



Special Olympics

Unified Champion Schools:

2025 Annual Liaison Survey

Report:

College and University Findings

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One Page Highlights

The Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) received responses from 155 SOUCS college and university liaisons. These SOUCS liaisons described who they were, who participated in SOUCS activities and events sponsored by their SOUCS program, and the activities and events that they sponsored in the 2024-2025 school year. They also stated the impact of SOUCS implementation for themselves or students at their college or university.

Findings

- SOUCS college and university programs had a median of 40 participants—including a median of 15 participants with an intellectual or developmental disability.
- Most SOUCS college or university liaisons reported previous awareness of and participation in Special Olympics community or PreK-12 Unified Champion Schools programming. However, liaisons also report that the majority of participants in SOUCS college or university events are participating in their first Special Olympics opportunity.
- SOUCS implementation was supported by student organizations, Special Olympics U.S. Programs, and campus departments. Having support from more groups is associated with more activities and events sponsored by their SOUCS college or university program.
- SOUCS programs met frequently during the school year.
- 69% of SOUCS college or university programs did not have someone with IDD in a leadership role.
- 52% of SOUCS college or university liaisons reported taking at least one leadership training or certification. SOUCS liaisons who reported taking at least one leadership training or certification also reported offering more SOUCS activities and events.
- 66% of SOUCS college or university liaisons reported receiving support from their U.S. Program. Support satisfaction was high, and support from U.S. Programs was associated with more SOUCS activities and events.
- SOUCS implementation was seen as valuable and impactful for students and communities. This includes leadership skill development, future career development, and community involvement goals.

Recommendations

1. SOUCS college and university programs should build upon existing collaborations within their college and university—particularly those involved in planning, coordinating, or hosting SOUCS activities—to support implementation.
2. Expand technical assistance and resource development to include clear onboarding materials for new participants, guidance for intentionally engaging both new and returning participants together, and accessible resources that support diverse participant needs.
3. Include individuals with IDD in leadership roles—either from students at an SOUCS college or university or from their community.
4. Sustain regular communication between SOUCS colleges and universities and Special Olympics U.S. Programs to support program coordination and capacity.
5. Promote SOUCS trainings for college and university liaisons to increase the percentage of SOUCS college and university liaisons or participants who complete SOUCS trainings.
6. Integrate the benefits of SOUCS implementation into outreach, marketing, and recruitment efforts to communicate the value of SOUCS participation more clearly to potential participants and campus partners.

Executive Summary

This 2025 Annual Liaison Survey Report focuses on data from Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (SOUCS) liaisons who completed the 2025 Annual Liaison Survey.

Methodology

In spring 2025, the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) distributed the Annual Liaison Survey. 155 college and university liaisons provided complete responses to be included in the analyses presented in this year's report. This represents a 54% overall response rate from college and university SOUCS schools. Most SOUCS liaisons who responded to this year's Annual Liaison Survey were either faculty or staff liaisons (66%) or college or university student liaisons (31%).

SOUCS liaisons were asked about their own background, a description of their SOUCS program and the activities that they did, and their perception of the impact that SOUCS has for their school and community.

Participants Profile

- SOUCS college and university liaisons estimated that their program had a median of 40 participants. This included a median of 15 participants with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD).
- Although most liaisons were aware of Special Olympics before joining their SOUCS college or university program, their prior Special Olympics involvement varied: 64% reported previous participation in Special Olympics school or community activities. 36% had no prior involvement with Special Olympics.
- Many SOUCS college and university liaisons reported some participants with prior Special Olympics experience, including community programming (81%) and SOUCS PreK-12 participation (64%).
- Many SOUCS college and university liaisons reported that a majority of their participants participated in Special Olympics activity for the first time. Specifically, 83% of liaisons reported that fewer than 50% of their participants at their institution had prior Special Olympics community programming involvement, and 91% reported that fewer than 50% of their participants at their institution had prior SOUCS K-12 involvement.

Program Implementation

- SOUCS liaisons reported implementation in college and universities is most commonly supported by student organizations (73%), their U.S. Program or local Special Olympics program (54%), and campus departments (51%). 62% of liaisons reported that activities were planned and implemented by more than one group.

- Programs involving multiple planning groups were linked with more activities in Special Olympics community sports, SOUCS Unified Sports, and SOUCS campus or community engagement activities.
- Most SOUCS programs met frequently, with 74% of liaisons reporting that their program met more than once per month to plan, prepare for, and implement Special Olympics-related practices, meetings, events, and activities.

Quality

- 69% liaisons reported their SOUCS college or university did not have anyone with IDD in a leadership role, even though many include participants with IDD.
- Over half of liaisons in SOUCS college and university programs reported receiving at least one type of training or certification, while 48% reported receiving none of the listed trainings. Unified Partner training was the most common (33%), followed by leadership training (27%) and coaching certification (22%).
- Training and certification, including leadership training, Unified Partner training, and coaching certification, were associated with implementation of more SOUCS activities.
- Support from Special Olympics U.S. Programs was commonly reported. 66% of liaisons reported receiving support, and 83% of those liaisons were satisfied with that support.
- Support and frequent communication with Special Olympics with U.S. Programs were associated with implementing more activities in SOUCS Unified Sports and SOUCS campus or community engagement. More frequent communication between SOUCS liaisons and their Special Olympics U.S. Program was also associated with a greater number of community sports activities.

Impact

- Liaisons at colleges and universities saw SOUCS as both valuable and impactful for participants with and without IDD. Liaisons felt participants developed skills relating to empathy, openness, and accountability through their SOUCS participation.
- 93% of student liaisons reported SOUCS influenced their future career or community involvement plans.

