

WHY SHOULD I JOIN A STUDENTS' CLUB? THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND PARTICIPATING IN STUDENTS' CLUBS

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Abstract: College students' socialization and the level of their socialization will directly influence the process of the student's growth, their living and their development in the future. Students' clubs affiliation in particular is the focus of our study's attention. We have tried to identify the profile of the students involved in these clubs, their motivation for involvement, the means by which these clubs are being promoted among students, how they attract new members and what type of activities do they organize. We have used a mixed methodology, combining opinion survey and focus groups, to get a better picture of these clubs' activities and membership.

Keywords: leisure satisfaction, motivation, college students

1. Introduction

Students' life is not confined to their participation at university courses. Besides the range of extracurricular activities offered by organizations outside the university, students have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities organized under the patronage of the university, respectively they can get involved in student clubs.

Starting from this argument, the present study aims at identifying the profile of students involved in college clubs. Thus, we developed a case study on students from the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences from Cluj-Napoca, college that enjoys the existence of several clubs developed over the years.

Through a quantitative perspective, the paper underlines which are the clubs attended by students, what kind of communication they adopt, and what are the motivational and personal factors from behind. In addition, through focus group, we will try to understand the clubs purposes and the type of socialization and learning they promote.

A shortcut of the study is that it is limited only to students from the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences and their availability to answer to the survey. A further understanding of motivational reasons and their correlation with leisure motivation and students' participation in college clubs must be sought in a relation to a larger sample from Babeș-Bolyai University. However, we consider this study a first attempt in order to better understand students' behavior and the main characteristics of the clubs they are joining.

2. Literature review

2.1. An overview on the self-determination theory

Ryan and Deci¹ believe that, at their best, people are curious, self-motivated, inspired, and striving to learn and to extend themselves. At the same time, individuals can reject growth and responsibility. In this respect, social context is considered to catalyze both within and between individual differences in motivation and personal

development. People are usually determined to act by different types of factors that generate different experiences and consequencesⁱⁱ.

The self-determination theory focuses on investigating people's inherent growth tendencies and psychological needs that can produce self-motivation and social integrationⁱⁱⁱ. In the same respect, the theory emphasizes the development and functioning of the individual and the degree to which the human behavior is autonomous or determined^{iv}.

It is considered that self-determination theory is composed of four sub-theories regarding the motivations. The first sub-theory refers to the fundamental psychological needs in order to explain motivation and well-being: competence, autonomy and relatedness^v. The second sub-theory deals with the causal orientation and discusses the tendency of the individual to search for certain types inputs from the environment^{vi}. The third sub-theory brings up the cognitive evaluation issue and refers to the effects of rewards, feedback and external events on intrinsic motivation^{vii}. Finally, the last sub-theory raises the integration issue and focuses on the development and internationalization process of extrinsic motivation^{viii}.

Based on the Deci and Ryan theory, there are several motivational forms depending on the level of self-determination. *Non-motivation* is usually the result of incompetency feelings and lack of control, less and less effort being used for finalizing the behavior^{ix}. *Intrinsic motivation* implies gaining satisfaction due to accomplishment of a certain activity. It is believed to be the prototype of self-determination and is characterized by pleasure, satisfaction, interest and freedom of choice.^x Intrinsic motivation implies a strong tendency to seek novelty and challenges, to explore and to develop, even in the absence of a reward.^{xi}

Cognitive evaluation theory (CET), a sub-theory of self-determination theory, claims that social-contextual events, like feedback, rewards etc., have the potential to increase intrinsic motivation.^{xii} Thus, for instance, while it is believed that positive performance feedback, choice opportunity or acknowledgement of feelings enhance intrinsic motivation and give the feeling of autonomy,^{xiii} negative performance feedback can diminish it.^{xiv} In addition, intrinsic motivation can be diminished by threats, deadlines, pressure and directives.^{xv} Although some research suggest that satisfaction of the need for relatedness might be important for intrinsic motivation, people tend to be intrinsically motivated only for activities that hold intrinsic interest for them.^{xvi}

