Overview
In February 2018, the Multi-Intuitional Study of Leadership (MSL) was disseminated to a random sample of 4,000 University of Maryland undergraduate students; 891 (22.3%) useable responses were collected. During the administration, the University of Maryland administered a campus-wide Climate Study, which may have impacted MSL response rates. The MSL examines socially responsible leadership skills, as conceptualized in the Social Change Model, and practices and the campus experiences and environments theorized to contribute to leadership development in college. The Social Change Model envisions leadership to exist in six components: Consciousness of Self, Congruence, Commitment, Collaboration, Controversy with Civility, and Citizenship. The MSL was first administered in 2006 and has since been used by over 350 institutions. In 2018, over 80 higher education institutions participated across five countries, including 10 of the 14 Big10 Institutions. For more information on the Social Change Model and the MSL, visit: leadershipstudy.net.

This report highlights findings regarding those students who reported holding leadership positions in student organizations; 84% of respondents reported being engaged in student organizations in some way and 48% of all respondents reported holding a leadership position in a student organization. A breakdown of students’ self-reported engagement in student organizations is presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Organization Participation</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Involved in a Student Organization</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only involved as a member</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved as leader</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information is self-reported by respondents.

Of those who reported holding leadership positions in student organizations, 71% of them indicated they had reached junior standing or higher.

Highlights
Examining the responses of University of Maryland student organization members regarding their leadership experiences and outcomes produced a number of highlights further detailed in this report:

• Almost half (47%) of frequent and a quarter (26%) of infrequent student organization leaders reported participating in leadership programs because they thought it would be good for their career or professional development.

• Just over one-third (34%) of student organization leaders reported having participated in a leadership lecture or workshop, and just over a quarter (26%) reported taking a leadership course.

• When asked why they do not participate in leadership programs, almost a quarter (24%) of frequent student organization leaders indicated they did not know what is available, 19% reported that the offered programs do not interest them, and 13% of student organization leaders reported not being sure what was involved in a leadership program.

“[Leadership is...] being able to provide the circumstances and tools for others to improve.”
- Student organization leader
Findings

Reasons to Participate in Leadership Programs

Survey respondents were asked to identify the reasons they chose to participate in leadership programs. These reasons largely can be grouped into two overarching themes or scales: reasons related to growth and change (e.g., "I wanted to work for political and social change" and "I wanted to contribute to campus and/or the broader community") and reasons related to a focus on the individual (e.g., "I wanted to have fun" and "I wanted an outlet to relieve stress"). Note that not all reasons presented in the survey were grouped into one of these two scales. More information on the scales and associated items can be found in Appendix A.

Reasons to Participate in Leadership Programs: Student Organization Leaders

Endorsement of at least 25% or more by Leader Frequency

There were no differences between student organization leaders’ class year or their racial group membership for either of these scales. However, student organization leaders identifying as women were more likely to indicate growth and change oriented reasons for participating in leadership programs than men.

When considering the frequency of student organization leadership, more differences emerge between those students who report more frequent student organization leadership opportunities. For example, about a quarter (26%) of infrequent student organization leaders participate in leadership programs to advance their career compared to just under one half (47%) of frequent student organization leaders.

“Leadership is a courageous act that requires kindness, empathy, and compassion. A leader is meant to guide, not dictate.”
- Student organization leader

\[*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05\]
Participation in Leadership Programs

Of those who reported they held a leadership role in a student organization, 46% have participated in a leadership education experience. The most common type of leadership training reported by these respondents are participation in a leadership lecture or workshop series (34%) and a quarter (26%) report taking a leadership course.