Recommendations

1. SOUCS college and university programs should build upon existing collaborations within their college and university—particularly those involved in planning, coordinating, or hosting SOUCS activities—to support implementation.
2. Expand technical assistance and resource development to include clear onboarding materials for new participants, guidance for intentionally engaging both new and returning participants together, and accessible resources that support diverse participant needs.
3. Include individuals with IDD in leadership roles—either from students at an SOUCS college or university or from their community.
4. Sustain regular communication between SOUCS colleges and universities and Special Olympics U.S. Programs to support program coordination and capacity.
5. Promote SOUCS trainings for college and university liaisons to increase the percentage of SOUCS college and university liaisons or participants who complete SOUCS trainings.
6. Integrate the benefits of SOUCS implementation into outreach, marketing, and recruitment efforts to communicate the value of SOUCS participation more clearly to potential participants and campus partners.

Introduction

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® (SOUCS) is one of Special Olympics' flagship strategies for fostering inclusive communities for students with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Designed for schools from PreK through college, SOUCS is an evidence-based approach that promotes social inclusion for students with IDD while cultivating an inclusive school culture. As a youth-centered initiative, SOUCS empowers students to create and maintain a school culture where inclusion is the norm and expectation.

SOUCS is grounded in three interconnected components: Special Olympics Unified Sports, Inclusive Youth Leadership, and Whole School Engagement. Together, SOUCS support meaningful participation, shared leadership, and inclusive community-building. In the college and university context, these components often take shape differently than in K-12 schools. SOUCS colleges and universities frequently engage students and community members across campus-based activities, community partnerships, and direct connections to local Special Olympics programs.

To capture how SOUCS is implemented on college and university campuses, the Center for Social Development and Education (CSDE) surveyed SOUCS college and university liaisons as part of the 2025 Annual Liaison Survey. The 2025 Annual Liaison Survey focused on SOUCS-related experiences across three distinct categories:

- **SOUCS Unified Sports®:** activities that bring athletes (individuals with IDD) and partners (individuals without IDD) together on the same team for training and competition, including intramurals, clinics and trainings, exhibitions, club sports, and competitive tournaments;
- **SOUCS Campus and Community Engagement:** activities that foster connections between campus and community through volunteering, event support, outreach activities, and awareness campaigns;
- **Special Olympics Community Programming:** activities that connect college participants with local Special Olympics programs through volunteering, coaching, officiating, competing, fundraising, hosting events, and supporting specialized programs.

These categories reflect how Unified Sports, inclusive leadership, and whole school engagement are commonly experienced and organized in college and university settings. This report focuses on four topics related to college and university programs:

1. Who participates in SOUCS implementation at colleges and universities, including participants' prior experience and familiarity with Special Olympics programming, and what types of institutions are participating;
2. What activities occur in SOUCS colleges and universities and how engaged are participants in those activities;

3. What supports do SOUCS college and university liaisons receive in relation to their SOUCS implementation; and
4. What is the perceived impact of SOUCS implementation for participants and campuses?

This report continues with a brief overview of the methodology used in the 2025 SOUCS Annual Liaison before addressing each of the four guiding questions. This report ends with CSDE's recommendations to support future growth of SOUCS at the college and university level within the United States.

Methodology

College and University Survey Development

Between February and March 2025, Special Olympics North America identified topic areas and questions based on current priorities and the 2023-2024 SOUCS College Inventory.¹ CSDE provided guidance related to question creation and survey design. The college and university survey consisted of 51 questions that covered characteristics of programs and their participants, SOUCS implementation, support received by Special Olympics and within their college and university, and the impact and value that SOUCS had within their college or university.

Survey Distribution

In spring 2025, Special Olympics North America provided a list of 285 SOUCS liaison contacts associated with colleges and universities. CSDE cleaned the survey list and coordinated with both Special Olympics North America and Special Olympics U.S. Programs² to distribute the Annual Liaison Survey to SOUCS liaisons between April and June 2025. CSDE was the primary contact for both SOUCS liaisons and U.S. Program staff.

Out of the 285 SOUCS liaisons who were contacted for the Annual Liaison Survey, 153 liaisons provided complete responses to be included in the analyses presented in this report. This represents a 54% overall response rate. Partially completed responses are included where available for specific analyses. All responses are based on liaison-reported information rather than direct student-level data.

¹ Special Olympics North America conducted a College Inventory Survey to assess SOUCS implementation in college and university programs. For 2024-2025, this was distributed as part of CSDE's scope of work related to the Annual Liaison Survey.

² A Special Olympics U.S. Program is an organization that coordinates and supports Special Olympics Programming within a U.S. state, territory, or region.

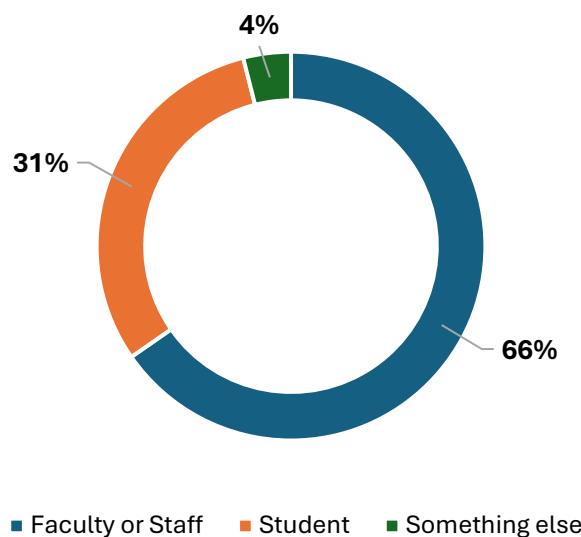
College and University Findings

Who participates in SOUCS implementation at colleges and universities, including participants' prior experience and familiarity with Special Olympics programming, and what types of institutions are participating?

