

Recruitment, Retention and Barriers:

Understanding Student Volunteering at the University of Oxford

Research by: Sara Al-Nemrat, Amino Nor, Krish Sen, Elias Gherbi-Gobe, Ellen Taylor



Introduction



- This project investigates the barriers preventing University of Oxford students from engaging in volunteer work, with a focus on the long-standing “Town and Gown” divide.
- Little is known about the specific motivations that drive students to volunteer, nor the full range of barriers that hinder their participation.
- By identifying and overcoming barriers to student volunteering, this research seeks to mobilise university resources to support and uplift the wider Oxfordshire community.

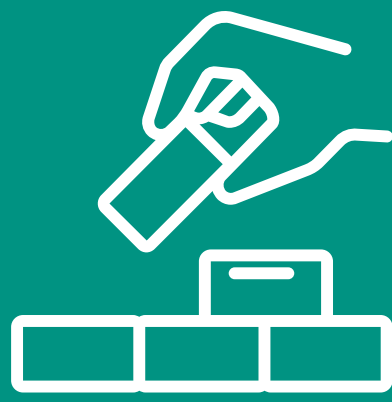
Aims:



Investigate the current student volunteering trends at the University of Oxford



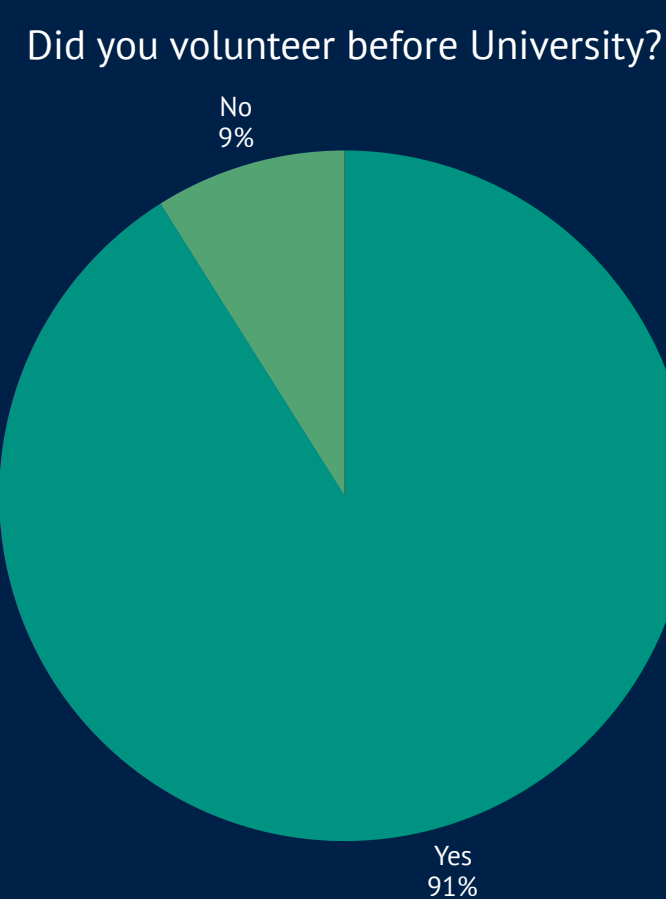
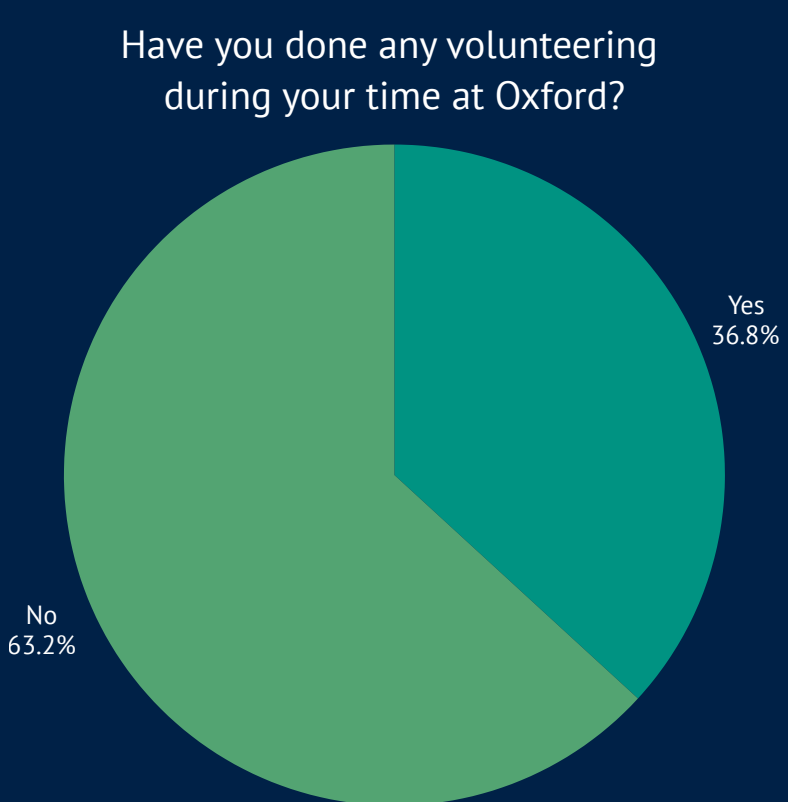
Researching the conditions for effective volunteer recruitment and engagement



