A New Perspective on Fostering Organic Diversity Within Organizations

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In recent years, businesses have continually struggled to diversify their talent pools in an organic manner. This paper offers a new perspective on fostering organic diversity. Using data on club membership from one four-year liberal arts institution, different indices were created to rank each club in the sample according to the proximity of the demographic distribution of the club membership to that of the overall student population. This method identifies clubs whose activities have universal appeal and thus produce diversity organically. These findings have important implications for businesses seeking to improve workforce cohesion and meet their DEI recruitment objectives.

Keywords: diversity, equity, inclusion, organic diversity, social skills, soft skills, recruitment, workforce cohesion, university, student clubs, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are top priorities for both organizations and higher education institutions. These entities continually face the challenge of finding effective ways to foster a diverse and unified organizational culture, fostering self-awareness and appreciation for diversity, and enhancing cross-cultural competencies for more effective collaboration with a diverse range of individuals. Furthermore, businesses are confronted with the task of identifying and nurturing new talent sources that contribute to a diverse and skilled workforce. Consequently, businesses are actively exploring strategies to maintain their DEI initiatives. Higher education institutions may serve as valuable models for how businesses can approach DEI programs and tap into unique student talent pools for workforce recruitment. This study aimed to assess the diversity and skill pools within one, public four-year liberal arts university's portfolio of student clubs–those organized and led by students, to ascertain if student clubs are a valuable resource for businesses to aid in the enhancement of their DEI initiatives and talent acquisition.

To that end, data was collected on club membership from the University's online platform for student club involvement. The data is comprised of 3704 students who have a combined total of 8088 club memberships divided among 319 clubs. This data was used to identify if certain activities and interests have universal appeal, that is, those activities transcend cultural and demographic characteristics and thus organically produce diversity. It is important to note culture was not (and cannot) explicitly be controlled. Rather, culture is likely to be correlated to ethnicity to some extent and thus is also likely to play some role in social dynamics. Based on this premise, if a club were to organically produce diversity, then the

demographic characteristics of the student sample in each club should correspond to the demographic characteristics of the overall student population. To determine each club's degree of organic diversity, a measure was constructed that ranks each club at the University according to the proximity of the demographic distribution of its club membership relative to the overall club student population. To achieve this, three different demographic indices were created: an ethnicity index (EI), a sex index (SI), and a combined ethnicity and sex (ESI) index.

The index rankings suggest that specific activities hold universal appeal. That is, they are culturally and demographically neutral. Clubs centered around these activities tend to naturally draw diverse groups of individuals within their membership. This insight could offer businesses an opportunity to reexamine aspects of their strategic planning process. Specifically, businesses could revise their vision and value statements in an effort to increase their universal appeal and thus organically attract a more diverse talent pool. Moreover, companies can utilize internal procedures to gather feedback from the workforce, pinpointing interests that extend beyond work roles and tasks. This data can then inform the design of suitable activities and events, fostering cohesion and naturally cultivating diversity within the organization. Lastly, students who engaged in leadership roles within clubs and students who participated in more than one club had a higher GPA than regular student members and students who were members of a single club. This finding implies that GPA acts as an indicator of increased social and soft skill development. This encourages businesses to refine their recruitment strategies by collaborating with higher education institutions to directly engage with students involved in structured student clubs.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In section 2, the existing literature is reviewed. In section 3, the data is described, and the methodology outlined. In section 4, the results are presented. In section 5, the implications of the findings are discussed. Finally, in section 6, different avenues of future research are explored.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Business diversity refers to the presence of individuals with various backgrounds, encompassing aspects such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and socio-economic status. The importance of diversity within businesses is widely acknowledged and can yield numerous positive outcomes for both the organization and its employees. Research indicates that diversity leads to enhanced work quality, improved decision-making, increased team satisfaction, and greater equity (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Gomez & Bernet, 2019). Diverse teams bring together a rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences, often resulting in more creative and innovative problem-solving approaches. A commitment to diversity and inclusion enables businesses to attract a broader spectrum of talent, fostering a more competent, engaged, and dedicated workforce. Likewise, a diverse student community prepares students to more effectively engage with diverse peers and function at a higher level as part of a group in their post-secondary experiences. As highlighted in a study by Parshakov et al. (2018), cultural diversity was found to significantly enhance team performance with its absence leading to a 30% decline in performance. However, collaborating within teams and alongside individuals from diverse backgrounds necessitates a refined skill set honed through practice (Kovarik & Warren, 2020). Therefore, cultivating soft skills, synonymous with social skills, becomes a pivotal factor for students venturing into the contemporary workforce. It becomes imperative for students not only to acquire hard skills but also to develop a robust set of desired soft or social skills. Hard skills refer to the objective skills or technical knowledge required for a particular job qualification. Kovarik and Warren (2020) found that students can acquire soft skills through engagement in student clubs and campus organizations, effectively enhancing their preparedness for the professional landscape. This can provide businesses with increased access to target students involved in student clubs and campus organizations to capitalize on the benefits of this skill development.

