Building the STUDENT VOICE

An Investigation of State Student Associations and Their Ability to Engage Students

In 2003, the California Student Association of Community Colleges organized 17,000 students to march on the state capitol to defend higher education funding. Their actions helped to spare system budget cuts and saved students hundreds of dollars in increased fees.

In 2003, the Oregon Student Association successfully fought to restore $4 million in funding to the Oregon Opportunity Grant, a need-based grant program that aids thousands of Oregon students.

The Associated Students of the University of Missouri successfully lobbied and passed a bill to exempt textbooks from sales tax; collectively, this saves students $6 million each year.

Student Empowerment
Training Project

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March 2004

About the Student Empowerment Training Project

The Student Empowerment Training (SET) Project has a 20-year history working with student government and state student association leaders and is dedicated to the mission of strengthening these institutions so that they may function as effective vehicles for student engagement. The SET Project was started in 1983 by student government presidents attending a national student voter registration conference who decided a permanent institution should exist in order to train student leaders and provide them with effective organizing and advocacy skills. The SET Project offers a wide variety of skills trainings for student government leaders and also trains a broad base of student leaders at national conferences around the country. Additionally, we publish materials and manuals to train and network student leaders, as well as to further enhance their ability to advocate on behalf of their campus constituents.

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Executive Summary

As civic engagement levels of American youth remain low, it is important to examine avenues of engagement to improve youth participation. This report evaluates state student associations, one particular community of organizations that engage college youth, in hopes of identifying specific characteristics that improve youth engagement levels. State student associations (SSAs) are statewide networks of college student governments; they advocate on behalf of students regarding higher education issues. This report examines SSA contributions to youth civic engagement, it identifies similar characteristics of associations with high engagement levels, and it makes a series of recommendations whereby, SSAs may be used to engage more students in future years.

State student associations (SSAs) make a significant contribution to engaging tens of thousands of young adults in political and civic activities each year. They provide unique opportunities for students to become politicized, work on policy issues, and ultimately impact higher education concerns. State student associations coordinate a range of activities where students can be registered to vote, participate on the board of directors of an incorporated non-profit or run a statewide grassroots campaign to improve higher education policy.

By investigating the relative engagement levels of state student associations, we make four overall recommendations for those interested in increasing the effectiveness of this community. These recommendations, by increasing the level of students engaged, may also allow an association to better articulate the student voice on higher education policy concerns.

Hire Full Time Staff

As soon as possible, state student associations should hire full-time staff. In all three engagement analyses, the associations with higher engagement levels had more full-time staff than did the associations with lower levels of engagement. Full-time staff benefit SSAs in a variety of different ways, which can result in a stronger ability to engage students. First, full-time staff provide a foundation around which an association can maintain and build programs. For example, staff manage internship programs where students participate in a structured, in-depth form of engagement. Additionally, staff help to manage regular volunteer activities for events and campaigns. For staff who lobby, they involve students in their on-going professional lobbying activities. It is the full-time attention that a staff member can devote to the association's activities that creates a solid foundation for engagement programs.

Second, full-time staff create a consistent presence from year to year as the student leadership changes annually. This consistency allows programs and projects that span longer than one academic year to continue and flourish, such as annual conferences and statewide campaigns. Staff are also able to build a rapport with higher education policy decision makers, such as state legislators and administrators. Staff function as annual trainers for each new year of student leaders and provide a stable base of institutional memory.

Specifically these staff should focus their time on lobbying efforts and campus based efforts. We found that the SSAs most effective at engaging students spend most of their time on lobbying efforts. Additionally, SSAs that have staff who spend time visiting and working on member campuses engage more students than those who don't. Paralleling these findings, SSA staff should be mostly dedicated to lobbying efforts and campus based organizing efforts.

Network and Organize Member Campuses

All associations with the highest levels of volunteer engagement involve individuals who are not student government officials in their activities. Additionally, associations with the highest number of student lobbyists organize the largest lobby days; these lobby days include many more individuals than just the SSA members. In general, associations that engage the most students, expand their outreach efforts to the broader campus community; they work to recruit and mobilize the broadest base of support possible.

One further example, that has previously been mentioned, is related to how SSA staff members spend their time. The highest engagement associations have staff spend time on member campuses. This specific outreach by staff can help to create a stronger working relationship with student government officials but it also allows the staff to reach out to other parts of the campus community; this outreach is less likely to occur if the staff member is not on campus.

Committing the time and resources to reach out to broader members of the campus community, and not just SSA participants, is an important aspect of how SSAs can engage many more students.

Build a Strong Funding System

SSAs with more resources were found to engage more students. The basic nature of having more funding means SSAs can create bigger and more stable structures that grow the association, and in turn can increase civic engagement. For example, hiring full-time staff or maintaining an office off campus requires significant resources. But, by having those funds available, SSAs like the California State Student Association and the Oregon Student Association can run a legislative internship program managed by a staff person with lobbying experience.

Specifically, the mandatory funding system rose to the top for associations with high levels of engagement. While we recognize it is not possible for SSAs to easily change their funding structures, this recommendation may prove more useful to newly forming associations or associations which will implement their first organizational fee. The stronger the funding system, the more financial resources that funding system will acquire for an SSA. For example, a mandatory fee system will generate more resources from a specific campus than will a donation fee system. By establishing and maintaining the strongest fee system possible, SSAs are helping to increase civic engagement levels.

Increase Opportunities to Engage Students

Associations with the highest levels of volunteers create more opportunities for students to become engaged. They organize more events and activities, coordinate more campaigns and run more internship programs. By creating more opportunities and avenues through which a student may first become engaged, SSAs are effectively increasing engagement levels. Internship programs, in particular, provide a structured, semester-long opportunity for students to become intimately involved with the happenings of an association.

Purpose

We know that young people tend to participate the least in political and civic engagement activities. In the 2000 presidential election only 32.3% of 18-24 year olds voted, compared to 69.9% of 65-74 year olds.[1] Youth turnout for elections has declined since 1972.[2] However, there is evidence to show that current youth are engaging in other ways. For example, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA has been tracking the volunteer rates of college freshman since 1990. These rates have been increasing for the last ten years and hit an all time high of 83.1% of students conducting volunteer efforts during their senior year of high school.[3]

The Student Empowerment Training Project believes that state student associations are one important avenue of civic engagement for many college students, both student government leaders and general students, on campuses across the country. State student associations are created to speak on behalf of students in a university system or across a state. These associations advocate higher education concerns to administrators, state legislators and the governor through policy research, grassroots action and the use of media. In order to be a more effective voice for students, SSAs typically work to involve as many students as possible.

To this date, there has been no formal account of the types of engagement SSAs conduct nor the level to which they engage students. This project, *Building the Student Voice*, funded through generous support from The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and The Pew Charitable Trusts, is designed to shine a spotlight on this unique student community and begin to understand their contribution to engaging young adults in civic and political activities. At a time in our history when millions of young people are not engaged in politics, the avenues of engagement that state student associations are responsible for take on a heightened importance. We hope to offer information and recommendations to the SSA community and other interested parties so that, collectively, we may use SSAs to their fullest potential as opportunities to engage even more students in civic and political life.

This project has five main components:

Section 1. First we catalog and describe the associations that make up the SSA community in the United States. Full descriptive information can be found in *Building the Student Voice: A Guide to State Student Associations*. However, we provide a brief synopsis of current SSAs in the first section of this report. The full guide should prove useful to both existing and newly forming SSAs. Most current SSA leaders are unaware of the scope, structure and activities of other members in the SSA community. Additionally, any student creating a new state student association should have a basic understanding of how other SSAs function so they may make educated decisions regarding their own formation; the guide will serve that function.

Section 2. Second we investigate the total amount of activity and engagement SSAs are responsible for. Previously, this information has not been calculated. We work to identify the main avenues of engagement SSAs carry out on college campuses around the country and quantify the overall impact SSAs have with respect to student civic engagement.

Section 3. Next we investigate what leads to higher SSA engagement levels. We set out to answer the following question: why do some SSAs engage more students than others? We first identify three levels of engagement for each of three specific types of engagement (student attendance at meetings, student volunteers and student lobbyists). We, then, investigate whether those SSA engagement levels are related to specific characteristics such as annual budgets, specific programs that are run, or the presence of full-time staff. Every member of the SSA community has opinions regarding what creates a successful SSA. However, there has never been an investigation of this kind that works to narrow the definition of SSA success, quantify that success and work to discern what can lead to that success.

Section 4. Based on our findings, we recommend specific actions SSAs can take to increase the amount of students engaged in their activities for each of the three engagement indicators.

Section 5. From informal conversations, state student associations have identified a few major challenges they experience. Two of those challenges, funding systems and annual turnover, will be further discussed.

