

# **An Exploration of Campus Recreation's Role in Student Engagement**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Student engagement research includes student success, grade point average, persistence, recruitment, retention, and belonging (Bean, 1980; Becker, Cooper, Atkins, & Martin, 2009; Willms, 2003). Campus recreation research explores benefits, involvement, satisfaction, participation, and community (Astin, 1984; Barcelona & Ross, 2002; Dalgarn, 2001; Kovac & Beck, 1997; Tsigilis, 2009). Research considering the relationship between student engagement and campus recreation is limited. The purpose of this research was to consider the role(s) of campus recreation participation in undergraduate student engagement at a post-secondary commuter campus. A case study approach using initial exploratory interviews and follow-up focus groups explored campus recreation participation in terms of social, academic, and intellectual engagement. Participants were current full-time undergraduate students, 18-24 years old and had participated in a campus recreation activity within the past four months. Findings provided guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation and contributed to and connected the existing knowledge bases of campus recreation and student engagement.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

According to Thomas Jefferson, the founder of the University of Virginia, “Give about two hours every day to exercise, for health must not be sacrificed to learning. A strong body makes the mind strong” (1785, para. 1). Apparent in Thomas Jefferson’s quote is that physical activity and recreation are positive influences on student learning.

Since the mid 1990s, research on student engagement has expanded rapidly and was described as the “latest buzzword in education circles” (Kenny, Kenny, & Dumont, 1995, p. 37). According to George Kuh (2001), one of the initial student engagement researchers, student engagement focuses on both the student and the institution as opposed to other theoretical frameworks that concentrate on one or the other. Student engagement research spans from student success, which includes graduation rates, health and academic success, including grade point average, persistence in school, recruitment and retention, to student participation and sense of belonging (Bean, 1908; Becker, Cooper, Atkins, & Martin, 2009; Willms, 2003). Student engagement is a relatively new field of research. Most of the engagement research to date has occurred in a classroom setting (Natriello, 1984), but has recently expanded to extracurricular settings. One of the major programs of research in this area, the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), provides survey data results. As a consequence, there are clear opportunities for research in other educational settings and for depth of inquiry through qualitative and mixed method approaches to enhance the current breadth perspective.

Similarly, campus recreation research is relatively recent and began in the 1970s (Astin, 1975). Described as recreation activities organized by a university or college recreation



department (e.g., intramurals, sports, leagues, tournaments, sport clubs, fitness classes and training, and sport lessons), campus recreation research typically explores benefits, involvement, satisfaction, participation, and sense of community (Astin, 1984; Barcelona & Ross, 2002; Dalgarn, 2001; Kovac & Beck, 1997; Tsigilis, 2009). Research considering the relationship between student engagement and campus recreation is limited (explored only by Kasunich, 2009), although some studies have focused on related issues of campus recreation facilities and persistence, recreation and recruitment and retention, recreational employment and academic success, recreation facilities and overall student/academic success (Hackett, 2007; Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg & Radcliffe, 2009; Lindsey & Sessoms, 2006; Wade, 1991). More research is also required in the area of campus recreation as this research is often based on first year and graduating students, looks at campus recreation in isolation of student development theories and concepts and often follows a quantitative approach. This points to research opportunities involving second and third year students, as well as student development concepts such as academic success, participation, persistence, and recruitment using a variety of approaches to enhance the breadth of campus recreation research.

Currently the University of Manitoba, the setting for this research, is known to be a commuter campus (e.g., students come to campus for classes but tend not to stay for extracurricular activities). Students at commuter campuses are less likely engaged and tend to have less involvement in education and social systems of the university (Pascarella, 1992). Commuter campus students are also less likely, compared to students who live on campus, to develop “aesthetic, cultural, and intellectual values; sociopolitical liberalism; secularism; self-esteem; autonomy, independence, and internal locus of control; persistence in college and degree attainment; and use of principle reasoning in judging moral issues” (Pascarella et al., 1992, p. 1);

The primary purpose of this research was to consider the role(s) of campus recreation in undergraduate student engagement in the context of a post-secondary commuter campus. This research topic was selected because it has a recent history (e.g., campus recreation literature began in 1970's and student engagement in 1990's), is time sensitive (e.g., student engagement and student experience has been identified as one of the University of Manitoba's President's, 2010 strategic goals), will expand on the limited literature on campus recreation in student engagement (e.g., only one unpublished thesis from 2009 identified), and will supplement the student engagement literature through a qualitative perspective. Furthermore, the findings shed light on retention of students in post-secondary education, which is an important issue for university administrations.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

The literature review focuses on exploring campus recreation participation and engagement of students at a commuter campus. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides background on relevant student development theories and the second section provides a review of key literature on student engagement, the selected theoretical framework for this research. The third section reviews campus recreation literature while the last section describes the research question.

### **Theoretical Approaches to Student Development**

There are three common student development theories in higher education literature - social integration (a component of Tinto's interactionist theory of student departure), Astin's theory of involvement, and student engagement theory (Pike & Kuh, 2005). This section will briefly examine and provide overall highlights of the first two theories, followed by a separate section on student engagement. Integration, involvement, and engagement are three different constructs based on theories with lengthy research histories that have guided post-secondary education for several decades (Wolf-Wendel, Ward & Kinzie, 2009). The three terms are often used interchangeably, and have shown to be problematic as researchers struggle to determine when one construct ends and another begins (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Wolf-Wendel et al. conclude, "These concepts each add something unique and important to understanding student development and success that can be lost among those who cite them without fully understanding their definition and use. Such haphazard citations and usage can lead to further confusion about the concepts" (p. 408). Each of these concepts is further described below.

## **Social Integration**

Social integration, in the context of student development theory, was developed from Vince Tinto's 1975 interactionist theory of student departure, which focused on student departure/withdrawal and persistence. The theory highlights the importance of students participating in and out of the classroom, and being socially and academically engaged. Tinto (1975, 1993) revealed that social integration occurred when students were integrated into the social aspect of college by participating in activities such as informal peer group associations, semiformal extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and staff at the college. He further speculated that the more students connected to their post-secondary institution, the more likely they were to persist and commit to the institution.

Tinto's theory was unique as he was the first to suggest that students who voluntarily departed from college as an institution issue, not only a student issue (1993). Tinto's theory has been applied in several studies, including Swail, Redd, and Penn (2003) who found students not involved in the "social fabric" (a term coined by Tinto in 1975) of the community were more likely to leave college. Highlights of Tinto's theory include integration as a state of being, based on students' perceptions of fit with the campus and focus on specific outcomes (e.g., successful integration results in retention and unsuccessful integration contributes to departure) (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Integration is most important for first year students, requires a reciprocal commitment from the individual and institution for integration to occur, and students need to form relationships with peers and faculty/professors to be successful in encouraging a sense of belonging (Wolf-Wendel et al.).

## Theory of Involvement

Another key contributor to the research on student development is Alexander Astin, whose theory focused on academic and social involvement. Astin concluded the more students were involved and committed to their learning, psychologically and physically, the more likely they would be satisfied with their education experience and succeed (Astin, 1985). In 1993, he further suggested that students who participated in extracurricular student activities often had good personal development, and students learned by being involved. Highlights from Astin's model include an emphasis on academic and out of class extracurricular activities. His work on involvement has been linked to many positive outcomes for students at college/university and has shown the importance of post-secondary institutions in providing opportunities for students to become involved as part of a successful college experience (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). Pace (1990) and Lindsey and Sessoms (2006), agree with Astin, that the amount of learning and personal development a student receives is proportionate to the quality and quantity of involvement they have. Table 1 illustrates the three student development theories examined in this research.

Table 1:

### *Examination of three Common Student Development Theories*

<b>Student Development Theories</b>	<b>Interactionalist Theory of Student Departure (integration)</b>	<b>Theory of Involvement</b>	<b>Student Engagement Theory</b>
<b>Authors</b>	Vince Tinto	Alexander Astin	George Kuh and Gary Pike
<b>Year</b>	1975	1985	1990's
<b>Focus</b>	student departure/withdrawal and persistence	academic and social involvement	student and institution's role in student's success

Student engagement, the theoretical framework for this research, is not an extension of integration or involvement theories but a progression of student development theories as it explores both student behaviour and educational processes and outcomes that institutions should follow to increase student engagement (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009). George Kuh concludes that “every generation needs its own way to understand the world-this kind of progression, this shifting of labels, represents more than just a temporal adjustment. The larger construct of engagement puts more responsibility on the institution, which is an important tweak...you have to shape the shoe to fit the foot or provide sandals and find ways people can slide a foot into the institution without having their toes cramp” (Wolfe-Wendel et al., 2009, p. 417). Given the above examination of the student development theories, the most appropriate framework for considering student and institutional perspectives is student engagement, which is outlined below.

## **Student Engagement**

### **Definitions and Measurement**

Student engagement, according to a 2009 interview with George Kuh, is based on two components, “the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success” and “how institutions of higher education allocate their human and other resources and organize learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate in and benefit from such activities” (as cited in Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009, p. 413). Although Kuh (2001) suggests student and institution actions are key components of student engagement, there is no single agreed upon definition. Post-secondary institutions use student engagement in a variety of contexts, such as purposeful

student-faculty contact, active and collaborative learning, clearly communicated performance expectations (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 2005; Kuh, Schuh, Whitt & Associates, 1991; National Centre for Higher Education Management Systems, 1994; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005) student satisfaction, persistence, quality of student's learning, and overall educational experience (Astin, 1984, 1985, 1993, 1999; Bruffee, 1993; McKeachie, Pintrich, Lin, & Smith, 1986; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005; Pike, 1993).

Willms (2003) adds that student engagement can refer to student involvement in extracurricular activities in the campus life of a school/college/university, has educational benefits and can occur in or outside of class. Fletcher (2005) proposes student engagement can occur in student planned activities and students are given a voice in their development through student engagement.

Sharan, Shachar, and Levine (1999) describe student engagement as a student's willingness, need, and desire to participate and be successful in the learning process to promote higher level thinking for understanding. Chapman (2003) suggests when engaged, students were more involved in the task, continued through challenges, and showed signs of happiness when they accomplished their work.

Although there is no clear definition for student engagement, there is general consensus that for students to be engaged they must “make a psychological investment in learning” (Newmann, 1992, p. 2), attempt to learn, try to understand and apply what they learn, and learning must be student focused (Fletcher, 2005). The challenge with the varying definitional aspects of student engagement is that it makes it difficult to compare findings across studies. Researchers and practitioners argue the need for one coherent – and multidimensional – framework (Appleton, 2008; Fredericks, 2004; National Research Council, 2003).

Similarly, there is a challenge with measuring student engagement as Kuh and other scholars (Alexander Astin, Gary Barnes, Arthur Chickering, Peter Ewell, John Gardner, Richard Light, and Ted Marchese with input from C. Robert Pace) found after they developed the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). A shortcoming of the NSSE - a popular, standardized student engagement research tool that identifies daily student engagement indicators at college/university (Carle et al., 2009) - is it only measures a portion of student engagement (how/if the student is engaged, educational practices of the institution and what the student gains from their education experience) and does not effectively measure all areas of student engagement (Kuh, 2001; NSSE, 2007). For example, NSSE does not directly measure student learning outcomes but analyzes student behaviour, which is correlated with learning and personal development.

Learning outcomes, such as leadership, teamwork and time management skills, however can be measured through Keeling's 2004 and 2006 resources *Learning Reconsidered - A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience* and *Learning Reconsidered 2 - Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience*. Initially developed as an education resource for post-secondary educators to explore student involvement and exposure to learning, these resources provide practical tools to measure student engagement (Keeling, 2004, 2006). Keelings' resources encourage all post-secondary institutions to focus on the student as a whole, place the student's learning at the center of their experience, and encourage post-secondary institutions to work towards this for each student. Similar to Kuh, Keeling's concept of student engagement focuses on student learning and post-secondary institution's responsibility towards student learning hence, both *Learning Reconsidered* resources use student experience in a similar context to student engagement.



One of the main tools currently in use to measure student engagement is the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), coordinated by the by the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. One of the most widely known student engagement surveys (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007), the NSSE research program analyzes data from hundreds of four-year colleges and universities across the USA and some in Canada, on a yearly basis pertaining to student participation and institution activities provided for learning and personal development. The findings provide an estimate of how undergraduate students spend their time and what they gain from attending college (NSSE). Research findings from the National Survey of Student Engagement represent empirically confirmed good practices in undergraduate education and illustrate students' and institutions' behaviours are linked with desired outcomes of college (NSSE). The Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research also coordinates the Beginning Community College Survey of Student Engagement (BCCSSE), the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) and the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE).

There is also a strong movement in Canada towards understanding the student experience with the use of the popular and long lasting research tool developed by the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC). The CUSC group currently works with 30 Canadian universities to understand Canadian undergraduate students (CUSC, 2010). Since 1994, CUSC and Canadian universities have implemented undergraduate student surveys that provide comparative data on student characteristics and experiences. The surveys alternate every three years among first year students, all undergraduates, and graduating students. Research topics explored through CUSC include student demographics, involvement in activities, extracurricular activities, skill growth and development, student satisfaction with university, education financing and debt, future

education and employment. Conducted between January and March, the surveys include a random sample of 1,000 students per participating university. Some of the universities include Alberta, British Columbia, Brandon, Dalhousie, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Simon Fraser, Toronto and Winnipeg. Currently the University of Manitoba, the setting for this research, also participates in these surveys.

**University of Manitoba and student engagement.** Since 2006, University of Manitoba Student Affairs department has maintained a focus on student engagement as evidenced by the *Learning Reconsidered* model and the *Learning Commons Concept Plan*, presented by a task force to the Vice President Academic (University of Manitoba, 2010). This *Learning Commons Concept Plan* at the University of Manitoba suggests student engagement should focus on student-centred learning experiences and environments. This task force recognizes that “learning commons concept is based on understanding that student’s social lives are not separate from their academic lives, and informal learning is just as crucial to academic growth as classroom-centred learning” (University of Manitoba, 2010, p. 1). This concept plan created by the Learning Commons Task Force developed a made in Manitoba blueprint, unique to the needs of the University of Manitoba that promotes student engagement. With a focus on learning environments for students, this blueprint also suggests that each designated student-centred learning environment should include recreational areas for students. The University of Manitoba is also one of the founding members of the Canadian University Survey Consortium and has developed *The Student Affairs Research Reports*. These reports produce annual information from University of Manitoba students who complete the Canadian University Survey Consortium and the National Survey of Student Engagement research.

## **Dimensions of Student Engagement**

There is a long research history that explores student engagement in terms of academic and intellectual engagement (Astin, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) but more recently there has been some consensus in the student engagement literature outlining three dimensions of engagement - social, academic, and intellectual. Social engagement includes campus recreation activities (e.g., participation in the life of the school), academic engagement (e.g., participation as a school requirement) and intellectual engagement (e.g., participation in learning that encourages understanding of concepts and development of ideas often to overcome problems) (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009).

Conditions that promote social engagement include participation in school clubs, teams, student government and activities such as orientation. These activities often encourage democratic, participatory, and voluntary orientations with positive social and relational outcomes (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009). For example, students who participate in social activities are more likely to develop friendships, social networks, a sense of belonging, and enjoy school. In contrast, supervisory or authoritative orientations are more often found in academic and intellectual engagement with outcomes of graduation, and learning competency, respectively (Dunleavy & Milton). According to Dunleavy and Milton, there are also potential negative outcomes associated with each of the dimensions. Associated with social engagement, social isolation and loneliness can occur; whereas, academic engagement can encourage students to rely solely on formal learning, and a low capacity to adapt, can be a potential negative outcome of intellectual engagement.

Gilbert (2007) also focused on the dimensions of student engagement and suggested intellectual engagement was evident when he observed students' values toward learning had shifted as students were more likely to act upon what they know and learn. He concluded intellectually engaged students looked for ways to improve the world around them based on what they learn. Service based learning, such as building a school in a third world country, is an example of an intellectually engaged student behaviour as students learn to be responsible for their own learning, persist in face of difficulties, and find intrinsic value in the work that they do (Gilbert). Students value intellectual engagement because they have opportunities to solve real problems, engage with knowledge that matters, make a difference in the world, feel respected, learn subjects connected to other subjects, learn from/with each other and people in their communities, and connect with experts (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999).

### **Student Engagement Benefits**

Research began on student engagement in the 1990s, and since then a number of benefits for engaged students have been documented. Gonyea (2006) found benefits include an enhanced ability to write, think analytically and logically, synthesize ideas, and learn on their own. Dunleavy and Milton (2009) suggested that direct benefits of student engagement are friendships, social network, sense of belonging, school enjoyment, academic success, and orientation towards good work. They further proposed that personal responsibility, knowledge building, problem solving, conceptual thinking and confident learners were also benefits of student engagement. In 2007, Simon Fraser University (SFU) conducted a Leadership Summit where volunteers, club leaders, executive and student staff participated in a student engagement study. The study findings include students believe involvement in social and co-curricular

activities is an important part of the student experience, and contributes to personal and skill development; participating in these activities in the school environment prepares them to be active citizens in the wider community; and students living in residence tend to be more involved in the community (Yee, 2007).

### **Student Success**

There has been some confusion with the terms student engagement and student success within the literature. Although student engagement does not have one specific definition, it does focus on the student and the institution providing opportunities for students to be engaged and successful; whereas, student success is often viewed as the larger construct associated with three different student development theories; student engagement, involvement, and integration (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009) described previously. Student success includes academic success (grade point average and persistence in school), graduation rates, health, and recruitment and retention. Similarly to student engagement, student success does not have a universal definition and is often individually defined (Becker et al., 2009). Many college students define success as doing well academically, having good health, and graduating with a degree without having to spend a long time in school (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In 2003, the National Research Council suggested focusing on student engagement as opposed to student success. The Council proposed that educational institutions should focus on the educational experiences and outcomes for all students by listening to students' experiences of school, and exploring student engagement in a modern way (Martin, 2003). The Council concluded the goal should be for deep cognitive engagement grounded in learning.