Student Clubs
Student clubs at colleges and universities play a crucial role in helping students acquire a wide range of soft skills and competencies, with a particular focus on personal, cognitive, and social development, all

of which contribute to the enhancement of students' professional and academic accomplishments. There are various categories of student clubs including but not limited to Academic Clubs, Political Clubs, Media and Publication Groups, Community Service and Social Justice, Theatre and the Arts, Religious, Spiritual, and Cultural Groups (Banks, 2023). Kovarik and Warren (2020) found that students who consistently engaged in one of these clubs for a minimum of one year exhibited heightened proficiency in leadership, networking, and communication skills. Similarly, regular, and scheduled club participation, such as practice and meetings, helped students to be more conscientious, efficient, organized, and systematic as well as have greater self-esteem (Bradley & Conway, 2016). Specific to esports and other competitive teams, working with others allows students to develop their ability to communicate, present themselves, and react appropriately in a given situation (Rothwell & Shaffer, 2019). Additionally, Kuzu (2021) revealed that student clubs primarily exhibited diversity in their categorization based on profession and department/program names, making these entities easier for businesses to target for recruitment. Additionally, it was observed that student clubs displayed diversity in areas related to academic research, professional work, and technical matters. Accordingly, understanding how students select to allocate their free time is critical as it positively contributes to their academic and soft skills development during college. However, it is important to note that there are student club organizations that are often racially homogeneous including Greek life, ethnic student organizations, and campus religions groups (Park, 2014). Furthermore, it has been identified that student club and extracurricular activities by females are often influenced and affected by social norms which may adversely affect engagement in STEM-related or perceived male dominate extracurricular pursuits (Leaper, 2015). Yet, Pike et al. (2003) argued that male college students may be more susceptible to limited advancements in social skill development because of their slower involvement in cocurricular activities in comparison.

Students' club choices are driven by the personal rewards they offered, which in turn can bolster a stronger sense of school connectedness and greater gains in interpersonal and team work skills (Bradley & Conway, 2016; Shcheglova, 2019). Ragins (1997) has also suggested that enhancing meaningful interactions between groups selected by students can greatly enhance their capacity to collaborate effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds. As such, student clubs often have institutional faculty or staff as club mentors to appropriately integrate learning experiences as part of the club that further contributes to their development and prepares students to enter, work, and lead multicultural organizations (Dachner & Betty, 2023; Walker, 2018). Similarly in a business context, meaningful interactions between employees and their immediate supervisor leads to heightened employee satisfaction, reduced turnover rates, increased employee loyalty, improved customer service, elevated sales, and greater profitability (Baqir, et al., 2020).