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[1] Census Bureau Data released February 27, 2002

[2] A CIRCLE publication, *Youth Voter Turnout has Declined, by Any Measure*, by Peter Levine and Mark Hugo Lopez, September 2002.

[3] *The American Freshman: National Norms for Fall 2003* by Linda Sax, et al. January 2004.

Methodology

At the beginning of this project, the Student Empowerment Training Project investigated all fifty states for the presence of a state student association. We started with information from *Building the Student Voice: Assessing the Health of Statewide Student Associations* written by the Center for Campus Free Speech and the United States Student Association. This document outlined associations that existed in 1999. We confirmed these state student associations and expanded upon the list by calling student government offices at multiple universities in each state to inquire about the presence of a statewide network. In addition, we searched the webpages of student governments, universities, and system-wide governing boards in most states for networks of student governments. Our inquiries identified 41 associations in 34 states.

Once an association was identified, we worked to contact the top student leader, typically the president, or the top staff member, typically the executive director. Each individual was asked to complete a pair of questionnaires on behalf of their association. The first was an activity measuring questionnaire designed to gather quantitative data to investigate the level and types of student engagement each state student association participates in. This consisted of 30 questions. The second was a structures and policies questionnaire designed to investigate the internal structure and activities of each SSA and the campus policies in which they work. This consisted of 93 questions, mostly closed-ended.

The third and final component of gathering information about state student associations was a survey, via phone or in-person, that investigated the campaign actions, history and current happenings of the SSA; additionally, we sought to gather opinions of the top leaders regarding challenges they face individually and as an association.

Of the forty-one state student associations identified, we were able to personally contact thirty-five SSA leaders. Of these leaders approached to participate in the surveys, sixteen participated. During this investigation we define SSAs broadly, including informal associations which, depending on the state, may be in name only. Because of this broad interpretation, some associations were difficult to contact. In some states, students were identified but unable to answer questions regarding the association due to a general lack of knowledge or a lack of institutional memory.

Based on the responses, we compiled data from the activity measuring surveys to create a picture of the total engagement levels of the sixteen participating SSAs. Additionally, we compiled the responses from the structures and policies surveys to further understand the actions of the SSA community as a whole. These findings can be found in Section 2 of this report starting on page 8.

To begin our analyzes of SSA engagement levels, we chose three engagement indicators to investigate:

1. The average number of students attending the association meetings.

2. The average number of volunteers involved with the association over one semester.

3. The number of students lobbying with the association the previous semester.

These indicators represent fundamental actions that all SSAs participate in, to varying degrees. Fourteen or more associations responded to each of these questions. Community service would not have proven a useful indicator due to the fact that only four associations organized service projects, for example. Additionally, these indicators imply varying degrees of involvement by the student volunteer, allowing us to capture different degrees of engagement; participating in a statewide lobby day typically requires more time and effort from a student than volunteering at a campus-based event sponsored by the SSA.

For each of the three indicators, we divided SSAs into three categories based on the frequency distribution of each indicator. Tertiles were used to create these categories, meaning the values for each indicator were rank ordered and cut-off values were selected to yield three groups representing roughly one-third of the total sample (i.e. tertiles). For example, the average number of students attending association meetings were rank ordered. The lower third of the sample had less than 22 students attend meetings and, therefore, were designated the "low" engagement group. The middle third had between 22 and 58 students attend meetings and were designated the "medium" group. Finally, the upper third had 58 or more students attend meetings and were designated the "high" engagement group. We then examined each of the three indicators separately to determine if there were similarities associated with specific levels of engagement.

For each of the three indicators we investigated the following ten characteristics.

1. Is there a correlation between SSA budgets and engagement levels?

2. Is there a correlation between the specific funding system and engagement levels?

3. Is there a correlation between incorporated non-profit status and engagement levels?

4. Is there a correlation between full-time staff and engagement levels?

5. Is there a correlation between an internship program and engagement levels?

6. Is there a correlation between the type of events SSAs spend most time on and engagement levels?

7. Is there a correlation between the quantity of SSA events and engagement levels?

8. Is there a correlation between students registered to vote and engagement levels?

9. Is there a correlation between staff working on campuses and engagement levels?

10. Is there a correlation between a separate off-campus office and engagement levels?

We first look to determine if there are correlations with the ten characteristics listed above for all three engagement indicators. These general analyzes findings can be found in Section 3A starting on page 10. We then look at each indicator separately to further describe similar characteristics within each level of engagement and try to describe why these characteristics may exist. These characteristics can be found in Section 3B starting on page 13. It is from the more in-depth look at each engagement indicator that we form our recommendations for how state student associations may increase student engagement.

It is important to note that each state student association represents a differently sized population of students. SASU, the Student Association of the State University of New York, currently represents 13,000 students while CSSA, the California State Student Association, represents 400,000 students. In order to ensure this investigation did not create a disadvantage for associations with smaller populations of students represented, we compared the engagement levels to the population of students served. For example, we divided the number of volunteers an SSA reportedly engaged by the student population the SSA represents; we come up with a percentage of represented students engaged. We then rank ordered the associations based on these percentages. For the volunteer engagement indicator, the tertiles of engagement were exactly the same. We repeated the process for each of the other two engagement indicators and found minimal differences in the engagement tertiles. When investigating those differences further, we found they did not result in changes to this report's major findings.

Based on our third and final survey of the SSA community, along with informal conversations and observations, we have identified a few key challenges that most state student associations are faced with. In Section 5 of this report, we further describe some of those challenges.

Because of the anticipated low survey population, we did not plan to confirm statistical significance for any of the above analyzes. This is an obvious limitation to studying the community of SSAs as a whole, due to the small population. Any findings from this investigation represent trends.

Section 1: The SSA Community

Forty-one state student associations in thirty four states were identified by the Student Empowerment Training Project during this investigation. These associations fall into one of three categories. Each category is briefly described below. For a more in-depth description of all forty-one state student associations, see *Building the Student Voice: A Guide to State Student Associations.*

Sixteen of the forty-one state student associations identified responded to the SET Project's engagement investigation. Eleven of the sixteen (69%) respondents are identified as independently incorporated state student associations. Four (25%) are identified as system organized and one (6%) is an informal network of student governments.

Independent State Student Associations

Thirteen of the country's state student associations fall into this category; eleven of them participating in the investigation. The defining characteristic of these SSAs is the non-profit corporate status they carry. Some are 501(c)3 organizations with mainly an educational mission while others have both a 501(c)3 foundation and a 501(c)4 advocacy association. The Oregon Student Association (OSA) and the Student Association of the State University of NY (SASU) each have both types of non-profit status, while the Student Association of Missouri (SAM) and the Texas State Student Association (TSSA) are only designated 501(c)3. By law, associations with 501(c)4 status are able to spend more time and money on direct advocacy and lobbying efforts.

Independent SSAs tend to:
- have an institutionalized funding system.
- have full-time professional staff.
- have a full-time, consistent presence in the statehouse.
- have multiple statewide campaigns or priority issues.

Current Independent SSAs:
- total 13 associations in 11 states;
- represent 1,608,000 students;
- include 152 member campuses;
- employ 42 professional staff; and
- manage $3,758,000 in annual budgets.

The independent SSAs that participated in the investigation include:

ASA Arizona Students' Association

CSSA California State Student Association

UCSA University of California Student Association

MSCSA Minnesota State College Student Association

MSUSA Minnesota State University Student Association

SAM Student Association of Missouri

SASU Student Association of the State University of New York

OSA Oregon Student Association

TSSA Texas State Student Association

WSL Washington Student Lobby

United Council The United Council of University of Wisconsin Students

System Organized State Student Associations

Seventeen of the country's state student associations fall into this category; four of them participating in the investigation. The defining characteristic of these SSAs is that the impetus for their creation came directly from a university governing board or high level administrator, such as a chancellor. These SSAs clearly function within the rules and policies of the university system and include all universities governed by the highest level university board. For example, the Commonwealth Council of Student Governments includes all campuses within the Pennsylvania State University system, which is governed by the systemwide Board of Trustees.

System organized SSAs tend to:
- be created by an act of the state legislature or the university governing board.
- receive money directly from the university system.
- meet in conjunction with the university governing board.
- have part-time university system advisors that work with the association.

Current system organized SSAs:
- total 17 associations in 17 states;
- represent 1,919,765 students;
- include 264 member campuses;
- employ 5 professional staff; and
- manage $814,241 in annual budgets.

The system organized SSAs that participated in the investigation include:

ASUM Associated Students of the University of Missouri

ASG University of North Carolina Associated Student Government

NDSA North Dakota Student Association

CCSG Commonwealth Council of Student Governments (Pennsylvania)

Informal State Student Associations

Eleven of the country's state student associations fall into this category; one of them participating in the investigation. The defining characteristic of these SSAs is their lack of both a non-profit status and inclusion into a university system. These state student associations vary in form; some are organized alongside a university system and some include multiple systems. For example, the Rutgers University Lobbying Association (RULA) is organized to only include colleges within the Rutgers University system. Whereas, the Associated Students of New Mexico (ASNM) includes six institutions each governed by a different Board of Regents.