Before analyzing any survey responses, the SOUCS contact list provided much information about college and university SOUCS programs. The majority of schools (87%) previously were a part of SOUCS before the 2024-2025 school year. SOUCS colleges or universities.³ 26% of SOUCS programs are at schools that offer an inclusive post-secondary education program (IPSE)⁴ recognized by Think College.⁵

The survey opened with questions about who is involved with SOUCS implementation at the college and university level. As seen in [Figure C1.1](#), most SOUCS liaisons at the college or university level are staff or faculty members (66%). Students made up most of the remaining SOUCS liaisons (31%), and individuals with roles other than students or faculty or staff members made up the remaining 4% of liaisons.⁶

Figure C1.1. Most SOUCS college and university liaisons are faculty or staff members.



SOUCS liaisons reported which groups engaged in co-leading, planning, running, or hosting SOUCS activities and events. SOUCS liaisons indicated that they coordinated with student organizations (73%), their U.S. Program or local Special Olympics program (54%), and/or campus departments or organizations (51%) to help with SOUCS implementation

³ 7% of schools had missing data for whether this was their first year of SOUCS implementation.

⁴ An IPSE is a program designed to promote success for students with IDD in college or university programs.

⁵ Think College is a non-profit dedicated to developing, expanding, and improving inclusive higher education options for people with intellectual disability. More information can be found on the [Think College website](#) or [Special Olympics website](#).

⁶ Percentages are rounded from 65.6%, 30.7%, and 3.7% and therefore do not sum to exactly 100%.

on their campus. 38% of liaisons reported that only 1 group participated in planning SOUCS activities and events, and 62% reported that two or more groups were involved.

SOUCS liaisons were also asked about their awareness of and participation in Special Olympics community or school-based activities before starting with their college or university SOUCS program. As seen in [Table C1.1](#), 51% of SOUCS liaisons were aware of both SOUCS and Special Olympics community programming. However, past involvement differed among SOUCS liaisons. In total, 64% reported prior participation in Special Olympics activities, either through community programs or SOUCS, while 36% had no previous involvement. The levels of awareness⁷ or prior involvement⁸ with Special Olympics community programming or SOUCS did not differ by whether a liaison was a student or a faculty/staff member, suggesting that familiarity with the program is not limited to a particular role.⁹

Table C1.1. Most SOUCS liaisons were aware of and had prior involvement with Special Olympics programming.

Response	n	%
Awareness		
Both Special Olympics community programs and Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools	83	51%
Generally aware of Special Olympics, but not aware of community or school programs	46	28%
Only aware of Special Olympics community programs	29	18%
Only aware of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools	4	2%
Not aware of Special Olympics at all	1	1%
Prior Involvement		
I was involved in Special Olympics community programs only (state/area/local games, events, or teams)	52	33%
I was involved in both Special Olympics community programs and Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools	30	19%
I was involved in Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools only (at a previous school)	19	12%
I was not involved with Special Olympics at all	57	36%

Liaisons were also asked about the makeup of people who participate in SOUCS activities and events within their college or university. As seen in [Table C1.2](#), SOUCS college and university programs had a median¹⁰ of 40 people who participated in SOUCS

⁷ $\chi^2(4) = 3.21, p = .524$.

⁸ $\chi^2(3) = 3.70, p = .295$.

⁹ Analyses only include liaisons who were either a staff or faculty member or a student.

¹⁰ The median is the 50th percentile of responses from SOUCS liaisons. In this case, 50% of SOUCS liaisons reported having 40 or less total participants in SOUCS college or university programming, and 50% of SOUCS liaisons reported having 40 or more total participants in SOUCS college or university programming.

activities and events. Furthermore, a median of 15 people with IDD participated in SOUCS activities and events.

Table C1.2. SOUCS college and university programs had many participants with and without IDD.

Participants	Median	Average	SD	Range
Total number of participants	40	75	134	0-1,000
Number of participants with IDD	15	24	40	0-400

Note: Both the total number of participants and the number of participants with IDD are positively skewed. This means that some SOUCS college or university programs had many more participants than other SOUCS college or university programs. The median number of participants would be the best measure to describe the typical number of overall participants and participants with IDD who participated in college and university SOUCS programming.

In looking at the people with IDD who participated in SOUCS college and university programming, 39% SOUCS college and university programs had enrolled students with IDD from their school as participants in their college or university's SOUCS programming. Out of these SOUCS college or university programs, 75% of SOUCS programming included enrolled students who were a part of an IPSE program within their college or community. Across all SOUCS college and university programs, 69% of SOUCS programming included community members with IDD who were not enrolled as students at their college or university. These findings reflect that SOUCS colleges and universities involve people with IDD with multiple pathways, more commonly through community-based participation than participation from student enrollment.

As shown in [Table C1.3](#), most SOUCS college and university programs reported that some participants had prior involvement in Special Olympics. Specifically, 81% of programs reported that at least some participants had been involved in Special Olympics community programming, and 64% reported that at least some participants had previously participated in SOUCS at the K-12 level.

As also shown in Table C1.3, when liaisons were asked about the percentage of participants with prior Special Olympics involvement, most reported that prior experience applied to less than 50% of their participants. For Special Olympics community programming, 83% of programs indicated that 50% or fewer participants had prior involvement. A similar finding was observed for PreK-12 SOUCS participation, where 91% of programs reported that 50% or fewer participants had prior involvement at another school. Combined, these findings show that while most programs include participants with prior Special Olympics community programming or PreK-12 SOUCS experience, such experience usually applies to 50% or fewer participants at their institution.

Table C1.3. Most programs have no more than 50% of participants who had prior involvement in Special Olympics community programming or SOUCS at the PreK-12 level.