These interactions have become increasingly important considering the rising numbers of international students and workers and the imperative to foster cross-cultural competence while gaining insights into the experiences of others (Dachner & Beatty, 2023). Therefore, as organizations strive to recruit and nurture a more diverse workforce, soft skills become increasingly crucial, enabling organizations to fully leverage the benefits of diversity. Student clubs provide the chance for students to meet and connect with similar-minded individuals, fostering new friendships and networking opportunities, building a sense of camaraderie and community, thus contributing to a memorable undergraduate experience and increased satisfaction (Banks, 2023). The endorsement of club activities and facilitating their success is a credible strategy for schools to elevate student achievement (Bradley & Conway, 2016) as well as support the organic growth of soft skills. Soft skills or social skills encompass personal attributes and interpersonal abilities that enable individuals to engage effectively with others in their social or professional settings. These skills serve to enhance an individual's hard skills, objective skills, or technical knowledge. Heckman and Kautz (2012) found that soft skills predicted success in life and causally produce that success. Notably, the authors argue programs that help enhance students' soft skills are essential in an effective strategy portfolio. Borghaus et al. (2011) showed that a significant portion of the variance in achievement in test scores and grades between students can be explained by personality traits and their soft skill development.

Similarly, Rothwell and Shaffer (2019) discovered that the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills cultivated in a STEM-oriented learning environment provided a valuable dimension to future employees.

Accordingly, these individuals developed the ability to collaborate within teams, acquire technological proficiency, and enhance critical thinking skills. Additionally, research has established a link between student clubs with a team-oriented focus and the development of leadership abilities, as well as the enhancement of advanced problem-solving, creativity, and communication skills (Castillo & Escribano, 2021). Hoang et al. (2021) discussed the impact of participation in competitive teams on factors related to college and career readiness, which contributes to fostering a sense of community, character development, and increased student engagement. Finally, in a study conducted by Keng (2023), the data suggests that soft skills potentially have a causal impact on academic achievements, although they may not be entirely reflected in the student's GPA. In fact, in a study conducted by Jones, et al (2017), they identified that business recruiters have begun to shift away from GPA and work experience and are more focused on factors that demonstrate soft and social skills. However, there is not a direct measure that currently exists outside of GPA. Yet, the combination of club engagement and GPA may offer deeper insight and a stronger correlation to higher proficiency in soft and social skills.

Talent Pipeline for Businesses

The significance of diversity and soft skills has grown more pronounced, particularly in light of the United States' with over 10 million job openings that surpass the number of job seekers ("Workforce Shortages," 2023). Various industry clusters face shortages due to factors such as skill mismatches, specialized and high-demand fields, an aging workforce, and the emergence of new technologies and industries. To combat these shortages, businesses often employ a range of strategies, including investing in education and training programs to cultivate essential skills and collaborating with educational institutions to align curricula with industry requirements. As emphasized during the 2023 National Governors Association meeting, there is a pressing need to focus on strategies for addressing workforce shortages and ensuring that workers possess the skills necessary to succeed in the evolving job market. This includes initiatives like expanding broadband access, providing digital skills training, and implementing apprenticeship programs ("Workforce Shortages," 2023).

Lyons et al. (2019) highlighted opportunities for employers and educational institutions to join forces, offering students earlier exposure to career pathways and critical employment sectors. They noted that such efforts can be particularly effective in demonstrating to students the direct connection between education and employability, thereby reducing school dropout rates, grade repetition, and enhancing student performance. Furthermore, organizations have implemented diversity and inclusion initiatives to broaden the pool of potential candidates, with a specific focus on underrepresented groups. Addressing talent pipeline challenges requires proactive efforts and adaptability from both employers and the workforce. Consequently, businesses are compelled to identify new talent pipelines, and in the past, internship programs with post-secondary institutions have proven to be invaluable. Student clubs may prove to be a valuable resource for businesses not only for workforce recruitment but also for internal programming approaches (i.e., employee activities, retreats) that can contribute to fostering a diverse and unified organizational culture within the business.