The informal SSAs tend to:
- vary in activity and membership year-to-year based on the interest from individual student body presidents.
- have no full-time staff.
- receive annual dues from individual student governments.

Current Informal SSAs:
- total 11 associations in 11 states;
- represent more than 2,915,000 students;
- include 218 member campuses; and
- employ no professional staff.

The informal SSAs that participated in the investigation include:
OCSG Ohio Council of Student Governments

Section 2:
SSA Engagement Totals

In this section, we describe the total amount of activity and engagement participating SSAs are responsible for. Previously, this information has never been calculated. We identify main avenues of engagement SSAs carry out on college campuses around the country and the number of students that become involved in those activities. In the information below, we describe the overall quantitative impact state student associations have in their combined states with respect to student civic engagement. Because SSAs use a variety of different activities to engage students in their work, we will quantify engagement by the type of activity.
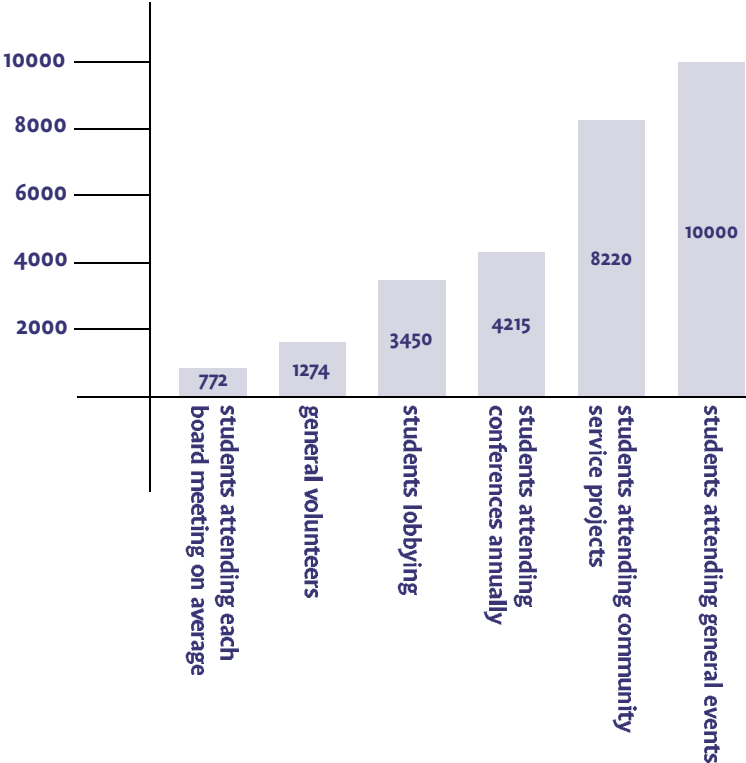
SSA efforts introduce students to political lobbying.

- 64% of SSAs (7 of 11) reported that most of the students attending their lobby efforts **had never lobbied before**.

- 14 SSAs reported organizing **289 lobby trips** in a given semester.

- These trips involved **3,450 student lobbyists.**

Number Of Students Engaged in SSA Activities
(time period is one semester/term unless otherwise stated)

Activity	Number
students attending each board meeting on average	772
general volunteers	1274
students lobbying	3450
students attending conferences annually	4215
students attending community service projects	8220
students attending general events	10000

SSAs focus on state level higher education issues; running multiple campaigns.

- 12 SSAs reported coordinating **42 issue-based campaigns** in one semester. Three states (Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Arizona) reported running six issue-based campaigns each.

- **State level issues are priority for SSAs.** 100% of SSAs work on state level issues while only 53% work on federal issues and 33% work on local issues.

- 50% of SSAs have regular volunteers for campaigns who are different than student government officials. These same SSAs reported a total of **1145 volunteers** getting involved with the association over the course of a semester.

Statewide voter registration efforts get a big boost from SSAs.

- Ten of the sixteen (63%) SSAs conducted voter registration efforts for the 2002 election.

- These ten associations **registered 120,300 students.**

- Additionally, the ten associations worked with **2,590 student volunteers** on the effort.

- 100% of the SSAs that registered students to vote used tabling as a technique on campus and 70% used door to door canvassing.

- The largest voter registration efforts were conducted in California by CSSA,which registered 36,000 students, and UCSA, which registered 25,000 students.

Positions on SSA boards of directors and regular board meetings function as leadership opportunities for students.

- On average, **772 students attend** SSA board meetings.These meetings are typically held monthly.

- **524 students hold an elected position** on the board of directors of an SSA.

- There are **73 executive positions** on SSA boards of directors.

- There are an **additional 109 leadership positions** within SSA boards of directors.

SSA conferences engage thousands and are used to develop student leaders.

- 11 SSAs (69%) hold at least one annual conference.

- **4,215 students** typically attend **37 conferences** annually.

- 73% of SSAs (8 of 11) reported sponsoring leadership development conferences; this is the most popular type of conference.

SSA internship programs considered a success.

- 7 SSAs (44%) reported coordinating an internship program; in all seven states combined there is an average of **48.5 interns each semester.**

- All 7 SSAs consider the internship program a success.

- The most common responsibilities of interns include policy research (83%) and lobbying or grassroots support (83%).

Community service projects are not a priority for SSAs.

- Only four SSAs (25%) organized community service projects in a given semester.

- These four SSAs organized 30 separate project which involved **8220 student volunteers.**

- The largest project, by far, was conducted by the University of North Carolina Associated Student Government (UNCASG).The annual service project is called "Service North Carolina"and includes projects at each of the 16 system universities.Last year, they involved 8000 students (97% of the reported student volunteers).

General Events held by SSAs.

- 12 SSAs reported that **10,000 students attended 112 events** in a given semester.

- 64% of SSAs (9 of 14) **spend most of their time on "grassroots" or "lobbying" events.**

- However, 63% of SSAs (10 of 16) involve member campuses in all of the following types of activities: grassroots pressure, conducting research, media work,lobbying, and educational events. Another 19% (3 of 16) of SSAs involve member campuses in four of the five activities.

Section 3: SSA Characteristics Related to Engagement Levels

We pose the question: why do some SSAs engage more students than others? In order to begin understanding SSA engagement levels, we chose to investigate three engagement activities that most, if not all, SSAs participate in (student attendance at meetings, student volunteers and student lobbyists). Based on those relative engagement levels, we work to identify similar characteristics or trends that may help to describe why some SSAs engage more students than others. We look at ten basic questions, outlined in the methodology description, to help provide insight into the SSA community and provide direction for those interested in increasing engagement levels even further.

In Section 3A we describe the basic findings of our analyzes and trends that may apply to all three engagement indicators. In Section 3B we delve into each engagement indicator separately to begin to describe why these characteristics might exist.

Before we describe our findings of the ten analyzes questions, it is worth highlighting one engagement indicator, in particular, that appears to have consistently similar characteristics.

The associations that engage the most students in lobbying activities have the following similar characteristics:

- 100% of the associations have full-time professional staff. They have 25 total staff.

- 100% of the associations are independent non-profits.

- 100% of the associations have offices off campus.

- These associations tend to have the largest budgets. Four of the six largest budgets are included in this category.

- These associations rely solely on mandatory student fees or student government allocations.

- These associations tend to register more students to vote.

Section 3A: Engagement Trends

1. Is there a correlation between SSA budgets and engagement levels?

Associations with the highest engagement levels tend to have larger average budgets.

- Associations with the highest level of student lobbyists have an average annual budget of $514,750.
  Those with the lowest level of student lobbyists average $218,250.

- Associations with the highest level of volunteers have an average annual budget of $323,750.
  Those with the lowest level of volunteers average $102,666.

- Associations with the highest level of attendance have an average annual budget of $259,600.
  Those with the lowest level of attendance average $84,750.