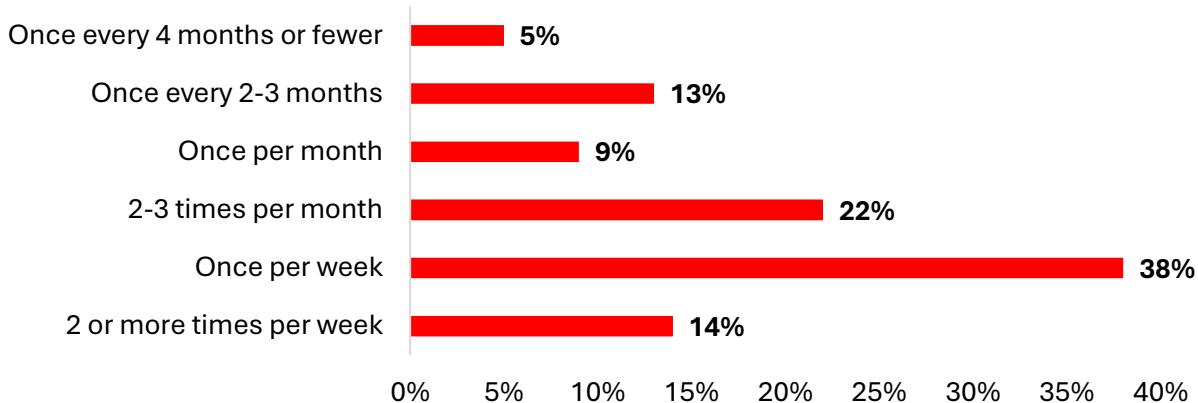
Involvement	n	%
Community Involvement = Yes	128	81%
0%-25%	66	52%
26%-50%	39	31%
51%-75%	18	14%
76%-100%	3	2%
SOUCS PreK-12 Involvement = Yes	99	64%
0%-25%	63	64%
26%-50%	27	27%
51%-75%	7	7%
76%-100%	2	2%

What Activities Occur in College and University SOUCS Schools and How Engaged Are Participants in College and University SOUCS Activities?

Whereas the last section focused on the students that participate in SOUCS activities and events in college and university SOUCS programs, this section focuses on the makeup and activities that are put on by SOUCS college and university programs. This section will summarize how often SOUCS college and university programs meet, the type and number of activities that SOUCS college and university programs participate in, and whether program characteristics differ based on the number of groups involved in administering the program and the level of training received by SOUCS college and university liaisons and participants.

SOUCS liaisons at colleges and universities reported participants at their institution came together frequently for SOUCS-related activities, including practices, competitions, meetings, events, and other preparations across activities. As seen in [Figure C2.1](#), 74% of SOUCS liaisons reported that their college or university program met more than once a month. Thirteen percent of SOUCS liaisons stated that their program met every 2-3 months, and 5% of SOUCS liaisons reported that they met either once every 4 months or less frequently.

Figure C2.1. Most SOUCS college or university programs meet at least 2-3 times per month or more frequently.



Note: Percentages are rounded to whole numbers and may not sum to exactly 100%.

SOUCS liaisons also report on the implementation of activities or events in their colleges or universities. College and university liaisons reported that their SOUCS program implemented an average of 7.1 activities in 2024-2025 (*Median* = 6, *SD* = 4.7, *Range* = 0-24). As seen in [Table C2.1](#), events consisted of four categories: Special Olympics community sports, Special Olympics community programming, SOUCS Unified Sports activities, and SOUCS campus or community engagement activities.

Table C2.1. SOUCS participants in college and university programs participate in multiple activity types.

Type of activity	List of all activities within the activity type	Average number of the type of activities offered	Observed Range
Special Olympics Community Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coaching a Special Olympics sports team in the community Volunteering at an event hosted by the local, area or state Special Olympics Program (event support, registration, etc.) Officiating a Special Olympics competition Competing in a Special Olympics sport outside of their school 	1.7	0-4
Special Olympics Community Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special Olympics Healthy Athletes Special Olympics Young Athletes Motor Activities Training Program (MATP) 	0.4	0-3
SOUCS Unified Sports Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unified intramural sports Unified club sports Unified esports Unified Sports Exhibition Unified Sports rivalry game Unified Sports clinic/training/recreational day NIRSA regional or national tournament Competing as a Unified team representing the college at a Special Olympics local, area, or state event 	2.5	0-8

Type of activity	List of all activities within the activity type	Average number of the type of activities offered	Observed Range
SOUCS Campus or Community Engagement Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unified College Championship Week • Fans in the Stands • On campus unified social event • Polar Plunge or another fundraiser • Disability/inclusion awareness campaign or rally • Supporting Unified Champion Schools at a local elementary, middle, or high school 	2.5	0-9

Further analyses investigated whether the number of activities that a college or university SOUCS program implements varied based on the number of planning groups involved in coordinating SOUCS activities or events. Programs with more than one planning group reported implementing more SO community sports activities,¹¹ SOUCS Unified Sports activities,¹² and SOUCS campus or community engagement activities¹³ (see [Figure C2.2](#)). Having more than one planning group was unrelated to differences in the number of SO community programs that an SOUCS school participated in.¹⁴