Recruitment strategies vary widely depending on the industry, job market conditions, and the company's specific needs. The selection of recruitment channels is often guided by the specific demands of the organization, the nature of the roles to be filled, and the available financial resources (SHRM, 2023). However, businesses often use a combination of methods to attract a diverse and qualified pool of candidates. For instance, employers frequently collaborate with recruitment or staffing agencies to assist in the identification and evaluation of potential candidates for their job vacancies. These agencies specialize in the sourcing and vetting of candidates. Additionally, employers may establish partnerships with educational institutions to tap into recent graduates and entry-level talent. This often involves participation in career fairs and on-campus recruiting events, which are prevalent in this context and provide business direct access to students (Davis & Binder, 2016). These job fairs, typically hosted at physical higher education institutions, provide a convenient platform for job seekers and employers to converge. Employers typically set up booths or tables at these events to introduce their company and promote available job opportunities.

As mentioned above, many companies implement internship programs with the intention of extending full-time offers to successful interns upon their graduation. Internship initiatives can serve as an effective channel for recruiting fresh talent and play a pivotal role in students' transition into a labor market marked by distinctive features (Franco, Silva, & Rodrigues, 2019). These programs provide students with hands-on experience while allowing companies to evaluate potential future employees. These programs enable businesses to advance diversity and inclusion by engaging with students from diverse backgrounds, including underrepresented groups, while simultaneously, providing students with authentic, real-world learning experiences (Mayorga, 2019). However, there is a lack of evidence showing that universities and businesses actively employ the existence of student clubs as potential avenues for internship programming and post-secondary workforce recruitment. Furthermore, there is limited data that confirms a link between diversity and the cultivation of soft skills among students participating in clubs. This study aims to bridge this gap by offering deeper insights into the valuable frameworks present within student clubs.

METHODOLOGY

Setting
The primary goal of this research was to identify diversity characteristics of a population, in this case, specific student club orientations and GPA performance, in its real-world context (Siedlecki, 2020). Although descriptive cases typically rely on qualitative data collection methods, the university has a variety of quantitative measures that currently exist that offer rich and detailed information about students at the university and their engagement in organized student clubs. Rashid, et al. (2019) utilized this method to clearly identify students' engagement within each club as well as any empirical relationships that exist between students, their club engagement, and their major. This substantiates the approach adopted for this study.

The setting for this case is a public, four-year liberal arts institution on the east coast that will be referred to as "University" in the state of New Jersey. The university, ranked among the nation's top, offers more than 160 undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as continuing education opportunities. The institution's average tuition cost is $12,994.00 in-state and $20,884.00 out-of-state per year. It has a 75% graduation rate, and 85% acceptance rate. The University's Fall 2023 student enrollment is a total of 8,788 full and part-time undergraduate and graduate students. Almost half, 47.6%, of the new first-time undergraduates are new transfer students. Most of the students, 88.9%, are enrolled at the undergraduate level. 90% of all students are enrolled full-time, with the remaining 10% enrolled part-time. In-state students comprised 96% of the student body, with the remainder enrolled out-of-state. 62% of the students are female and 38% are male. The racial makeup of the student body is 59% Caucasian, 19% Hispanic, 10% African-American, and 7% Asian, with the remainder indicated as either mixed-race or unknown/unspecified. These numbers broadly align with the demographic composition of the state of New Jersey where, according to data from the 2020 U.S. census, 54.5% of the population identified as Caucasian, 21.6% identified as Hispanic, 13.6% identified as African-American, and 11% identified as Asian. Student clubs at the University encompass a wide range of different activities. Some clubs are centered around exploring hobbies like chess, cars, and hiking. Others are centered around a specific degree program, leadership, and personal development, or celebrating specific cultures and traditions. All clubs are, therefore, a collection of students who share a common interest. In addition, membership in a specific club or clubs is entirely voluntary.

