

Reflections on the Phenomenon of Work Slackening Among Award-Winning University Student Cadres and Countermeasure Research

Yanan Gao*

Huaiyin Institute of Technology, Huai'an 223300, Jiangsu, China

**Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.*

Copyright: © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

Abstract: Student cadres serve as a crucial force in university campus governance, cultural development, and the cultivation of academic ethos. They play key roles in campus administration, academic atmosphere construction, and university-industry collaboration practices. The initial purpose of merit-based recognition and incentive systems is to encourage student cadres to assume responsibilities and exemplify leadership. However, a phenomenon has been observed where some student cadres at this institution exhibit a decline in performance after receiving university or college-level “Outstanding Student Cadre” honors, manifesting as negative work attitudes, reduced efficiency, and diminished team collaboration effectiveness. This not only hinders the cadres’ own development of applied competencies but also impacts the execution of various university tasks. Grounded in the practical context of student cadre work at Huaiyin Institute of Technology, this paper analyzes the significance of enhancing student cadre work enthusiasm from three perspectives: “personal growth,” “campus development,” and “talent cultivation.” Subsequently, addressing the characteristics of engineering students and shortcomings in existing management mechanisms, it proposes pathways—from the “individual,” “institutional,” and “environmental” dimensions—to strengthen value orientation, sustain motivation, and foster a supportive atmosphere, thereby promoting continuous advancement among student cadres and improving the overall effectiveness of student affairs at the institution.

Keywords: Student cadres; Incentive mechanisms; Campus management; Academic atmosphere construction; Cultivation of applied talents

Online publication: December 12, 2025

1. Introduction

The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China strategically emphasizes that “training a large number of high-quality personnel with both moral integrity and professional competence is a major issue of long-term importance for the country and the nation,” charting the course for talent cultivation in higher education^[1]. Similarly, the “Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of ‘Double First-Class’

in Higher Education Institutions” jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and other departments underscores the practical requirement to “advance curriculum reform, strengthen the integrated design of curricula and teaching across different training stages, and adhere to teaching students in accordance with their aptitude” [2]. Within university student management and affairs, student cadres function as a mainstay force [3]. They act as bridges for communication between staff and students and leaders in student self-governance and academic ethos enhancement, assisting the university in conducting student work and fostering a positive learning environment and campus culture. Universities typically employ various merit-based recognition methods to incentivize active participation, granting student cadres honors and awards to promote performance through evaluation. However, a recent phenomenon noted in some literature is the tendency for student cadres to “slack off after receiving awards” [4], which is detrimental to both the cadres’ own development and team building, hinders the smooth operation of university functions, and has become a pressing issue requiring resolution.

2. The significance of student cadre work enthusiasm in universities

Student cadres play a vital role in university student management.

(1) For personal growth

Enhancing Employability through Integration with Engineering Background. Many student cadres at this institution hail from engineering majors such as Mechanical Engineering, Electronics, and Computer Science. Their work responsibilities often intersect with practical applications of their disciplines. Highly motivated cadres can effectively integrate student work with professional skill development. For instance, organizing activities like “Engineering Training Competitions” or “Electronic Design Competitions” hones teamwork and resource coordination abilities, thereby deepening the application of specialized knowledge.

(2) For campus development

Ensuring Efficient Implementation of Engineering-Oriented Tasks. Student cadres serve as crucial links in engineering-focused tasks such as “Engineering Training Center Management,” “Internship Leadership,” and “Laboratory Coordination.” Their work enthusiasm directly influences execution outcomes.

(3) For talent cultivation

Fulfilling the Educational Goal of Integrating Moral and Technical Prowess. Student cadre work is a significant avenue for blending “moral education” with “technical education”. Enthusiastic cadres proactively fulfill responsibilities. For example, in “Engineering Students Serving the Community” volunteer initiatives, they research needs and organize support activities, applying professional skills while disseminating a spirit of collaboration. Conversely, work indolence undermines the educational function of these platforms.