After early childhood, social pressure intervenes with activities that are decreasingly interesting and that imply new responsibilities.^{xvii} Regardless of the context, whenever, a person foster a certain behavior in others, the other's motivation can range between a-motivation and unwillingness to passive compliance and finally, to active personal assurance and internalization.^{xviii} In this context, and in contrast with intrinsic motivation that implies doing an activity for an inner satisfaction, *extrinsic motivation* refers to the accomplishment of an activity in order to gain some separable outcome.^{xix}

While intrinsic motivation implies intrinsic regulation as interest, enjoyment, and inherent satisfaction, extrinsic motivation refers to four types of regulatory styles. First, there are the external regulation that implies compliance, external reward and punishments. Second, there is the introjected regulation that have as relevant regulatory processes the self-control, ego-involvement, internal rewards, and punishments. Third, identified regulation has personal importance and implies conscious valuing. Finally, integrated regulation refers to congruence, awareness, and synthesis with self.^{xx}

2.2. Young people and extra-curricular activities

Battistich et al.^{xxi} consider that a student's feelings associated with identification and commitment to a group are a mixture of the feelings of acceptance and support and the feelings that she is making valuable contributions to the group. Solomon et al.^{xxii} claim that a community represent "a social organization whose members know, care and support one another, have common goals and a sense of shared purpose, and to which they actively contribute and feel personally committed".

In this respect, the *sense of community* is used to describe "the psychological aspects of social settings that satisfy group members' needs for belonging and meaning".^{xxiii} The concept of community is perceived as being a very complex concept, with different and powerful meanings: the feeling of membership, the opportunity to exert meaningful influence, shared emotional connections, and psychological needs fulfilled^{xxiv} shared values, a common agenda of activities, and a pattern of caring social relations^{xxv} warm and supportive interpersonal relationships, opportunities to participate in group norm-setting and decision making, and the feeling of being valued and competent within a group setting^{xxvi}, acceptance, inclusion and encouragement of, and recognition for participation.^{xxvii}

Engagement is defined as the extent to which "students identify with and value schooling outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic school activities".^{xxviii} On one side psychologically speaking, engagement refers to a sense of belongingness or attachment that come together with feelings and acceptance by the peers. On the other side, engagement is an issue of behavior. In this respect, students are considered to attend the meetings, to respect and prepare for the activities.^{xxix}

Students' clubs are defined as "autonomous groups of students who meet regularly with the express aim to enhance their personal learning around a given topic or theme".^{xxx} Typically, clubs are either self-organized and led by students, or sponsored and led by external organizations. Thematically speaking, clubs focus on a large area of interest as professional societies, subject-specific clubs, and specialist interests and have activities as guest lectures, seminar series, panel discussions, networking meetings, competitions, off-campus visits or community service projects.^{xxxi}

Ferrari et al.^{xxxii} claims that *mastery oriented students* are the ones concern with learning the materials and are driven by curiosity. Novel and challenging tasks, long-term learning, and skills development are attractive for this type of students that.^{xxxiii} In contrast, *performance oriented students* are concerned with tangible results and grades.^{xxxiv} Therefore, are more prone to develop maladaptive behavior after gaining an unfavorable result.^{xxxv}

The extra-curricular activities in which adolescents invest time can be perceived as learning environments that imply development opportunities.^{xxxvi} Participation in youth activities is correlated with reducing problem behavior, staying in school, and increasing on general measures of positive adjustment.^{xxxvii} In terms of *personal development*, it has been argued that youth activities facilitate identity work, provide a context for the development of initiatives and helps in the development of basic emotional, cognitive and physical skills.^{xxxviii} In terms of *interpersonal development*, youth activities can develop teamwork and social skills, can promote interpersonal relationship and extend peer networks,^{xxxix} and helps developing connections to adults and acquire social capital.^{xl} However, there are situations that can induce *negative experiences*. For instance, a situation characterized by competition can be associated with stress and

anxiety. Alternatively, certain activities can degenerate in undesirable social behaviors, as, for instance, alcohol use.