**Academic success.** Grade point average (GPA), persistence (number of years to graduate), and student retention (the ability to keep a student going to university) have also been used to measure student success (Becker et al.). Several studies have shown that grade point averages may be the most important factor in predicting college retention (Astin, 1997; Bennett, 2003; Braxton & Mundy, 2001-2002).

**Health.** A part of student success, health is relatively new in relation to student engagement. However, some recent studies have included involvement in physical activity, nutrition, social, emotional, vocational, intellectual, and environmental activities, and incidence of disease or health risk factors also as part of student success (Delva et al., 2004; Malinauskas, Raedeke, Aeby, Smith, & Dallas, 2006; Von Ah, Ebert, Ngamvitroj, Parj, & Kang, 2004). Becker et al. (2009) found that graduation rates, academic success and health status are top priorities in student success, which has been the first research to explore health status and student grade point averages.

**Recruitment and retention.** Apparent in student engagement literature, institutions are encouraged to listen to their students (Fletcher, 2005), and by doing so would determine factors that encourage students to come (recruitment) and stay (retention) at universities, which are two factors related to student engagement. Becker, Cooper, Atkins, and Martin (2009) found that students who are more academic and socially integrated are more likely to continue to stay in college and graduate. Pre-existing factors, such as gender, high school grade point average, entrance exam scores, and first term grades (Radcliffe, Huesman & Kellogg, 2006a, 2006b), as well as influencing social and academic integration, recruitment and retention (Bean, 1980) are important factors in predicting future academic success. Post secondary institutions also want to

use student engagement findings to enhance learning environments and student retention (Hu & Kuh, 2002).

### **Student Engagement and Gender**

Research within the area of student engagement and gender at post-secondary institutions began in 2000 and has provided varying results. With post-secondary institutions wanting to measure and define student engagement more accurately, and better understand factors that impact engagement (Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Hu & Kuh, 2002), student engagement and gender literature is limited but expanding. Peter and Horn (2005) reported that, at many post-secondary institutions, more female students are enrolled compared to male, and female students now outnumber male students as undergraduate students at 58% to 42% respectively. Andrews and Ridenhour (2006) found that male students are more likely than female post-secondary students to score higher on standardized tests as well as secure high-paying careers even with an increase in the number of female students enrolled. Females were found more likely than males to illustrate academic behaviours such as study habits and attendance (Woodfield, Jessop, & McMillan, 2006; Zusman, Knox, & Lieberman, 2005); whereas Sax found female students' relationships with school peers and faculty, as well as their involvement with the institution, may be different from their male counterparts (2008). Zhao, Carini and Kuh (2005) found that at times, female students reported higher engagement while other times male students reported higher engagement. Tison, Bateman, and Culver suggest gender effects on student engagement in particular relate to course selection, declaration of major and co-curricular activities (2011). Tison et al. further found that "the relationship between

gender and engagement is related to engagement type as well as an institution level factor (gender composition)” (p. 2).

### **Student Participation and Sense of Belonging**

Student engagement literature also focuses on student participation and involvement including sense of belonging and community. Willms (2003) uses sense of belonging to refer to student engagement in his Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) research. PISA is research funded through the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which assesses 15 year old students internationally on academic performance, student participation and sense of belonging. Willms analyzes student participation and engagement as a measure of student learning, as these two constructs illustrate an attitude towards schooling and life-long learning. He further suggests, student involvement in this context has academic and social benefits for a student and includes extracurricular activities. Willms, however, also found that each country researched had some students with high literacy skills but still a low sense of belonging. Not all students therefore feel a sense of belonging even if they score high on literacy skills. Willms explained students with low sense of belonging may withhold their feelings while others may become disengaged. He suggested more detailed research to determine how best to meet the needs of these students as the goal is to have students use the knowledge and skills as active citizens in their community.

### **Student Disengagement**

As suggested by Farmer-Dougan, Farmer-Dougan, and McKinney (nd) and Willms (2003), students can be unmotivated in university; they may withdraw or become disengaged.



Yee's (2007) student engagement study identified two main reasons that students were not engaged at Simon Fraser University (SFU), including lack of time and lack of information about activities. As a commuter campus, SFU's findings illustrate that, on average students spend nine hours a week on campus outside of class. These hours outside of class include commitments to employment, sports and fitness, volunteering, and non-SFU clubs and organizations. When participants were asked what would make their SFU experience more enjoyable, they said they would like to see more of the following: social events, school spirit, better community atmosphere and student involvement, food choices, opportunities to make friends on campus, flexible activities (e.g., sports, intramurals, activities and clubs), comfortable places to hang out and study, consideration of the opinions of students before making decisions, green space, information on events and an active student society (Yee). Students were more likely to disagree or strongly disagree that the overall level of student engagement is high at SFU (Yee). Students did agree that they valued community involvement, SFU students are friendly and they would like to be more involved in the community (Yee). These findings show that particularly at a commuter campus, students may be less engaged, but overall the students would like to be more involved, and value their community. Other findings included SFU has a strong, diverse community, but it is often seen as segregated and lacking in coordination; student leaders believe most students find it difficult to connect with others and find out about organizations, events and activities; many students feel the SFU community lacks a sense of pride in our school (Yee). The next section within this chapter reviews campus recreation literature.

## **Campus Recreation**

Recreation activities that occur on a university campus, organized by a recreation department, are commonly referred to as campus recreation but can also refer to facilities run by recreation departments. Today, most campus recreation facilities have fitness centres, gymnasiums, swimming pools, handball/racquetball and squash courts, climbing walls, and multi-use spaces (Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg, & Radcliffe, 2009). Campus recreation departments often provide activities for students and staff, such as intramurals, sports, leagues, tournaments, sport clubs, fitness classes and training, and sport lessons (Huesman et al., 2009). The aim of activities provided by campus recreation departments is to meet the needs and expectations of their participants. Campus recreation facilities are known for being social environments where large numbers of students, staff and community members meet and socialize with each other (Huesman et al.).

### **Campus Recreation Benefits**

Several decades of research illustrate there are a number of benefits for participants in campus recreation activities. Research by a large Midwest University illustrated that 75% of student respondents felt they benefited by participating in campus recreation activities (Haines, 2001). Some of the benefits the students reported receiving included an increase in physical well-being, sense of accomplishment, fitness, physical strength, and stress reduction (Haines). Several other authors' findings show strong support for recreation activities and state campus recreation participation enhances student's quality of life (Byl, 2002; Ellis, Compton, Tyson & Bohlig, 2002; Tsigilis, 2009; Weese, 1997). Furthermore, recreation activities assist with personal and social diversity, leadership skills, increased retention and student learning

(Barcelona & Ross, 2002; Haines, 2001), and thereby play an important role in universities (Tsigilis, 2009).

Other authors found students were more likely to continue to be active throughout their lives if they participated in campus recreation activities (Bocarro, Kanters, Casper & Forrester, 2008). Byl (2002) further reports that participating in campus recreation activities will assist with maintaining an active life. Often participants engage in recreation activity, learn new skills that they enjoy, and begin to build a sense of community that continues with them even after they complete university. Kasunich's (2009) unpublished thesis research on the link between campus recreation and student engagement suggests further investigation is required on his findings related to student's learning new skills, social network expansion, better grade attainment, and ability to cope and manage stress. Cooper and Theriault (2008) propose motives for participation in campus recreation can be social (to be with friends), physiological (to be healthy), or intrapersonal (to feel better about oneself) in nature.

Some studies found campus recreation and its associated physical activity programming benefited students with stress reduction, enhanced creativity, and re-energizing the body and mind (Fontaine, 2000; Landers, 1997). Physically active recreation improves physical fitness and reduces illness and disease (Bouchard, Shepard, Stephens, Sutton & McPherson, 1990; Chakravarthy & Booth, 2003a, 2003b). In 2005, Newman found participation in physical activity by university students enhanced self-concept, self-esteem, self-discipline and students who participated were more likely to graduate. From Body's (1996) perspective, "the student recreation building of today is a far cry from its predecessors. And it is increasingly regarded not as non-academic luxury but as an essential structure for the education of a young person's body, mind, emotional qualities and self-discipline" (p. 7).

## **Student Involvement and Participation in Campus Recreation Activities**

The greater the student's involvement in college, the greater amount of learning and personal development the student will achieve (Astin, 1984). The more someone is invested in her/his experience, the more likely she/he will be successful. Pace (1990) continues to describe involvement as including extracurricular activities and interaction with university faculty, staff and students. Extracurricular activities include any university/college activity students participate in and out of class (Pace). Student government, intramurals, clubs, peer tutors, and campus orientations are a few examples. Pace further suggests extracurricular activities are important in higher education and further develop intellectual and general education skills. Garland (1985) agreed with Astin and Pace, although added that students are more likely to graduate and be satisfied with their college experience if they participate in extracurricular activities.

Kovac and Beck (1997) investigated gender rates of participation in intramurals and perceived benefits. They found female students were more satisfied, and participated for individual and social benefits, whereas male students' responses were frequently based on self benefits (e.g., to be physically fit, reduce stress). They also found students were generally satisfied with their recreational sport experiences; however, findings were limited in scope therefore could not be generalized beyond the study.

Lastly, in regards to campus recreation and participation, a number of studies explored campus recreation facilities and customer usage rates. For example, Bryant, Banta, and Bradley (1995), Harrold (1997, 2006) and University of Texas (2007) claimed the percentage of overall

college/university students who use campus recreation facilities is between 70-95% of the student population.

### **Sense of Community and Belonging**

Another stream of campus recreation research focuses on how students identify with campus recreation and the importance of community and student's feeling a sense of belonging. Similar to Tinto's (1975) research, which identified campus recreation facilities as important to "the social fabric" of the university, several other studies address the importance of positive relationships (with other students and staff), student satisfaction, and identification with the institution. Students often use campus recreation facilities since they know other people, and begin to develop a community within the facility (Huesman et al., 2009) and feel a sense of belonging. Campus recreation facilities offer students a safe place to engage with other students, allow for opportunities to be physically active and provide a break from studies (Huesman et al.). It is therefore common to see these facilities with lots of students just hanging out. Huesman et al. further suggest one of the main reasons campus recreation facilities exist is to allow students, staff and community a place to have fun. Students feel a sense of community with the facilities as they create opportunities for social interaction and these feelings are often affiliated with the institution (Hall, 2006). Hall concludes that community, social interaction and affiliation with an institution, likely contribute to persistence in university and that campus recreation activities/facilities directly influence student persistence. Dalgarn (2001) found campus recreation facilities create a sense of community and provide a place for students to interact with other students, faculty, and staff. Further explored by Belch et al. (2001), students who participate in recreational sports develop informal support groups, identify research partners, and

are more likely to seek advice from other students and faculty. Huesman et al. (2009) agreed with Dalgarn and Belch et al. that small communities such as clubs and teams are created in campus recreation facilities, and encourage social integration for students. Huesman et al. further revealed social integration positively impacts students, and students may become more engaged because of the community. Bryant et al. (1995) found that social integration likely occurs in campus recreation facilities since these facilities provide many opportunities for different students and communities to interact. Hall (2006) divided sense of community into three categories: friendship, socialization, and physical activity.

Benefits of campus recreation also extend to students with disabilities. Gillies' (2003) work on students with disabilities transitioning into university, identified leisure as important to student's successful transition into a university community. Findings from Gillies' qualitative research concluded "becoming part of campus life" and "goal achievement" as often crucial for student transition and satisfaction.

## **Student Success**

Continuing to explore campus recreation, the next section focuses on student success, which includes academic success (grade point average and persistence), graduation rates, and health, and recruitment and retention. Of particular interest is why people who participate in campus recreation tend to have higher levels of student and academic success. For example, studies that looked at campus recreation facilities and student learning/development and academic success include the following key findings: 1) first year students who use recreation centres in their first semester have higher first term grade point averages and persistence rates compared to non-users (Belch et al., 2001), 2) there is a positive relationship between part-time

employment at campus recreation facilities and grade point averages (Hackett, 2007), and 3) participation in recreational sports activities has shown positive contributions to scholastic achievement, persistence rates, and satisfaction with the overall collegiate experience (Hackett, 2007; NIRSA, 2002).

**Academic success.** Grade point average as part of student/academic success and campus recreation participation has also been explored. For example, Kasim (2001) found students who balance their academics and non-academic activities have higher grade point averages, and although students who recreate intensely do not all show good grades, the more intense the recreation activity, the more positive the student's aspiration towards learning in class. Kasim's findings also illustrate that participation in academic and non-academic activities needs to be balanced for optimal results. In recent research, Huesman et al. (2009) were the first researchers to use individual student academic records, including grade point averages (from the Registrar's Office) and campus recreation facility counts (from swipes of entrance into the campus recreation facility) compared to previous studies that used self-reported grade point averages and estimated facility use counts. In addition, higher satisfaction with college life and academic success was found by Light (1990) when students had participated in college activities. Similarly, Smith and Thomas (1989) found relationships with faculty and participation in intramurals as good predictors of educational impact and success.

**Health.** As part of student success, health is an important component of success for college and university students. For example, in Gillies' (2003) research, participation in recreation and leisure activities was found to contribute to one's overall health and well being. He further suggested that physical participation (in campus recreation) can improve overall health status. Cooper and Theriault (2008) contended that student's physiological motives, such

as one's health, can encourage physical activity and should be considered by Campus Recreation professionals. Sallis, Bauman, and Pratt (1998) also found that increased health benefits come with participation. Slack (2006) adds that physical activity is important for health promotion and disease prevention; specific benefits include improved cardiovascular health, increased fitness, cancer prevention, reduced stress, and obesity prevention. Lastly, physical activity can be described as an important indicator of perceived health (Mowen, Orsega-Smith, Payne, Ainsworth, & Godbey, 2007) and there are many benefits that directly come from participation in campus recreation activities, such as increased physical fitness (Zizzi, Ayers, Watson, & Keeler, 2004) and stress reduction (Kanters, 2000; Ragheb & McKinney 1993). Despite the many benefits for health, Keating, Guan, Pinero, and Bridges (2005) found that 40-50% of college/university students are inactive. Similarly, Irwin (2007) found that 65% of Canadian college students who are active still do not maintain the necessary physical activity for health benefits over a one-month period.

**Recruitment and retention.** As previously described, recruitment and retention are an important part of student engagement and this section will review these two constructs in relation to campus recreation. Research shows that students who have a tour of the campus recreation facility prior to selecting which university they attend, may select the university because of the campus recreation facilities (Haines, 2001). Recruitment departments therefore should continue to promote tours of the best campus recreation facilities to potential, newly arrived, and current students. For example in Haines' research, 75% of the male students stated that recreation facilities and activities were somewhat to very important when they chose to attend a college/university although 62% of the female students stated recreation facilities and activities were somewhat to very important for them to continue to go to that college/university. These



findings show clear support for the influence of recreation facilities and activities on a student's university selection and retention process.

Campus recreation facilities are also known to promote social interaction and assist with establishing culture and community at a university (Tinto 1975, 1993). Tinto (1975) further suggested social interaction can increase social integration, which contributes to student retention. Social interaction includes all opportunities students have with each other, staff and community, where as social integration involves students moving from smaller groups into the larger group. In this context, small groups such as student clubs, teams, and recreation activity classes would assist in integrating students into the larger community of the university.

Research by Bryant et al. (1995) found campus recreation (facilities and activities) to be important factors for students in selecting and persisting in college. As described by Hall (2006), campus recreation activities and facilities directly influence student persistence (e.g., the number of years it takes to complete university) and that campus recreation activities/facilities directly influence student persistence.

In research by Lindsey and Sessoms (2006), commonalities among recruitment, retention and participation rates in campus recreation were identified. In deciding to attend university, 67% of the students (including 75% of the males and 62% of the females) considered recreation sports facilities and programs to be somewhat to very important. In deciding to continue with college, 70% of the students considered sports facilities and programs to be somewhat to very important. In terms of how many students currently participate in recreational sports on campus each week, the response was 83% and 94% would like to participate each week, demonstrating a large percentage of students at this Southeastern University that use campus recreation facilities.

Lindsey and Sessoms' (2006) findings were consistent with Haines (2001) and Banta et al. (1991) that juniors and seniors more often report they actively participate or would like to participate in recreation/sports compared to freshmen and sophomores.

### **Purpose of the Research**

From the literature review, it can be seen that aspects of student integration, involvement, and engagement arise in the research results on campus recreation benefits. As student engagement has been found to be the more encompassing construct, and, in particular considers the institution's role in student development, encourages the student to be an active participant in the process of engagement (Stage & Hossler, 2000), and is important to post-secondary institution administrators (Body, 1996), the overarching purpose of this research is to explore the role(s) of campus recreation in undergraduate student engagement in the context of a post-secondary commuter campus. Specifically, the objectives of this study are detailed below.

### **Research Objectives:**

- 1) To explore students' perceptions regarding their campus recreation participation on the nature and scope of their social, academic, and intellectual engagement with the University;
- 2) To provide guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation; and
- 3) To contribute to and connect the existing knowledge bases on campus recreation and student engagement.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methods

Chapter three explains the research design and methods used. This includes a description of the setting, the participants and rationale for their selection, and recruitment process. Specific procedures are reviewed, and data analysis and ethical procedures are explained. Upon completion of ethics and approval, the research design was implemented.

### Research Design

As much of the student engagement and campus recreation research to date has been survey based, this study focused on adding depth and richness to understanding the relationships through a qualitative case study research design. Stake (1995) explains that case studies “employ strategies of inquiry” through exploration of programs, events, activities, processes, or one or more individuals, and are bound by time and activity. He suggests case studies are theoretical and pragmatic, and the methodology benefits policy development. Merriam (1998) agrees with Stake about the importance of case studies and adds that case studies are valuable for educational research. The World Bank prefers case studies as they “are manageable, and it is more desirable to have a few carefully done case studies with results one can trust than to aim for large, probabilistic, and generalizable samples with results that are dubious because of the multitude of technical, logistic, and management problems” (Patton, 1990, p.100). In general, case studies are more process oriented, and focus on context and discovery compared to outcomes, specific variables and confirmation, which is often the case in non-qualitative research (Baumgartner & Hensley, 2006).