Average Budget Based on Engagement Level
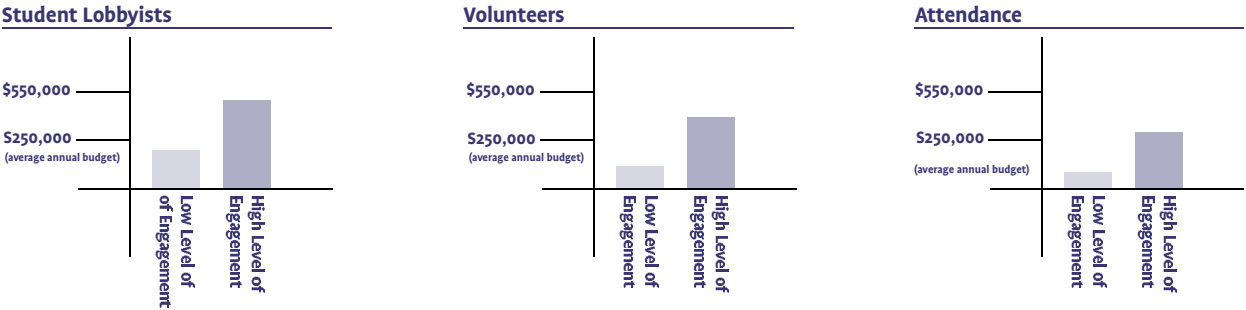
Student Lobbyists

$550,000

$250,000
(average annual budget)

Low Level of Engagement | High Level of Engagement

Volunteers

$550,000

$250,000
(average annual budget)

Low Level of Engagement | High Level of Engagement

Attendance

$550,000

$250,000
(average annual budget)

Low Level of Engagement | High Level of Engagement

2. Is there a correlation between the specific funding system and engagement levels?
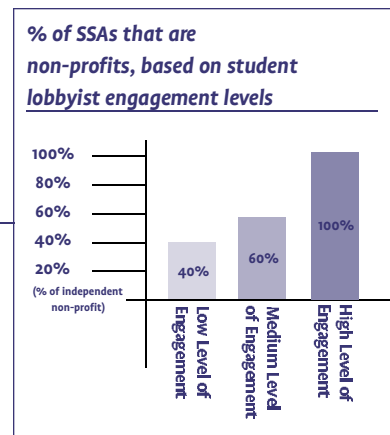
Associations with mandatory student fees tend to engage more students.
- Organizations with the highest levels of engagement for all three indicators tend to rely more heavily on mandatory fees.

- Organizations with lower levels of volunteer and board meeting engagement tend to rely more heavily on donations or refundable fees.

3. Is there a correlation between incorporated non-profit status and engagement levels?

Associations with the highest level of student lobbyists were most likely to be independent, incorporated non-profits.
- 100% of SSAs with the highest level of student lobbyists were independent non-profits.

- Only 40% of the lowest level of student lobbyists were independent non-profits.

% of SSAs that are non-profits, based on student lobbyist engagement levels

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
(% of independent non-profit)

40% — Low Level of Engagement
60% — Medium Level of Engagement
100% — High Level of Engagement

Associations with the highest attendance at meetings are more likely to be system organized SSAs.
- 60% of SSAs with the highest attendance were system organized.

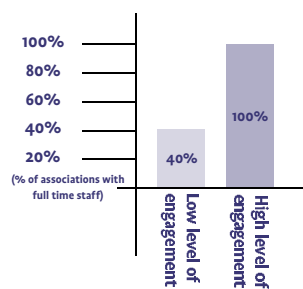- Only 17% of the medium level of attendance and no SSAs in the lowest level were system organized.

4. Is there a correlation between full-time staff and engagement levels?

Associations with higher levels of engagement in all three categories were more likely to have full time staff.
- 100% of the associations with the highest level of student lobbyists have one or more staff. In fact each of these associations have between 4 and 10 staff.

- 60% of the associations with the highest level of attendance have one or more staff, compared to 20% of associations with the lowest attendance.

- 75% of the associations with the highest level of volunteers have one or more staff, compared to 25% of associations with the least volunteers.

% of SSAs Having Staff, Based on Engagement Level
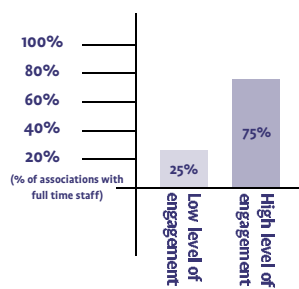
Student Lobbyists

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
(% of associations with full time staff)

40% — Low level of engagement
100% — High level of engagement

Volunteers

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
(% of associations with full time staff)

25% — Low level of engagement
75% — High level of engagement

Attendance

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
(% of associations with full time staff)

20% — Low level of engagement
60% — High level of engagement

5. Is there a correlation between an internship program and engagement levels?

Associations with high levels of volunteers are more likely to have internship programs.

- 75% of the associations with the highest level of volunteers have internship programs while 33% of medium volunteer levels and 25% of low volunteer levels have internship programs.

6. Is there a correlation between the type of events SSAs spend most of their time on and engagement levels?

Associations with higher levels of engagement are more likely to spend the majority of their time on lobbying efforts.
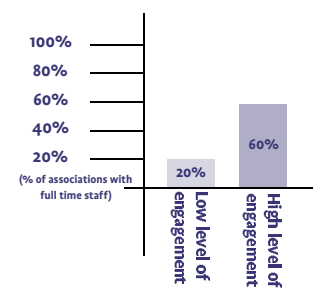
- 66% of associations with the highest level of volunteer engagement reported spending most of their time on lobbying efforts.
- 40% of associations with the highest level of attendance at board meetings reported spending most of their time on lobbying efforts.
- Comparatively, the lower levels of volunteer and attendance indicators spend more time on grassroots and education efforts.

7. Is there a correlation between the quantity of SSA events and engagement levels?

Associations with the highest volunteer levels tend to sponsor the most events.

- SSAs with the highest level of volunteers sponsored 18 events a semester on average while SSAs with medium and low levels sponsored 5.5 and 1 events, respectively.

8. Is there a correlation between students registered to vote and engagement levels?

Associations that have high levels of student lobbyists tend to register the most students to vote.

- SSAs with the highest level of student lobbyists registered 11,700 students on average while the medium and low engagement groups registered 9,125 and 9,250 students, respectively.

9. Is there a correlation between staff working on campuses and engagement levels?

Associations with the highest levels of engagement have staff that physically work on member campuses.

- In all three engagement categories, SSAs with high levels of engagement have staff that physically work on member campuses, whereas the SSAs with the lowest engagement levels never do.

10. Is there a correlation between a separate off-campus office and engagement levels?

Associations with the highest level of student lobbyists have off-campus offices.

- 100% of SSAs with the highest level of student lobbyists have off-campus offices, compared to 60% of SSAs with both medium and low engagement.

Associations with the highest level of student attendance are least likely to have off-campus offices.

- 60% of SSAs with the highest amount of attendees have off campus offices, compared to 65% of medium level attendees and 80% of low level attendees.

Section 3B: In-depth Look at Engagement Indicators

Attendance at board meetings

Associations were split into the following tertiles based on average attendance at board meetings.

High (>58 Students)	Medium (22-58 students)	Low (<22 students)
ASG	OSA	SAM
CCSG	UCSA	SASU
MSCSA	CSSA	OCSG
NDSA	TSSA	WSL
United Council	ASUM	ASA
	MSUSA	

When analyzing attendance as an engagement indicator, SSAs with medium engagement levels appears to have a stronger correlation with many of the comparison factors. For example, it is the associations in the medium engagement group that had the highest average budget,sponsored the most events, registered the most students to vote in 2002, were more likely to have full-time professional staff, and were more likely to run an internship program. In all of these comparisons, the medium tertile was more likely to exhibit a correlation than both the low and high engagement groups.

This finding implies that there are other important characteristics linked to high attendance at board meetings that were not investigated in the frequency distribution analyzes. When looking further at other possible characteristics, we found that associations with high attendance have on average more member schools, more directors on the board, more leadership positions, and more campaigns than the two other attendance categories.

	High	Medium	Low
avg. attendance	95.6	35.9	15.6
avg. # of member school	23.2	10	6.4
avg. # of directors	69.8	20	15
avg. # of leadership positions	16.2	3.3	1.6
average # of campaigns	3.9	2.7	1.8

By involving more schools and requiring more individuals to attend regular meetings, it makes sense that SSA attendance would be higher for those associations. It is unclear, however, if a higher number of leadership positions is causal. More leadership positions could be a result of having a larger group of students to manage.

These findings also imply that associations with high levels of attendance do not necessarily have the highest amount of other opportunities to engage students. For example, it is the medium engagement level that has the most sponsored events, is more likely to run an internship program and tends to register the most students to vote, not the high engagement level. This finding is also strengthened by the fact that only one association is in the high engagement levels of both student attendance and student volunteers. Ultimately it appears that high student attendance at meetings does not translate into a high level of volunteer activity.

An additional observation found when looking at the *Guide to State Student Associations* is that independent SSAs have approximately half the board of director positions as compared to system organized SSAs. (The one major exception is United Council, which has 165 board members; that is more than any other SSA in the country.) Additionally, based on the above attendance frequency distribution, 60% of the SSAs with the highest attendance are system organized SSAs whereas, only 17% of the middle tertile are system organized SSAs. One possible explanation for this finding is a subtle but important difference between independent and system organized board purposes. Independent SSA boards are charged with the legal responsibilities related to policy, personnel and financial decisions. To help streamline the decision making process, independent SSAs tend to keep their official board of directors to a small number. System organized SSAs do not have such legal responsibilities and tend to encourage more director positions.