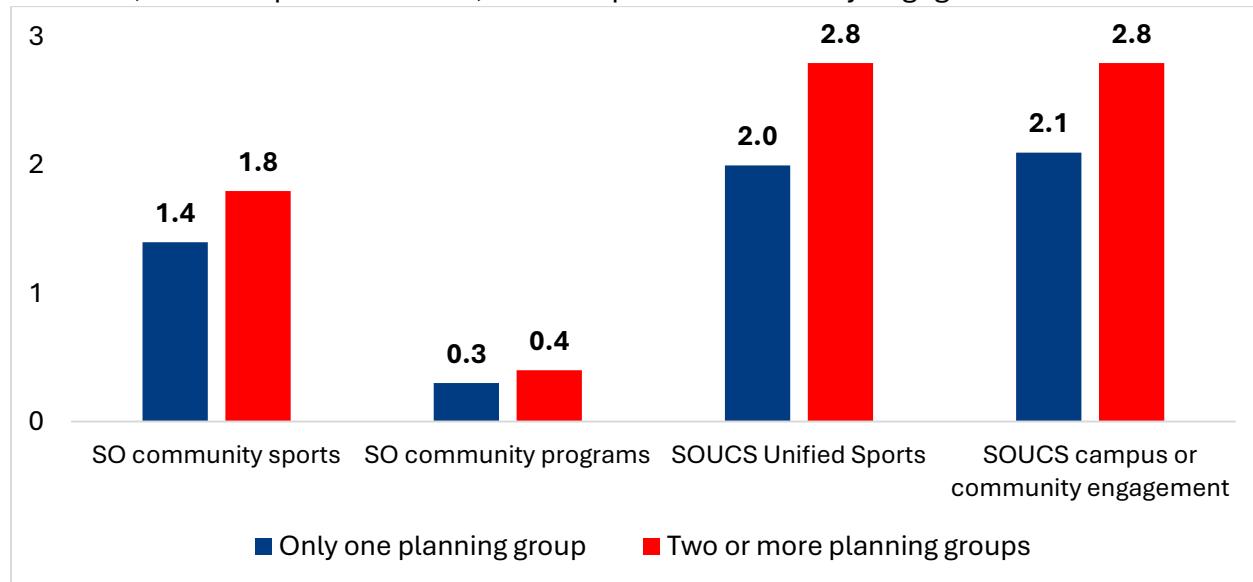
¹¹ Welch's $t(124) = 2.12, p = .036, d = 0.35$.

¹² Welch's $t(124) = 2.73, p = .007, d = 0.45$.

¹³ Welch's $t(144) = -1.96, p = .052, d = 0.32$. The mean difference is smaller than the standard $\alpha = .050$, but the effect size shows a small-to-medium effect.

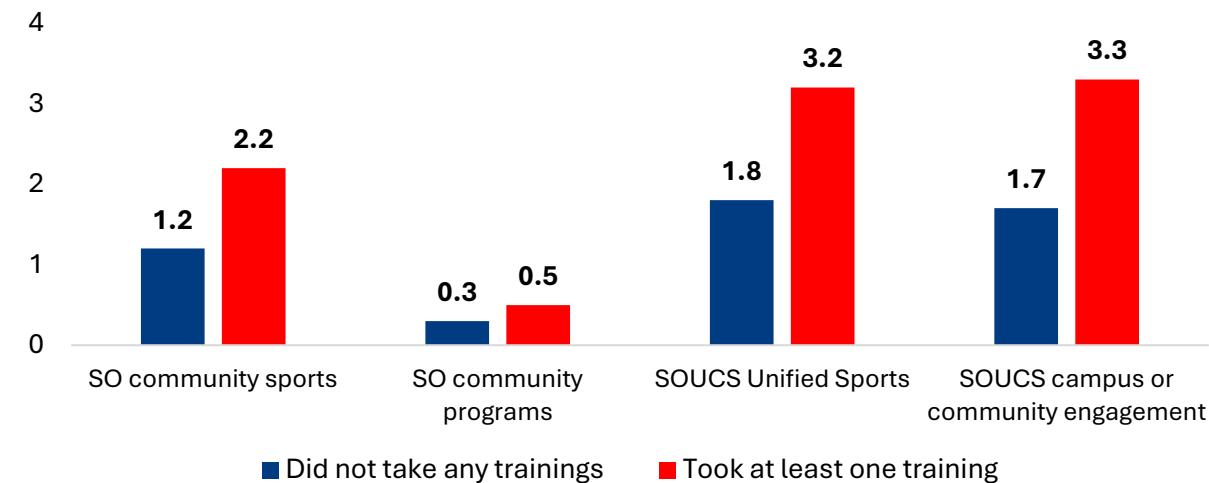
¹⁴ Welch's $t(111) = 0.94, p = .348, d = 0.16$.

Figure C2.2. Having more planning groups was associated with more community sports activities, Unified Sports activities, and campus or community engagement activities.



The last set of analyses for this section focused on whether leadership training, Unified partner training, or coaching certification was related to more activities across any of the four types of SOUCS activities or events at the college level. As seen in [Figure C2.3](#), taking at least one leadership training was associated with offering more SOUCS activities and events.¹⁵ Additionally, as seen in [Table C2.2](#), each type of training was associated with more activities within a SOUCS college or university program. Cohen's d effect sizes for these differences show that training has a moderate-to-large effect on the number of activities or events that an SOUCS college or university program offers.

Figure C2.3. Schools implementing SOUCS that had one or more individuals complete a leadership training offered a greater number of SOUCS activities and events.



¹⁵ Welch's t -tests ≥ 2.15 , $ps \leq .033$, Cohen's $d \geq 0.34$.

Table C2.2. More activities and events were offered in SOUCS college and university programs that had a SOUCS liaison or participant who took a leadership training, Unified Sports training, or Coaching Certification.

Type of training and type of activities	Average number of events: did not take this training	Average number of events: did take this training	Welch's t	p	Cohen's d
Leadership Training					
Community Sports activities	1.5	2.3	3.4	< .001	0.6
Unified Sports activities	2.2	3.3	3.2	.002	0.6
Community Programming	0.3	0.6	2.2	.035	0.4
Campus and Community Outreach and Events	2.1	3.6	4.1	< .001	0.8
Unified Sports Training					
Community Sports activities	1.5	2.2	3.4	.001	0.6
Unified Sports activities	2.5	3.4	4.8	< .001	0.8
Community Programming ¹	0.3	0.5	0.9	.350	0.2
Campus and Community Outreach and Events	2.0	3.5	4.0	< .001	0.7
Coaching Certification					
Community Sports activities	1.5	2.6	4.8	< .001	0.9
Unified Sports activities	2.1	3.8	4.8	< .001	1.0
Community Programming	0.3	0.7	2.6	.014	0.5
Campus and Community Outreach and Events	2.2	3.5	3.1	.003	0.6

Note: ¹ The only difference in the average number of events that was not statistically significant was the number of community programming events based on whether the SOUCS college or university program had someone who took the Unified Sports training.