A case study approach allowed a context based investigation employing a variety of data collection techniques to understand a particular case of interest (Patton, 2002). Initial exploratory interviews and follow-up focus groups were conducted at the University of Manitoba in response to the three research objectives: 1) to explore students' perceptions regarding their campus recreation participation on the nature and scope of their engagement with the University; 2) to provide guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation and; 3) to contribute to and connect the existing knowledge bases on campus recreation and student engagement.

### **Setting**

The University of Manitoba's Bison Recreation Services at the Fort Garry Campus was the setting for this research. The University of Manitoba is the largest post-secondary institution in Manitoba, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It is Western Canada's first University and was founded more than 130 years ago. The student body is comprised of 26,000 part time, full-time, undergraduate and graduate students, 8,000 faculty and staff, 180,000 alumni, and over two campuses. Nearly eight percent of the current students are International, representing close to 100 countries. There are more female than male undergraduate students with 55% female full-time undergraduate students and 63% female part-time undergraduate students. The University of Manitoba is the region's largest and only research intensive University offering in excess of 90 degrees, diplomas, and certificates – more than 60 at the undergraduate level including professional disciplines such as medicine, law, and engineering. The University is known to be a commuter campus based on its highly local student body and only accommodates 1200 students, or four percent, in campus residences.

Campus recreation at the University of Manitoba is part of the Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management. There are four pillars within the Faculty - Academics, Active Living, Bison Sport, and Research. Within Active Living, there are four areas; Bison Athletic Therapy, Bison Children's Programs, Bison Facilities, and Bison Recreation Services, which is comprised of Bison Membership Services and Bison Recreation Programs. Campus recreation falls within Bison Recreation Services, and the mission statement is "to inspire and facilitate students and staff of the University of Manitoba and the community to embrace active healthy lifestyles through involvement in a diverse assortment of enjoyable and educational experiences that will contribute to improved quality of life" (University of Manitoba, 2010). Under Bison Membership Services and Bison Recreation Programs, there are eight sub-areas. Bison Membership Services is comprised of Fort Garry and Bannatyne (the two University of Manitoba campuses) customer services, membership services and fitness lifestyles. Bison Recreation Programs is comprised of Fort Garry and Bannatyne campus intramurals, clubs, special events, adult instructional, leagues, fitness, occupational testing, and employee wellness. Facilities include a swimming pool, three gymnasiums, squash, tennis and racquetball courts, two indoor tracks, an ice rink, two dance studios and 38,000 square feet of cardiovascular and free weight training area.

### **Phase 1 - Interviews**

**Participant selection - interviews.** Similar to Cooper and Theriault (2008), the participants in the interview portion of this research consisted of current full-time undergraduate students who were 18-24 years old and had participated in a campus recreation activity within the past four months (e.g., September-December, 2010). According to the University of

Manitoba's Institutional Analysis, 80% of a possible 15,283 full-time undergraduate students, are 18-24 years old (University of Manitoba, 2010) and this age range is consistent with Statistics Canada classification of youth (Statistics Canada, 2009). This was therefore the age range used in this research. The past four months was used as a time period for participation so that the research would not exclude students who go away for the summer term, and allowed for the highest participation time period, which is the fall term (University of Manitoba, 2010).

To be eligible to participate in the research, participants had to have participated in recreation activities at the Fort Garry Campus organized by or within Bison Recreation Services facilities within the past four months, and had left their e-mail address as a means to be contacted by Bison Recreation Services. The sample for this research was based on specific characteristics raised in the literature as relevant to campus recreation and/or student engagement (e.g., student status, age, campus recreation participation, gender); therefore, purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. As described by Palys and Atchison (2008) purposeful sampling is a method that "people or locations are intentionally sought out because they meet some criteria for inclusion in the research – a good informant has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to participate and is willing to participate in the research" (p. 124).

To recruit participants, the Bison Recreation Services Customer Service Supervisor printed a report in the recreational software system, Class, based on the criteria above (e.g., 18-24 year old, full-time undergraduate student, participated in campus recreation activity within the past four months). The report was expected to show the number of times eligible participants participated in a campus recreation activity or used the facility, and the e-mail addresses for those participants. However, when the Customer Service Supervisor searched for this report and

subsequently contacted Class software, the software company stated that a custom report would have to be created to gather this information. The Customer Service Supervisor shared this with the researcher, and the researcher decided to use participant's self reported usage rates instead of actual usage rates extracted by Class software as a means to avoid extra costs and time associated with creating a custom Class report. Similar to other campus recreation and student engagement research (e.g., Becker, Cooper, Atkins & Martin, 2009; Gillies, 2003; Hall, 2006; Kasunich, 2009; Knap, 2001), self-report data are often used when other data exist but are too difficult or expensive to obtain (Baldwin, 2000). Further support for self reported data includes that the data are assumed to be accurate as they are based upon past experiences and stored in participants' autobiographical memory (Jobe, 2000), are widely accepted in certain settings (e.g., health) (Stone, 2000), and are straightforward as participants willingly consent to interviews (Bersoff, 2000). The researcher then categorized the participants into three different campus recreation participation groups (group "a", "b", and "c") based on the participant's self reported recreation participation frequency. Group "a" included students with low campus recreation participation (approximately zero-two times a week for the past four months), group "b" included medium campus recreation participation (approximately three-four times a week for the past four months), and group "c" included high campus recreation participation (approximately five times or more a week). To recruit participants an Expression of Interest Request (see Appendix A), drafted by the researcher, was sent out by the Bison Recreation Services Customer Service Supervisor to all eligible participants based on the purposeful sample. The Customer Service Supervisor e-mail (see Appendix B) explained that the request was sent on behalf of the researcher, the purpose of the research, and asked for participation in a one hour interview. Since the Customer Service Supervisor sent out the Expression of Interest Request, the

researcher did not access confidential information of potential participants. In the Expression of Interest Request, participants were told that upon completion of the research, they would receive a small thank you gift. The first six students who met the recreation participation eligibility criteria (two low, two medium, two high with both genders per participation rate) and responded to the researcher's Expression of Interest Request, were e-mailed a short series of screening questions (see Appendix C). The screening questions, used to confirm eligibility, inquired about the participant's age, gender, university status (e.g., full-time, part-time, graduate, undergraduate, and year in program), if they participated in Bison Recreation Services within the past four months and in which activity, and the frequency of their participation (e.g., times per week or per month). From the responses, six participants were selected to participate in the interviews. If more than six participants had responded at the same time, the researcher would have selected the first six participants based on alphabetical order of the participant's first initial in their last name and fulfilled the gender requirement above (e.g., each gender in the low, medium and high participant rate group). The researcher followed up with an e-mail to each eligible participant asking them to review and complete the informed consent form (see Appendix D), and the researcher answered any questions the participants had via e-mail prior to conducting the interview. The interviews occurred within one week following the participant's response to the researcher's e-mail. In the interview, the six participants were asked questions (see Appendix E) pertaining to the research objectives and the participants' responses were used to further develop the focus group questions. As the interview phase was highly exploratory and used to inform the focus group phase, six interviews provided sufficient data and direction for the focus groups.



**Informed consent - interviews.** Participants had five days to review the informed consent form (see Appendix D), which allowed time to raise concerns or ask questions of the researcher. Once the informed consent form was signed and returned to the researcher, the researcher and participant set up the interview in a private, agreed upon location, at the University of Manitoba. All participants were provided the researcher and advisor contact information, if they had questions at any time throughout the process. Participants were not anonymous as they responded to an Expression of Interest e-mail that the researcher drafted and was sent by the Customer Service Supervisor, however, confidentiality was assured. Only the researcher knew the names of the selected participants and to maintain confidentiality, participants were given pseudo names that correspond with their interview data allowing only the researcher access to participant identities. Participants were not deceived nor did they experience any risk by participating in the research. No confidential records were consulted before or during the research and participants received a copy of their interview transcription to review. Participants were provided a small thank you gift with a value of \$25 each after the interview and will be provided results from the research upon completion.

### **Data Collection - Interviews**

Participants were asked to participate in one face-to-face interview, with open-ended, semi-structured questions, for approximately one hour. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask the same general questions of each of the six participants (Baumgartner & Hensley, 2006) and allowed for rewording, probing, and clarity of the questions (Berg, 2004). The semi-structured interview questions pertained to campus recreation and student engagement (see Appendix E). In order to develop the interview questions, the literature and previous studies

that had explored campus recreation and student engagement were reviewed, such as a pilot study done by the researcher in March, 2010, and Kasunich's (2009) research on campus recreation and student engagement. Prior to each interview, the researcher answered any questions that participants had, explained about the digital voice recording of the interview, reminded them that they could ask questions throughout, and stop at any time. As Palys and Atchison (2008) suggest it is important for the researcher to build a rapport with the interviewee, to make him/her feel at ease. Also Berg (2004) concludes, interviews allow for "a conversation with a purpose" (p. 75). Glesne (2006) states an interview "can be the basis for the later data collection, and that not knowing enough about the phenomenon of interest, researchers interview a sample of respondents" (p. 80). This research therefore began with interviews to learn more about the topic, which was further explored through focus groups. All interviews were recorded with permission using a digital voice recorder and transcribed verbatim.

### **Data Analysis - Interviews**

After the interviews, the recordings were transcribed, analyzed and then coded according to common themes, an approach suggested by Patton (2002). Also proposed by Sjoström and Dahlgren (2002), codes were "analyzed based on 1) Frequency – how often an idea is articulated 2) Position – where the statement is positioned; often the most significant elements are found in the introductory parts of an answer 3) Pregnancy – when participants explicitly emphasize that certain aspects are more important than others" (p. 341-342). This type of thematic analysis, (Glesne, 2006), "involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (p. 74). The results were then used to develop questions for the focus groups and subsequently as part of the larger study findings.

## **Phase 2 - Focus Groups**

Similar to other case study research (e.g., Kasunich, 2009), focus groups were conducted following initial exploratory interviews. According to Palys and Atchison (2008), focus groups “provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interviews” (p.159).

**Participant selection - focus groups.** Similar to the interviews, focus group participants were full-time undergraduate students 18-24 years old who had participated in recreation activities at the Fort Garry Campus, organized by or within, Bison Recreation Services facilities within the past four months, and had left their e-mail address as a means to be contacted by Bison Recreation Services. Participants in the focus groups were also based on a purposeful sample using the same criteria as the interviews. Once again, to recruit participants the Customer Service Supervisor e-mailed all eligible participants from the Class software system, the Focus Group Expression of Interest Request (see Appendix F). The e-mail explained that the request was sent on behalf of the researcher, the purpose of the research, and asked for participation in a ninety minute focus group. Since the Customer Service Supervisor sent out the Expression of Interest e-mail, the researcher did not access confidential information of potential participants. The Expression of Interest Request informed participants who upon completion of the research, they would receive a small thank you gift.

Following the recommended size for focus groups, which is five to ten persons based on the topic and nature of the group (Krueger & Casey, 2000), the first thirty participants who met the recreation participation eligibility criteria (ten low, ten medium, ten high participants) with both genders per participation rate, and responded to the researcher’s Expression of Interest

Request were e-mailed a short series of screening questions (Appendix G). However, after the Customer Service Supervisor e-mailed two Expression of Interest Requests only twenty-one new interested participants met the selection/eligibility criteria. The screening questions included the participant's age, gender, university status (e.g., full-time, part-time, graduate, undergraduate, and year in program), if they participated in Bison Recreation Services within the past four months and if so what activity/service, and the frequency of their Bison Recreation Services activities (e.g., per week or per month). The three focus groups were created according to the participant's similar campus recreation participation and were relatively homogeneous. It was a challenge to sort the groups into low, medium and high participation rates according to the participant's availability so the low group had one medium participant (e.g., four total participants), the medium group had one low participant (e.g., seven total participants), and the high group had two medium participants (e.g., four total participants). Advantages of using a homogeneous group include ease of discussion on topics if the participants know the group is similar, ease of logistics in arranging a meeting time and location, and possibility of Bison Recreation Services providing outreach following the study for specific participant groups (e.g., something specific for low participant groups). The researcher followed up with an e-mail to each eligible participant asking them to review and complete the informed consent form (see Appendix H) and answered any questions the participants had via e-mail prior to conducting the focus groups.

**Informed consent - focus groups.** The same informed consent procedures were followed for the focus group participants as the interview participants, with the exception that focus group members were provided a small thank you gift with a value of \$10.

### **Data Collection - Focus Groups**

Once the informed consent forms were e-mailed to the participants, the researcher proposed times to conduct the focus groups in an agreed upon time and location. The focus groups were set up within one week following the participant's response to the e-mail. All three focus groups occurred in the same setting over two days and participants were asked the same semi-structured questions (see Appendix I). Focus group questions were developed using themes that emerged in the initial exploratory interviews, and previous studies that had explored campus recreation and student engagement. The questions were more specific, open-ended, and structured in comparison to the broad based interview questions. The focus group followed the recommended questioning route (Krueger & Casey, 2000) that begins with easy to answer, introductory questions to allow all participants to talk, to transition questions, to main questions, and finished with summary questions, if participants had any additional insights.

The physical space for the focus group was agreed upon by the participants and researcher, in a private, comfortable location at the University of Manitoba. Each focus group took approximately ninety minutes. The focus groups were moderated by the researcher and tape recorded by a digital voice recorder, transcribed, and e-mailed back to the participants for accuracy and authenticity (Stringer, 2007).

### **Data Analysis - Focus Groups**

Similar to the interviews, the focus group data were collected, analyzed and coded using thematic analysis. The transcription of the data was read several times looking for common phrases and words, which were then coded into separated clumps of data. These data were further analyzed (Glesne, 2006) and common themes were identified within each focus group

and across all three focus groups. Participant feedback, verbatim quotes and paraphrasing were used to code data into themes. Specifically themes and codes were developed based on how often an idea was expressed, where it was expressed in the sentence (e.g., often key information is at the start of the participant's response), and if participants emphasized concepts as being important (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002). Codes were segregated into data clumps for analysis and description (Glesne, 2006).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher is a graduate student and employed by the University of Manitoba as the Director of Recreation Programs, which is the setting for this research. Prior to this research being conducted, the researcher has witnessed students involved in campus recreation activities, in particular intramurals and clubs who seem to be engaged on campus. There is therefore a potential for researcher bias based on the researcher's previous experience and position with campus recreation. However, the role of the researcher was not kept from the participants, nor was it part of the recruitment process as was described in this chapter. Meeting location bias was controlled by meeting the participants in an agreed upon neutral campus location, as opposed to the researcher/Director's office. Although the researcher's position may be seen as a limitation, Locke et al., (1987) suggest that the researcher's familiarity with the setting can be useful and positive as the researcher is familiar with the setting, programs, participants, and overall context of the research (i.e., campus recreation at the University of Manitoba).

Strategies to enhance verification of the study include triangulation of data, member checking, and clarification of the researcher's role in the study. Triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple methods to investigate the same phenomenon (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham,

1989), was used to determine trustworthiness, transferability and dependability. Triangulation helps strengthen trustworthiness of inquiry by off-setting or counteracting biases (Flick, 1998; Greene et al., 1989), and was applied in this research by using interview and focus group data. To confirm trustworthiness of the data, the researcher transcribed verbatim the responses the participants provided, and then e-mailed the transcription back to the participants to confirm accuracy and authenticity as a means of member checking (Stringer, 2007). To enhance reliability of the study, negative or discrepant information was described. Lastly, participant feedback, verbatim quotes and paraphrasing were used to code data into themes, which increased dependability, transferability and trustworthiness. According to Green and Caracelli (1997) this study, similar to other qualitative research, focused on particularity of findings rather than generalizability, which is used in quantitative research.

The results and themes from the interviews and focus groups are described in Chapter IV Results.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides a profile of the interview participants, the second section provides the interview results, the third section describes the focus group participants, and the fourth section provides the focus group results. Participants' responses are presented below using direct quotes and paraphrased ideas are identified by the participant identification codes in brackets (e.g., IHFV, 2010).

#### Phase 1 - Interviews

**Participant profiles.** The first phase of the research involved six interviews with 18-24 year old, full-time undergraduate students at the University of Manitoba who had participated in a campus recreation activity within the past four months (September-December, 2010). Each participation rate (e.g. low, medium, or high) had one male and female interviewee. The six interviews took place between December 21<sup>st</sup> and December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 at the University of Manitoba in an agreed upon private place. Table 2 presents responses to the eligibility/screening questions. Pseudo names were created by using four identifiers: 1) interview (I), 2) participation rate (L/M/H), 3) gender (M/F), and 4) their first name initial (e.g. C - ILFC – Interview Low Female Cathy).



Table 2:

*Interview - Participant Profile*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>University Status</b>	<b>Frequency of Participation</b>	<b>Living arrangements prior to University</b>
<b>Female, Low (ILFC)</b>	20	FT/UG, yr. 3 Science	1-2/week	Lived in Winnipeg
<b>Female, Medium (IMFK)</b>	21	FT/UG, yr. 4 Engineering	3/week	Lived in Winnipeg
<b>Female, High (IHFV)</b>	21	FT/UG, yr. 4 Interior Design	7/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Male, Low (ILMN)</b>	20	FT/UG, yr.3 Science	1-2/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Male, Medium (IMMA)</b>	22	FT/UG, yr. 4-5 Engineering	5/week	Lived in Winnipeg
<b>Male, High (IHMJ)</b>	23	FT/UG, yr.5 Science	7/week	Lived in Winnipeg

Five out of the six interview participants were in their third or fourth year of university, and two were 20 and 21 years old, and the last two participants were 22 and 23 years old. Although not part of the interview questions, participants shared if they grew up in Winnipeg or moved to Winnipeg to attend the University of Manitoba and therefore these responses are included.