This analysis does not take into account "legislative conferences" (also "general assembly meetings"). These legislative conferences are typically used by independent state student associations to encourage more student input regarding legislative priorities for the year. For example, MSCSA has 100 students on average attend their monthly board meetings but it has 300 students attend assembly meetings. These legislative conferences, or assemblies, are not the official board of directors but they are delegated some of the policy making authority, by the board.

Volunteers in the last semester

Associations were split into the following tertiles based on the average number of volunteers.
(CSSA and SAM did not respond.)

High (>50 Students)	Medium (5-50 students)	Low (<5 students)
OSA	WSL	ASA
CCSG	UCSA	SASU
MSUSA	ASG	NDSA
ASUM	MSCSA	TSSA
	OCSG	
	United Council	

State student associations are not in the habit of recording the amount of volunteers that participate in activities. When campaigns are delegated out to member campuses to coordinate, it is difficult for the central leadership to know how many students actually participate in on-going events. It is common, however, to track students that attend one-time specific events such as lobby days or conferences; these are more centrally coordinated. Additionally, the concept of volunteers can be interpreted differently by each SSA. Some may have perceived "volunteer" to mean a one time participant in any activity while another SSA may have construed it to mean a student that participates in an on-going fashion.

Even with the above limitations, there appears to be major differences between the three frequency distributions. Three SSAs of the lowest tertile reported zero volunteers in a semester, while two SSAs in the highest tertile each reported more than 300 volunteers in a semester.

	High	Medium	Low
avg. # of volunteers	263.8	35.8	1
avg. # of campaigns	4.4	2.7	1.8
avg. # of total events	18	5.5	1
% having internships	75%	33%	25%
average # of staff	5.3	3	.5
% having volunteers different than student government officials	100%	50%	0%

SSAs with the highest level of volunteer engagement had a higher percentage of internship programs and a higher average number of full-time professional staff. This could account for engaging more students in volunteer activities. A structured internship program where students coordinate events and recruit additional individuals to participate would likely increase volunteer rates.67% of SSAs that run internship programs stated that interns engage in "recruitment or outreach efforts".Additionally, having full-time staff to physically manage the day-to-day activities of volunteers could also increase volunteer rates.

Based on observations,the majority of individuals who participate in SSA activities are student government members. However, 50% of SSAs (8 of 16) do report having regular volunteers for campaigns who are different than student government officials. 100% of the associations with the highest level of volunteer engagement have volunteers other than student government officials.

Again,it is of interest to note that only one association is in the highest tertile for both attendance at board meetings and average number of volunteers;it is the Commonwealth Council of Student Governments.This leads one to believe that having a high number of students attending the board meeting does not automatically translate into an SSA reporting a high number of volunteers that participate in SSA activities.

Student lobbyists in the last semester

Associations were split into the following tertiles based on the number of students participating in lobby efforts.(TSSA and SASU did not respond.)

High (>100 Students)	Medium (11-100 students)	Low (<11 students)
OSA	WSL	ASG
UCSA	ASUM	NDSA
MSUSA	ASA	OCSG
MSCSA	CCSG	SAM
	United Council	CSSA

As previously mentioned,the highest engagement level of student lobbyists have similar characteristics.Before we further describe those characteristics,it is important to note that lobbying,more than the other two engagement indicators,helps to fulfill the core mission of a state student association:speaking on behalf of the students they represent.So, one could make the statement that associations who engage more students in this activity are doing a better job fulfilling the core mission of the SSA.

To further describe the similar characteristics of this high engagement group, 100% of the associations have full-time professional staff. Full-time advocates are experts on state higher education issues and are better able to stay up to date on current legislative bills than students with a full course load. Many of these staff not only focus their attention on state legislative policy but also work closely with member campuses to recruit student leaders to participate in lobbying activities. Having full-time staff dedicated to engaging student lobbyists clearly can benefit the overall amount of students engaged in lobbying activities.

Second, 100% of the associations are independent non-profits. Based on observation and conversation, it is clear that separately incorporated SSAs see their role more distinctly as a student advocacy organization. Generally speaking, system organized and informal SSAs are more likely to describe their role as a communication network that links student governments.

Third, 100% of the associations have offices off campus. Regardless of the level of engagement, most SSAs that rent or own office space, do so in the capital city for the purpose of having a location to coordinate lobbying activities.

Fourth, these associations tend to have the largest budgets. Four of the six largest budgets are included in this category. The majority of these budgets are used to hire staff members, which in turn can coordinate more lobbying activities. Additionally, these SSA budgets rely solely on mandatory student fees or student government allocations, which are deemed "stronger" funding systems when compared to a donation or dues based system. It is these strong funding systems which can support both a consistent annual budget and staff presence.

Lastly, these associations tend to register more students to vote. If these associations do a better job of engaging student lobbyists, it makes sense that they would also want to mobilize young voters. Building a stronger base of young voting constituents only helps an SSA's lobbying efforts as it sits down to speak with legislators about student issues.

	High	Medium	Low
avg. # of lobbyists	800	46.4	3.6
% having staff	100%	60%	40%
avg. # of staff	6.25	2.4	.8
% independent non-profits	100%	60%	40%
% having off campus office	100%	60%	60%
avg. # of lobby trips	8.5	22.6	28.4
avg. # of students registered	11,700	9,125	9,250

There appears to be a significant difference in the number of students engaged in lobbying activities as you compare the three frequency distributions. In addition to the previously mentioned similarities, the associations with the least amount of lobby trips tend to engage the most amount of student lobbyists. This may appear counterintuitive. However, the explanation lies in the fact that all associations in the highest tertile place a high priority on a few lobby trips that demonstrate massive student support. One SSA in particular stands out with respect to this trend. MSCSA reported conducting two lobby trips with a total of 2,300 students participating.

All of the associations with the most student lobbyists have full-time professional staff that conduct on-going low level lobbying which is accented by a few major student lobby days throughout a given semester. In Minnesota for example, MSUSA and MSCSA both have full-time staff constantly working at the statehouse lobbying on behalf of students. Every February, they combine efforts to organize a massive student lobby day. Lead students and staff coordinate recruitment efforts on the 53 combined campuses, arrange transportation, and schedule dozens of lobby meetings for the single day.

Section 4: Recommendations

Recommendations to increase board meeting attendance

It is important to reiterate our finding that high student attendance at meetings does not translate into a high level of volunteer activity. Keeping that in mind, a few suggestions follow for SSAs interested in increasing the number of students involved in regular board meetings.

1. **Ensure board meetings discuss and decide important student issues.** It appears that more students attend legislative conferences or general assemblies because important decisions are made regarding higher education policy stances; no school wants to be left out of important decisions or planning. SSAs should use this concept to strengthen their regular board meetings as well. Make sure each board meeting includes discussion and decisions that matter to the issues students are concerned about. For example, students should be more excited to plan out a statewide campaign and how their campus will be involved than revamp the SSA constitution.

2. **Involve a student government "action".** Stemming from the observation that more students attend legislative conferences than regular board meetings and also because high SSA board attendance does not translate into high volunteer rates, it seems appropriate to make board meetings more action oriented. Students attend legislative conferences because of important decision. If board meetings involved important "actions" more student would attend and, at the same time, it engages students in a different type of civic activity. These actions could include dedicating a few hours to gather petition signatures on campus to support higher education policy or helping the local student government publicize its upcoming bookswap program for students to save money on textbooks.

3. **Begin to actively recruit students to board meetings.** 80% of SSAs (12 of 15) reported that individuals who are not elected board members of the association attend regular board meetings. This demonstrates that there is interest in the actions of SSAs by non-elected members (either student government members or the general student body). Yet, only 39% of SSAs (5 of 13) reported they actively recruit individuals to the association meetings. SSAs should capitalize on general student interest and begin to actively recruit students to board meetings regardless of whether or not they have an elected position. This active recruitment could range from simply making an announcement at member campuses' student government meetings to recruiting specific individuals to attend the next SSA board meeting.

4. **Develop strong committees.** During SSA board meetings, many SSAs break into committee groups such as federal legislative issues, state legislative issues and student services. Some associations spend a significant amount of time in these committee groups. None of the surveys investigated committees. However, through observing SSA board meetings, it became clear that "strong" committee meetings can recruit and excite students to become (and stay) involved with the SSA. "Strong" committees are led by well-prepared student leaders, tackle important "hot" topics and result in the committee coming to a decision regarding a course of action. For SSAs that have staff, usually a staff member is paired with each committee to provide continuity and expertise.