Eccles and Barber^{xli} talk about a difference between relaxed leisure and constructive activities. While relaxed leisure is not demanding though enjoyable (e.g. watching TV), constructive leisure denotes effort and implies a context in which a person can develop her personality, identity and passions. It is assumed that there is more benefit from the constructive activities of the young people. They can help in acquiring and practicing social, physical, and intellectual skills, in contributing to the well-being of ones' community and to the developing a sense of a community member, in inducing the feeling of belongingness, in establishing supportive social networks, and in experiencing challenges.^{xlii} In the same respect, participation in extra-curricular activities are linked, on one side, with a positive development, with high grades, school engagement and educational aspirations^{xliii} and on the other side with an healthy adult development, with an active political participation and an active volunteering activities.^{xliv}

Considering the above-described context, the concept of *leisure* comes into discussion. Assessing leisure as being a major source of pleasure,^{xlv} it can be found in any type of activity, from indoor to outdoor, and it is considered to play an important role in global society.^{xlvi} Moreover, it is strongly related to motivation, self-efficacy, commitment to the activity, and satisfaction.^{xlvii} Beggs, Elkins and Powers^{xlviii} suggest that the ability to have a satisfying leisure experience can be strongly associated to the individual's motivation to participate in that leisure activity.

Leisure is defined as "the time given to freely chosen activities performed when not involved in self-care or work".^{xlix} More specifically speaking, the definition of leisure can be threefold: leisure as any free time, leisure as a specific activity, such as school club or organized sports, and leisure as a subjective experience of an individual.^l

The Leisure Motivation Scale, although very used and often adapted by different researchers, has been originally proposed by Beard and Ragheb.^{li} The scale is composed of four sub-scale: intellectual (a mental stimulation such as cognitive learning or the opportunity to use one's imagination), social (the need for interpersonal relationships), competence-mastery (the desire for competition and challenge), and stimulus-avoidance (to escape and restoration one seeks in their leisure activities).^{lii}

3. Methods

This study is a first attempt to utilize the Leisure Motivation Scale to examine what motivates college students to participate in leisure activities offered by student clubs from the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences. We considered the Leisure Motivation Scale (LMS) as an appropriate scale to use for our purpose in order to determine motivation levels for participating in student clubs. We have adapted the scale items to maintain their significance at the translation of items, but it did not affect the validity of the scale.

An online survey research was used to collect data from a non-representative sample of students enrolled in academic courses, but known to be representative of the student population in terms of gender, class standing, and level of participation. The questionnaire was developed using Google forms and applied online on the Facebook pages of the student's clubs and on the official Facebook page of the faculty.

The instrument used in this study was structured in three components. The first section included demographic information, frequency of participation in student clubs and preferences and general motivations. The second section of the instrument included

Likert scale items (1=never, 5=very often) relative to the use of 45 leisure motivation items subsumed in four categories: intellectual, social, competence/mastery, and stimulus avoidance factors. The last section included personality traits Likert scales (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) aimed at an understanding how students described themselves through the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

Furthermore, in order to find out what motivates students to participate in extracurricular activities, we have conducted a focus group with clubs coordinators.

4. Focus-group results

In order to have a better image of the reasons for which students decide to activate in clubs, we have conducted a focus group with six student clubs coordinators from Babes-Bolyai University - Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences (CPACS). In addition to education, the College wants to offer students various opportunities for socialization and involvement in the community, providing them with a wide range of extracurricular activities. There are eighteen students clubs activating at present in CPACS: Alpine Club, Photoshop Student Club, Political Science Students' Society, Animé and Japanese Culture Club, Touché Theatre, 50mmPhotoClub, Video Production Club, CinemAP, Board Games Night, Applied Research Club, Library Club, Media History Club, Debate Club, Student Press, Volleyball & Basketball Club, ComunitAP, Romania One. Our focus group discussion involved the first six clubs mentioned before.

