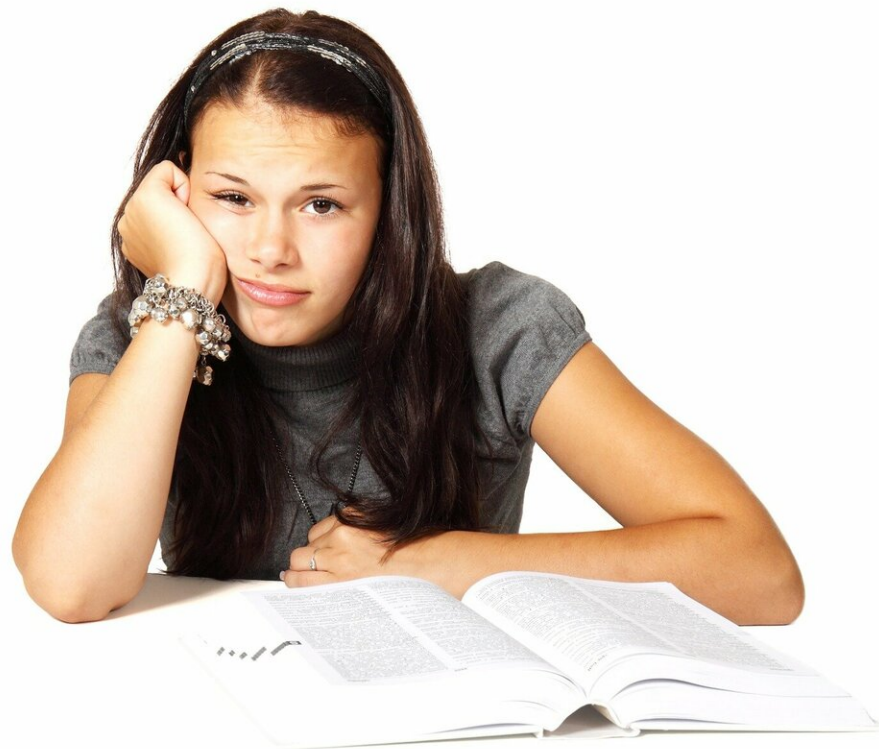


# Colleges that emphasize activism have more civically engaged students

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Students tend to be more engaged in activism if the school that they attend emphasizes social and political issues, according to new research featuring faculty at Binghamton University, State University of New

York.

A research team including Binghamton University Assistant Professor of Student Affairs Administration John Zilvinskis examined survey responses to an experimental itemset of the National Survey of Student Engagement measuring behaviors related to [student activism](#). The sample included 3,257 seniors from 22 four-year institutions.

The survey items had respondents measure, "How much does your institution emphasize the following?"

- Discussing social or political issues, causes, campaigns or organizations
- Participating in activities focused on social or political issues, causes, campaigns or organizations
- Organizing activities focused on social or political issues, causes, campaigns or organizations
- Being an informed and active citizen focused on social or political issues, causes, campaigns or organizations

For administrators and educators in [higher education](#), the researchers found that institutions with higher averages of emphasized activism had students who were more likely to participate in these behaviors.

"The higher institutional averages could indicate that a culture of emphasizing activism leads to more student engagement in activism; however, there also may be a self-selection effect in that activists choose to attend institutions that hold these values," said Zilvinskis.

The researchers also found that Black students and queer students were significantly more likely than other respondents to participate in activism.

"Our country has a history of marginalizing people from these groups, so I suspect they are more motivated to engage in activism behaviors to create more equitable experiences," said Zilvinskis. "The disappointing counter-finding is that their straight and White peers are not as engaged in activism."

Zilvinskis is now researching student participation in high-impact practices at [community colleges](#) and the engagement of students with disabilities at these institutions.

**More information:** John Zilvinskis et al, Measuring Institutional Effects on Student Activism, *Journal of College Student Development* (2020). [DOI: 10.1353/csd.2020.0034](https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2020.0034)

Provided by Binghamton University

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