The first two interview questions were designed for respondents to answer easily and comfortably. They provided profile information related to campus recreation involvement including the length of participation, activity selection, and how they became involved. The questions were, “How long have you participated in campus recreation activities at the

University of Manitoba?” and “Which activities do you participate in and how did you become involved?” Table 3 presents their responses.

Table 3:

*Interview - Campus Recreation Activities*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Length of Participation</b>	<b>Activity Participated in</b>	<b>How Involved</b>
<b>Female, Low (ILFC)</b>	3 years	Judo	Saw judo class after exam and was intrigued
<b>Female, Medium (IMFK)</b>	4 years	Dodgeball Intramurals, Gritty Grotto	From a friend
<b>Female, High (IHFV)</b>	3 years	Fitness Classes, Tennis Club	From a friend
<b>Male, Low (ILMN)</b>	3 years	Wushu	From a friend
<b>Male, Medium (IMMA)</b>	5 years	Gritty Grotto, Soccer Intramurals	Looked into it as he knew the gym was here
<b>Male, High (IHMJ)</b>	5 years	Wrestling, Gritty Grotto	Looked into it as he knew the gym was here and looked for wrestling opportunity

The length of participation in campus recreation activities ranged from three to five years across a variety of campus recreation activities including intramurals, clubs, working out in the Gritty Grotto, fitness classes, and adult wellness classes. Similarly, students became involved in campus recreation activities in a number of ways including seeing a class, previously hearing about campus recreation activities/facilities, and the most common response, particularly for female participants, was encouragement from friends. The interview participants’ responses illustrated that female participants often became involved in campus recreation through friends and participated for social reasons regardless of their participation rates, whereas, male participants more likely began participating independently. The female with medium participation explained “some of my good friends started working out here so I thought maybe I

should start working out too so that is pretty much how I joined; with my friends” (IMFK, 2010). She also added, “when I do fitness classes I usually go with friends” (IMFK).

## **Results - Interviews**

The intent of the six, one hour interviews, was to gather general information about the role of campus recreation and student engagement. Themes were identified across and within the interviews following Sjostrom & Dahlgren’s (2002) example of thematic analysis. This method of analysis identifies and separates responses based on frequency, position, and pregnancy. Verbatim quotes and paraphrasing were also used to code data into themes and transcripts were checked by participants for accuracy. The interview thematic findings are first described under three main categories: students’ perceptions of campus recreation; students’ perceptions of the University of Manitoba; and students’ perceptions of the connections between the two.

**Students’ perceptions of campus recreation.** Interview participants provided similar responses for interview question #3, “What do you like about participating in campus recreation activities?” and interview question #4, “If you were to describe to someone why they should participate in campus recreation activities, what would you say?” The responses are therefore compiled for these two interview questions. All interview participants provided examples of what they enjoyed about campus recreation by saying they enjoyed trying new things (ILMN, 2010), they liked the personal gain from participation (including skill development in areas such as time management) (IHFV, 2010), they had a strong sense of belonging and community on campus as campus recreation allowed them to socialize with their friends (IHFV), campus recreation facilities provided a place to hang out (IHFV), campus recreation participation

improved their health and helped them de-stress (IMFK, 2010), campus recreation participation was convenient and cost effective (\$5-\$10/class) (ILFC, 2010). One female participant with high participation elaborated as she identified with campus recreation and its facilities, “campus recreation just becomes a part of you” (IHFV). She explained, “everything (in campus recreation) was set up for me to succeed” (IHFV). This participant eventually was employed by Bison Recreation Services as an instructor, “being a tennis instructor was one of the best things I did in my life in Canada” (IHFV), therefore, she identified strongly with her campus recreation experience.

It was also apparent that the participants had a strong commitment to their intramural, club, adult wellness and fitness activities, even if they had low participation rates. For example, one female participant with low participation attended campus recreation facilities for Judo only once-twice a week but she spoke about how committed she was to this activity, raved about the instructor and wished there was more combative room space/time so more students could experience this program. Similarly, two other high participation rate participants, one male and female participant, mentioned they were very committed to their campus recreation participation as they would come to the campus recreation facilities seven days a week for 3-4 hours a day (IHFV). All the participants described that campus recreation had a large impact on their university experience and it had helped to show them there are lots of opportunities at university. Lastly, one female participant with medium participation said “everything that I needed was right in Bison Recreation Services facilities including a pool, track and large stretching area” (IMFK, 2010).

Interview participants also provided some improvements they would like to see within campus recreation including more marketing and reviewing prices of programs and services.

Specifically, one male participant with low participation suggested Bison Recreation Services' "goal should be to spread the word of campus recreation by being more a part of a student's day" (ILMN, 2010). Similarly, one male participant with medium participation suggested that he was not aware of the World Cup soccer special event offered through campus recreation, even though he had been coming to campus recreation facilities for the past five years, roughly five days a week. In terms of price of programs, one female participant with low participation mentioned that "it was a shame that the gym membership pass was so inexpensive in comparison to purchasing a program as all students should be able to purchase programs at a similar, low cost" (ILFC, 2010). Overall, the participants' perceptions of campus recreation were positive and they provided a few ideas for improvements.

Common themes from the interview participants' perceptions of campus recreation included the importance of trying new things, skill development, friendship, sense of belonging and community, convenient and cost effective, improved health, a place to de-stress, identity, commitment, opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, and involvement. Interview participants, both male and female, identified with and were committed to their campus recreation participation, and campus recreation had a positive impact on their student experience, regardless of their participation rates. Similarly, both male and female participants across participation rates felt there were lots of opportunities at the University of Manitoba and in particular with campus recreation, however, interview participants were not fully aware of all the opportunities that campus recreation offered.

**Students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba.** When asked interview question #5, "What other recreation activities do you participate in at the University of Manitoba not offered through Bison Recreation Services?" responses were as noted in Table 4.

Table 4:

*Interview - Other Recreation Activities*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Activities Participated in Outside of Bison Recreation Services</b>
<b>Female, Low (ILC)</b>	UMSU martial arts student group; very minimal time commitment. Did not attend U1 orientation.
<b>Female, Medium (IMK)</b>	Engineering student group volunteer; very minimal time commitment but good for a resume booster. Did not attend U1 orientation.
<b>Female, High (IHL)</b>	U1 orientation volunteer; faculty council member
<b>Male, Low (ILN)</b>	UMSwing student group; minimal time commitment. UMSU orientation slide activity at Buller building.
<b>Male, Medium (IMA)</b>	Engineering SAT teams, back to school activities/UMSU orientations, student exchange through engineering faculty
<b>Male, High (IHJ)</b>	Chemistry club executive, wrestling club president, never met UMSU members or aware of whom has been elected.

The interview participants were all involved in some campus recreation activity offered by a group other than Bison Recreation Services; ranging from a small time commitment (e.g., attending once) to longer commitments such as a full academic year. Not all participants had attended University 1 or UMSU (University of Manitoba Student Union) orientations on campus, which are large information events held on campus to help students become more aware of opportunities the University has to offer. Specifically, the low and medium female participants had not attended University 1 orientations, whereas the low and medium male participants had both commented that they attended and enjoyed the UMSU orientation activities. Across both genders, the medium and high participants were involved in their faculty activities with both high female and male participants being on their faculty student council. The male participant with high participation also mentioned he did not know who was on UMSU or never met any UMSU members before, although he had been attending the University of Manitoba for five years, and is an involved student on campus but is unaware of the student's union members and

issues. Overall the interview participants were all involved in some form of recreation activity on campus not offered through Bison Recreation Services.

When asked interview question #6, “If you were to describe to someone why they should come to the University of Manitoba, what would you say?” Only two of the six participants mentioned they would recommend the University of Manitoba to prospective students. Of those who would recommend the University, the female participant with high and male participant with low participation, felt there were lots of courses to choose from, campus had a city inside a city atmosphere, it was easy to navigate once you became more familiar with campus, staff are friendly, University 1 was a great option to let you try classes before you are in a faculty, and was reasonably priced for what you pay and are offered. The female participant with high participation, who is an international student mentioned that she came for the English Program as she “wanted to get away from my country for school” (IHFV, 2010). She also suggested “there is lots of diversity on campus so even if you are not from Canada there will probably be other students from your county” (IHFV). The low and medium female participants and the medium and high male participants would not recommend coming to the University of Manitoba. The male participant with medium participation stated “I would not go out of my way to recommend the University of Manitoba” (IMMA, 2010). He did however mention that although he would not recommend the University of Manitoba, “there is no reason not to choose the University of Manitoba” (IMMA). The responses from the participants who would not recommend the University of Manitoba suggested they would ask a prospective student, which program they were interested in before generally recommending the University of Manitoba. Overall the participants’ responses were positive about their University of Manitoba experience but some participants questioned decisions that the University made. For example, the female participant

with medium participation mentioned she did not agree with “the high priced projects that physical plant puts forward” (IMFK, 2010) and provided an example of payroll withholding money from her because of a mistake the University made. Three participants, the low female (ILFC), the medium male (ILMN) and medium female (IMFK) participants, demonstrated their frustration with the tuition freeze as it negatively impacted their student experience by having poor infrastructure (e.g., library ceilings leaking, Gritty Grotto flooding) and the female participant with low participation was “concerned with UMSU selling out to Aramark (food service company on campus) as a monopoly” (ILFC, 2010). Only the two participants who moved to Winnipeg specifically to attend the University of Manitoba, would recommend the University of Manitoba, whereas the other four interviewees, who are from Winnipeg, would not recommend the University of Manitoba generally, but rather would inquire with prospective students about which program they were interested in before making a recommendation. Regardless, all interview participants provided reasons to come to the University such as lots of courses to choose from, easy to navigate campus, University 1, friendly staff, diverse student population, and reasonable tuition. Interview participants also provided a few ideas for improvements based on their perceptions of the University of Manitoba such as fixing infrastructure on campus and better hours of operation for students.

When asked interview question #7, “How would you describe your experience as a student at the University of Manitoba?” the participants overall described their experience as positive. Reasons why included, education was fun (ILMN, 2010), professors were good (ILMN) and sense of pride and involvement within faculties (IMMA, 2010) The male participant with low participation explained he enjoyed meeting new people, “especially people from different walks of life and people that are like-minded” (ILMN). The male and female



medium participants mentioned they enjoyed faculty organized events and teams, and that they participated in campus recreation activities as “it gets students more involved” (IMMA). The male participant with medium participation added “UMSU and University 1 ‘Back to School’ activities in the fall are also great as me and my friends prefer to be on campus at bars than off campus” and “(outdoor) events are good in the fall” (IMMA). Two participants, the female participant with high participation and the male participant with medium participation, suggested “I wished I had have been involved in more at university earlier on in my degree as now I am finishing school and realizing I will be leaving soon and I want to take full advantage of everything the University has to offer before I leave” (IMMA). When probed as to why participants did not partake in more, the male participant with medium participation mentioned “I didn’t know about all the options I could have been involved in and I guess I didn’t really care in my first few years of my degree” (IMMA). In terms of school pride, this interviewee also commented “I chose to come to the University of Manitoba as a default because there was no decision process to come here so maybe that is why I and other students have less pride” (IMMA). He further mentioned “that you don’t have anything else, other than your faculty, to be a part of, or proud of, and going to sports events never came up with me and my friends” (IMMA). He further suggested that sports events were never really advertised well so he was not really aware of the games. He did mention that within his faculty of Engineering, of which he was very proud, the sense of pride started the first day of University. He described it as a type of “propaganda” where it was stressed over and over by his faculty that “you will design things to change the world” and “you are an Engineer” (IMMA). He further suggested within his competitive program of Engineering, “it was important to distinguish yourself, and do what you can to improve the image of the faculty, even if that means paying more for tuition” (IMMA).

Both students in engineering, the female and male medium participants stated there was competition within their engineering program and they felt they had to distinguish themselves.

The male with medium participation continued “the University of Manitoba is a great school and it is worth paying more for better opportunities” and he would rather experience these opportunities “at university before dealing with them in the real world” (IMMA, 2010). The low female and male participants also mentioned that they would be willing to pay more for tuition to have better opportunities at university. The male with medium participation added, “I am proud of who I’ve become and I have worked hard getting where I am” (IMMA). An example of how he tried to distinguish himself and take advantage of opportunities at the University of Manitoba included going on a five month exchange to Budapest. He described it as “the best decision I made” (IMMA). From that experience he learned a lot about independence, responsibility and maturity as this was the first time he lived away from home. He explained “personal experience says a lot more on a resume than what everyone else learns from class” (IMMA). He was extremely satisfied with this experience and he mentioned that he learned several engineering skills that would be applicable to him when he begins working full-time.

When responding to this question, three participants discussed their commuting patterns to the University of Manitoba. The male participant with medium participation preferred to stay on campus now in comparison to his first year, as he described, “I came and went throughout the day (in my first year) but now I come at the start of the day and stay all day, as I prefer being on campus as opposed to being off campus” (IMMA, 2010). A female participant with high participation mentioned she felt lost in her first year on campus with no home or faculty as she did not feel connected to campus in University 1, whereas now she is in a faculty and prefers to stay on campus all day. These two participants, the female participant with high participation

and the male participant with medium participation, therefore both felt positively about their University of Manitoba experience by being on campus throughout the day, as they felt connected to and enjoyed spending their free time on campus. The male participant with low participation also felt positive about his university experience although he came and went from campus throughout the day.

In regards to this question overall, the interview responses suggest that participants had a positive experience at the University of Manitoba because of the quality of education and professors, opportunities to meet new people, personal and academic skills development, and the sense of faculty pride and involvement. There was some variation of responses in terms of the participants' perceptions of commuting patterns; for example the male participant with low participation came for class and went home as soon as class was over, whereas the male and female participants with high participation, and one male participant with medium participation, felt it was better use of their time to come to university and stay all day. Similar themes arose to those in the participant's campus recreation perceptions such as opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, sense of community and sense of belonging. Unique themes of pride, negativity toward university operations/services, student diversity, competitiveness amongst programs, maturity, and commuting patterns can be seen relating to the University of Manitoba perceptions. Also arising was the nature of selecting to attend University of Manitoba (i.e., default or purposeful) having an influence on how it was perceived.

**Students' perceptions of the connections between campus recreation and the University of Manitoba.** Next question # 8 was asked, "How might participating in campus recreation activities affect how you feel about the University of Manitoba (or your experience as a student at the U of M)?" This question directly relates to the main focus and first research

objective of this study, “To explore students’ perceptions regarding their campus recreation participation on the nature and scope of their social, academic, and intellectual engagement with the University.” These three dimensions of student engagement, social, academic, and intellectual, are discussed below with examples from the participants’ responses to this question.

The interview participants’ responses suggested participating in campus recreation activities had an impact on their social engagement at the University of Manitoba. Participants provided examples of social engagement, described as participation in the life of school (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009), that contributed to positive feelings about the University of Manitoba. Examples of social engagement included a strong passion for their campus recreation participation (IHFV, 2010; FHMJ, 2011), participants felt more part of the University (ILFC, 2010), participants met new people (ILMN, 2010), participants enjoyed opportunities to get involved outside of class (ILMN), participants felt less alone (ILMN), participants were proud of their participation (IHFV) and campus recreation became part of them. The female and male participants with high participation and the male participant with medium participation mentioned campus recreation facilities were a comfortable place, “people become so close, like family here” (IHFV). Campus recreation participation has connected several students to the University, and all the interview participants noted that their campus recreation participation allowed them to be accepted into a group (e.g., clubs, intramurals, adult wellness, fitness classes), which was exciting for them, as this connected them on campus as they began recognizing more people, and made them feel like they belonged. The male participant with medium participation mentioned that when talking with friends about university, he does not often talk about classes, instead they talk about things they enjoy doing like intramurals or other campus recreation activities. Lastly the female participant with high participation expressed she

had grown up at the University of Manitoba by participating in campus recreation activities. Regardless of participation rates or gender, all the interview participants were able to provide examples of how participating in campus recreation activities had an impact on the way they felt about the University of Manitoba in terms of social engagement and felt positively about their social engagement at the University of Manitoba.

Although examples were less prevalent, participants discussed how participating in campus recreation activities affected how they felt about the University of Manitoba in terms of academic engagement, described as participation in school requirements (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009). Some of the examples included “exercise provided a much needed mental break from studies” (IMFK, 2010) and “campus recreation participation helped me feel rejuvenated” (IHMJ, 2010). The male participant with medium participation also responded that campus recreation helped him with “balance in his life” (IMMA, 2010). Several participants commented that education was good at the University of Manitoba but there was so much more than just academics. Regardless of participation rates or gender of interviewees, stress relief was the most common response associated with this dimension.

Intellectual engagement focuses on participation in learning that encourages understanding concepts and development of ideas often to overcome problems (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009). Two examples participants provided of intellectual engagement included enhanced skill and personal development in areas such as increased confidence (ILFC, 2010; ILMN, 2010), social, interpersonal, and communication skills (IHFV, 2010), self-esteem (ILFC; ILMN), time management, leadership, teamwork, discipline, tact, responsibility, teaching (IHFV) and the importance of being active (IMFK, 2010) that they felt could apply elsewhere in their lives. For example, the male participant with high participation was a student group Club

Executive and the female participant with high participation was a Tennis Instructor, so the skills that these individuals learned from their time with campus recreation were more in-depth than regular participants but overall all the participants stated they had acquired transferable skills from campus recreation participation. The Club Executive learned about examining information from the media as he personally experienced, from being involved in campus recreation, that the media sometimes exaggerates information to make better stories. The female and male participants with low participation both commented on the confidence they gained from their campus recreation participation, and that this confidence has transferred into other areas of their lives as they are now more self-sufficient, and more likely to sign up for another campus recreation activity on their own again. The male participant with medium participation also identified that campus recreation has helped him to “learn to let things go” and he has “learned to relax” which he thinks are good skills to have in his future as an engineer (IMMA, 2010). Regardless of participation rates or gender, all the interview participants were therefore able to provide examples of intellectual engagement through participating in campus recreation activities that contributed to positive feelings about the University of Manitoba.