Data and Measure Construction
Data was retrieved from the University's online platform for student club involvement. In total, there were 319 registered clubs as of the end of the Spring 2022 semester (the reference period for the data). However, many of the clubs are relatively new and have few members. Some of the clubs comprised a single member who was also the club founder. To avoid small sample bias, clubs with a club membership (club size) of less than 30 students were excluded. Thus, the sample is comprised of all clubs at the university (117 in total) with at least 30 members. Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of all club

members (of these 117 clubs) as of the end of the Spring 2022 semester. The 3704 student club participants had a combined total of 8088 club memberships. The demographics of the students who were members of at least one club closely resemble the demographic profile of the student body at the end of the Spring 2022 semester. Hence, there is no selection bias in club membership based on sex and ethnicity. The ethnic distribution by club memberships, on the other hand, exhibits a smaller proportion of Caucasians. This can be explained by the fact that the University, like many other colleges and universities across the United States, has many cultural appreciation clubs – clubs dedicated to the celebration of the traditions and culture of students from typically minority (non-Caucasian) backgrounds, which increases their overall club membership proportion.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	Students	Club Memberships
N	3704	8088
Ethnicity (in percent)		
African American	8.56	9.11
Asian	8.86	13.33
Caucasian	60.88	54.49
Hispanic	15.25	16.12
More Than 1 Race	3.56	3.77
Unknown	2.89	3.18
Sex (in percent)		
Female	68.60	72.55
Male	31.40	27.45

To determine each club's degree of organic diversity, three different measures were constructed: an ethnicity index (EI), a sex index (SI), and a combined ethnicity and sex (ESI) index. These indices rank each club at the University according to the proximity of the demographic distribution of its club membership relative to that of the overall club student population. To create the ethnicity index, the proportional distribution of ethnicities within each club was calculated, mirroring the process used for the overall student population as shown in Table 1. Next, the proportion that each ethnicity represents in each club was subtracted from each ethnicity's corresponding percentage in the overall student population. This method of analysis solely prioritizes deviations from the overall population and remains impartial to over or under-representation. Consequently, for each ethnicity, the absolute value was used, summing all figures to establish our ethnicity index. To illustrate, suppose that 12% of the students in a certain club are Asian and 5% are African American. First, the deviation is calculated in absolute value, for each ethnicity in that club, from the overall population. For Asian, that is 0.0314 (|0.12-0.086|), while for African Americans, that is 0.0356 (|0.05-0.0856|). This process is repeated for the other ethnicities in the club. Lastly, all six numbers are summed. The result is the ethnicity index for that club.

The sex index was similarly constructed. Suppose that a club is 90% female and 10% male. This means that the sex index for the club will equal 0.428 (|0.9-0.686|+|0.1-0.314|). Although the biological term sex is used, many of the clubs and the activities they centered around are skewed toward a particular sex primarily due to their gender (the social and cultural roles associated with each sex) rather than their biological characteristics. Accordingly, the combined EI+SI score takes the sum of the EI and SI index scores for each club. For any of these indices, the lower the index score for a given club, the closer the club's demographics match those of the overall student population. An index score of zero would thus indicate that a club's demographics align perfectly with the student population.

RESULTS

In Table 2, the ten best (top half) and the ten worst (bottom half) clubs are ranked according to their EI score. Before discussing the clubs at the top of the rankings, note that the clubs at the bottom represent what was described earlier as cultural celebration clubs. These clubs are designed to bring together people with similar cultural and ethnic backgrounds and are thus, by definition, exclusionary of individuals with different backgrounds. Naturally, these clubs perform worse according to the ethnicity index ranking. The best-performing clubs, however, are clubs that are involved with activities of general interest to everyone and are not conditional on ethnic or cultural background. The top-ranked club, The Great Outdoors Club, states its mission is "to bring students together to explore the beauty of the great outdoors." It is perhaps not surprising that appreciation of nature is a universal trait that transcends ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The clubs ranked second and third are focused on mental health. Pride Alliance is a club for members of the LGBTQ+ community whose shared struggles to fit in society also appear to transcend their immutable physical characteristics. A Capella (singing), Action Volunteers for the Environment (climate activism), and Esports (electronic video games), together with gardening and dancing, are other activities that generate diversity organically.