The most majority of the eighteen clubs are dedicated exclusively to students in CPACS, though they do not have any formal recruitment criteria. As one of the coordinators has remarked the College encourages students to engage in a wide range of extracurricular activities, providing the clubs with the entire infrastructure needed and occasionally supporting them with finance.

The focus group questions were concentrated on students' motivation for club membership, students' profile in terms of involvement and engagement, the activities of the clubs, the recruitment methods and promotional aspects of the club activities intended to attract new members. Concerning the activities of the clubs, we have noticed a very wide range of extracurricular activities, starting with promoting students' active involvement in the community, education through adventure, sports and cultural activities, personal and professional development. Thematically speaking, these clubs focus on a large area of interest, ranging from subject-specific clubs to specialist interests, and have activities as guest lectures, seminar series, panel discussions, workshops and team-buildings, networking meetings, competitions, exhibitions, off-campus visits or community service projects. They are both relaxed leisure and constructive activities clubs.

Given each clubs' history and organization, some of them have very detailed budget and calendar of activities, while others are just a way of joining students with similar interests in specific leisure activities and are self-sustaining.

When asked about their motivation to participate to clubs' activities, the coordinators emphasized the fact that these students are mainly mastery oriented, concerned with personal development and driven by curiosity. Novel and challenging tasks, long-term learning, and skills development are attractive for this type of students. They join clubs in order to learn new things, to gather useful information or to develop specific skills, to socialize with others with whom they share common interests, preferences, hobbies and passions, to relax or to spend free time in a constructive manner. They usually find out

about the clubs from other members or through Facebook. The events are disseminated through Facebook also, or through printed ads in the college. Most of these students have previous volunteering activity and display high community involvement. For them, joining student clubs is just a means of continuing their high school activity. They identify with and value schooling outcomes, and participate in academic and non-academic school activities. Their motivation is mainly intrinsic, but enhanced by contextual events, like feedback and rewards.

On the other hand, few of these student club members are coming from small communities, where they have had no chance to involve in such a wide variety of activities and therefore perceive these clubs as a ripe opportunity for personal and professional development.

The main problem with clubs' membership is that during the first semester, they organize weekly activities and have a high rate of participation and large numbers of students attending events, but by the end of the academic year, students' interests start crystallizing and they develop stable interests in one or two of the clubs. Dropout is also explained by the large volume of academic tasks and the diversity of activities and personal projects. As the coordinators said, we talk about the same 10% of the students who join any of the university's projects, the ones who seek information, who pursue opportunities, who engage in active networking, who have a specific vision about their role as a student and who plan their personal and professional development.

One of the most severe challenges a club has to face is the recruitment period and the refreshing of membership. Very homogenous clubs are confronted with the risk of adjournment. As students leave university, new members have to take on responsibilities, therefore it is a three-year cycle that the coordinators have to manage, otherwise, these clubs cannot be long-term sustainable. The role of the club coordinator or board of directors is crucial.

5. Survey results

We had a total of 42 respondents, divided equally by gender. Of the 42 surveyed students, most were from the Department of Communication and Advertising (62%), followed by students from Public Administration (21%) and Journalism and Public Health. Most responses came from students from first or second year, but we had answers also from master students. 83% of the surveyed respondents said that they are part of a student club. 71% of the respondents expressed their desire to be part of other student clubs in the future.