Other comments the participants provided included “...that campus recreation had helped participants with self-control, fitness staff helped participants with fitness techniques and health issues, and intramurals helped them to be active.” The female participant with high participation mentioned when she reflected upon her time at University, she realized she had learned a lot and when she leaves and goes back to her country, she will miss the University of Manitoba and all the people and community she had here (IHFV, 2010).

## Summary of Interview Themes

After analyzing the interview data and describing the results as they related to students' perceptions of campus recreation, the University of Manitoba, and the connections between campus recreation and the University of Manitoba, the following themes were identified across and within the interviews. In terms of students' perceptions of campus recreation, responses were positive and participants provided a few ideas for improvements. Common themes included the importance of trying new things, skill development, friendship, sense of belonging and community, convenient and cost effective, improved health and a place to de-stress, identity, commitment, opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, and involvement. The interview participants' responses illustrated that female participants often became involved in campus recreation through friends and participated for social reasons regardless of their participation rates, whereas, male participants more likely began participating independently.

In terms of students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba, responses were fairly positive and participants provided a few ideas for improvements. Similar themes arose to those in the participant's campus recreation perceptions such as opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, sense of community and belonging. Unique themes relating to the University of Manitoba perceptions included pride, negativity with university operations/services, student diversity, competitiveness amongst programs, maturity, and commuting patterns. Also arising was the nature of selecting to attend University of Manitoba (e.g., default or purposeful) having an influence on how it was perceived. Regarding involvement in their faculties, all interview participants were involved in some form of recreation activity on campus not offered through Bison Recreation Services, all medium and high participants were involved in recreation activities within their faculties and both the high female and male participants were part of their

faculty student council. Female participants were also more forthcoming in providing suggestions that the University could improve on such as food services on campus, physical plant, payroll and renovations on campus. In describing their experience as a student at the University of Manitoba, the low female and male participants, and the medium male participant also mentioned that they would be willing to pay more for tuition to have better opportunities at University. In terms of students' perceptions of campus recreation and their engagement with the University of Manitoba, interview participants provided examples of social, academic, and intellectual engagement. Social themes included feeling more part of the University, meeting new people, enjoying opportunities to get involved outside of class, feeling less alone, pride in their participation, a sense of belonging and community, and connectedness to campus. Academic themes related to campus recreation providing a mental break from studies and helping participants feel rejuvenated for their studies. Intellectual themes focused on enhanced personal and skill development transferable from campus recreation to their role as university students and beyond.

Overall the intent of the six one hour interviews was to gather general information about the role of campus recreation and student engagement, which helped shape the focus group questions. Specifically results from the interviews were incorporated into focus group questions numbers three and five. See Appendix I.

## **Phase 2 - Focus Groups**

**Participant profiles.** The second phase of the research involved new participants with the same sample criteria as the interviews, in three focus groups to explore the role of campus recreation in undergraduate student engagement on a commuter campus. Each focus group also



had a minimum of one male and female participant. Twenty-one new participants were selected and three focus groups took place – one on January 6, 2011 and two on January 7, 2011. Fifteen participants actually participated as six participants did not follow through with the focus groups. Of the fifteen participants, eight were male and seven were female. (See Table 5 for the focus group participant breakdown). Similar to the interviews, pseudo names were created using four identifiers: 1) focus group (F), 2) participation rate (L/M/H), 3) gender (M/F), and their first name initial (e.g. E - FLFE – Focus Group Low Female Edith).

Table 5:

*Focus Group Participants*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Low Participation Group (Focus Group 1)</b>	3 (one other student did not show up)	1	4
<b>High Participation Group (Focus Group 2)</b>	2 (one other student did not show up)	5 (one other student did not show up)	7
<b>Medium Participation Group (Focus Group 3)</b>	2 (one other student did not show up b/c they were sick)	2 (one other student did not show up b/c they were sick, one had an emergency)	4

Similar to the interviews, pseudo names were created using four identifiers: 1) focus group (F), 2) participation rate (L/M/H), 3) gender (M/F), and their first name initial (e.g. E - FLFE – Focus Group Low Female Edith). Although not asked in the focus group eligibility/screening questions, participants also shared at the focus groups if they grew up in Winnipeg or moved to Winnipeg to attend the University of Manitoba and therefore these responses are included too. Tables 6-8 present responses to the eligibility/screening questions.

The focus group participants' ages ranged from 18-24 years old, they studied across six faculties, and participated in a variety of campus recreation activities including intramurals, swimming in the pool, working out in the Gritty Grotto, playing squash, climbing, adult wellness classes, fitness classes, clubs and officiating intramurals. Five of the focus group participants were in their third year of university, four in their second, three in their fourth, two in their fifth year and one in their first year. Most students were 21 (4), followed by three students that were each 20, 22 and 23 years old. There was also one 24 year old and one 18 year old.

Table 6:

*Participant Profiles (Focus Group 1 - Low Participation)*

<b>Focus Group 1</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>University Status</b>	<b>What Campus Rec activities do you participate in?</b>	<b>Frequency of participation</b>	<b>Living arrangements prior to University</b>
<b>Female, Low (FLFY)</b>	23	FT/UG, yr.2 Science	Gritty Grotto, pool	1/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Female, Low (FLFN)</b>	20	FT/UG, yr.2 Science	Gritty Grotto, pool	2/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Female, Medium (FMFE)</b>	21	FT/UG, yr.4 Science	Dodgeball Intramurals, Volleyball Ref, Gritty Grotto	4/week	Lived in Winnipeg
<b>Male, Low (FLMR)</b>	20	FT/UG, yr.3 Science	Hockey Intramurals	2/week	Moved to Winnipeg (Residence)

Table 7:

*Participant Profiles (Focus Group 2 - High Participation)*

<b>Focus Group 2</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>University Status</b>	<b>What Campus Rec activities do you participate in?</b>	<b>Frequency of participation</b>	<b>Living arrangements prior to University</b>
<b>Female, High (FHFA)</b>	23	FT/UG, yr.3 Recreation Management	Intramurals, Ref, Gritty Grotto, pool	5/week	Moved to Winnipeg (Was previously in Residence)
<b>Female, High (FHFL)</b>	21	FT/UG, yr.3 Recreation Management	Muay Thai, Pilates, Intramurals	4-5/week	Lived in Winnipeg
<b>Male, Medium (FMMN)</b>	20	FT/UG, yr.2 University 1	Intramurals	2-3/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Male, Medium (FMMC)</b>	22	FT/UG, yr.3 Kinesiology	Dodgeball Intramurals, Gritty Grotto	3/week	Lived in Winnipeg
<b>Male, High (FHMA)</b>	18	FT/UG, yr.1 University 1	Gritty Grotto, Hip Hop	5/week	Moved to Winnipeg (Residence)
<b>Male, High (FHMC)</b>	22	FT/UG, yr. 5 Science	Wrestling, Climbing	7/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Male, High (FHMJ)</b>	23	FT/UG, yr.5 Science	Wrestling, Gritty Grotto	7/week	Lived in Winnipeg

Table 8:

*Participant Profiles (Focus Group 3 - Medium Participation)*

<b>Focus Group 3</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>University Status</b>	<b>What Campus Rec activities do you participate in?</b>	<b>Frequency of participation</b>	<b>Living arrangements prior to University</b>
<b>Female, Low (FLFJ)</b>	21	FT/UG, yr.2 Law	Dodgeball Intramurals	1/week	Lived just outside of Winnipeg
<b>Female, Medium (FMFH)</b>	22	FT/UG, yr.4 Education	Gritty Grotto, Fitness Classes	3-4/week	Moved to Winnipeg
<b>Male, Medium (FMMP)</b>	24	FT/UG, yr.3 Recreation Management	Dodgeball Intramurals, Zumba	3-4/week	Lived just outside of Winnipeg
<b>Male, Medium (FMMS)</b>	21	FT/UG, yr.4 Science	Gritty Grotto, Squash	3-4/week	Moved to Winnipeg (Residence)

**Results - Focus Groups**

The intent of the three, ninety minute focus groups, was to add depth and scope to the interview phase as well as gain additional insights into the role of campus recreation in student engagement. Similar to the interviews, the focus group data were reviewed by question, analyzed and coded into common themes. Verbatim quotes and paraphrasing were also used to code data into themes and transcripts were checked by participants for accuracy. This type of thematic analysis, according to Glesne (2006), “involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description” (p. 74). Themes were coded based on how often an idea was expressed, where it was expressed in the sentence as often key information was at the start of the participant’s response, and if participants emphasized concepts as being important (Sjostrom & Dahlgren, 2002). The analysis of focus group data was first done within each focus group then compared across all three focus groups. The focus group

thematic findings are described under three main categories: students' perceptions of campus recreation; students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba; and students' perceptions of the connections between the two.

**Students' perceptions of campus recreation.** The opening questions of the focus group were designed to get all participants talking so a question about their campus recreation participation was used and confirmed much of what was in the participant profile screening questions regarding their activities and participation rates (see Appendix G). The low participants were involved once or twice a week, medium participants three to four times per week, and high participants were five or more times per week. The activities that the focus group participants were involved in included intramurals, swimming in the pool, working out in the Gritty Grotto, playing squash, climbing, adult wellness classes, fitness classes, clubs and officiating intramurals. Drop-in activities include working out in the Gritty Grotto, swimming in the pool, climbing, and fitness classes, whereas intramurals, clubs, squash, and adult wellness classes require advance sign-up. Only female participants responded that they participated in fitness classes or swam and only male participants responded that they participated in squash, climbing or clubs. As well, half of the participants in all the focus groups (e.g., eight participants) participated in intramurals and worked out in the Gritty Grotto.

When focus group participants were asked question # 2, "How did you become involved?" the focus group participants responded that they became involved in campus recreation activities through friends, flyers, free day passes, wanting to try something new, or wanting to be more active. In the low participation group, two participants became involved through family members, one through a friend, and one through a flyer in their residence. In the high participation focus group, four of the participants became involved through a friend and

three became involved because they knew they wanted to be active and looked for campus recreation facilities. Lastly the medium participation focus group, two of the participants became involved with a friend, one knew they were coming to the faculty so they purchased a membership, and the last participant received a free day pass. Amongst the focus groups, through a friend was the most common response as to how participants became involved with campus recreation. Only one low group participant became involved on their own, the one male participant that received the flyer through residence, whereas the rest of the low focus group participants became involved with someone else. As well, only one female participant in the medium focus group became involved on her own, whereas the rest of the female participants became involved with someone else.

When the focus group participants were asked question # 3, “Some people when asked to describe why they should participate in campus recreation said meet new people, stress relief, convenient, cost effective and to stay healthy. How would you react to that?” All three focus group participants agreed that the reasons to participate in campus recreation activities included meet new people, stress relief, convenient, cost effective, and important for health. The groups expanded on the reasons to participate in campus recreation activities with the high participation group saying it broadened their horizons as they began learning about other faculties from the people they met, they became aware of lots of new activities to try, and the University of Manitoba began to feel like a small town as they started to recognize people all over campus from campus recreation. Evident in all three focus groups and described by one low participation focus group member “campus recreation participation allowed for a mental break from my studies as I had an opportunity to concentrate on a different activity” and “sometimes when you come back to your studies you can solve problems that previously seemed very

difficult” (FLMR, 2011). The common themes across focus groups for students’ perceptions of campus recreation included meeting new people, stress relief, convenient and cost effective, important for health, opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, sense of belonging and community, identity, and commitment.

**Students’ perceptions of the University of Manitoba.** When focus group participants were asked question # 4, “How would you describe your experience as a student at the University of Manitoba?” they shared their experiences in a variety of ways. Examples provided were positive and negative, and participants also compared their university experience to their high school and residence experiences, for those students that lived in residence. Focus group participants felt positive about the quality of professors, learned a lot, enjoyed the challenge of university, and felt there was lots of help for students if they looked for it. The low and high focus groups mentioned the 24 hour study carrels in St. John’s Residence and the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC), as positively contributing to their University of Manitoba experience. One male participant from the high focus group stated “the (LAC) is a great place as it teaches students how to study and write better” (FHMJ, 2011). However, the focus group participants all agreed that many students are unaware of the student services available on campus, such as the Learning Assistance Centre. For the participants who were aware of the student services, they found them to be very helpful. Participants from all three focus groups also felt positively about their University of Manitoba experience as they have matured by going to university and classes became more interesting as they continued with their studies. One female participant with low participation that was new to Canada was happy the University of Manitoba offered fair enrollment, safety, and had no corruption compared to her home country of China. Lastly, participants across the three focus groups agreed they had a sense of community at the

University of Manitoba, but their sense of community was not campus wide, rather the focus group participants identified with the faculties they were in, and less so with the University of Manitoba as a whole. The focus group participants who had a sense of community within their faculties included those from Engineering, Education, Law and Kinesiology & Recreation Management. However, focus group participants from University 1, Arts and Science did not feel a strong sense of community within their faculties. With further inquiry, the focus group participants thought that often in these general, large programs, students move on in their education and specialize within a different faculty and they begin to feel a part of that faculty's community. Participants from all three focus groups did agree the University of Manitoba was a commuter campus and campus had its own small community feel. One male participant with high participation from the Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management mentioned "I've met 90% of my friends by being in the student lounge areas watching TV and sitting there. And facebook tells you what's going on" (FHMC, 2011). He suggested "you can get to know people and develop a sense of community by being on campus more with other likeminded students" (FHMC) and he suggested new students should try to make themselves aware of campus activities.

All the focus group participants also reported negative experiences at the University of Manitoba. The low participation focus group participants found it difficult to meet new people in class, because the class sizes are large and they felt text books selected by professors were very expensive, but the focus group participants were satisfied with the cost of classes. The high participation focus group felt mostly overwhelmed by campus orientations, even though participants realized the benefit of being exposed to many student opportunities at the University of Manitoba. One male participant with high participation mentioned "in my first year I was



unaware of all the services on campus and nobody pushed me to find out information” (FHMC, 2011). However, the high focus group participants mentioned that when the University of Manitoba tries to communicate with the student body, in particular by the all-student e-mails, the high focus group participants often do not read the e-mails before they delete them. The high focus group participants felt they received too many e-mails from the University of Manitoba. The medium focus group participants shared that faculties seem to be disconnected from one another as one female participant stated “each faculty has its own community and there is only one event that is between faculties” (FMFJ, 2011). Lastly, all three focus groups mentioned that campus seems to be a Monday-Friday campus open from 9:00-5:00 pm as often most services on campus are closed evenings and weekends (e.g. library, restaurants, study spaces) and there is no place to get food on campus after 8 pm. Because of the lack of space for students and poor hours of operation, one male participant with high participation added “lots of people try to get away from campus to meet friends where other campuses/universities in Canada are relaxed and people stay longer” (FHMC). The participants from the high participation focus group agreed with this participant’s example from “other campuses/universities in Canada” as participants said “this would be way better” (FHMJ, 2011).

In terms of the participants’ responses to question four, there were some comparisons from their University of Manitoba experience to their high school experience. For example, across the focus groups participants were happy with the friends they made at university and participants were somewhat surprised their friends now were not often the friends they had from high school. One male participant with high participation mentioned in his first semester of university he found it difficult because coming from high school he felt he did not know how to study properly for university. Another male participant with low participation from Northern

Manitoba mentioned “it seemed like the high school curriculum from the north was different than in other parts of Manitoba” as when he was in university he was expected to know parts of the curriculum before coming to university that he never saw before in high school science classes. This made the transition to university difficult for him as he tried to teach himself concepts he was expected to know from the high school curriculum while learning the university curriculum simultaneously. There was also consensus amongst the three focus groups that students at university were more accepting of others, were more mature compared to high school, and it was a big transition to go to university. One female participant with high participation stated “I was overwhelmed when I first came to university but now I’m comfortable in my buildings (campus recreation buildings); I have a good sense of community here” (FHFL, 2011). Overall the focus group participants suggested one way to overcome the difficulties of transitioning from high school to university was by getting involved and looking for a sense of community on campus.

Three focus group participants, who lived in residence, (one from each focus group) spoke of their residence experience when asked about their University of Manitoba experience. They agreed there was a strong sense of community within residence, which was positive but there was also a sense of a social ladder or hierarchy based on popularity within residence that was not always positive. With further inquiry by the moderator about the sense of a social ladder on campus, the other focus group participants did not feel this social ladder experience on campus generally, as they felt there were many different people with different interests/focuses on campus so it did not appear to transfer beyond the residence context. The residence focus group participants mentioned that if you were low on the social ladder in residence and “if you don’t have social skills within residence you will be at the bottom of the social ladder” (FLMR,

2011). These members could all recall other students who started a residence term, low on the social ladder, that did not last the term and the participants were not sure what happened to them; if the students left school or just left residence but the residence focus group participants felt that status on the social ladder within residence had an impact on their university experience. The residence focus group participants also commented on the commuter campus feel to the University; they reiterated that campus services and hours of operation were not good and they felt because they live on campus, they would need even more places to get away/study on campus. The residence focus group participants were also discouraged that spaces they did have, such as lounge and study spaces in Arthur Mauro Residence, no longer existed as the spaces had been turned into administration offices.

In summary, the focus group participants related positive and negative examples that influenced how they perceived their experience at the University of Manitoba. They felt positive about the quality of professors, amount of learning, the challenge of university, and felt there was lots of help for students if they looked for it but many students were unaware of student services at the University of Manitoba. They also felt they developed skills such as maturity, were more culturally sensitive, accepting of others, and developed a sense of community within their faculty, but not the larger University of Manitoba commuter campus. Negative aspects related to difficulty meeting new people as class sizes were large, campus orientations were overwhelming, text books were too expensive, faculties were disconnected, the hours of operation on campus were poor, lack of space for students to congregate, and the University of Manitoba Administration sends out too many all-student e-mails. In comparison to high school, focus group participants were happy with the friends they made at university, were somewhat surprised their friends now were not often the friends they had from high school, and going to university

was a big transition from high school. Residence students also added within residence there is a strong sense of community and sense of social ladder or hierarchy based on popularity within residence that was not always positive but had an impact on residence students' university experience.