5. **Create as many leadership opportunities as possible.** Increasing the number of leadership positions within the board structure may help to increase the number of overall student participants. 73% of SSAs (8 of 11) stated there were more people interested in SSA leadership positions than the number of positions in place. State student associations should create as many leadership opportunities as possible; the premise is that by giving a student a specific leadership role with specific responsibilities and goals, that student is more likely to actively participate and stay involved. Additionally, by creating and filling more leadership positions, these leaders can then work with a new team of students, creating more volunteer capacity (i.e. increasing the amount of student volunteers the association can manage).

Recommendations to increase volunteers

If SSAs are interested in increasing the number of volunteers, a few suggestions follow:

1. **Recruit students other than student government leaders to participate in SSA activities.** State student associations are associations of student governments. However, that doesn't mean that only student government officials should be involved with SSA activities. 100% of the SSAs with the highest level of volunteers engage non-student government officials in their regular activities. Broadly reaching out and organizing the entire campus community at member campuses to be involved can increase volunteer engagement levels. This could be as simple as having non-student government members participate in committee meetings to help organize campus events or identifying non-student government members to coordinate the local actions of a SSA statewide campaign.

2. **Hold more events/Run more campaigns.** SSAs with high levels of volunteers also had high levels of events and campaigns. By creating more volunteer opportunities, common sense dictates it is likely that an association will have a greater number of volunteers. 94% of SSAs (15 of 16) said they would like to hold more events. When asked to choose the types of events they would like to hold more of, the top events were trainings (47%) and lobbying events (40%). The reasons SSAs are not holding more events are "not enough time" (60% of SSAs) and "not enough financial resources" (47%). Being able to sponsor and organize more events on member campuses is a tension for many SSAs; the following two recommendations may offer additional help in increasing both event and volunteer numbers.

3. **Coordinate an internship program.** For SSAs with and without staff, internship programs appear linked to high volunteer rates. The two most common internship activities, as reported by SSAs that run programs, were lobbying or generating grassroots support and conducting policy research. The majority of internship programs also have interns conduct recruitment and outreach efforts and event planning and implementation. By creating a structured opportunity where students have specific goals and spend a specified amount of time on project work, SSAs benefit. Interns can coordinate recruitment activities and plan events to engage additional students in the SSAs campaigns and projects. Most SSA internship programs provide stipends and/or academic credit for the participating students.

4. **Have volunteer coordinators.** Whether an SSA has staff or not, one or more individuals should be designated as volunteer coordinators. It is challenging to manage a lot of volunteers and it is common to hear student government leaders say they don't know what to do with volunteers. Someone within the SSA should be in charge of focusing on volunteers that participate in activities. This volunteer coordinator, in addition to recruiting new individuals, would ensure volunteers have actions or activities to participate in. By keeping an eye towards recruitment and making it a priority, SSAs are more likely to be able to increase their volunteer base.

5. **Use board meetings as a way to increase volunteer rates.** As mentioned previously, only one SSA had the highest level of both attendance at meetings and student volunteers, implying the two activities are not linked. For individuals with high board attendance, it seems likely that attendees would be willing to participate in other volunteer activities (whether they are student government members or not). Ensure you use board meetings as an opportunity to organize and collaborate on activity ideas and planning. For example MSUSA used a recent board meeting as an opportunity to train students and to plan its upcoming lobby day. Following a few overviews, students split into campuses and planned out their upcoming activities to recruit volunteers for the lobby day. Specific students were responsible for implementing pieces of the recruitment plans when they returned to campus. In the end, the lobby day was deemed a success with close to 200 students attending from across the seven member campuses. Additionally, the idea of having a student association "action" linked with the SSA board meeting (see recommendations to increase board meeting attendance) will increase the number of volunteers participating in activities.

Recommendations to increase student lobbyists

If SSAs are interested in increasing the number of student lobbyists, a few suggestions follow:

1. **Build up a full-time presence at the state capitol.** 100% of SSAs with the highest level of student lobbyists have full time staff members. Each one has a legislative staff member who is responsible for monitoring all higher education policy and legislation that is moving through the state house. Additionally, each executive director spends significant amounts of time focusing on legislative priorities. While it may be difficult or nearly impossible for some state student associations to hire full-time professional staff members who facilitate student lobbying activities, it is still possible to strengthen the student presence at the state capital. A few ideas follow:

   a. *Develop an internship program that focuses on legislative advocacy.* Depending on the strength of the program, students could spend an entire semester or just a few credits in a semester monitoring and acting on higher education policy issues. A team of interns can participate in hearings, meet with legislators and help to publicize the issues on member campuses. Each student government in the state of Washington has a student lobbyist who spends a significant amount of time in Olympia during the legislative session; the Washington Student Lobby works to coordinate those activities and create a full time student presence.

   b. *Utilize outside sources to strengthen the student voice.* Students and state student associations are the best voice for the student community in any state. However, with limited staff and resources it is smart to utilize resources that exist outside the student community. For example, some SSAs when they first start out, hire a part time lobbyist who is responsible for keeping students posted on higher education policy issues in addition to lobbying on specific issues; the Student Association of Missouri is one such association. The part-time lobbyist is a stepping stone to hiring full-time professional staff. Additionally, if an association is unable to stay updated on state legislative issues and unable to hire any type of staff person, communicate with similar organizations who are able to stay updated. For example, the Oregon Community College Student Association is affiliated with the Oregon Community College Association (an association of community college presidents). Keeping in mind that these outside sources have different viewpoints than students, their higher education policy updates and analyzes may prove useful to a state student association with limited resources. If a state has a state Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), contact a staff member or student to identify any opportunity for collaboration on higher education issues.

2. **Organize a few highly visible lobby days that mobilize students across the state.** The SSAs with the highest level of student lobbyists tend to have fewer lobby days that mobilize larger groups of students. Last March, when massive higher education budget cuts were being proposed, students in states across the country were able to mobilize thousands of concerned students. For example, 17,000 student volunteers with the California Student Association of Community Colleges rallied on the steps of the capital in Sacramento and then proceeded to meet with legislators. Another example is in Trenton, New Jersey where 1000 concerned students rallied to protest budget cuts. As important higher education decisions are being made, educating and mobilizing students in a few highly visible lobby days not only can involve more total student lobbyists but will, also, help fight for better policy decisions. Being able to accomplish a successful and large lobby day takes a lot of work; it first requires an issue students identify with, a simple and clear message, and a well-planned statewide recruitment strategy.

3. **Conduct more in-district lobby meetings.** For a state student association without the infrastructure to conduct full-time lobby efforts, in-district lobby meetings provide another opportunity to engage students in lobbying activities. Associations can schedule meetings with legislators that represent the college town, as well as with legislators of students' hometowns. When students return to their hometowns for winter and spring breaks these meetings can take place.

Section 5: SSA Challenges

The majority of this report is dedicated to SSA structures and activities that promote student civic engagement and involvement in political activities. However, through conversations with SSA leaders stemming from the third and final survey piece of this investigation, as well as through observation, a few major challenges exist that appear to hinder SSAs from engaging students in activities. This section will discuss two of those major challenges: SSA funding and annual turnover.

Section 5A: SSA Funding Systems

In general, creating and maintaining the actual funding system of a state student association is a challenge to most, if not all, state student associations. In this section, we will first describe some of the internal challenges that exist within campus structures for developing state student association fees and then, we will describe some of the external challenges that impact how and what state student associations may do. During our SSA investigation we found that 64% of SSAs (9 of 14) feel that the association's funding level has limited its ability to engage students; additionally 64% of SSAs (9 of 14) feel that the association needs more financial resources to engage students.

Internal Challenges

When first starting out, SSAs must fight hard to prove their worth and that student fee dollars should fund such a voice for students. The Student Association of Missouri (SAM), which just began re-forming in 2001, took approximately a year to institute a fee at a few member schools; this is fast compared to other current SSA initiatives. In order to receive those fees, students had to pass the idea through student government, the general student body, varying amounts of administrators, and ultimately the university governing board. This proved successful at three schools but at one school, in particular, the effort was abandoned because administrators did not support the use of student fees for a state student association. There are many other examples throughout the history of SSAs where an association has faltered from the very beginning due to a lack of support for a structured funding system.

Once SSAs have established a funding system, they spend a significant amount of their time maintaining that funding system. Some SSAs that are funded through a refundable or mandatory fee structure need to re-affirm support for their funding system every few years. United Council, for example, is required to run referenda on its 23 member campuses every two years. These referenda, while helping to spread the word about their activities and victories for students, require a significant amount of staff time, student time and organizational resources. This is time and money that could be used to work specifically on statewide higher education issues.