What Supports do College and University SOUCS Liaisons Report in Relation to their SOUCS Implementation?

A goal of SOUCS is to promote leadership opportunities for young people with and without IDD. Obtaining leadership roles and practicing leadership skills can benefit people with and without IDD during and after SOUCS activities and events occur. This section focuses on leadership roles—especially for people with IDD, training and certification, and support from Special Olympics U.S. Program staff, which are key indicators associated with stronger SOUCS implementation.

In terms of leadership roles, the majority of SOUCS college and university programs *did not* have people with IDD in leadership roles:

- 69% of SOUCS college and university programs *did not have* anyone with IDD in leadership roles.
- 31% of SOUCS college and university programs *had* at least one person with IDD in leadership roles.

SOUCS colleges and universities that offered a greater number of activities in 2024-2025 were more likely to include individuals with IDD in leadership roles.¹⁶ The sample size was too small to determine whether the SOUCS liaison's role, partnership with their school's inclusive postsecondary education program, or the SOUCS liaison's prior awareness or involvement in SOUCS activities were related to whether they had a person with IDD in leadership roles.¹⁷

Training and certification represent another support structure that may strengthen SOUCS implementation at colleges and universities. Overall, fewer than half of SOUCS college and university liaisons reported that they or someone in their program received training through Special Olympics. Specifically, Unified Partner training was most common (33%), followed by leadership training (27%), and coaching certification (22%).

Programs that reported receiving training or certification consistently implemented a greater number of SOUCS activities. Across leadership training, Unified Partner training, and coaching certification, programs with trained individuals engaged in more SOUCS Unified Sports and SOUCS campus or community engagement activities than those without training. They also reported greater involvement in community sports activities.

In terms of support from Special Olympics U.S. Programs, 66% of SOUCS college or university programs reported that they received support from their Special Olympics U.S.

¹⁶ Odds Ratio = 1.32, 95% CI [1.06, 1.65].

¹⁷ A binary logistic regression showed a high R^2 (0.31), which suggests that these factors may relate to whether a person with IDD is in a leadership role. However, the variability in the estimates makes it unclear whether these effects are unstable or stable.

Program.¹⁸ In terms of communication frequency, 72% of SOUCS liaisons reported that they were in contact with their Special Olympics U.S. Program at least once per month.¹⁹ Most SOUCS liaisons (83%) who reported receiving support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program were satisfied with that support.²⁰

As seen in [Figure C3.1](#), SOUCS college and university programs that received support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program had more SOUCS Unified Sports activities²¹ and SOUCS campus or community engagement activities.²² There were no differences in the number of community sports activities²³ or community programming activities²⁴ based on if a SOUCS college or university program did or did not receive support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program. Similarly, the frequency of a SOUCS's liaison communication with their Special Olympics U.S. Program was related to having more community sports activities,²⁵ SOUCS Unified Sports activities,²⁶ and SOUCS campus or community engagement activities.²⁷ There was no observed relationship between communication frequency and the number of Special Olympics community programming events.²⁸

¹⁸ Support includes facilities, transportation, scheduling, staff, money, or other services that would help an SOUCS college or university program implement SOUCS activities or events.

¹⁹ The frequency that an SOUCS liaison is in contact with their U.S. Program was unrelated with whether they perceived that they received support from their U.S. Program, *Mann-Whitney U* = 2210, *p* = .097

²⁰ Welch's *t*(108) = 2.80, *p* = .006, *d* = 0.47.

²¹ Welch's *t*(120) = 2.49, *p* = .014, *d* = 0.41.

²² Welch's *t*(115) = 1.44, *p* = .153, *d* = 0.24.

²³ Welch's *t*(108) = 0.01, *p* = .992, *d* = 0.00.

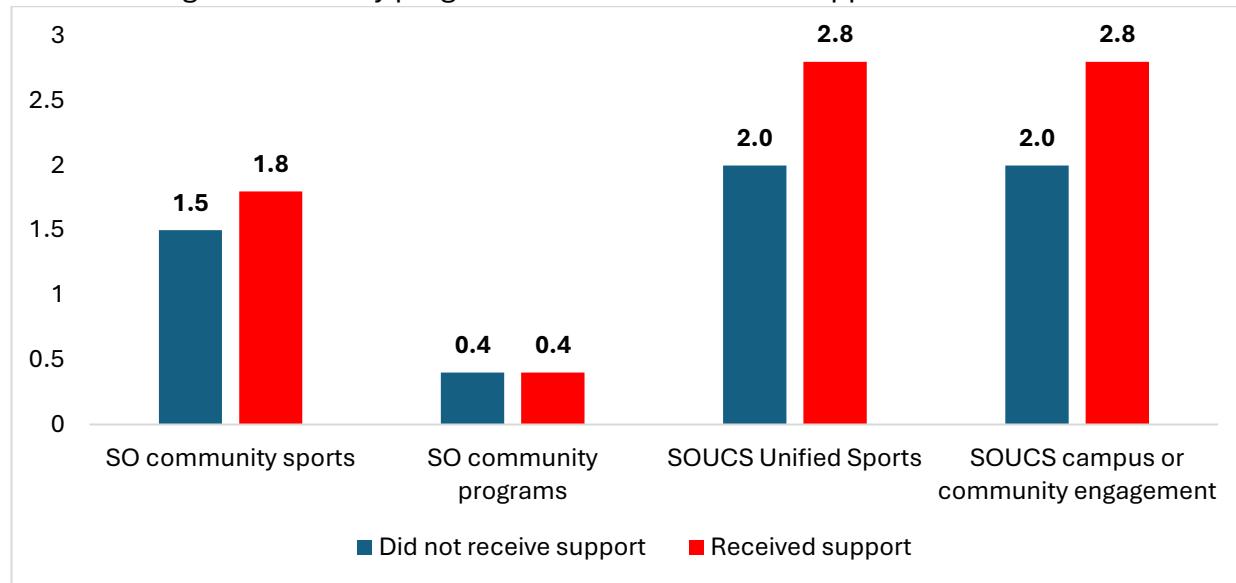
²⁴ *r* = .18, *p* = .027.