When focus group participants were asked question # 5, "Some people when asked to describe why they should come to the University of Manitoba said it was convenient, cost effective and there was a sense of community. How would you react to that?" From all three focus groups, more than half of the participants (e.g., eight participants) would not provide an overall recommendation to come to the University of Manitoba, but instead would inquire as to what a prospective student was looking at, before providing further advice. Similar to the interview participants' responses, the focus group participants that moved to Winnipeg to come to the University of Manitoba were more likely to recommend the University of Manitoba to prospective students as compared to students that previously lived in Winnipeg prior to University. Focus group participants that lived in Winnipeg prior to university were more likely to select the University of Manitoba as a default university. One female participant with low participation mentioned "I went to high school in St. Vital so I knew pretty much I would be coming to the University of Manitoba" (FFLJ, 2011). Nonetheless, all three focus groups agreed that some of the reasons to come to the University of Manitoba included the University of Manitoba was convenient and cost effective, and there was a sense of community. Focus group participants with medium participation, however, did mention parking at both campuses and accommodations at Bannatyne campus, were not convenient. Some of the other reasons suggested for coming to the University of Manitoba included "lots of academic programs to choose from" and "University 1 allowed students to try a variety of courses" (FFLJ). One

female participant with medium participation elaborated on a benefit of University 1, “it allowed me to take courses without wasting a year in a faculty if I didn’t know what I wanted to do” (FLFJ). In regards to the University of Manitoba being cost effective, one male participant with high participation stated “it is not unheard of to graduate without debt, which is great” (FHMC, 2011). There was overall consensus that although the University of Manitoba costs are low, the students do not want this to negatively impact the University’s image. The same male participant with high participation added he would not “want to undersell the University of Manitoba degree because the costs are so low” (FHMC). He followed up by saying, “professors are good and it doesn’t take away from the quality because it costs less” (FHMC). The focus group participants began to discuss recruitment to the University of Manitoba and asked each other if someone came to their high school to recruit them to the University of Manitoba. None of the participants from the three focus groups could remember someone coming to recruit them to the University of Manitoba but the participants thought this could help increase the number of local Manitoba students to come to the University of Manitoba, particularly by choice instead of by default. The high focus group participants mentioned recruitment within Manitoba did not appear to be strong but there seemed to be lots of international recruitment as there were lots of international students on campus.

Overall, responses suggest that focus group participants had a positive experience at the University of Manitoba because of the quality of education and professors, the range of academic programs, University 1 flexibility, convenient campus, cost effectiveness, and faculties with a strong sense of community. Although participants provided many positive experiences from the University of Manitoba, less than half of the focus group participants would recommend the University without inquiring about prospective students’ interests. As well, participants felt

more university resources should be put towards recruiting local students. Similar themes arose to those in the participant's campus recreation perceptions such as opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, sense of community and belonging within several faculties, meeting new people, convenient and cost effective. Unique themes of increased maturity, student diversity, commuter campus, shortage of physical student space, and social pressures can be seen relating to the University of Manitoba perceptions.

**Students' perceptions of the connections between campus recreation and the University of Manitoba.** When focus group participants were asked question # 6, "Can you describe how participating in campus recreation affects your broader university experience?" All focus group participants agreed their campus recreation participation had an impact on their social engagement, (e.g., participation in the life of the school), as campus recreation was very social in nature. They also agreed campus recreation can assist with academic engagement (e.g., participation as a school requirement) by allowing for opportunities to relieve stress. Lastly, when asked about campus recreation and intellectual engagement (e.g., participation in learning that encourages understanding of concepts and development of ideas often to overcome problems), the focus group participants had to really think to understand the nature of this dimension and it required prompting before the students responded. One participant stated campus recreation "helps you all around and makes you feel calm" (FHFL, 2011). Another male participant with medium participation added "I learned a lot about myself (through campus recreation participation) and am more mature because of my participation" (FMMS, 2011). Similarly another male participant with high participation stated, "you can learn more (by participating in campus recreation) than a 5 year course" (FHMJ, 2011) referring to his experience as a student group Club Executive for the past two years. Another female participant

with high participation provided an example of problem solving abilities that came from watching a peer try a new procedure with intramural hockey. In this example, players were directed by the Intramural Supervisor to place a sock over their hockey stick to prevent marking the gym floors, as happened in the previous season. This simple task solved the problem of marking the floors and encouraged other Intramural Supervisors to problem solve in their areas too.

Focus group participants then spoke of their personal and skill development from participating in campus recreation activities, which included trying something new, problem solving, interpersonal skills, time management, and organizational skills, which illustrated the connection from their campus recreation participation to their intellectual engagement. One male participant with medium participation also found his skill development transferred into other employment opportunities because of his campus recreation participation, he explained, “I use to be a ‘stick’ but because of campus recreation I’ve been able to secure good employment for the summer and have had other full-time employment opportunities” (FMMS, 2011).

Referring to findings from Yee’s 2007 Simon Fraser University student engagement study at Burnaby’s commuter campus, the moderator probed focus group participants on how they felt about the following statements?

- Social and extracurricular activities are important for student experience
- Social and extracurricular activities contribute to personal and skill development
- Participating in these activities prepares you to be active citizens in community

Each focus group participant agreed with the three statements from the Simon Fraser University’s study when they reflected on their own campus recreation participation at the

University of Manitoba. As for being more prepared now to be active citizens in the community, two focus group participants provided personal examples to illustrate their ready to be active citizens. A male participant with medium participation added that he learned through campus recreation participation “that it is important to eat right, learned to be healthy and now I share this knowledge with others” (FMMS, 2011). One female participant with medium participation in law school mentioned “Law Firms will only hire people that have a good balance between academics and social/life experience and they want people that are passionate about something” (FLFJ, 2011). One last question from the Simon Fraser University study was asked of the focus group participants, which asked them “how they felt about school pride at the University of Manitoba?” All focus group participants agreed that the University of Manitoba “does not really have school pride” (FLFJ) but that faculty pride was strong. One male participant with medium participation that lived in residence explained “yes there is pride within residence and within some faculties, but not with the University of Manitoba overall” (FMMS).

Other comments the focus group participants reiterated in concluding the focus groups were that they really enjoyed their time on campus (FHFL, 2011), identified with where they hang out (FHMJ, 2011), valued volunteering and meeting new people (FHFL). Repeated calls for improvements from the focus group participants related to a “shortage of space in every building” and “poor operating hours of campus services” (FLMR, 2011). One female participant with low participation added because of the shortage of space on campus, she had become more aware when “outsiders are in your midst” (FLFJ, 2011). She explained, “people that come into our spaces (Faculty of Law spaces) that are part of another faculty can be seen as outsiders; we call them ‘snails’ students not actually in law school, and you can tell who they are” (FLFJ). Two female and one male participant with low participation also expressed the competitiveness



for classes such as medicine and within this focus group, the participants felt girls were less likely to share school resources (notes, lab assignments, etc.) compared to boys, and boys were more laid back and accepting to become acquaintances. This same focus group discussed the pressures they experienced as students such as cultural expectations from family in their Chinese and Iranian cultures, pressure from girlfriends/boyfriends when dating to spend more time together and these pressures were seen as “one more thing biting at your heels” (FLMR). Lastly, similar to the interview, a female participant from the high participation focus group mentioned she only had one term left and she said “I wished I had of gotten involved earlier in my degree” (FHFL, 2011).

The medium participation focus group also discussed campus recreation and retention; the participants felt campus recreation was very important in keeping them at the University, and the University should focus on retention and persistence through campus recreation. One male participant with medium participation said “I wouldn’t be here (university) otherwise”, referring to his campus recreation participation (FMMS, 2011). Another male participant with medium participation said campus recreation activities and facilities were a “great place to grow and learn new things” (FMMP, 2011) and he further explained, that for him, he “need(ed) a place like campus recreation at the University of Manitoba to find out what I wanted to do” (FMMP). This participant was recently enrolled in Kinesiology & Recreation Management so he was referring to finding a field he was interested in pursuing, because of his campus recreation experience. One female participant with medium participation shared “I met my husband here (campus recreation facilities)” (FLFJ, 2011) so campus recreation activities/facilities had a very positive association for her.

## Summary of Focus Group Themes

After analyzing the focus group data, and describing the results as they related to students' perceptions of campus recreation, the University of Manitoba, and the connections between campus recreation and the University of Manitoba, the following themes were identified across and within the focus groups. In terms of students' perceptions of campus recreation, the themes from the focus group participants included meeting new people, importance for health, stress relief, cost effective and convenient, opportunities and unaware of opportunities, sense of belonging and community, identity, and commitment. In terms of students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba, participants provided examples of positive and negative experiences, and common themes arose. Similar themes arose to those in the participant's campus recreation perceptions such as opportunities and unawareness of opportunities, sense of community and belonging within several faculties, meeting new people, convenient and cost effective. Unique themes relating to the University of Manitoba perceptions included increased maturity, student diversity, commuter campus, shortage of physical student space, and social pressures. Also arising was the nature of selecting to attend University of Manitoba (e.g., default or purposeful) having an influence on how it was perceived. The focus group participants felt positive about their professors, their skill and personal development including their culturally sensitivity, maturity, and acceptance of others, and the services to assist students. However, the focus group participants felt many students were unaware of these student services. The focus group participants also commented positively on the sense of community they had within their faculty, which they suggested was not present within the larger University of Manitoba commuter campus. On the contrary, focus group participants felt negatively about their experience as participants suggested it was difficult to meet new people as class sizes were large and campus

orientations were overwhelming, text books were too expensive, faculties were disconnected, and, the hours of operation and amount of physical student space on campus was poor. Lastly, participants suggested that the University of Manitoba Administration sends out too many all-student e-mails. Overall, focus group participants provided many positive experiences from the University of Manitoba, however, they were divided over outright recommending the University without knowing more about potential students' interests, and participants felt more University resources should be put towards recruiting local students.

Common themes related to perceptions between campus recreation and the University of Manitoba, included personal and skill development, retention and persistence, and negative external factors such as competitiveness and social pressure. Focus group participants provided thematic examples of social, academic and intellectual engagement. Social themes included feeling a part of their faculty, meeting new people, enjoying opportunities to get involved outside of class, pride in their participation, a sense of belonging and community, identity and commitment, student diversity and connectedness to campus. Academic themes related to campus recreation providing a mental break from studies and helping participants feel rejuvenated for their studies. Intellectual themes focused on enhanced personal and skill development transferable from campus recreation to their role as university students and beyond.

The common and unique themes from the interviews and focus groups will be further explored in the discussion chapter, and will consider the results in relation to the existing literature and provide insights on the relationship of campus recreation and student engagement.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion & Conclusion

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section provides a summary and integration of the themes, and discusses findings in light of research objective one. Section two describes the characteristics of the study participants while section three integrates the findings with past literature to address research objective three. Section four summarizes the theoretical and practical implications of this study to address research objective two, section five describes limitations and the last section provides future directions.

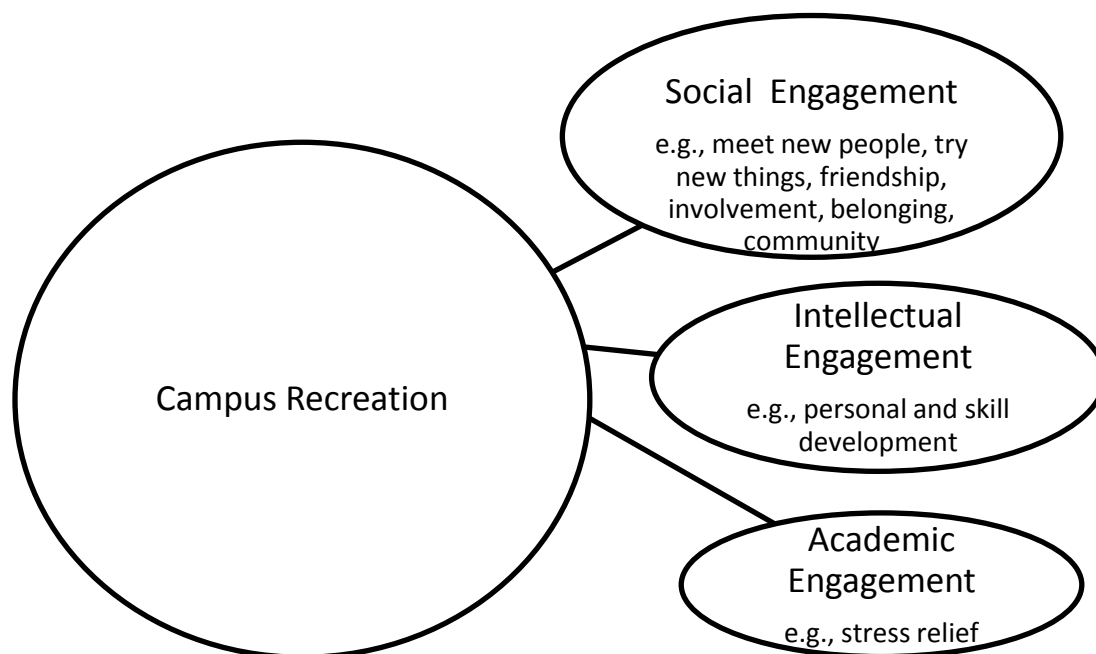
### Summary and Integration of Themes

Common overarching themes across interviews and focus groups for campus recreation participation that illustrated particular salience were *identification/commitment* including *sense of belonging* and *sense of community* (to campus recreation or an activity pursued through campus recreation as well as to the university); *personal benefits* of a social, health, or skill development nature; *unawareness of opportunities* provided by campus recreation departments; and campus recreation assisted participants with *retention and persistence*. Findings regarding perceptions of the University of Manitoba differed according to *student origin* (whether these students were from Winnipeg or not) with those who moved here to attend university holding more positive perceptions and being more likely to recommend it. *Sense of pride* was more strongly associated to individual faculties than the university as a whole. *Physical space* was raised as important to building *sense of belonging* and *sense of community* regardless of whether it was campus recreation facilities, individual faculty spaces or University of Manitoba common areas. *Personal benefits* including health or skill development, *opportunities* and *unawareness of*

*opportunities*, and *negative factors* such as social pressure, competitiveness, and a negativity towards university administration/services also had an impact on students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba.

**Campus recreation and student engagement at the University of Manitoba.** The first and primary research objective of this case study was to explore student's perceptions regarding their campus recreation participation on the nature and scope of their social, academic, and intellectual engagement with the University. Findings illustrate students are socially engaged through campus recreation participation but also academically and intellectually engaged. The social engagement contribution of campus recreation was most prominent and is shown by the overarching themes of *trying new things, meeting new people, friendship, involvement, sense of belonging* and *sense of community*. Intellectual engagement, while less prominent than social engagement, still substantially contributed to campus recreation participation as evident through themes of *personal and skill development*. Academic engagement as a result of campus recreation participation was mainly described as opportunities to *relieve stress* relating to studying and other academic pursuits. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of these contributions of campus recreation participation on student engagement dimensions.

Figure 1. Role of Campus Recreation in Student Engagement



### Characteristics of Study Participants

Several characteristics of participants are discussed in relation to the findings. These characteristics, and ones identified during the research, include campus recreation participation rates, gender, student origin, and living on campus.

**Participation rates.** The interviews and focus groups were composed based on three self-reported campus recreation participation groups. Participation was categorized as low (0-2 times per week), medium (3-4 times per week), and high (5 or more times a week). Upon analysis of the results, participation rates appeared to exhibit two patterns distinctive to the themes including *involvement* and *personal development*. Regarding *involvement*, students with high participation rates in campus recreation were also involved in other university activities, such as student councils. Whereas, regarding *personal development*, students with low

participation rates in campus recreation experienced an increase in self-confidence by participating in campus recreation activities.

**Gender.** To explore possible gender differences amongst the interview and focus group participants, the six interviews had a female and male participant per participation rate, and each of the three focus groups had at least one female and male participant. Upon analyzing the findings of the study, it was apparent that in some realms, gender did have an impact. Female participants spoke of becoming involved in campus recreation activities through friends, whereas, male participants were more likely involved independently; however socializing, *meeting new people, friendship, sense of belonging* and *sense of community* were important to both genders. While in this study only female participants shared examples of *negative factors* related to the University of Manitoba administration/service operation that had an impact on their perception of the University of Manitoba and subsequently provided ideas to overcome these negative factors, there is nothing to suggest in the literature or from their responses that this is specific to gender.

**Student origin.** Although not identified prior to the research, beyond possibly relating to campus commuting, it became apparent that living arrangements before attending university, specifically the origin of students, were relevant to students' perceptions about their university experience. For example, participants who moved to Winnipeg to go to the University of Manitoba were more likely to recommend coming to the University of Manitoba to prospective students versus participants that lived in Winnipeg prior to attending university. Findings suggested that the local students were more likely to attend the University of Manitoba by default as opposed to actively selecting the University of Manitoba. Since the University of Manitoba undergraduate population is comprised of mostly local students (e.g., 70% from

Manitoba including 50% from Winnipeg), this becomes an important consideration for student engagement (University of Manitoba, 2008). Actively selecting the University of Manitoba appeared to contribute positively to the themes of *pride and sense of belonging*. Three study participants who actively selected the University of Manitoba were International students from Iran and China who emphasized that campus recreation participation provided a *sense of community* - they felt at home in campus recreation activities and facilities; and campus recreation participation provided *opportunities* - such as *meeting new people*, developing *friendships, involvement* and *stress relief*. Similarly, the three international study participants emphasized that the University of Manitoba provided *opportunities* such as affordable education, fair enrollment, safety, and a corrupt free place to pursue post-secondary education. These campus recreation and University of Manitoba opportunities helped to abate *negative external factors* such as pressure from their family and culture to do well academically.

