

Involvement and Volunteerism

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Prepared for UASU Executive Committee by
Department of Research and Advocacy



Overview

This report assesses a UASU Perks survey that ran January 12–16, 2023 (n=744). One question ('What kind of opportunities interest you the most?') is repeated from the 2018 Annual Survey.

- Interest in volunteering, professional development opportunities, and clubs related to a student's field of study is stable. Over half of respondents are interested in volunteering.
- Interest in faculty or department associations is down.
- Interest in undergraduate research participation and clubs unrelated to field of study is up.
- Lack of interest in involvement ('none of the above') is up.
- 1/3 of respondents said that a reference letter would strongly impact their decision to volunteer.
- Interest in volunteering remained consistent over the first three years, falling sharply afterward. Second-year students were the most likely to be interested. This pattern is new: in 2018, interest in volunteering was stable by year of study.
- Interest in volunteering centered on three themes:
 - Building/helping their community
 - Meeting new people
 - Gaining practical experience
- Disinterest in volunteering centered on three themes:
 - A need for paid work
 - A lack of available time
 - A belief that volunteer positions would not involve meaningful work

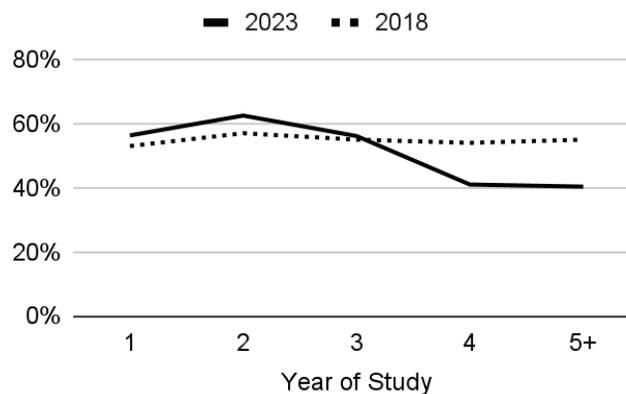
"Would you be more likely to volunteer knowing you'd get a reference letter or similarly tangible thing out of it?"

- No, it wouldn't impact my decision at all: 12%
- Maybe: 15%
- Yes, that would be a factor worth considering: 39%
- Yes, that would strongly impact my decision to volunteer: 34%

"What kinds of opportunities interest you the most? (Choose all that apply.)"

- Professional development: 45% (stable from 46% in 2018 Annual Survey)
- Undergraduate research participation: 40% (up from 32% in 2018)
- Faculty or department associations: 28% (down from 40% in 2018)
- Clubs related to my field of study: 56% (stable from 54% in 2018)
- Clubs unrelated to my field of study: 37% (up from 28% in 2018)
- Volunteering: 54% (stable from 55% in 2018)
- None of the above: 10% (up from 4% in 2018)

Percent interested in volunteering



As other interests were more consistent with the 2018 data by year of study, this upper-year disinterest in volunteering appears to be a real difference.

"If you're interested in volunteering, why?"

"Building my CV and the personal satisfaction of accomplishing something tangible."

Virtually all respondents spoke to at least one of three dominant desires: building/helping their community, meeting new people, and/or gaining practical experience. For example, out of ~450 substantive text responses:

- Help: 126 occurrences
- Experience: 111
- Community: 73
- Resume: 61
- Meet: 43
- Give back: 29

"If you're not interested in volunteering, why?"

"Already did enough volunteering throughout the past two years. Time to start making coin."

Focusing on upper-year students, with an eye to the pattern of upper-year disengagement noted above, virtually all substantive respondents indicated at least one of two interrelated factors: they have no time and, if they are going to work, they want/need to be paid. Subthemes included 'I've already done a lot of volunteering,' 'any free time I have needs to go towards working for money,' and 'I've got too much on my plate and can't risk my mental health deteriorating again.' Time constraints were often associated with transit access, especially at night.

These were common themes throughout the rest of the responses as well. Some students also remarked that they expected volunteer work to be boring, un-educational, and/or un-meaningful, or that they had already done significant amounts of volunteering. However, time and a need for paid work remained the dominant concerns.