TABLE 2
TOP TEN BEST AND WORST PERFORMING CLUB BY IE SCORE

Club Name	Club Size	EI Score
Great Outdoors Club	102	0.0471
Active Minds	69	0.0692
Pathways to Healing	157	0.0842
Nursing Club	47	0.0944
Pride Alliance	50	0.1000
A Capella	32	0.1100
Action Volunteers for the Environment	112	0.1129
Garden Club	78	0.1149
Esports	110	0.1255
Dance Club	58	0.1317
Los Latinos	108	1.2192
Pakistani Students Association	77	1.2205
togetHER Empowering and Mentoring Women of Color	117	1.2432
Unified Black Students Society	85	1.3190
Korean Student Organization	59	1.3332
Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Foundation	35	1.3971
Filipino American Student Association of Stockton	37	1.4718
South Asian Student Association	40	1.5200
African Student Association	38	1.5647
Muslim Student Association	55	1.5654

In Table 3, clubs are ranked according to their SI score. The top-ranked club, Themed Living Communities, is centered around welcoming new students and helping them connect with the university community and connect students to all campus and community services. This result suggests that going to an unknown place where one may feel like an outsider or lack a sense of belonging transcends sex/gender characteristics. Note that when ranked by SI score, some culture and identity celebration clubs like the Bengali Student Association and the Asian Student Alliance make the top of the ranking. Although, as stated prior, these clubs are primarily exclusionary of people with different backgrounds by design, their celebration of specific cultures and identities does appear to appeal in similar proportion to both sexes that are part of each group. The Argo, the University's newspaper, also appears to be one of the more well-

balanced in terms of the proportional representation of each sex in the club. Other activities that appeal to both sexes/genders in similar proportion to their representation in the population are literature, math, marine science, and ocean preservation (Love Blue University Chapter).

TABLE 3
TOP TEN BEST AND WORST PERFORMING CLUB BY SI SCORE

Club Name	Club Size	SI Score
Themed Living Communities	70	0.0006
Bengali Students Association	61	0.0050
Adoptees United	41	0.0061
The Argo	44	0.0083
Marine Science Club	136	0.0104
Love Blue	130	0.0126
Literature Club	104	0.0126
Asian Student Alliance	67	0.0310
Math Club	39	0.0387
Graduate Physical Therapy Club	58	0.0418
History Club	35	0.5720
Sigma Sigma Sigma	75	0.5747
Music Union	41	0.6402
Billiards Club	63	0.6418
Gaming Club	162	0.6683
Computer Society	59	0.6940
Investment Club	46	0.7198
Car Club	40	0.7220
Osprey Chess Club	32	0.8720
Esports	110	0.8992

Note that fifteen of the clubs in the sample are either all male or all females. These clubs are sororities, fraternities, or clubs related to an all-male or female sport, like rowing. Since these clubs do not provide useful information as it pertains to the SI score, they were removed from the ranking. Thus, the clubs at the bottom of the ranking in Table 3 contained at least one male or female student. Surprisingly, these clubs are heavily male-dominated. This discovery contradicts the findings of Pike et al. (2003) who argue that male college students might face higher risks of limited gains in social skill development due to their comparatively slower engagement in cocurricular activities. Some of the main activities that clubs at the bottom are engaged in that appear to favor males relate to playing games, either board (Billiards Club, Chess Club) or electronic (Gaming Club, Esports). Furthermore, the Investment Club and the Car Club are also heavily male-dominated. As mentioned earlier, these clubs tend to be male dominated not because of the innate biological characteristics of the male sex but rather due to cultural factors that are often associated with males or men. A strong interest in anything car-related is more common among men than women. Similarly, men appear to have a greater proclivity, if not to play games, then, at the very least, to gather socially to play together in groups. Interest in engineering or computer science (Computer Club) and finance and investment (Investment Club) have also been shown to heavily skew toward higher male participation.