3. Manifestations of work slackening among award-winning student cadres

Some university student cadres exhibit various signs of work slackening after receiving awards, primarily concentrated in three areas: negative work attitudes, decreased work efficiency, and poorer team collaboration [5].

(1) Negative work attitudes

Prior to receiving awards, student cadres at Huaiyin Institute of Technology and other universities

often demonstrate proactiveness in participating in campus activities, assisting faculty with class management, and serving fellow students, displaying a sense of ownership and responsibility. However, after being honored, some cadres exhibit a “relaxation of effort,” showing diminished drive towards tasks and faculty assignments, even displaying behaviors like procrastination and perfunctory completion. They may become particularly averse to routine administrative tasks, easily losing sight of the original intent of organizational commitment and service.

(2) Decreased work efficiency

The decline in proactive attitude directly impairs the work efficacy of student cadres. Procrastination becomes more prevalent, affecting overall work progress. When arranging tasks, they may merely follow procedures mechanically without seeking ways to improve efficiency or quality. Organizing campus events often relies on “tried-and-true” methods without adaptation to actual circumstances or needs, leading to rigid, inflexible activities with low participation rates. Faced with difficulties or problems, they tend to avoid them or shift blame rather than actively seeking solutions, allowing issues to persist or worsen.

(3) Deteriorating team collaboration

University student cadre work primarily involves collective effort. After receiving awards, some cadres exhibit reduced willingness and efficiency in cooperation. During group discussions, they are reluctant to voice their opinions and may disdain or disrespect others’ views, displaying pronounced individualism and capriciousness. In practice, they neglect communication and collaboration, failing to share workloads or potential issues with team members, resulting in low overall team synergy. Some cadres hold strong notions of personal interest and weak team spirit, basing decisions and actions primarily on individual benefit, sometimes even pursuing honors at the expense of other cadres’ interests, leading to competition and conflict within the team and an overall discordant organizational atmosphere.

4. Analysis of causes for work slackening among award-winning student cadres

The phenomenon of work slackening among university student cadres after receiving honors such as university/college-level “Outstanding Student Cadre” titles not only affects their personal growth and capability enhancement but also weakens the overall operational efficiency of student organizations and the healthy functioning of campus governance^[6]. This issue is not accidental but stems from a combination of factors at the individual, institutional, and environmental levels.

4.1. Individual factors

(1) Post-goal attainment lethargy

For some student cadres, merit-based recognition represents a significant, motivating objective in their student work. To achieve this goal, they invest considerable time and effort in striving for faculty satisfaction and peer recognition. However, once the goal is attained, a lack of subsequent targets leads to relaxation, resulting in diminished motivation and passion for work. They may cease efforts to improve their capabilities and efficiency, resorting to perfunctory completion and superficial efforts.

(2) Distorted self-perception

After receiving honors, some student cadres develop a skewed understanding of their responsibilities and mission. They may treat the honor as an identity label rather than an impetus for continuous improvement as a cadre, or even as an “exemplary representative,” feeling exempt from the need for sustained contribution and dedication to other students. An inflated self-assessment and overemphasis on past achievements can stifle the drive for further learning and progress.

(3) Failure to balance academics and work

Many student cadres must juggle student responsibilities with academic performance. Some may prioritize work for award consideration, often working late nights or even neglecting studies. After receiving awards, some cadres, due to poor academic performance or heightened self-perception, may relax their self-discipline. Unsatisfactory academic results can dampen work enthusiasm. Furthermore, since merit-based evaluations are often linked to academic grades, poor performance can preclude future honors, leading to frustration and disappointment, which in turn reduces proactive engagement in work. Additionally, some cadres lack effective time management and planning skills, struggling to accurately allocate time between work and studies, often leading to an imbalance. Prolonged conflict and divided attention can result in unsatisfactory outcomes in both areas.