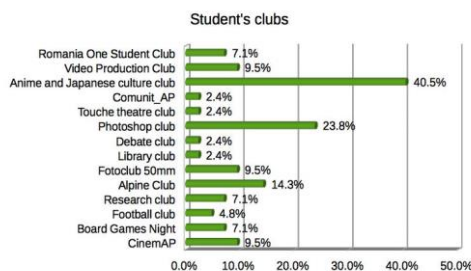


Figure 1. Students' clubs

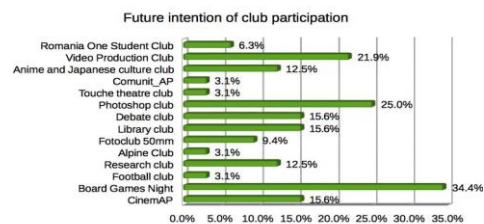


Figure 2. Future intention of club participation

The clubs chosen by most of the students are the following: Anime and Japanese culture club, the Photoshop club, the Alpine club, followed by many others. Asked if the future they would like to enroll in other student clubs, we notice that students have shown great interest for other underrepresented clubs like Board Games Night club, Video Production club, Debate Club, Library clubs and other. Therefore, we see a possible lack of information to students about all opportunities of student clubs.

As expected, students learned about the club they belong from Facebook (45%), from colleagues (33%) or teachers (26%). The majority of students participate weekly at the club's activities (40%), and some of them (36%) participate only sometimes. Because of the nature of the interactions, communication with members of the club takes on a weekly basis (38%) or even daily one (26%).

The next set of questions used a Likert scale to test students' level of agreement or disagreement to motivation to participate in student clubs. We correlated our questions with the literature that states that students' clubs encourage peer interactions, promote cooperation, build relationships, connect students to school and provide structure and challenge (Hansen 2003).

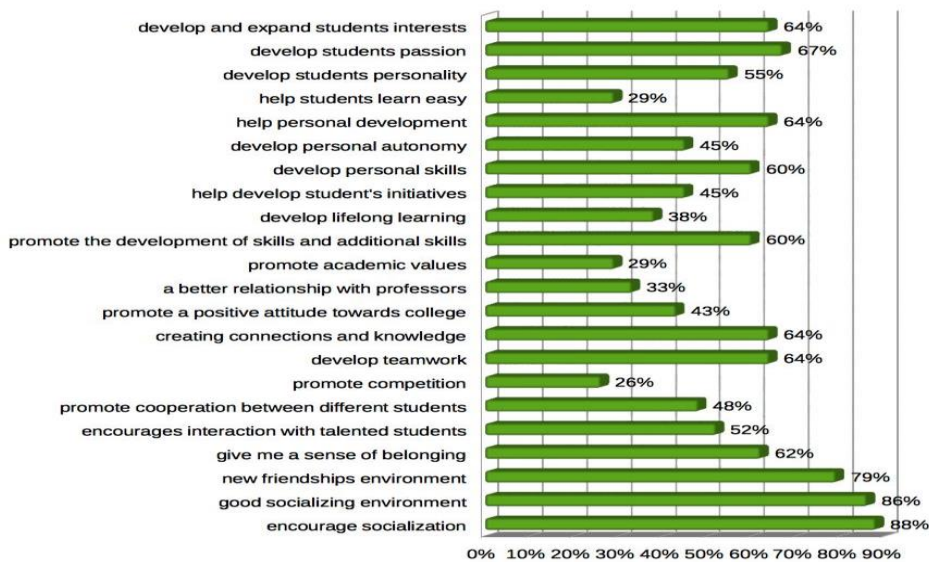


Figure 3. The perceived purpose of students' clubs

Taking into consideration only the "strongly agree" responses, we can see the prevalence of student clubs considered as a place for socialization: that encourage socialization (88%), a good socializing environment (86%), an environment for new friendships (79%). As expected, students clubs are seen as a place for personal development: they develop students' passions (67%), expand students' interests (64%), help personal development (64%) and develop personal skills (60%). Few answers identify student clubs as a place for competition (26%), probably because of the nature of clubs, aimed more at improving skills than at sports skills. What is interesting is the relationship to faculty and professors: we identified moderate answers in seeing student clubs as a mean to promote academic values (29%), to promote a better relationship

with professors (33%), and a positive attitude towards college (43%). One possible explanation resided again in the nature of student clubs, many of them created by students and orientated on them and not from the professors' initiative.