**Living on campus.** While living in residence was not considered one of the criteria for the purposeful sample, it is related to the commuter campus context. Each focus group contained one participant that currently lives in residence, whose perspectives shed light on themes of *identification/commitment, negative factors* such as social pressure and campus *pride*. Negative themes, such as social pressure to fit within the social ladder or hierarchy based on popularity within residence were raised by those participants who lived in residence. Lastly, associated with the building participants lived in, common themes included *identification/commitment* and *sense of building pride*. These residence study participants mentioned that their pride ranked as follows, residence, faculty and then campus.



## **Integration of Findings with Past Literature**

In this section, findings are separated into three main categories: students' perceptions of campus recreation, students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba, and students' perceptions of the connections between the two. Convergent and divergent findings are related to the existing literature.

**Students' perceptions of campus recreation.** The findings reinforce and add to the current literature on campus recreation. Examples that reinforce the literature include the benefits derived (e.g., tried something new, improved health, de-stress) from participating in campus recreation activities (Willms, 2003; Haines, 2001; Gillies, 2003), a strong sense of community (Huesman, Brown Lee & Radcliffe, 2009; Byl, 2002; Belch, 2001; Dalgarn, 2001) and belonging within campus recreation activities (Willms, 2003). Additionally, campus recreation had a positive impact on student post-secondary retention (Tinto, 1975; Haines, 2001; Banta, 1991; Lindsey & Sessoms, 2009) and participants' persistence at university (Hall, 2006; Bryant, 1995). According to Kovac and Beck's research, female students participated in campus recreation activities (in particular intramurals) for individual and social benefits, whereas male students participated for self benefits (e.g., to be physically fit, reduce stress) (1997). Benefits cited from this study provide examples of Cooper and Theriault's (2008) social, physiological, and intrapersonal benefits. Participants were not questioned specifically about their current campus recreation satisfaction similar to Kasunich (2009), but they did mention that campus recreation activities were convenient, cost effective and provided a place to hang out on campus.

New findings related to students' perceptions of campus recreation included the notion of *identity* (e.g., it was a part of who they were) and were often very *committed* to their campus

recreation participation (e.g., shown by the number of hours they spent in campus recreation facilities). Lastly, participants felt participating in campus recreation activities encouraged them to have a more positive view of the university.

**Students' perceptions of the University of Manitoba.** The findings related to student perceptions of the University of Manitoba reinforce and add to the student development literature. Findings from this study that reinforce the literature include: participants had matured and become more responsible while attending university (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009); participants felt they had a strong sense of pride and a sense of community within their faculties (Willms, 2003), participants felt there was less sense of pride and engagement within the larger university community but would like to be more involved (Yee, 2007); participants were mostly unaware of all the services on campus, however, they knew there were lots of opportunities at the university (Kasunich 2009).” Similar to the University of Manitoba’s Learning Commons Task Force, which recognizes that “student’s social lives are not separate from their academic lives” (University of Manitoba, 2010, p. 1), participants within this study stated that “academic classes are only a small portion of the learning process”. Tinto’s theory of integration (1975; 1993) included students’ perceptions of fit with the campus, which was evident in the responses provided by the students that lived in residence who referred to a social ladder or hierarchy based on popularity within residence and students who departed from residence because they did not fit. The theory of integration (1975; 1993) also requires a reciprocal commitment from the individual and institution for integration to occur, whereas, students in this study formed relationships with peers and faculty/professors, and this encouraged a sense of belonging. Similar to the theory of involvement, participants’ responses demonstrated that the more students were involved and committed to their learning, psychologically and physically, the more likely

they would be satisfied with their education experience and succeed (1985), and students who participated in extracurricular student activities often had good personal development (1993).

Findings of unique relevance to the University of Manitoba pertained to cost, recruitment, competitiveness, and willingness to recommend the University. Participants noted the university was cost-effective and convenient; they would be willing to pay more for tuition for better infrastructure, resources and services; they did not experience strong recruitment initiatives to attract them to the university; they felt a sense of competitiveness within certain programs (e.g., medicine, engineering) and social pressure within residence, and hesitation to recommend the university to other students. Evidently, students that moved to Winnipeg to attend the University of Manitoba were more likely to recommend the university in comparison to students that lived in Winnipeg prior to coming to university.

**Students' perceptions of campus recreation and the University of Manitoba.** In reviewing the findings related to campus recreation and the University of Manitoba in terms of the three dimensions of student engagement, participants felt by participating in campus recreation activities they were socially engaged, which is not new; however, they also felt by participating in campus recreation activities they were academically and intellectually engaged, which has not specifically been addressed to date. As mentioned in the literature review on student engagement, there were three dimensions of student engagement - social, academic and intellectual (Dunleavy & Milton, 2009); however, campus recreation activities typically are seen as only contributing to social engagement, whereas, this research found campus recreation activities at the University of Manitoba contribute to all three dimensions. Typically, social engagement includes participation in the life of school, academic engagement includes participation as a school requirement and intellectual engagement includes participation in

learning that encourages understanding of concepts and development of ideas to overcome problems (Dunleavy & Milton). Social engagement therefore includes campus recreation participation but was not often associated with the other two dimensions of student engagement; academic or intellectual. As Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg, & Radcliffe (2009) state, campus recreation facilities are known for being social environments where large number of students, staff and community members meet and socialize with each other. However, the focus group participants in this study spoke of academic engagement through campus recreation participation that made them more rested, relaxed, and provided a break from certain academic questions that they were able to answer after returning from their campus recreation participation. Fontaine (2000) and Landers (1997) similarly found campus recreation activities benefited students with stress reduction, enhanced creativity, and re-energized their body and minds but did not extend their findings to consider the potential impact on student engagement.

Participants in this study, reinforced Newman's (2005) findings including intellectual engagement through skill development such as physical activity participation enhanced student's self-concept, self-esteem, self-discipline and they were more likely to graduate. One student said "without campus recreation activities, I would not be here today (e.g., in university)". Campus recreation participation exposed them to new career opportunities, allowed them to solve problems and use the skills they developed in other parts of their life. One participant explained that by participating in campus recreation "you learn how to hold your tongue and build self control" so there was "lots of skill development and you learn to let things go, relax and not to take things so personally". These are clear examples of intellectual engagement - learning that encourages understanding of concepts and development of ideas to overcome problems.

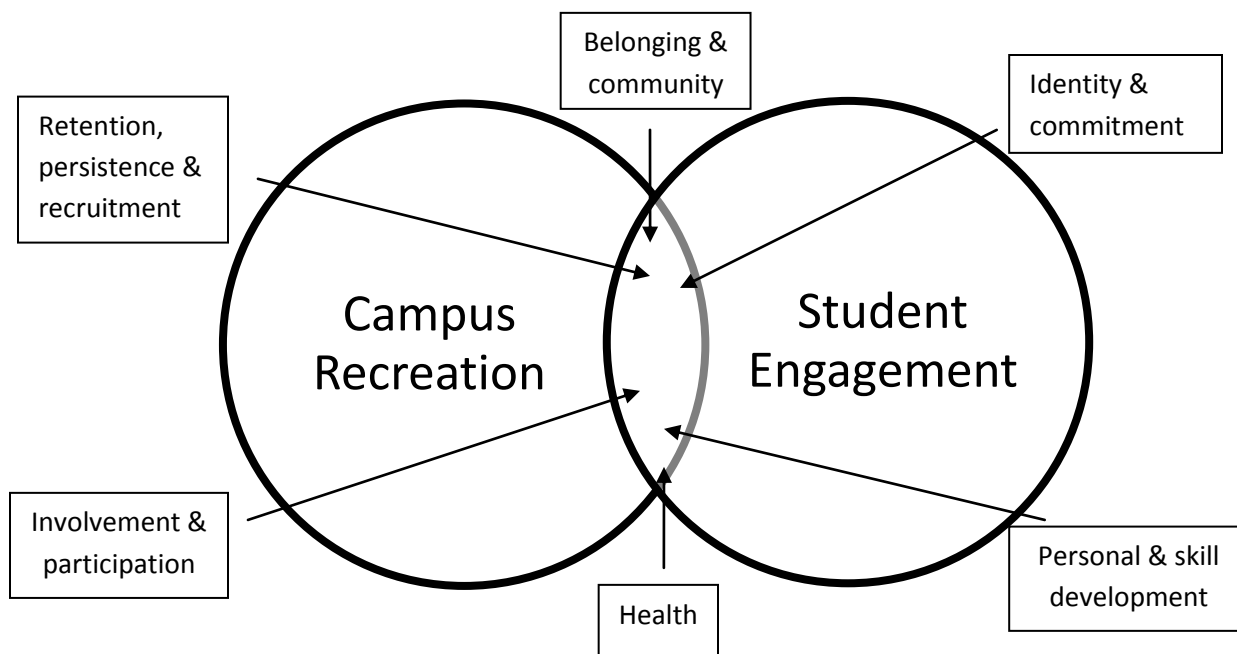
The study findings also reinforce Dunleavy & Milton's potential negative outcomes associated with each dimension (2009). For example, associated with social engagement, social isolation and loneliness can occur and two focus group participants explained about how students on campus, in particular in residence, are part of a social ladder and if you are low on the social ladder, you can feel isolation and loneliness. Potential negative outcomes of academic engagement were also supported as one participant described "my brother focuses only on his academics and now he is in his last year, he is going to spend more time on recreation and finding a girlfriend because he has a good grade point average". She described his experience as an example of a negative outcome of academic engagement, when students rely solely on formal learning as a form of engagement. Lastly, a potential negative outcome of intellectual engagement was evident when one participant in the focus group illustrated his low capacity to adapt as he stated "volunteering is only for kin/rec students not management/business students as probably you all want to own your own business". The rest of the focus group participants tried to explain they are studying in a variety of programs and that they really see the benefit of volunteering, but this participant could not see or adapt to what they were trying to explain.

The five National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) benchmarks, including active and collaborative learning, enriching educational experiences, student-faculty interaction, level of academic challenge and supportive campus environment, were supported by the participants' responses and link to the three student engagement dimensions. For example, all five of the NSSE's benchmarks were evident through an engineering participant's response as he described his participation in the faculty's Student Automotive Engineers (SAE) teams where he worked with other students and faculty to build cars for an international competition. The example also illustrates the participant's social, academic and intellectual engagement as the male participant

with medium participation described his experience. “It begins with the design process in one year, continues through the summer, and then runs into April with the competition in the summer. Students also work with their faculty and Dean to fundraise support from corporations that goes towards sending students to the competition. Participants that contribute enough time get to go to the competition” (IMMA, 2010) and he valued this practical experience. He further described the process, “there are five or four teams and there are competitions in the summer usually in the states. It is Automotive Engineers. We actually build a car... like a miniaturized buggy for one person. You can take it and compete with it in a competition”. He added, “I spend a lot of my time doing that” referring to his time spent at the University of Manitoba (IMMA).

Based on the findings from this research, Figure 2 below illustrates the connection between campus recreation and student engagement. Specifically, campus recreation can have an impact on engagement and engagement can have an impact on campus recreation. The literature that overlaps between campus recreation and student engagement includes health, retention/persistence, recruitment, involvement and participation, sense of belonging and community, identity and commitment, personal and skill development and opportunities.

Figure 2. Connection of Campus Recreation and Student Engagement Literature



Literature review topics on student engagement that were not raised by the study participants included graduation rates, grade point averages, and overall academic success of the participants.

### Implications of Findings

The results of this study have several practical and theoretical implications for campus recreation and student engagement, and particularly for the University of Manitoba. Within this section, these implications are described. In addition, study limitations and opportunities for future research are presented.

**Theoretical implications.** Student engagement, the theoretical framework for this research, is based on two components, “the amount of time and effort students put into their studies and other activities that lead to the experiences and outcomes that constitute student success” and “how institutions of higher education allocate their human and other resources and

organize learning opportunities and services to encourage students to participate in and benefit from such activities” (George Kuh cited in Wolf-Wendel et al., 2009, p. 413). Although Kuh (2001) suggests student and institution actions are key components of student engagement, there is no single agreed upon definition and therefore post-secondary institutions use student engagement in a variety of contexts. As there is no clear definition for student engagement it is difficult to compare findings across studies and researchers and practitioners argue the need for one coherent – and multidimensional – framework (Fredericks, 2004; Appleton, 2008; National Research Council, 2003). The findings from this case study provided clear support for the duality of the definition offered by George Kuh. This research sought to bridge the campus recreation and student engagement literature and the results demonstrate there is a place for campus recreation in the broader student engagement conceptualization – beyond just the social dimension to include all three dimensions (e.g., social, academic, and intellectual) of student engagement. Figure 1 illustrates these results and the likely differential size of contribution across dimensions. As a result, this research contributes to and connects the existing knowledge bases on campus recreation and student engagement, as well as highlighting several areas of overlap between campus recreation and student engagement literature. (Figure 2 illustrates these results).

**Practical implications.** As time sensitive topics important to University Administrators there are several practical implications from these research findings that provide guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation. One finding includes campus recreation activities encouraged participants to have a more positive view of the university therefore it is important for campus recreation departments to continue to offer students quality, convenient, cost effective programs so their overall university experience is positive. Research



(e.g., through a needs assessment/survey of students) could assist in refining offerings that best meet these needs while finding out a more effective means of reaching students to promote programs and services. Another finding focuses on students' enhanced sense of pride and community within their faculties. Campus recreation departments should organize more faculty vs. faculty activities that encourage pride and sense of community amongst students within all faculties, including the larger faculty of Arts, Science and University 1. Participants also suggested that they would like more spaces on campus to hang out, socialize, study and eat beyond Monday-Friday 9:00-5:00 pm, which is time sensitive as the University of Manitoba is in the process of planning to build a new Active Living Centre and therefore should include considerations of common space and hours of operation, to better meet the needs of students within their facilities.

Research participants also suggested they would be willing to pay more tuition for better infrastructure, resources and services. Research participants did not experience strong recruitment initiatives to attract them to come to the University of Manitoba but research shows that quality campus recreation facilities have an impact on student recruitment, retention and persistence (Bryant et al., 1995; Hall, 2006; Haines, 2001; Lindsey and Sessoms, 2006), therefore dialogue should occur with campus recreation and recruitment departments, and high schools. There was also much discussion about limited awareness of resources and activities on campus. Promotion of campus recreation and other ancillary/support services should be improved to better inform students. The all student emails should be evaluated as there were suggestions these were not effective communication tools.

It is important for campus recreation departments to continue to provide stress relieving activities for students (e.g., Minute to Win It special events around exam time) and communicate

to students the skills/learning outcomes they can develop from campus recreation participation. Campus recreation departments should continue to show students the opportunities/services that are available to them outside of academics (e.g., professional development conferences) and encourage participants to get involved in their first year (e.g., through information shared with students at orientation and class presentations). Lastly, campus recreation departments should highlight the student engagement benefits as a way to increase use of campus recreation programs and services. The focus group participants also suggested one way to overcome the difficulties of transitioning from high school to university was by getting involved and looking for a sense of community on campus. Similarly, campus recreation departments can play a more active role in making international students feel at home at the University of Manitoba and enhance students' sense of belonging and community.

### **Limitations**

While case study research has many strengths and advantages, there are limitations to the design and the specific data collection methods used in this study. In this qualitative research, the reproduction of results may be challenging as responses are open ended and coded by the researcher. In terms of dependability, having only one coder may be a limitation for interpretation of codes, however, to try to overcome this limitation, the researcher used a partial intercoder agreement (cross-checking of codes) with the advisor at several points throughout the analysis and interpretation stages. Triangulation of data, member checking with interview and focus group participants, and inclusion of negative or discrepant information did occur to enhance trustworthiness of the findings. Potential for researcher bias due to position and

experience in the organization was addressed through full disclosure and also mediated using the above strategies.

Selecting and recruiting participants for three homogeneous focus groups was also a challenge as it was difficult to find a time when all participants in each participation level (e.g., low, medium, and high) were available. In an attempt to use the participants that were interested in the focus groups, work around their availability while considering participation rates, all three focus groups had one or two participants that were from a different participation rate. There were other common characteristics however. According to Krueger and Casey, homogenous focus groups can be comprised of participants with “something in common” (2000, p.9) that is “important to the researcher” (p.10). The participants within these three focus groups were all 18-24 years old, full-time undergraduate students who had participated in campus recreation activity within the past four months.

### **Future Research**

Since student engagement and campus recreation are relatively new fields of research, there is a need and opportunity for more research in these areas, and particularly for replication and extension of this study at other universities of similar and different types (e.g., commuter/residential; large/small, urban/nonurban). From reviewing recent student engagement literature, there is a need for more research involving extra-curricular activities as opposed to in classroom. Qualitative and/or mixed method approaches that can elicit student stories to give meaning and richness to student engagement are required to enhance the current breadth perspective.

From reviewing the campus recreation literature, it is evident more research is required using actual participation (e.g., card swipes) of campus recreation facilities and actual student academic information from the registrar's office, which could empirically examine relationships between campus recreation and academic success. More research is required for students between first year and graduation as this would include all stages of the university experience, and involvement in other areas of student activity and engagement such as student organizations, associations and clubs, would supplement the literature. Research regarding the relationship between student activities and student performance measured by grade point average and health status has also been limited. Opportunities for the exploration of setting features for youth development, identified by Eccles and Gootman (2002), such as identity, physical and psychological safety, opportunities and belonging, and skill building, could also provide guidance for future student engagement research. Lastly, qualitative inquiry specifically around recruitment, retention, satisfaction, and benefits of participation in campus recreation following some leads exposed through this study, would supplement the literature.

## **Conclusion**

The study and findings addressed the three research objectives: to explore students' perceptions regarding their campus recreation participation on the nature and scope of their social, academic, and intellectual engagement with the university; to provide guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation; and to contribute to and connect the existing knowledge bases on campus recreation and student engagement.

In response to research objective one, findings illustrate students are socially engaged through campus recreation participation but also academically and intellectually engaged.

Intellectual engagement, while less prominent than social engagement, still emerged as a substantial outcome of campus recreation participation. Academic engagement as a result of campus recreation participation was mainly associated with opportunities to relieve stress.