Additionally SSAs that receive annual student government allocations need to prepare and present a budget to each member schools' student government for approval and full funding. Some years, student governments choose to hold back those resources as leverage for some organizational change or as demonstration of dissatisfaction over a previous decision by the board. In the past, this action by student governments has made the Florida Student Association's budget more unstable than the executive director would like.

To the knowledge of this investigation, the Washington Student Lobby (WSL) is the only SSA that is funded through an institutional donation system, where each student chooses to give $2 to WSL during course registration. This system of funding is subject to each individual student's choice and is not based on a community decision to fund the association. WSL is subjected to varying levels of funding year to year; this funding system makes it difficult to plan future projects.

The dues system, which is used mainly by informal associations, is subjected annually to each individual student government's choice. Sometimes schools opt-in to the association and sometimes they do not.

Lastly, it is important to mention that some system organized SSAs and one independent SSA receive money directly from the university administration. Students have very little control, if any, over the allocation of these resources and are subject to administrative financial decisions each year.

External Challenges

Even when a student association funding system has been firmly in place for many years, maintaining that fee from challenges outside the basic student government system has proven difficult . For example:

- 47% (7 of 15) of SSAs said the use of their fees have been directly challenged in some way by a campus or outside group.

- 31% (4 of 13) of SSAs said that member campuses have limits on the use of student fees,therefore, impacting the SSA's use of fees.

- Of those 4 SSAs, 100% have a limited use of fees for advocacy; 25% have a limited use of fees for salaries;and 25% have a limited used of fees for off campus expenditures.

- These fee limitations were created by the state government, the system-wide administration, and/or the campus based student government.

Below are three specific arenas where external fee challenges have existed over the course of SSA history.[4]
- Litigation seeking to limit student fee collection and use
- Legislative bills attempting to restrict student fee collection and use
- University policies which affect student fee collection and use

These external challenges tend to occur when a state student association has been effective at working on issues in a state. The opponents of that issue, instead of challenging the association on the merits of the issue, challenge the association's funding source. Opponents who realize that funding sources for many state student associations make it possible to work full-time and effectively on issues of concern, make student fees a large target.

Student fee autonomy is of tantamount concern for student governments and state student associations. Student fees foster involvement and action on campuses and in states and should be allocated to address the issues students deem important. Student fees create a marketplace of ideas and introduce young adults to differing viewpoints.There are examples to follow that demonstrate outside individuals'desires to have control over the collection and distribution of student fee monies.

Court Challenges:

Wisconsin: Backed by a special interest legal foundation,a University ofWisconsin law student,Scott Southworth,challenged the institution's policy of collecting mandatory student activities fees and allocating those funds to student groups and organizations.Southworth believed that this mandatory funding system violated his First Amendment right to free association.The case went through the legal system and reached the U.S. Supreme Court.On March 22,2000, in a landmark decision for campus free speech,the Court unanimously agreed that universities can further their educational missions with a diverse range of student activities funded by mandatory fees.

California: Before the U.S. Supreme Court supported mandatory fee systems in the Rosenberger and Southworth cases,student fee advocates faced a defeat before a judicial panel. Ending litigation in Smith v. Board of Regents, dating back to 1979, the California Supreme Court established restrictive guidelines on student fee funding at the University of California in 1993. However, in 1999 a federal court judge responded to a lawsuit brought by the Associated Students of the University of California-Riverside (ASUCR), overruling many of the most restrictive interpretations of the Smith case as overly broad. Specifically, the Riverside case reaffirmed the right of the University of California Students Association (UCSA) to organize statewide and receive student fee funding.

Oregon: In 1995 two lawsuits were filed challenging the mandatory fee system in Oregon. In both cases, (Hollingsworth v Lane Community College and Rounds v University of Oregon) District Court judges and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the mandatory fee systems.

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[4] The Center for Campus Free Speech provided much of the historical fee information from its report *Building the Student Voice:Assessing the Health of Statewide Student Associations.*

Virginia: University of Virginia fee policies restricted funding for "religious"and "political"student organizations.When a student publication that provided a "Christian perspective" was denied funding based on this restriction,their student editor successfully challenged the restrictive policies before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia*. In their 1996 decision,the Supreme Court declared mandatory student fees to be a type of public forum and determined that colleges and universities cannot discriminate against certain viewpoints.The prelude to their March 2000 <u>Southworth</u> decision, the <u>Rosenberger</u> case calls into question fee policies that make content-based and view-point-based distinctions against so-called "religious","political",or "ideological" organizations and activities.

Legislative Challenges:

U.S. Congress: In 1995,federal legislators debated legislation that would limit the use of student fees.Legislators were concerned that student fee dollars were being used for political activities.The fee use limitation would have most likely impacted political debates or speakers sponsored by student organizations, the use of student fees to work on policy issues related to higher education,and the funding of organizations such as state student associations.The legislation ultimately failed due to public outcry from college campuses all over the country.

New Jersey: In 1995,state legislators passed and Governor Christine Todd Whitman signed into law a bill that made it illegal for student fees to be used for statewide lobbying purposes.This effectively rendered the state student association at the time, United Students of NJ, powerless.This "campus gag rule"also impacted the larger campus community, making it illegal for any organization to work on state legislative issues using student fees.

Pennsylvania: In the early 1980's legislation was passed in Pennsylvania to abolish the mandatory fee system.This was the funding system that supported the Commonwealth Association of Students (CAS). CAS was funded with $300,000 of mandatory fees and ran successful state-wide campaigns regarding issues of student concerns.It was these successful campaigns that made CAS a target of the fee legislation. Once the bill was passed, CAS continued to work for a few years with a $15,000 budget but officially shut down its student advocacy effort in 1984.

Minnesota: Since 1992, the Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA) and the Minnesota State College Student Association (MSCSA) have worked to defeat bills every year that attack student fee use to broadcast student opinions. Specifically in 1997 a bill was introduced and voted down that would have weakened MSUSA's fee structure. Following that bill, in 1998 another bill was introduced that would have allowed the legislature to micromanage how students choose to structure their association. Most recently, in 2003 MSUSA and MSCSA successfully fought against a bill that would have changed the mandatory funding system to an "opt-in" or donation system of funding.

Oregon: In 1997 the state legislature introduced a bill to eliminate the mandatory fee system in Oregon.The bill was backed by a handful of legislators and the Associated Oregon Industries.Oregon Student Association worked to defeat the bill by building a coalition of over 500 campus and community leaders.This "campus gag rule" was defeated but left some legislators promising to reintroduce the bill in the following year. OSA has continually organized and advocated to keep the campus community open to all opinions and maintain student autonomy over student fees.

Colorado: In 1994 a bill was in the state legislature that would have restricted the use of student fees from "political activities".This would not only have stopped CSA from functioning in the state but would have affected a myriad of other student organizations. CSA organized successfully against this bill. Again in 1998 a similar bill called the "Paycheck Protection Act"was introduced that would have kept non-profits out of policy debates regarding state ballot initiatives.A statewide coalition effectively defeated this bill, as well. In 2001, yet another bill was introduced and eventually passed that made the waivable fee illegal in the state of Colorado. While this doesn't impact CSA who receives mandatory fee allocations it does encroach upon a student government's and student body's ability to collect and allocate their fees effectively.

Other states who have similar legislative attacks on a regular basis, include New York, Florida, Massachusetts, Texas, California,and Idaho.

University Policy Challenges:

Kansas: In 1993, Representative Tim Shallenburger asked the attorney general to take a closer look at the use of student fees. The attorney general based his recommendation of Kansas student fee use on California student policies at the time. This recommendation resulted in a Kansas Board of Regents policy that bans student fees from supporting lobbying or "off campus" activities. The California policies used to shape the attorney general's opinion have since been changed due to a Supreme Court ruling in <u>Rosenberger v University of Virginia</u>. However, the Kansas policy has not changed- the rule is still on the books. Prior to this policy, the Associated Students of Kansas represented 70,000 students at 6 campuses, received a $.60 per semester fee to support 3 full time staff, and was a thriving advocate for students.

Texas: In the early 1990's the Texas Student Association, with their 15 member schools and 1 million students, was devastated by an administrative policy that prohibited student governments from using their fees to lobby. TSA officially dissolved in 1996.

South Dakota: The Board of Regents in South Dakota have created a policy that prevents the South Dakota Student Federation from using student fees to hire any staff beyond an executive director.

Arizona: In the early 1970s Arizona Student Association (ASA) had struggled with finding a funding mechanism and consistent staff to build the organization. In 1974 when reorganizing, member schools began contributing student fees to fund ASA. The Board of Regents' Legal Counsel withheld the funds from ASA because one of their missions was to lobby. Students began questioning the decision-How could the university be allowed to lobby but students could not? Student leaders raised the possibility of legal action to stop this "selective enforcement". This dispute, then, prompted the Board of Regents to help officially launch ASA.