Barriers to Participating in Leadership Programs

Student organization leaders do, however, report barriers to participation in leadership programs. Of interest, 15% of infrequent student organization leaders reported not being sure what was involved in a leadership program. Infrequent student organization leaders were also statistically more likely to report a barrier to participation in leadership programs was that they do not view themselves as a leader (13% as compared to 5% of frequent student organization leaders).*

Barriers to Participation in Leadership Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers to Participation</th>
<th>Student Organization Leader Frequency: Many or Much of the time</th>
<th>Student Organization Leader Frequency: Once or Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have other priorities (e.g., family, academics)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know what is available</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My work commitments prevent me from participating</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs offered don't interest me</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not sure what is involved in a leadership program</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested in the type of leadership promoted</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The fees required are prohibitive</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't view myself as a leader*</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not interested in learning about leadership</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs offered don't reflect my cultural identity</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001
Areas of Growth

One custom question asked students to reflect on the areas of growth in student organizations: “Thinking about your experience in student organizations, what do you see as the three biggest areas of growth?” Below are the areas in which respondents who reported frequent student organization leadership experiences differed in their endorsement by 5% or more from those reporting they held student organization leadership roles infrequently. Note that these differences are not necessarily statistically different.

Areas of Growth: Student Organization Leaders
Endorsement differs by 5% or more by Leader Frequency

- Student Organization Leader Frequency: Many or Much of the time
- Student Organization Leader Frequency: Once or Sometimes

In only two areas, infrequent student organization leaders indicated Commitment and Integrity/Ethics to be areas of growth at a higher rate than students with frequent student organization leadership experiences.

It is important to note that this question can be interpreted to reflect the areas in which students believe they grew as a result of being a member of a student organization or the areas in which students believe student organizations need to grow.

“[Leadership is…] doing the right thing when no one is watching.”
- Student organization leader
Changes and Recommendations

Based on the data presented above, there are some opportunities to improve programming and resource education efforts, some of which are already underway:

- The Maryland Lead program has recently increased marketing of their programs. Since 18% of frequent student organization leaders reported not knowing what is available to them when asked about barriers to participating in leadership programs, assessing knowledge of leadership program availability in the future may be helpful to identify if these marketing efforts have worked to increase awareness.

- Similarly, 15% of infrequent student organization leaders indicated they are not sure what is involved in a leadership program. It may be helpful in the marketing of co-curricular leadership programs to highlight and/or operationalize the goals and outcomes of these programs so students are more aware of the benefits of participation.

- Another marketing consideration may be reflected in the reasons student selected for participating in leadership education programs. For example, do the current marketing materials suggest that these programs will be “fun”? Do they make clear that the programs will contribute to students’ career and professional development?

- Some review of the curriculum of leadership programs may also be warranted. For example, almost half (47%) of frequent student organization leaders participate in leadership education programs because they believe it will advance their career. In what ways does the curriculum of these programs make clear for students the connection between what they are learning and experiencing and how it will help students professionally later in their careers?

- Just under half (46%) of student organization leaders reported having participated in a leadership program of some kind. Reaching out to student organization members specifically, as with the targeted track of the Terrapin Leadership Institute (TLI) and the new workshop series offered by the Student Organization Resource, center may prove fruitful avenues to increase students’ overall leadership capacity.

- Additionally, the Student Organization Resource Center and other leadership programs should consider partnering with colleagues across campus to further develop students’ skills. For example, developing a partnership with the University Career Center may be a good initial partnership to explore given student organization leaders reported interest in leadership programs stems in part from their belief that it will contribute to their career or professional development.

- Readers of this report need to grapple with the question of how students develop their leadership efficacy. The only barrier for which there was a statistical difference between frequent and infrequent student organization leaders was the item "I don’t view myself as a leader.” How might leadership educators engage students in their programs who do not yet view themselves as leaders? How do students develop their efficacy as leaders without engaging in leadership education?
Appendix A

Data Analysis Decisions: Subscales

Subscales were created using a categorical principal components analysis with an oblique rotation. The items in each subscale are presented below along with Cronbach’s alpha, a measure of reliability. Items were asked endorsement style, that is, respondents were presented with the list of reasons they may choose to participate in leadership programs and asked to identify which reasons they believed were true for them.

### Reasons for Participation in Leadership Programs: Growth and Change  \( \alpha = 0.772 \)

- I wanted to learn about people who are different from me.
- I wanted to contribute to the campus and/or broader community
- I wanted to work for political or social change
- To become more effective at working with others who are different than me
- I thought it would be good for my career or professional development

### Reasons for Participation in Leadership Programs: Focus on Self  \( \alpha = 0.662 \)

- I wanted an outlet to relieve stress
- I wanted to have fun
- I wanted to receive recognition
- I wanted to gain influence