We further analyzed the Leisure Motivation Scale (LMS), by looking to its four components: intellectual, social, competence/mastery, and stimulus/avoidance factors. One again, we will analyze only the “strongly agree” answers, and we have computed all the answers of the 45 item scale. For each set of factors, we observed which of the items are the most represented.

Thus, as regard to Intellectual factors, we observe the prevalence of learning and discovering items: students participate in clubs to discover new things, to learn about new things, and on the second plan factors such as use of imagination, creativity, curiosity. The Social factors scored more on items related to creating new relationships, social interaction and building and being with others. Social factors scored low on items related to gaining one's respect and influencing others, but also on revealing one's skills and feelings to others.

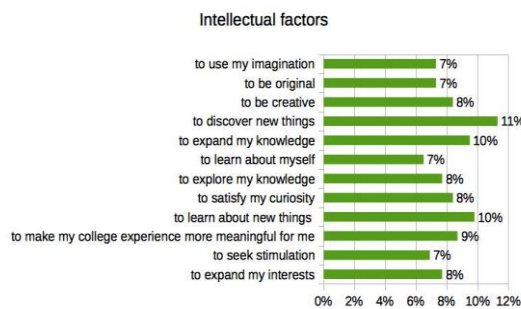


Figure 4. LSM – Intellectual factors

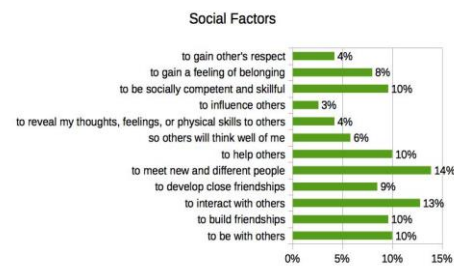


Figure 5. LSM – Social factors

On the Competence/Mastery factors, we identified a high prevalence of three items: challenging one's abilities, knowing one's abilities and mastering things. Once again, we observe a low frequency of those who want to compete against others, and those who want to excel at a sport. Last, on the Stimulus/Avoidance factors we observe a tendency of students to get away from routine, to escape and get a change of pace, and in second plan items related to stress relieve, recreation, mental and physical relaxation.

When summarized all four scale factors, we can recreate a picture of the student who participates in student clubs: one who is interested in challenging his/hers abilities and who enjoys mastering new things, a student interested in meeting new and different people and in social interactions, that wants to get away from his/hers regular routine and wants to discover and learn about new things. Although it seems redundant, the reasons for creating student clubs are in agreement with the factors identified by the article.

In the final phase, we have utilized the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, in order to see how students from college clubs describe themselves. The 10 items that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree measure the positive or negative orientation towards oneself. The scale ranges from 0-30, with 30 indicating the highest score possible.

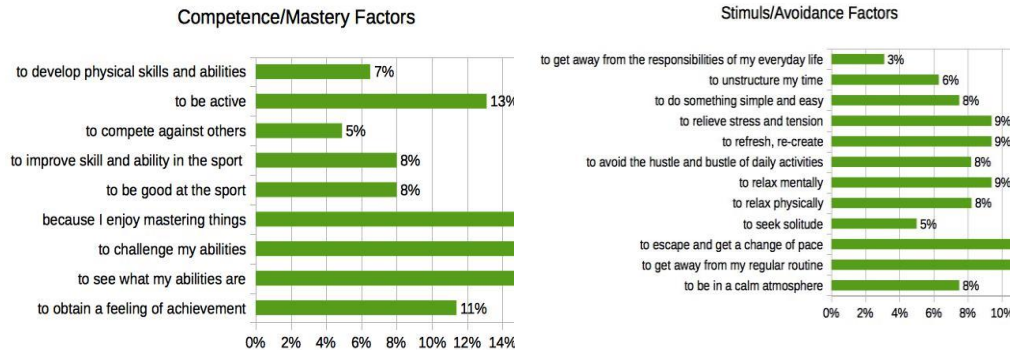


Figure 6. LSM – Competence/Mastery factors **Figure 7.** LSM – Stimulus/Avoidance factors

By computing all survey responses, from the “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” items, it resulted an average of 26 points for the majority of respondents. We can interpret that students from college clubs have a high self-esteem, and a positive self-regard.