In response to research objective two, to provide guidance for enhancing student engagement through campus recreation, several practical implications were provided related to communication, recruitment, retention, and facility and program development.

Lastly, in response to research objective three, to contribute to and connect the existing knowledge bases on campus recreation and student engagement, the findings from this research illustrate there is a connection between campus recreation and student engagement. In terms of theoretical implications, the findings from this case study provided clear support for the duality of the definition student engagement offered by George Kuh, which includes the importance of the individual and the institution in student's engagement. This research sought to bridge the campus recreation and student engagement literature and the results demonstrate there is a place for campus recreation in the broader student engagement conceptualization – beyond just the social dimension to include all three dimensions (e.g., social, academic, and intellectual) of student engagement. Specifically, campus recreation can have an impact on engagement and engagement can have an impact on campus recreation. The literature that overlaps between campus recreation and student engagement includes health, persistence/retention, recruitment, involvement and participation, sense of belonging and community, identity and commitment, personal and skill development and opportunities. These new findings add to the literature and provide conceptual and practical direction for further research in the area of student engagement dimensions and campus recreation.

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### **Appendix A - Interview Expression of Interest Request**

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010

#### **Re: Request for Research Volunteers**

Dear Bison Recreation Services Participant,

I am a Graduate Student at the University of Manitoba conducting my thesis research on campus recreation participation. I am looking for interview participants who are 18-24 years old full-time undergraduate students at the University of Manitoba and who have participated in a campus recreation activity within the past four months to be interviewed for my study.

The interview will take approximately one hour and include questions pertaining to your campus recreation participation and general student experience. Campus recreation participation in this context refers to all recreation activities that you have participated in at the Fort Garry Campus, organized by or within, Bison Recreation Services facilities (e.g., intramurals, sports, leagues, tournaments, sport clubs, fitness classes and training, and sport lessons). The interview will be in an agreed upon, private location and time at the University of Manitoba, next week. Upon completion of the interview, participants will receive a small thank you gift with a value of approximately \$25.00.

Individual identity of each participant will be strictly confidential and any direct quotes and/or mentions in the research will use a pseudonym, not real names.

For more information or to volunteer your participation in this research, please e-mail me at the following address [tanya\\_angus@umanitoba.ca](mailto:tanya_angus@umanitoba.ca) before December 10th, 2010.

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and thank you for considering this invitation to participate in this great learning opportunity at the University of Manitoba.

Sincerely,

Tanya Angus  
Graduate Student – University of Manitoba



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**Appendix B - Bison Recreation Services Customer Service Supervisor e-mail**

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Dear Bison Recreation Services Participant,

Please find attached a request for volunteers for a study by a University of Manitoba Graduate Student conducting research on campus recreation participation. For more information, please respond directly to the following address **tanya\_angus@umanitoba.ca** before December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Sincerely,

Bison Recreation Services  
University of Manitoba



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### **Appendix C - Interview Eligibility Pre-screening Questionnaire**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your university status (e.g. full-time, part-time, graduate, undergraduate, what program?)
4. Have you participated in a campus recreation (bison recreation services activity within the past 4 months) and if so what?
5. How often in the past 4 months have you visited the bison recreation services facilities and/or participated in one of their activities (e.g. per week or per month on average?)



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## **Appendix D - Interview Informed Consent**

**Researcher:** Tanya Angus

Tanya Angus, a master's student at the University of Manitoba is conducting an interview as part of her master's thesis. However to encourage full disclosure of this study please note, she is also the Director of Bison Recreation Services Programs, although she is conducting this research as a graduate student not as an employee of the University. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more information, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand all accompanying information.

### **1. Purpose of the Research:**

The purpose of this research is to explore the role campus of recreation participation in undergraduate student experience. Campus recreation participation in this context refers to all recreation activities at the Fort Garry Campus, organized by or within, Bison Recreation Services facilities (e.g. intramurals, sports, leagues, tournaments, sport clubs, fitness classes and training, and sport lessons).

**2. Participant Compensation:**

Upon completion of the interview, you will receive a small thank you gift with an approximate value of \$25.00.

**3. Research Procedure:**

You will be asked a series of questions relating to your experience participating in campus recreation activities. You may refuse to answer any question without penalty. Subsequent to the interview, you will be provided a draft report of the interview to review for accuracy, to which you will be asked to respond.

**4. Time Requirement:**

The interviews are expected to take about one hour to complete.

**5. Description of Recording Device:**

Interviews will be recorded on a digital voice recorder with your permission. You may ask that the recording device is stopped at any time.

**6. Confidentiality:**

The digital voice recorder will only be used to assist the researcher with accurate recollection and analysis of the data and will be destroyed upon completion of the research. Your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any of the written notes or transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes to maintain your confidentiality throughout the data collection and analysis process. No information provided will be traceable to you and only the researcher and advisor will have access to the data. All data will be kept confidential in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home and will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

**7. Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any time and for any reason.

**8. Feedback:**

Generalized findings of the research will be e-mailed to you upon completion of the research.

**9. Participant Consent:**

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the research.

Researcher: Tanya Angus

Advisor: Dr. Kelly MacKay

Phone: 474-8756

Phone: 474-7058

E-mail: tanya\_angus@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-names persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

---

Participants Signature

Date



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### Appendix E - Interview Schedule

I reminded the participants of the research purpose, obtained the signed informed consent form, and re-assured them about confidentiality. I explained that I would like to record the interview to capture what they are saying, and let them know that they can stop at anytime.

General topics were discussed as the interview was free-flowing. These are sample questions.

#### **(Questions exploring their participation in campus recreation activities.)**

1. How long have you participated in campus recreation activities at the University of Manitoba?
2. Which activities do you participate in and how did you become involved?
3. What do you like about participating in campus recreation activities?
4. If you were to describe to someone why they should participate in campus recreation activities, what would you say?

#### **(Questions exploring their experience at the University of Manitoba.)**

5. What other recreation activities do you participate in at the University of Manitoba not offered through Bison Recreation Services?
6. If you were to describe to someone why they should come to the University of Manitoba, what would you say?
7. How would you describe your experience as a student at the University of Manitoba?

#### **(Questions exploring possible connections between their experience in campus recreation and at the University of Manitoba, and see if they have anything else to add.)**

8. How might participating in campus recreation activities affect how you feel about the University of Manitoba (or your experience as a student at the U of M)? (Probe: dimensions - social, academic, intellectual, etc.)
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

I thanked the participant, let them know they would receive a copy of the transcribed interview within the next few weeks to review for accuracy, and provided the participant the thank you gift.





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### Appendix F - Focus Group Expression of Interest Request

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010

#### Re: Request for Volunteers

Dear Bison Recreation Services Participant,

I am a Graduate Student at the University of Manitoba conducting my thesis on campus recreation and I am looking for 18-24 year old full-time undergraduate students at the University of Manitoba that have participated in a campus recreation activity within the past four months to be part of a focus group. A focus group is similar to a group interview with one person asking questions to a group of 6-10 people at the same time.

The ninety minute focus group will include questions pertaining to your campus recreation participation and general student experience. Campus recreation participation in this context refers to all recreation activities that you have participated in at the Fort Garry Campus, organized by or within, Bison Recreation Services facilities (e.g. intramurals, sports, leagues, tournaments, sport clubs, fitness classes and training, and sport lessons). The focus group will occur on campus. The exact time and place will be determined once volunteers are confirmed. Upon completion of the focus group, you will receive a small thank you gift with a value of \$10.00.

Your individual identity will be strictly confidential and any direct quotes and/or mentions in the research will use a pseudonym, not your real name.

For more information about the focus group or to volunteer your participation in this research; please e-mail me at the following address [tanya\\_angus@umanitoba.ca](mailto:tanya_angus@umanitoba.ca) before December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

I look forward to hearing from you soon, and thank you for considering this invitation to participate in this great learning opportunity at the University of Manitoba.

Sincerely,

Tanya Angus  
Graduate Student – University of Manitoba



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### **Appendix G - Focus Group Eligibility Pre-screening Questionnaire**

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your university status (e.g. full-time, part-time, graduate, undergraduate, what program?)
4. Have you participated in a campus recreation (bison recreation services activity within the past 4 months) and if so what?
5. How often in the past 4 months have you visited the bison recreation services facilities and/or participated in one of their activities (e.g. per week or per month on average?)



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## Appendix H - Focus Group Informed Consent

**Researcher:** Tanya Angus

Tanya Angus, a master's student at the University of Manitoba is conducting a focus group as part of her master's thesis. However to encourage full disclosure, she is also the Director of Bison Recreation Services Programs although she is conducting this research as a graduate student not as an employee of the University. This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more information, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand all accompanying information.

### **1. Purpose of the Research:**

The purpose of this research is to explore the role campus of recreation participation in undergraduate student experience. Campus recreation participation in this context refers to all recreation activities at the Fort Garry Campus, organized by or within, Bison Recreation Services facilities (e.g. intramurals, sports, leagues, tournaments, sport clubs, fitness classes and training, and sport lessons).

**2. Participant Compensation:**

Upon completion of the focus group, you will receive a small thank you gift with an approximate value of \$10.00.

**3. Research Procedure:**

You will be asked a series of questions relating to your experience participating in campus recreation activities. In addition, some basic demographic data will be collected from each participant. You will be provided a draft report after the focus group to review for accuracy, to which you will be asked to respond.

**4. Time Requirement:**

The focus group is expected to take about ninety minutes to complete.

**5. Description of Recording Device:**

Focus groups will be recorded on a digital voice recorder with your permission. You may ask that the recording device be stopped at any time.

**6. Confidentiality:**

The digital voice recorder will only be used to assist the researcher with accurate recollection and analysis of the data and will be destroyed upon completion of the research. Your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any of the written notes or transcripts, and pseudonyms will be used for quotes to maintain your confidentiality throughout the data collection and analysis process. No information provided will be traceable to you and only the researcher and advisor will have access to the data. All data will be kept confidential in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home and will be destroyed upon completion of the research.

**7. Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any time and for any reason.

**8. Feedback:**

Generalized findings of the research will be e-mailed to you upon completion of the research.

**9. Participant Consent:**

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout the research.

Researcher: Tanya Angus

Advisor: Dr. Kelly MacKay

Phone: 474-8756

Phone: 474-7058

E-mail: tanya\_angus@umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-names persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

---

Participants Signature

Date



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### Appendix I - Focus Group Schedule

I reminded the participants of the research purpose, obtained the signed informed consent form, and re-assured them about confidentiality. I explained that I would like to record the focus group to capture what they are saying, and let them know that they can stop at anytime.

The questions below were further developed based on findings from the interviews.

**(The first set of questions explored their experience participating in campus recreation activities.)**

1. Can you tell me a bit about which campus recreation activities you participate in and how often you participate within a typical week?
2. How did you become involved?
3. Some people when asked to describe why they should participate in campus recreation said to meet new people, for stress relief, it was convenient and cost effective, for their health. How would you react to that?

**(The next set of questions explored their experience at the University of Manitoba in more general terms.)**

4. How would you describe your experience as a student at the University of Manitoba?
5. Some people when asked to describe why they should come to the University of Manitoba said it is a great place to be, for the sense of belonging and community, it was convenient and cost effective. How would you react to that?

**(The last question asked participants to reflect on both their experiences in campus recreation specifically and at the University of Manitoba generally.)**

6. Can you describe how participating in campus recreation affects your broader university experience? (Probes: social, intellectual, academic, etc.)
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I thanked the participants, let them know they would receive a copy of the transcribed focus group within the next few weeks to review for accuracy, and provided the participants the thank you gift.

## Appendix J - Summary of Interview Questions

**Interview question #1** “How long have you participated in campus recreation activities at the University of Manitoba?”

### *Interview - Length of Participation in Campus Recreation Activities*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Length of Participation</b>
<b>Female, Low (ILC)</b>	3 years
<b>Female, Medium (IMK)</b>	4 years
<b>Female, High (IHL)</b>	3 years
<b>Male, Low (ILN)</b>	3 years
<b>Male, Medium (IMA)</b>	5 years
<b>Male, High (IHJ)</b>	5 years

**Interview question #2** “Which activities do you participate in and how did you become involved?”

### *Interview - Activities and How Involved*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Activity Participated in</b>	<b>How Involved</b>
<b>Female, Low (ILC)</b>	Judo	Saw class after exam
<b>Female, Medium (IMK)</b>	Dodgeball Intramurals, Gritty Grotto	From a friend
<b>Female, High (IHL)</b>	Volleyball & Soccer Intramurals, Fitness Classes	From a friend
<b>Male, Low (ILN)</b>	Wushu	From a friend
<b>Male, Medium (IMA)</b>	Gritty Grotto, Soccer Intramurals	Looked into it as knew the gym was here
<b>Male, High (IHJ)</b>	Wrestling, Gritty Grotto	Looked into it as knew the gym was here and looking for wrestling

**Interview question #5** “What other recreation activities do you participate in at the University of Manitoba not offered through Bison Recreation Services?” responses were as follows.

*Interview - Other Recreation Activities*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Activities other than Bison Recreation Services</b>
<b>Female, Low (ILC)</b>	UMSU martial arts student group; very minimal time commitment. Did not attend orientation.
<b>Female, Medium (IMK)</b>	Engineering student group volunteer; very minimal time commitment but good for a resume booster. Did not attend orientation.
<b>Female, High (IHL)</b>	U1 orientation volunteer/summer employee, student council member, and national student association related to her faculty.
<b>Male, Low (ILN)</b>	UMSwing student group; minimal time commitment. Orientation slide activity at Buller building.
<b>Male, Medium (IMA)</b>	Engineering SAT teams, back to school activities/orientations, student exchange through engineering faculty
<b>Male, High (IHJ)</b>	Chemistry club executive, wrestling club president, never met UMSU members or aware of whom has been elected.



### Appendix K - Summary Focus Group Questions

**Focus group question # 1** “Can you tell me a bit about which campus recreation activities you participate in and how often you participate within a typical week?”

#### *Campus Recreation Activities and Frequency (Low Focus Group Participants)*

<b>Focus Group 1</b>	<b>What Campus Rec activities do you participate in?</b>	<b>Frequency of participation</b>
<b>Female, Low (FLY)</b>	Gritty Grotto, pool	1/week
<b>Female, Low (FLN)</b>	Gritty Grotto, pool	2/week
<b>Female, Medium (FME)</b>	Dodgeball Intramurals, Volleyball Ref, Gritty Grotto	4/week
<b>Male, Low (FLR)</b>	Hockey Intramurals	2/week

*Campus Recreation Activities and Frequency (Medium-High Focus Group Participants)*

<b>Focus Group 2</b>	<b>What Campus Rec activities do you participate in?</b>	<b>Frequency of participation</b>
<b>Female, Medium (FMA)</b>	Intramurals, Ref Intramural Soccer, Gritty Grotto, pool	3-4/week
<b>Female, High (FHL)</b>	Muay Thai, Pilates, Intramurals	4-5/week
<b>Male, Medium (FMN)</b>	Intramurals	2-3/week
<b>Male, Medium (FMC)</b>	Intramural Dodgeball, Gritty Grotto	3/week
<b>Male, Medium (FMA)</b>	Gritty Grotto, Hip Hop	4/week
<b>Male, Medium (FMC)</b>	Wrestling, Climbing	3-4/week
<b>Male, High (FHJ)</b>	Wrestling, Gritty Grotto	7/week

*Campus Recreation Activities and Frequency (Medium Focus Group Participants)*

<b>Focus Group 3</b>	<b>What Campus Rec activities do you participate in?</b>	<b>Frequency of participation</b>
<b>Female, Low (FLJ)</b>	Dodgeball Intramural	1/week
<b>Female, Medium (FMH)</b>	Gritty Grotto, Fitness Classes	3-4/week
<b>Male, Medium (FMP)</b>	Dodgeball Intramurals, Zumba	3-4/week
<b>Male, Medium (FMS)</b>	Gritty Grotto, Squash	3-4/week

**Focus group question # 2** “How did you become involved?”

*Activities and How Involved (Focus Group 1, Low)*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>How Became Involved</b>
<b>Female, Low (FLFY)</b>	Brother
<b>Female, Low (FLFN)</b>	Brother
<b>Female, Medium (FMFE)</b>	Friend
<b>Male, Low (FLMR)</b>	A flyer in residence.

*Activities and How Involved (Focus Group 2, High)*

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<b>Participant</b>	<b>How Became Involved</b>
<b>Female, High (FHFA)</b>	I started intramurals as soon as I got here as a friend of mine wanted me to join her and I love being here.
<b>Female, High (FHFL)</b>	I got involved in intramurals in my first year with a few people I knew. I joined them and then because I go to school here in this faculty, and work here, it has made me more involved all the time.
<b>Male, Medium (FMMN)</b>	I go to the gym because of the view. I got a membership and started going to the gym here and then I started doing intramurals.
<b>Male, Medium (FMMA)</b>	This is my first year of intramurals, a friend just randomly asked me and I went for it and the Grotto to just stay fit.
<b>Male, High (FHMA)</b>	This is my first year in school and I knew they had the Grotto and I bought a membership the first week. Through advertising and posters on the wall I joined programs.
<b>Male, High (FHMC)</b>	I found out about the gym 2 <sup>nd</sup> year and so I joined the Grotto and Rock Climbing as I always wanted to try that and otherwise it's pretty expensive and far away in the city. Here it is quite cheap and then I heard about someone from here that won provincials in wrestling so I came back to check that out.
<b>Male, High (FHMJ)</b>	Looked for a place to continue wrestling after high school and found it at the UofM.

*Activities and How Involved (Focus Group 3, Medium)*

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<b>Participant</b>	<b>How Became Involved</b>
<b>Female, Low (FLFJ)</b>	Received a free pass to visit recreation services.
<b>Female, Medium (FMFH)</b>	Friend
<b>Male, Medium (FMMP)</b>	He knew he was going to the faculty so signed up as soon as he came to campus.
<b>Male, Medium (FMMS)</b>	Friend