In Table 4, clubs are ranked according to their combined EI+SI (ESI) score. What appears to promote diversity in both ethnicity and race naturally is students' shared passion and interest in specific activities. The Argo – the University's student newspaper comes out on top as the most balanced organization in terms of both ethnicity and sex. The other clubs that appear to naturally attract a diverse group of students are focused on exploring members' shared appreciation for the ocean and nature (Love Blue, Marine Science, Great Outdoors), literature, horror movies and fiction, music (A Capella), physical therapy, and marijuana

research. The clubs on the bottom of the list, on the other hand, are cultural appreciation clubs that are centered around celebrating unique cultural backgrounds.

TABLE 4
TOP TEN BEST AND WORST PERFORMING CLUBS BY ESI SCORE

Club Name	Club Size	ESI Score	El Rank	SI Rank
The Argo	44	0.2047	31	4
Horror Society	49	0.2113	17	17
Love Blue Stockton Chapter	130	0.2118	33	6
A Capella	32	0.238	6	22
Literature Club	104	0.2418	41	7
Undergraduate Physical Therapy Club	81	0.2488	25	18
Graduate Physical Therapy Club	58	0.2504	37	10
Marijuana Alliance for Research and Transparency	72	0.2542	28	19
Great Outdoors Club	102	0.2622	1	37
Marine Science Club	136	0.2745	48	5
Fashion and Beauty	81	1.3731	91	74
Korean Student Organization	59	1.3849	112	14
Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Foundation	35	1.4537	113	17
Minorities in Law	30	1.468	106	68
Los Latinos Unidos	108	1.4769	108	47
Filipino American Student Association	37	1.5466	114	20
South Aslan Student Association	40	1.698	115	28
Unified Black Students Society	84	1.7326	111	78
Muslim Student Association	55	1.7375	117	27
African Student Organization	38	1.8243	116	49

Lastly, in Table 5, students are clustered according to their position within a club and the number of club memberships. These findings indicate that students with executive positions within a club had a higher GPA compared to students at the "Member" level. Similarly, students who were members of more than one club (and up to six) had a higher GPA compared to students who were members of a single club. Although GPA primarily reflects a student's academic performance and grasp of the curriculum rather than their development of soft skills, it can still corelate with discipline, commitment, and cognitive skills. However, it may not fully reflect a student's soft skills development. These skills are often cultivated through experiences, extracurricular activities, internships, or practical applications beyond the classroom, which clubs facilitate.

TABLE 5
STUDENT GPA BASED ON CLUB POSITION AND NUMBER OF CLUB MEMBERSHIPS

Club Position	Students	GPA	# of Club Memberships	Students	GPA
Member	3704	3.30	1	2088	3.27
President	210	3.55	2	682	3.34
Vice President	174	3.49	3	358	3.34
Treasurer	162	3.50	4	223	3.38
Secretary	147	3.51	5	119	3.29
Public Relations	99	3.48	6	68	3.51

Notes: Our data contains information on past executive positions. Therefore, students who were, for example, a President in the past two years, but retired from the position, are also included in our data. For that reason, the total number of students in each position (except Public Relations) is higher than the total number of clubs (117).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In general, these findings suggest that certain activities have universal appeal, and clubs centered around these activities can naturally attract more diverse sets of individuals within their membership ranks. The universal appeal of these activities appears to primarily stem from their cultural and demographic neutrality. These results can have important implications for businesses. First, to the extent that businesses' vision and value statements have a universal appeal and are well promoted to new potential hires, businesses may be able to attract a more diverse pool of candidates naturally. At best, this pool of candidates would closely resemble the demographics of the applicants for a given job or industry. At worst, even if the pool of candidates heavily skews in a specific direction in terms of its demographic characteristics, it should at the very least, be marginally more diverse compared to the pool of candidates of businesses that have narrow or culturally non-neutral vision and value statements in outlining their strategic planning process. Therefore, to aid in the achievement of DEI initiatives and goals, businesses may want to 1) reevaluate or expand on their vision and value statements and 2) ensure they are promoted and communicated adequately with potential new employees during the hiring process.