Lay the foundations for mobilised student volunteer community engagement

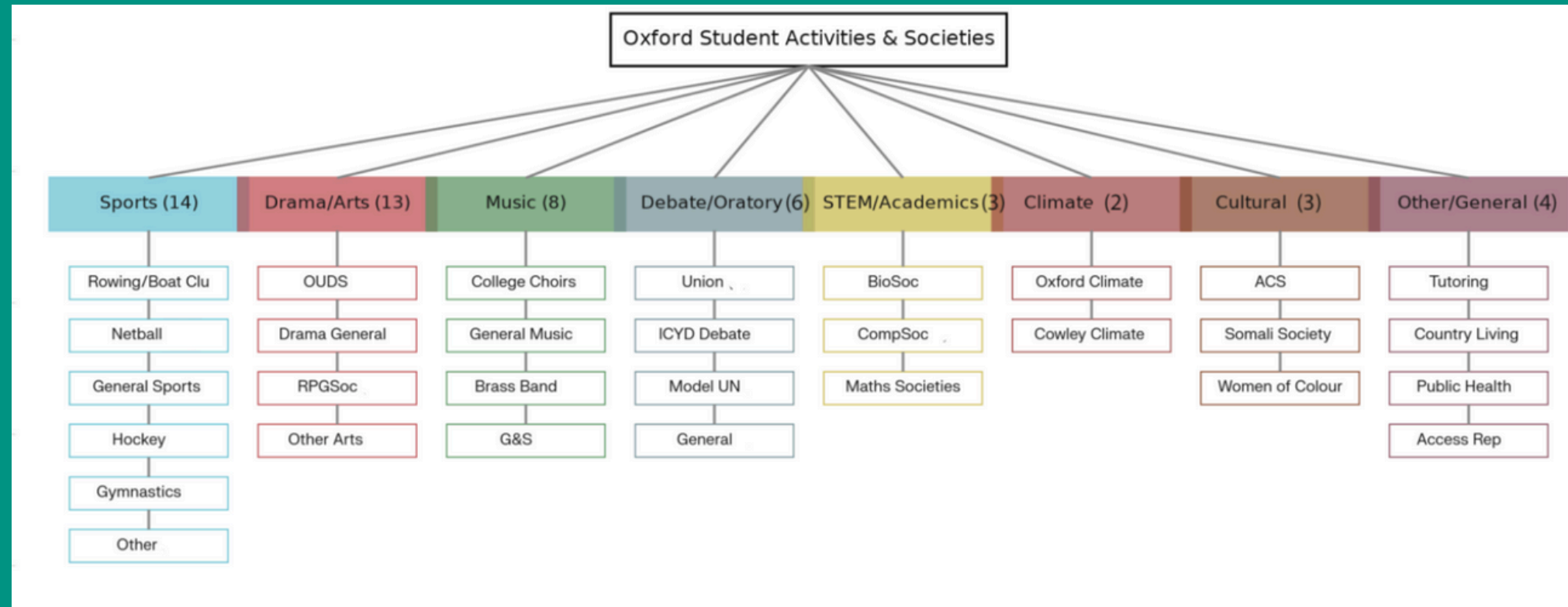
Current student volunteering trends

- Motivations and incentives for those who do or have volunteered in the past were overwhelmingly altruistic, with 89% saying that was their greatest motivation. Other motivations included career-related motivations, at 89% and social motivations, at 29.7%
- Prior volunteering tendencies are not maintained after entry into university, with 91.0% of respondents said that they had volunteered prior to university, while only 36.8% continued to do so after becoming students
- In terms of barriers to student volunteering, focus group analysis revealed 16 separate mentions of time pressure, far exceeding other barriers such as awareness (4 mentions).



Long-term student volunteer mobilisation

- Institutions need to be utilised as much as the student body does:
 - By looking at the Twinings programme as a case study we recognised that by focusing solely on the student body we are not tapping into the resources that the institution can offer.
- Leveraging societies and affiliations with societies:
 - All students were asked whether they were part of any college or university societies (e.g. sports, music, coding, drama, debate) that could contribute skills or activities to a co-curricular programme for local children” Responses are synthesized in the following map:



Methodology:



4 x Interviews with access directors



1 x Survey aimed at access directors



2 x Focus group discussions with students



1 x Survey aimed at students

“We have an attitude of gratitude, I think, and I think that goes a long way, and it is just pure thanks, and never forgetting that students in their eight weeks are finding yet another half an hour to do something for free for the benefit of someone else. And I think, just knowing how much we all appreciate that is really, really important.”
-Hannah Rolley, Trinity College access director

“I wish I'd known this earlier or I wish I had known what was going on. There's lots of information scarcity about what's possible.”
-Matt Williams, Jesus College

Effective recruitment and engagement

- Routes for recruitment:
 - Formal routes of recruitment are preferred and deemed most effective but word of mouth remains vital.
- Specific targeting of groups most likely to volunteer or deemed most appropriate:
 - Some colleges are in favour of recruiting only students of a state school or specific ethnic/ religious background. Others prefer not to limit their volunteer pool and believe students of all backgrounds have something to offer access and outreach.
- Retention:
 - Informal and flexible scheduling favoured most (78.6%), with the use of social medias such as Facebook.
 - A sentiment that was repeatedly expressed was that recognition, both verbal and monetary. This contributes to creating a culture of volunteering within colleges.