheaton Record. Eventually, I co-launched an independent journal and ended up with an internship as a reporter for WORLD Magazine this past summer, all because of an article first published in a college newspaper. I found myself on the steps of the Capitol building with my press badge, covering breaking news in Washington, D.C.

“Most of the college experience happens outside the classroom, so the way you choose to spend your free time matters a great deal. Make the most of the opportunities available to you. There is an outlet for every personality type on a college campus—so find the community that suits you. Meet those who have similar interests. Learn and grow together.

“In short, don’t take anything for granted. Never say, ‘it’s just a co-curricular.’ Those co-curriculars just might make a big difference in your career.

“After graduation, I plan to pursue work as a writer and reporter. I will use my skills in verbal and written communication, photography, public speaking and digital media to build a career as a writer.”

Ciera Horton
Paul Vermeesch

Class of 2018

**Clubs or Organizations:** Discipleship Small Groups, Class Films, Arena Theater, Jukebox Theater, Jewish Culture Club, Class Council, Teaching Assistance, Student Activities Office Media Team

“Being in positions of leadership during my two years at Wheaton has given me greater confidence in my abilities as a leader and has shown me the places in my life that can still use improvement. My participation in these activities has strengthened my capacity to work well in groups of people and in team settings.

“I’ve intentionally tried to stretch myself and take advantage of opportunities that may have been uncomfortable or risky in my two years at Wheaton. But these experiences have paid dividends by deepening relationships with my friends and bringing me in contact with a host of other students I would have never met otherwise. I’ve so appreciated the
chances I’ve gotten to interact with peers from all across the Wheaton College landscape.

“I’m of the opinion that a liberal arts undergraduate education is as much about the experiences you have and the people you do life with as it is about the education itself. The friends I’ve made in these past two years will remain lifelong friends, and I have no doubt that I will look back on these undergraduate years as some of the best of my life.

“My advice to a prospective student is that there’s absolutely no reason to remain unengaged and isolated. There are activities and opportunities to fit every interest, and the odds are that some of the most fulfilling moments of your college career will come when you least expect them from a co-curricular activity or campus organization.”

Paul Vermeesch
Clubs or Organizations: Orientation Committee, Student Ambassador, Global Urban Perspectives, Varsity Women’s Golf, Human Anatomy Teacher Assistant, Wheaton in the Holy Lands, Study Abroad (Danish Institute for Study Abroad)

“In every organization I have been involved in, particularly Orientation Committee, the faculty and staff commit to cultivating a deep sense of family and an intentional focus on student development. With that comes a trust and camaraderie between students that have allowed me to explore, fail, and grow in leaps and bounds. Honestly, I feel like I have learned much more about the world, its people, God, and myself than I ever could in a classroom. College is the ultimate experiential learning environment because you begin to take ownership of every aspect of your life, especially the activities in which you choose to participate.

“The self-awareness I have gained through my involvement in co-curricular activities has been one of the most empowering gifts I will take with me from Wheaton College.

Dana Ann Henderson*
Class of 2017

*center, top right
These activities collectively have radically transformed my understanding of my own personality and communication style, let alone concepts much larger than myself such as social justice, leadership, and the Church. It seems so basic to know yourself well, but the people I have worked with and the programs in which I have taken part have revealed level upon level of beautiful complexity that is so worth discovering.

“My advice to a prospective student is not to miss out on the opportunities around you. First, get your feet wet by trying something that really interests you. Then, try something that intrigues you, that will challenge you, that will give you the honor of being a part of something bigger than yourself. You might be surprised by what you discover!”

Dana Ann Henderson
Clubs or Organizations: Student Government: Class President and Chaplain, Residence Life: Upper Class Council President Athletics: Athletics Promotion Manager, Half-time Emcee and Mascot Advisory Council President

Current Career and Graduate school: Corporate Strategist at LinkedIn
1st Year MBA Student at University of Chicago Booth School of Business
Once I complete graduate school I hope to live overseas, working in a leadership role in a tech company.

“The co-curricular roles I participated in during college helped me develop a foundation of leadership and managerial skills that I have built upon since that time. Additionally, connections I made through different organizations directly led to several job opportunities as well.

“My favorite aspect of co-curricular involvement was having unparalleled access to administrators and staff. By working
with them in various roles, it opened up opportunities for connection and mentorship that might not have otherwise happened. The connections and friendships I made through these organizations continue to be some of the richest relationships I have and created great memories.

“There is no better way to make new friends and acquire new skills than to get involved in co-curricular activities.

“One thing I wish I would have done differently as a college student was connecting with alumni while I was a student. I didn’t realize how receptive and willing alumni are to meeting and helping out students until after I graduated. There are clubs and organizations connecting more students with alumni than ever before. I would encourage current students to pursue relationships with alumni. They are a valuable resource!

“If a role that you would like to do doesn’t yet exist, then create it! I was the first person to have most of the roles I did within various organizations because I was involved in helping to create them. Do the best you can to enlarge your vision.”

Interested in learning more about what types of co-curricular activities are available for you and how they can affect your college career and future?

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