Additionally, these results could offer organizations insight into improving workforce cohesion. Workforce cohesion, or how well employees work together, is an important goal for any organization since there is a positive relationship between team/workforce cohesion and productivity (Ely & Thomas, 2020; Gomez & Bernet, 2019). Most large organizations understand the importance of productivity and work cohesion. For that reason, many large organizations regularly hold team-building exercises in the workplace, organize offsite employee retreats, and expand the recreational infrastructure in their office. Organizations could use use annual surveys, round tables, and other means to collectively gather employee feedback to identify what are the collective interests of their workforce including and beyond work task topics to determine an approach to internal programming that can stimulate organic diversity. As such, businesses could enable all workers to connect with like-minded individuals that will foster new friendships, create networking opportunities, cultivate more workforce cohesion, stimulate organic diversity and growth in soft skills through a sense of community, ultimately enhancing workplace culture and boosting satisfaction levels that can lead to increases in performance (Banks, 2023; Bradley & Conway, 2016; Parshakov, et al., 2018).

Lastly, recruiting students based solely on their GPA might not always guarantee the best fit for a business. While a high GPA can indicate strong academic performance and dedication, it does not comprehensively showcase a candidate's potential or suitability for a role. Businesses often benefit from a diverse set of skills and attributes beyond academic achievements. Soft skills like communication, problem-solving, creativity, and teamwork, as well as practical experiences gained through internships, projects, or extracurricular activities, such as club participation, are crucial for success in many roles. Accordingly, this study encourages businesses to adopt a more balanced approach that considers GPA alongside factors such

as relevant experiences, extracurricular activities, internships, and demonstrated soft skills, which can lead to a more holistic and effective recruitment process. It ensures that the selected candidates not only have a solid academic foundation but also possess the practical skills and qualities needed to thrive in a professional environment. As such, businesses can refine their recruitment strategies by partnering with higher education institutions to target either specific student clubs that align with core business objectives (i.e., a marketing firm targeting a marketing student club) or student club leaders that demonstrate higher GPA with the assumption that these individuals have developed greater soft and social skills needed in the workforce. In conclusion, colleges and universities are a valuable source of business talent. Partnering with these institutions will provide businesses with access to a new workforce pool of candidates with diverse skills and educational backgrounds.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The future value of diversity and soft skills is anticipated to be significant and enduring. As businesses continue to advance, soft skills, which include communication, adaptability, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and collaboration, to list a few, will become increasingly sought after in the workplace. As a result, there are several future research streams that can provide greater transparency to businesses and higher education institutions with respect to student clubs and soft skill development and/or diversity. For example, when exploring research opportunities in developing soft skills in student clubs, undertaking a longitudinal study to monitor students' club participation throughout their college years and assessing the progression of their soft skills could reinforce the significance of extracurricular activities on resumes, allowing businesses to hone in on these aspects. Furthermore, future research can compare the development of soft skills between students involved in different types of clubs (e.g., academic, cultural, sports) to understand which clubs contribute more to specific skill sets as well as investigate how assuming leadership roles within clubs influences the acquisition of leadership, communication, and teamwork skills among students and validate any correlation to GPA.

With a focus on soft skill development and diversity of and within student clubs, future research can investigate how club participation contributes to the development of soft skills among students from diverse backgrounds and analyze whether the skill development varies among different demographic groups within clubs. Additional research can also explore how intersectional identities (e.g., race, gender, socio-economic status) within clubs impact the development of specific soft skills and whether certain groups have unique challenges or advantages. Lastly, with a focus on developing more diversity-oriented research, researchers can analyze whether club participation, especially in diverse clubs, influences students' attitudes and readiness to contribute to diverse and inclusive workplaces. Exploring the correlation between the inclusiveness of clubs and the retention of diverse members can provide insights into how a club atmosphere nurtures skill development. This exploration can show how such dynamics may translate into more effective business recruitment strategies and improved organizational cohesion efforts.

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