Section 5B: Annual Turnover

Inherently, state student associations will have high annual turnover; it is the nature of a college campus, a student government and a state student association's structure. Regardless of whether an association is independent, system organized or informal, high turnover impacts the association. In this section, we will discuss how annual turnover impacts each style of SSA.

Informal State Student Associations

In some states, annual turnover makes it nearly impossible to organize a state student association. For example:

New Jersey: In the state of New Jersey four different incarnations of a state student association have existed in the past nine years. As previously mentioned, the New Jersey "campus gag rule" passed in 1995 dissolved the United Students of New Jersey (USNJ), the SSA at the time. Since USNJ, students have attempted the following state student associations:
1) the New Jersey Higher Education Association, started in 1997 and shortly dissolved;
2) the 21 Fund, started in the late 1990s and effectively disappeared when the lead student graduated;
3) the Rutgers University Lobbying Association (RULA), started in 2000. RULA still exists in name but lost most activity when the two lead students graduated; and
4) the New Jersey Higher Education Coalition of Students (NJHECS), started in 2002 but no longer meets since lead students graduated.

Idaho: *Building the Student Voice: Assessing the Health of State Student Associations* written by the Center for Campus Free Speech and the United States Student Association in 1999 lists the Idaho Student Advisory Committee as an association that was founded in 1995. That association does not exist any longer but students are currently working to form the Idaho Student Association. Last year, the student body presidents of the major universities in Idaho rarely met. But this year, the student body presidents are communicating and working together in a formal fashion under the name of the Idaho Student Association.

New Mexico: The Associated Students of New Mexico (ASNM) has reportedly been in existence since the late 1970s. Some years schools communicate and collaborate on projects while other years, ASNM lay dormant. Last year, there was no collaboration of student governments. However, this year, the student body president at New Mexico State University is working to create a new form of ASNM that will last long after she graduates.

Virginia: In 1999 it was reported that the Virginia Student Leadership Alliance (VSLA) had just been formed in 1998, after the Virginia Student Coalition was dissolved in 1994. During this investigation, we could find no student government actively involved with VSLA.

With no consistent individuals, informal state student associations tend to go through periods of high interest from student governments and then fall into latent periods or even full dissolution of the association, only to be reformed a few years later.

System Organized Student Associations

System organized student associations also have high annual student turnover. The main impact for these associations is the lack of continuation of specific programs. System organized student associations traditionally tackle new issues each year; it is the new student leaders who determine the issues of interest. There may not be a continuation of projects as new leaders take over the association. If there is a continuation of specific issues, usually no work is done during the summer months which causes a loss of momentum as students restart the academic year.

In comparison to informal associations, system organized associations tend to have a university employee assigned to the association; these staff may provide policy research or keep students abreast of the university governing board's activities. A few system organized SSAs hire their own full-time staff, such as the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, the University Student Senate of the City University of New York, and the University of North Carolina Associated Student Government. It is these staff who typically train student leaders every year on basic association information and skills and help with the annual transition. If a system organized state student association does not have an advisor or staff member, typically the exiting student body president will prepare the newly elected student body president to participate in the association.

Alaska: The University of Alaska System Governance Office has two staff members who are responsible for coordinating activities of the Coalition of Student Leaders, the system's state student association. One staff member, in particular, has been with the university system for many years and can provide a wealth of institutional memory and advice to students regarding past actions and agendas. These two staff provide training and support each year as student leaders change. The staff members working with the Coalition of Student Leaders organize an annual President's Retreat to orient student leaders to the association. It is at this leadership retreat that the association members determine their priority issues for the year.

Louisiana: The Louisiana Board of Regents manage thirty institutions of higher education. The Council of Student Body Presidents, which represents students from all thirty institutions, is assigned two system staff members who help students plan meetings and coordinate state wide projects. The projects, typically, change every year with each new council.

Missouri: The Associated Students of the University of Missouri (ASUM) have one full-time professional staff member, an executive director. She has been with the association for more than 15 years, has a wealth of historical knowledge regarding the association and helps to create a smooth transition of leadership from year to year.

Independent State Student Associations

Independent state student associations are not immune to the same annual student turnover. However, typically, the presence of multiple full-time professional staff helps to minimize the affects by providing significant consistency and institutional memory. It is these full-time staff members who help to facilitate the continuation of statewide programs and projects from year to year.

Oregon: The Oregon Student Association hosts the Northwest Student Leadership Conference (NWSLC), which is attended by hundreds of students from the region each year. As soon as one year's conference is finalized, staff members begin to organize the following year's conference. It is this continuity of staff that help to ensure the success of each NWSLC.

Minnesota: The Minnesota State University Student Association (MSUSA) is currently fighting changes in state financial aid policies that reduce opportunities to receive aid. These changes were made in 2003; the fight on this issue is expected to continue into the next academic year. The full-time staff members have provided, and will continue to provide, continuity between years regarding this specific issue.

For independent associations that do not have full-time professional staff, their turnover challenges may look similar to informal associations.

Texas: The Texas State Student Association is currently in its formative years. An earlier version, the Texas Student Association, had dissolved in 1996. During the 2002-2003 academic year, student government members made headway on forming the association. When the 2003-2004 academic year came around and new student government leaders took office, the association lost some momentum regarding its structure and activities.

New York: The Student Association of the State University of New York (SASU) has been in existence since 1970. However, in the last four years, SASU has been unable to hire full-time professional staff. They have been struggling each year, and sometimes each semester, with regular student turnover. With such high turnover, it is difficult for these students to effectively continue their work to voice student concern.

It is interesting to note that while full-time staff may reduce the challenges of annual student turnover, they cause additional challenges of staff turnover. Half of SSAs with full time professional staff reported that their staff turn over every two years while the other half turn over at an interval greater than every three years. In an effort to minimize negative impacts of staff turnover, the United Council recently expanded its staff commitments to two years and staggered those commitments to ensure that the full staff does not turn over during the same year.

Appendix I: Number of Students Engaged by Individual SSA & Activity Type

Association	Independent	System	Informal	Student Volunteers	Students at Events	Attendance at Meetings	Directors on the Board
ASA	X			0		14	18
CSSA	X				300	40	42
UCSA	X			40	250	23	18
MSCSA	X			50	3500	100	16
MSUSA	X			500	500	55	7
ASUM		X		300	250	23	15
SAM	X				1300	20	12
SASU	X			4	15	7	7
ASG		X		20	1500	70	64
NDSA		X		0	0	65	60
OCSG			X	50	0	20	26
OSA	X			105	370	30	18
CCSG		X		150	1000	150	44
TSSA	X			0	0	45	0
WSL	X			20	15	17	12
UC	X			35	1000	93	165
TOTALS				**1,274**	**10,000**	**772**	**524**

Association	Executive Positions	Average Interns	Students at Conferences	Students Registered to Vote 2002	Voter Registration Volunteers	Students Lobbying	Community Service Volunteers
ASA	0	2	100	15,000	unknown	14	0
CSSA	6	1	300	36,000	42	10	115
UCSA	6	n/a	500	25,000	140	280	0
MSCSA	5	n/a	1800	7,500	70	2300	40
MSUSA	2	2.5	75	1,800	25	500	0
ASUM	2	10	n/a	3,000	100	13	0
SAM	6	n/a	60	0	0	0	0
SASU	3	n/a	5	0	0	0	0
ASG	12	1	300	1000	2000	5	8000
NDSA	4	n/a	n/a	0	0	3	0
OCSG	4	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
OSA	6	30	700	12,500	100	120	0
CCSG	4	n/a	n/a	unknown	unknown	100	65
TSSA	4	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
WSL	7	n/a	n/a	5,000	25	75	0
UC	2	2	375	13,500	88	30	0
TOTALS	**73**	**48.5**	**4,215**	**120,300**	**2,590**	**3,450**	**8,220**

Appendix II: Number of Engagement Activities by Individual SSA

Association	Independent	System	Informal	Internship Program	Number of Campaigns	Number of Events	Number of Conferences	Number of Lobby Trips	Number of Service Projects
ASA	X			X	6		1	2	0
CSSA	X			X	2	2	2	25	23
UCSA	X				3	3	3	2	0
MSCSA	X				1	7	14	2	1
MSUSA	X			X	5	7	4	12	0
ASUM		X		X	2	40	0	100	0
SAM	X				0	2	1	11	0
SASU	X				0	3	1	0	0
ASG		X		X	5	6	1	86	1
NDSA		X			1	0	0	15	0
OCSG			X		1	0	0	5	0
OSA	X			X	4	8	2	18	0
CCSG		X			6	17	6	3	5
TSSA	X				0	0	0	0	0
WSL	X				0	2	0	5	0
UC	X			X	6	15	2	3	0
TOTALS					**42**	**112**	**37**	**289**	**30**