²⁵ *r* = .33, *p* < .001.

²⁶ *r* = .23, *p* = .004.

²⁷ *r* = .04, *p* = .604.

Figure C3.1. SOUCS college and university programs that received support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program have more Special Olympics community sports, SOUCS Unified Sports activities, and SOUCS campus or community engagement events than SOUCS college or university programs who do not receive support.



What Is the Impact of SOUCS Implementation?

The last part of the 2025 SOUCS Annual Liaison Survey focused on the impact that SOUCS liaisons from college and university programs perceive for themselves and program participants. Overall, SOUCS liaisons reported high perceived impact and value of college and university programs for participants with and without IDD.

As seen in [Figure C4.1](#), SOUCS liaisons thought that the activities and events that occurred as part of their SOUCS college or university programs were both impactful ($M = 5.2$) and valuable ($M = 5.6$) for participants with and without IDD.²⁸ The perceived value²⁹ and impact³⁰ that SOUCS liaisons report from college and university activities and events were not related to the role of the SOUCS liaison (e.g., faculty or student), the number of participants who participated in the SOUCS college or university program, whether their college or university had an IPSE,³¹ the number of activities or events that their SOUCS college or university program implemented, any trainings that any SOUCS participants

²⁸ A confirmatory factor analysis found a decent model fit for two factors: value (e.g., the three value questions) and impact (e.g., the three impact questions), $\chi^2(8) = 25.0$, $p = .002$, $CFI = .96$, $SRMR = 0.5$, $RMSEA = .12$. Based on the CFI and $SRMR$ values, this model was good enough to justify an impact and value factor. The three value questions were averaged together to create an average score for value, and the three impact questions were averaged together to create an average score for impact. Scores ranged between 1-6, with higher numbers indicating more value or impact.

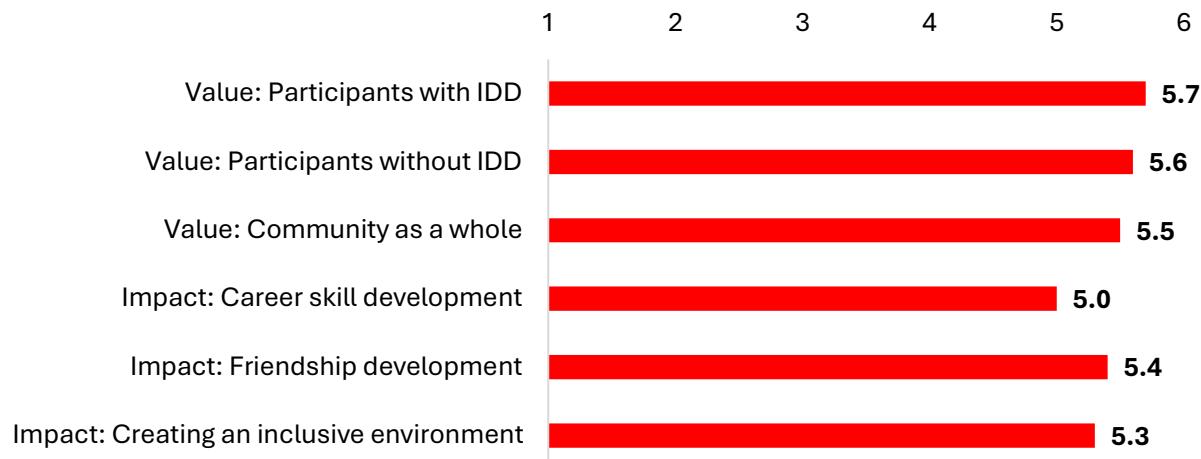
²⁹ $R^2 = .08$, $F(13, 131) = 0.94$, $p = .552$.

³⁰ $R^2 = .14$, $F(13, 131) = 1.76$, $p = .067$. No predictor variable was statistically significant, $ps \geq .105$.

³¹ In this dataset, every school who has an Inclusive Postsecondary Education program was part of the Think College dataset.

completed, nor the frequency that they communicate with or perceived support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program.