6. Conclusions

The present paper has a dual objective. On one hand, the aim of the study is that of investigating the opinions of the coordinators of the students’ clubs in terms of the main reasons students have for attending one. On the other hand, the research tries to better understand students’ belongingness to a club by examining their own perception on it.

The answers we received from the focus group are consistent with the ones coming from the survey. Students who join student clubs are mastery oriented, highly involved in their community, looking for new opportunity to grow and for networking.

Our results support the findings of Eccles and Barber,^{liii} Larson and Verma,^{liv} Pittaway^{lv} and Ferrari^{lvi}. Students decide to join student clubs in order to enhance their personal learning around a given topic of high interest to them. They are continuously seeking novel and challenging tasks, long-term learning, and skills development contexts. Acquiring social capital is important for these active students, and extending peer networks is a habit for them (as Brown^{lvii} and Hansen^{lviii} have previously discovered). Students engage in club activities in order to benefit from the advantages of extracurricular activities seen as a constructive mean of acquiring and practicing social, physical, and intellectual skills.

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- ^{liii} Eccles and Barber, 1999
- ^{liiv} Larson and Verma, 1999
- ^{liv} Pittaway, 2005
- ^{lvi} Ferrari, 2009
- ^{lvii} Brown, 1990
- ^{lviii} Hansen, 2003

Appendix

Student club	Main objective	Coordinator	Department	Year of launch
Mountain Club	organizing and promoting ecological, touristic and mountain activities and promoting a responsible attitude towards the environment and the community	Catalin Hadadea, student	Public Administration and Management	2012
Photoshop Student Club	practicing and highlighting students' capacity of creating logos, posters, visit cards, invitations etc.	Dorin Spoaller, student	Communication, PR and Advertising	2013
Political Science Students' Society	promoting democratic civic values, open society and encouraging students' social involvement	Anatolie Cosciug, student	Political Science	1993
Animé and Japanese Culture Club	sharing information about anime and the Japanese culture	George Manu, student	Communication, PR and Advertising	2014
Touché Theatre	increasing the interaction between students and involve them in various cultural activities	Andra Sfetcu, student	Communication, PR and Advertising	2011
50mmPhotoClub	developing students' love of photography and photographic projects	Ioana Filipas, faculty	Journalism	2010
Video Production Club	developing students' filming and editing skills	Dorin Spoaller, student	Communication, PR and Advertising	2014
CinemAP	develop students' love of cinematography	Tudor Iclau, faculty	Public Administration and Management	2008
Board Games Night	relaxing, networking and playing board games	Adrian Hudrea, faculty	Public Administration and Management	2009
Applied Research Club	developing students' applied research knowledge and skills	George Vlas, student	Public Administration and Management	2010
Library Club	increasing the interaction between students and involve them in various cultural activities	Claudiu Jacota, student	Public Administration and Management	2012
Media History Club	developing students' appetite for media history	Vlad Jecan, faculty	Journalism	
Debate Club	practicing public speaking abilities, critical thinking and logic argumentation	Sinziana Jurau, faculty	Journalism	2002
Student Press	promoting young journalists	Paul Boca, student	Journalism	
Volleyball & Basketball Club	promoting a responsible attitude towards sports and healthy lifestyle	Bogdan Rusu, student	Public Administration and Management	2013
ComunitAP	implementing creative and bold ideas for a better community	Marius Andrei, student	Public Administration and Management	2014
Romania One	encouraging civic democracy among students	Paul Farcas, faculty	Communication, PR and Advertising	2014
Time for You	initiate charity projects and discussions on spiritual and moral topics	Cristian Vesă, student	Public Administration and Management	2013