

# Introduction

Colleges and universities exist in both academic and social contexts, with nonacademic experiences being important for student retention (Tinto, 1975). According to the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange (2002), first year student retention rates were highest among White students (80.3%), whereas they are 67.2%, 74.7%, and 75.7% for American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African-American, and Hispanic/Latina/o students, respectively. Contributing to improving this situation by assuring that their facilities, programs, services, and staff are grounded in and operating by principles of diversity, inclusivity, and social justice are important concerns of campus recreation professionals. This will become increasingly important in the future, as demographic trends indicate that ethnic minority groups account for the vast majority of America's total population growth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify barriers and facilitators of ethnic minority students to participating in campus recreation programs.

# Study Design

**Approach** – An open-ended, qualitative approach using focus groups as a data collection method was applied to explore the barriers and facilitators to ethnic minority students engaging in campus recreation.

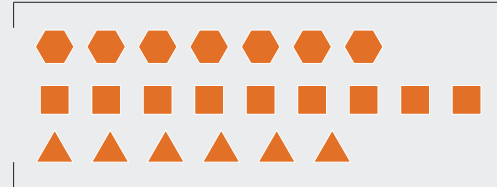
**Participants** – Undergraduate students (N = 22; n = 14 females, n = 8 males) who identified as American Indian/Alaska Native (n = 6), Black/African American (n = 7), or Hispanic/Latina/o (n = 9) were recruited from campus cultural centers to participate in one of three focus group discussions.

**Moderators** – Focus group moderators are undergraduate students employed by the Department of Recreational Sports at Oregon State University. Their outreach and marketing work contributes to one of six initiatives of the department's strategic plan.

**Analysis** – Each focus group discussion was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed text was analyzed and coded using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), with consensus achieved by two independent coders. The results were also member-checked to ensure that the data was not misinterpreted or incomplete.

# Results

Focus groups included 3 Oregon State University cultural centers, and 22 participants:



- Centro Cultural Cesar Chavez
- Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center
- ▲ Native American Longhouse

From these focus groups, the following themes emerged:

- Barriers**
1. Organizational Barriers
  2. Lack of Time
  3. Gender Barriers
  4. Cultural Barriers

- Facilitators**
1. Social Dynamics of Recreation Centers
  2. Health Maintenance
  3. Personal Growth
  4. Maintaining a Cultural Connection
  5. Facilities and Services
  6. Accountability

# Next Steps

## 1. Addressing organizational barriers:

The Department of Recreational Sports can review policies on court reservations to ensure equitable use of shared spaces, increase its online presence with resources for e-campus students, reconsider the additional cost of programs for students facing socioeconomic barriers, and improve marketing strategies for services from which students can benefit (e.g., free 30-minute equipment orientations).

## 2. Addressing gender barriers:

The Department of Recreational Sports can facilitate women's weight training activities by creating a "women's only" space or time in the weight room. It can also alleviate the male-dominant environment by increasing education on topics such as healthy masculinity in addition to creating a more inclusive atmosphere for students of any gender.

## 3. Addressing cultural barriers:

The Department Recreational Sports can recruit a more racially diverse student population, both as student employees and regular participants. Cultural competence training could be incorporated into staff training. Potential strategies include adding sports and activities that are popular among specific minority populations, hosting student groups, and teaching activities and rules.

## 4. Expanding breadth of research:

Future research could explore the same themes of access and engagement in other underserved student populations, such as differently abled students, LGBTQ students, student parents, or veteran students.

Another option would be to expand the search for barriers to engagement beyond campus recreation, and into other areas of student affairs, such as student leadership, career services, or counseling and psychological services.

## References

- Seidman, A. (2005). Minority student retention: Resources for practitioners. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2005(125), 7-24. Retrieved from <http://proxy.library.oregonstate.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=16620871&site=ehost-live>
- Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(11), 89-125.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2011). *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>

# Ethnic Minority Student Engagement in Campus Recreation: Barriers and Facilitators

Tram V. Hoang, H.B.S.  
Bradley J. Cardinal, Ph.D.  
Daniel W. Newhart, Ph.D.  
Oregon State University

# Future Implications

An exploration of the barriers and facilitators to underserved students engaging in campus recreation shows there is more that can be done to increase access to campus recreation and create a more inclusive community for a diverse student population. This study resulted in four areas of improvement and further research, defined in "Next Steps."

# Conclusion

While the Department of Recreational Sports has provided ample opportunities for students to participate in physical activity and build community, there are additional opportunities to further engage students in campus recreation. Recreational facilities can create more inclusive environments by ensuring equitable use of shared spaces, facilitating women's weight training activities, providing resources to online students, creating more structured programming, requiring cultural competence training for all staff, and designating spaces for cultural recreational activities. Understanding the barriers and facilitators to underserved students' engaging in campus recreation is an important step in the process of increasing engagement across the realm of student affairs.