FACULTY BRIEF · BUS-X 496 HONORS CAPSTONE

In and Out of the Kelley Bubble

How student involvement shapes success at the Kelley School of Business — and what faculty can do about it.

The core finding. Extracurricular involvement — specifically business fraternities, career workshops, and selective clubs — is more predictive of a Kelley student's network, mentorship access, and offer rate than GPA, major, or effort alone. Students who don't know the involvement system exists fall behind within their first two semesters, and most never fully catch up.

The Project

A mixed-methods study of 33 Kelley seniors (24 highly involved, 9 minimally involved) conducted December 2025 – April 2026. Each interview was 45–75 minutes and covered involvement history, recruiting, academics, mentorship, social dynamics, and wellbeing. 22 quantitative variables were tracked per participant. IRB-approved (IU Study #29569, exempt), funded by Hutton Honors College, advised by Prof. Stephanie Moore.

6.6×	3×	~3×	9.25 / 4.0
Club connections (345 vs 52)	Mentors acquired (11.3 vs 3.75)	Offer rate (~20% vs ~7%)	Kelley satisfaction (out of 10)

All comparisons: 24 highly involved vs. 9 minimally involved. 55% of all participants considered transferring; 76% acknowledged an unspoken social hierarchy at Kelley.

Why It Matters for Faculty

The gap between students with offers in hand and students who feel lost is rarely about ability. It's about information: who knew which workshops to apply to and when, who had a sophomore mentor walk them through recruiting timelines, who was told that Kelley Compass (BUS-T 175) wouldn't prepare them for IB recruiting. First-gen, international, and out-of-state students — without family or peer networks transmitting this informal knowledge — were overrepresented among the minimally involved. Faculty are one of the few trusted voices outside the student peer network. A 60-second mention of a workshop deadline during office hours can change a trajectory.

In Students' Own Words

> *"Nobody tells you freshman year that your career path is basically decided by sophomore fall. By the time I figured out IB recruiting, it was already too late."*
>
> **— P012, minimally involved**

> *"If you're not in a frat or a workshop, you don't exist. That's how it feels. And if you don't know what those are by freshman year, you're already behind."*
>
> **— P007, highly involved**

> *"Kelley Compass was pretty useless. My fraternity taught me more about recruiting in one weekend than my entire freshman year of class."*
>
> **— P021, highly involved**

Recommendations & Actions

Six Recommendations for Faculty

1. **Mention recruiting timelines in class.** A single slide or 60-second note about when finance/consulting/accounting/real estate applications open can shift student awareness.
2. **Normalize involvement conversations in office hours.** Ask what clubs, workshops, or fraternities students are considering — not to pressure them, but to surface whether they even know what exists.
3. **Watch for invisible students.** Minimally involved students often had 3.5+ GPAs. The signal is isolation and vague career plans, not bad grades.
4. **Be intentional about first-gen and international students.** They were overrepresented among the minimally involved. A direct recommendation from faculty carries unusual weight.
5. **Advocate for curriculum reform.** Kelley Compass (BUS-T 175) was the single most criticized course in the interviews. Faculty voices matter in restructuring early advising.
6. **Share the Kelley Bubble resources.** The project website was built to reduce information asymmetry. Pointing one uninvolved advisee to the Path Finder takes 30 seconds.

How You Can Help

1. Share with advisees

Point underclassmen — especially sophomores and transfers — to the Path Finder and Calendar. It costs you nothing and can save them months.

2. Support the KSG presentation

Kelley Student Government and the Student Engagement Office have expressed interest. Faculty endorsement helps the research reach decision-makers.

3. Adjust advising

Ask one extra question: "Do you know what business fraternities and workshops exist, and have you considered applying?" The answer is often no.

Project website: The Kelley Bubble — Guide, Path Finder, Involvements directory, Recruitment Calendar, and Resources. See the *For Professors* page for the full version of this brief.

Full paper: "In and Out of the Kelley Bubble" (~40 pages, APA). Final draft due April 20, 2026.

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