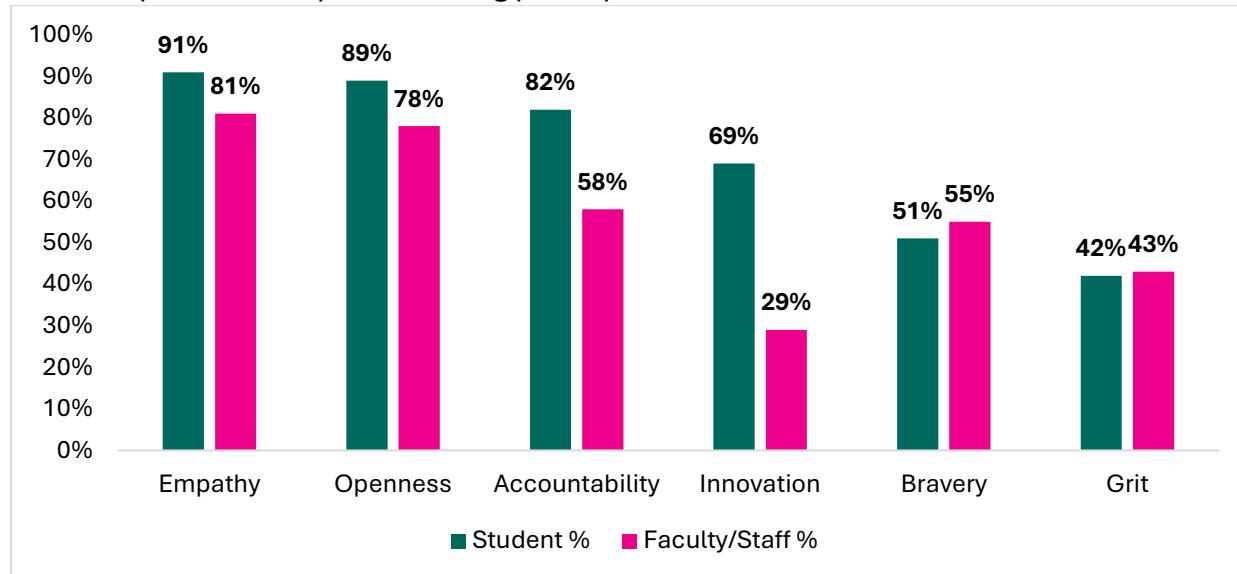
Figure C4.1. SOUCS college and university liaisons think that SOUCS provides value and impacts their college and university's community and environment.



Note: Ratings are on a 6-point scale, where higher values indicate greater perceived value or impact.

As seen in [Figure C4.2](#), both students and faculty or staff SOUCS liaisons thought that SOUCS provided opportunities for skill development for themselves (if they were a student liaison) or their students (if they were a faculty or staff liaison). Over 60% of SOUCS student liaisons thought that being a SOUCS liaison was related to their own development in empathy, openness, accountability, and innovation. Fifty-five percent of faculty or staff SOUCS liaisons reported that participants with and without IDD developed leadership skills such as empathy, openness, bravery, and accountability through their involvement in Unified Champion Schools.

Figure C4.2. Student SOUCS liaisons reported growth in their own leadership skills through their involvement in their college and university program, while other liaisons reported leadership skill development among participants with and without IDD.



Lastly, SOUCS liaisons thought that participating in SOUCS within their college or university was related to their future career or plans for community involvement:

- Most student SOUCS liaisons (93%) said SOUCS influenced their own future career plans or their plans for community involvement.
- About half of faculty or staff SOUCS liaisons (51%) thought that SOUCS influenced their participants' future career or plans for community involvement.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Results from this year's 2024-2025 SOUCS Annual Liaison Survey identified many insights for college and university SOUCS programs. This final section will highlight key findings and provide recommendations for the 2025-2026 academic year.

CSDE's first recommendation is that **SOUCS college and university programs should build upon existing collaborations within their college and university—particularly those involved in planning, coordinating, or hosting SOUCS activities—to support implementation.** SOUCS programs that have multiple groups that they collaborated or coordinated with to plan SOUCS activities or events also offered more SOUCS activities or events. Building upon these collaborations can lead to more extensive SOUCS college and university programs.

CSDE's second recommendation is to expand technical assistance and resource development to include clear onboarding materials for new participants, guidance for intentionally engaging both new and returning participants together, and

accessible resources that support diverse participant needs. SOUCS college and university liaisons have much prior experience with Special Olympics community events or SOUCS at the PreK-12 level. However, SOUCS college and university liaisons reported that approximately 50% of participants in their SOUCS program are having their first experience with Special Olympics as part of SOUCS at the college or University level. Providing support for both returning and new participants can help support the quality of SOUCS events within their college or university as well as their overall community.

CSDE's third recommendation is to suggest to SOUCS college and university programs that they should include individuals with IDD in leadership roles—either from students at an SOUCS college or university or from their community. Many SOUCS college and university programs include participants with IDD. However, the percentage of SOUCS college or university programs with individuals with IDD in leadership roles is relatively low. This recommendation aligns with findings from PreK-12 SOUCS evaluation, where leadership teams that include students with IDD are common, and the presence of leadership teams more broadly has been associated with higher-quality implementation and stronger indicators of inclusion and school-wide integration. Although the higher education context differs from PreK-12 settings, these findings suggest that inclusive leadership structures may similarly support program quality and inclusion at the college and university level.

CSDE's fourth recommendation is to sustain regular communication between SOUCS colleges and universities and Special Olympics U.S. Programs to support program coordination and capacity. SOUCS colleges and universities that received support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program offered more SOUCS Unified Sports and campus or community engagement activities. Similarly, more frequent communication between SOUCS liaisons and their Special Olympics U.S. Program was associated with a greater number of SOUCS Unified Sports, community sports, and campus or community engagement activities. Furthermore, SOUCS liaisons reported high satisfaction with their support from their Special Olympics U.S. Program. Finding ways to increase capacity for regular communication that supports SOUCS implementation can help SOUCS college and university programs grow.

CSDE's fifth recommendation is to promote SOUCS trainings for college and university liaisons to increase the percentage of SOUCS college and university liaisons or participants who complete SOUCS trainings. Trainings and certifications have been beneficial for SOUCS college and university liaisons and participants as well as their SOUCS college or university programs. However, 48% of SOUCS college or university liaisons reported that no one in their program received any SOUCS trainings. There are both a need and opportunity to increase the training capacity of SOUCS liaisons and participants to help SOUCS implementation.

CSDE's sixth recommendation is to integrate the benefits of SOUCS implementation into outreach, marketing, and recruitment efforts to communicate

the value of SOUCS participation more clearly to potential participants and campus partners. SOUCS college and university liaisons reported that SOUCS implementation was valuable for college and community participants. Benefits included adding value to their college or university, specific impacts for SOUCS participants, and leadership skill development. Building on this foundation, CSDE also recommends examining whether additional benefits vary by the type of Special Olympics activity or other aspects of program implementation.