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Increasing School Unity at BYU–I

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Issue Overview

BYU–I Students Are not Connected to BYU-I



“Nothing really excites me at BYU-I”- A student

A sense of community and school spirit plays a vital role in student experience and retention at universities. However, at BYU-Idaho, survey results indicate that almost 40% of students feel disconnected from students and BYU–I. While the results of this survey indicate a larger problem the exact figures may not be representative of the campus as a whole due to the small sample size. However this survey does point to a general lack of engagement from the student body. This lack of engagement could lead to decreased academic motivation, student retention issues, and a diminished sense of belonging. I conducted various interviews with students to better understand the problem. One respondent told me “I like BYU-I but I don’t feel very connected to the school or many of the other students.” Another student said “There is nothing wrong with BYU-I but I don’t think I will miss it when I graduate.” Addressing these challenges requires a clear understanding of student priorities, participation trends, and potential solutions to improve engagement across campus.

Infographic regarding the survey found [here](#).

Consequence

What happens when students are disengaged?

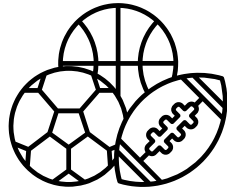


A lack of student involvement and engagement in higher education can lead to significant negative outcomes for both students and academic institutions. Students who feel disconnected from their educational environment often experience diminished academic performance and a decreased sense of belonging. This disengagement is associated with higher rates of absenteeism, increased likelihood of dropping out, and elevated levels of anxiety and depression. Research indicates that students with low engagement are more prone to negative emotional states, such as boredom and frustration, which can further impede their academic success (Xie et al., 2023).

Possible Actions

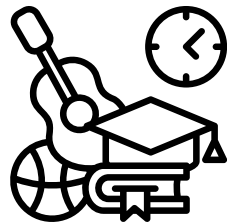
Below are 3 actions that are designed to address the issues stated.

Introduce Intercollegiate Sports



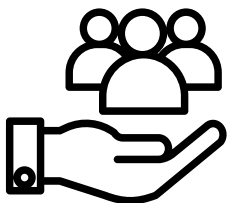
Establishing intercollegiate sports at BYU-Idaho would foster school spirit, create a stronger sense of unity, and provide students with more opportunities for engagement through athletic events and team support.

Enhance Campus Clubs and Organizations



Improving on campus clubs and organizations through better promotion, funding, and programming would encourage more students to participate in extracurricular activities and build lasting connections.

Create a Campus-Wide Service Initiative



Launching a large-scale service challenge would unite students through meaningful community involvement while reinforcing the university's values of service and leadership.



Benefits and Challenges

Intercollegiate Sports

Implementing intercollegiate sports at BYU-Idaho could enhance school spirit, foster community engagement, and provide student-athletes with valuable life skills such as leadership, discipline, and time management. Successful programs can also boost institutional visibility, attract prospective students, and strengthen alumni ties. However, significant financial investment is required for facilities, staff, scholarships, and travel, creating budgetary challenges. Balancing athletics with academic priorities and ensuring equity and inclusion under Title IX regulations are also critical considerations. While other universities have found success integrating athletics into student development, BYU-Idaho must align such programs with its mission and values to ensure long-term sustainability and positive impact.

The topic is explored at greater depth [here](#).

Enhancing Campus Clubs and Organizations

Enhancing the accessibility and visibility of campus clubs at BYU-Idaho can boost student engagement, promote inclusivity, and provide valuable leadership and professional development opportunities. A comprehensive, easily accessible directory of organizations, active student leadership, and an increased offering of clubs can foster a vibrant campus culture. However, challenges such as resource allocation, sustaining member engagement, and tethering connections to the school must be addressed. Providing administrative support, faculty mentorship, and structured leadership transitions can ensure club longevity and effectiveness. By implementing strategic promotional efforts and inclusive initiatives, BYU-Idaho can create a thriving environment where all students find meaningful opportunities for involvement.

The topic is explored at greater depth [here](#).

Implementing a Campus-Wide Service Initiative

Establishing a campus-wide service-learning initiative at BYU-Idaho can enhance student engagement, promote civic responsibility, and strengthen university-community relationships by integrating service with academic learning. These programs provide students with practical skills, boost social awareness, and contribute to local development while enhancing the university's reputation. However, successful

implementation requires significant resources, careful alignment with academic curricula, and sustained faculty and student engagement. Challenges include ensuring meaningful service experiences, maintaining long-term community partnerships, and addressing concerns about obligatory participation. Drawing from successful models at other institutions, BYU-Idaho can create a program that aligns with its mission while fostering impactful learning and service opportunities.

The topic is explored at greater depth [here](#).



Stakeholders



Students – Students are the primary stakeholders since these initiatives are meant to improve their college experience. Whether through sports, clubs, or service projects, students will benefit from greater involvement, but their level of interest and participation will determine the success of any program.



University Administration – The administration is responsible for approving, funding, and managing these programs. They must consider factors like cost, alignment with school values, and long-term sustainability when deciding which initiative to support.



Faculty & Staff – Professors and university staff play a key role in supporting student engagement by advising clubs, mentoring students, and integrating service initiatives into coursework. Their willingness to participate and encourage students will affect how successful these programs become.



Alumni & Donors – Alumni and donors can provide financial support and long-term funding for these programs. Their continued engagement with the university, especially through sports and service initiatives, can help sustain and expand student involvement opportunities.

	Cost	Impact on Engagement	Available Immediately	Support From Students	Ancillary Benefits
Intercollegiate Sports	3	1	3	1	1
Additional Campus Clubs	1	3	1	3	2
Service Initiative	2	2	2	2	3

Topic is explained in greater detail [here](#).

Decision

Best Decision for Maximizing Student Engagement and School Spirit → Intercollegiate Sports

If student engagement and school spirit are the top priority, then intercollegiate sports is the best option.

Why Intercollegiate Sports?

Highest Reach Across the Student Body:

- Unlike clubs and service initiatives, sports engage both participants and spectators, creating a unifying experience (Clopton, 2009).
- Attendance at games, pep rallies, and related events can engage 60-80% of the student population (Holy Family University, 2023).

School Identity & Long-Term Traditions:

- Sports create deep emotional connections to the university, leading to long-term student and alumni engagement (Smith, 2021).
- The "Flutie Effect" suggests that athletic success increases school visibility, applications, and donations (Zimbalist, 2016).

Sustained Engagement & Retention:

- Sporting events happen regularly (weekly or seasonally), keeping students engaged throughout the year.
- Campus clubs and service projects often require active participation, but sports allow passive engagement as spectators, leading to broader inclusion (Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, 2020).

Community & Alumni Engagement:

- **Sports provide a reason for alumni to stay engaged, return to campus, and donate (Meer & Rosen, 2008).**
- **Local businesses and the broader community benefit, strengthening the university's external relationships (Denhart & Ridpath, 2011).**

Challenges to Consider:

High Cost & Financial Risk – Intercollegiate sports require a large upfront investment with no guarantee of profitability.

Time to Implement – Establishing competitive teams, facilities, and administrative structures can take 3-5 years (NCAA, 2022).

Final Verdict: Intercollegiate Sports is the Best Choice for Student Engagement & School Spirit

- If financial feasibility is NOT a concern, intercollegiate sports provide the most effective long-term student engagement strategy.
- The broad reach, deep emotional connection, and sustained school spirit make sports unmatched in impact.



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