4.2. Institutional factors

(1) Inadequate incentive and assessment mechanisms

Current incentive mechanisms for student cadres exhibit certain shortcomings. For instance, they are often uniform in form and lack long-term sustainability. Recognition primarily consists of honorary certificates and limited material rewards, which, while motivating in the short term, can lead to “reward fatigue” among cadres, gradually diminishing motivation. This is particularly true for previously awarded cadres; without subsequent recognition, issues like lack of initiative and confidence can easily arise. Concurrently, evaluation systems are often incomplete. On one hand, assessment rules may be unclear, lacking standardized frameworks and scientific indicator systems. On the other hand, evaluation processes might be irregular, overly influenced by peer relationships, compromising fairness and impartiality. Finally, the widespread lack of supervision and inspection mechanisms for potential misconduct in student work weakens the constraining force of these systems, enabling some cadres to perform their duties perfunctorily.

(2) Lack of post-award cultivation and support

After receiving honors, there is generally a systemic lack of follow-up cultivation and supportive measures for student cadres. Most higher education institutions have not established specialized development plans or training programs for cadres. Post-award, their competency structures and performance are not systematically adjusted or enhanced. The absence of procedural guidance and resource support means cadres facing difficulties or problems in practical work lack timely advice. Some faculty advisors may not provide sufficiently immediate feedback or guidance, leaving cadres feeling lost or at a loss, which affects their motivation. Furthermore, the lack of collaborative channels and information exchange platforms between departments deprives cadres of adequate support in cross-departmental and comprehensive tasks. The absence of inter-organizational cooperation invisibly increases work difficulty and pressure, weakening the cultivation of cadres’ comprehensive abilities.

4.3. Environmental factors

(1) Shifting attitudes of peers

After recognition, the attitudes of surrounding peers can change, impacting the cadres' psychological state and work performance. On one hand, praise and admiration from some students can foster arrogance in cadres, leading them to believe they have already gained sufficient recognition and lack motivation for further development. Interactions with peers might reveal a sense of superiority, causing them to overlook others' opinions, undermining their grassroots support base, and affecting their practical work effectiveness. On the other hand, jealousy might lead to passive-aggressive behavior from peers. This can create additional psychological pressure for cadres, even fostering resistance towards student work. When performing duties, non-cooperation from certain peers or unreasonable demands can increase operational difficulties, reducing the cadres' own work enthusiasm and initiative, resulting in negative attitudes and impacted performance.

(2) Campus management culture and atmosphere

A results-oriented campus culture that undervalues process, collaboration, and fosters excessive competition can negatively influence the values and attitudes of student cadres. In an environment where the pursuit of honors is paramount, cadres may undervalue personal capability enhancement, procedural experience, and collaborative work. Some might even engage in inappropriate behavior or excessively self-promote while disregarding other team members to win accolades, hindering the establishment of harmonious organizational relationships and a positive team atmosphere. Moreover, if the university's focus on organizing and judging campus activities lies solely on final outcomes and honors gained, without substantive recognition or evaluation of the implementation process, student participation, and particularly the efforts of student cadres, it may lead cadres to feel their efforts are unappreciated, discouraging further contribution. More seriously, such a utilitarian cultural atmosphere can exacerbate utilitarian thinking, causing individuals to focus excessively on personal interests and honors at the expense of peers and the original purpose of self-development, which is detrimental to healthy student growth.

5. Countermeasures to overcome work slackening among award-winning student cadres

5.1. Individual level

(1) Foster correct values and professional outlook

Universities can regularly conduct education on values and professional ethics for student cadres. Inviting relevant experts, scholars, outstanding cadres, and corporate leaders to share experiences can illustrate the benefits of holding correct values, helping cadres understand that personal value is realized through serving others, not the other way around. Additionally, establishing themed dialogue sessions on value construction can encourage discussion, promoting cadres' recognition, internalization, and practice of sound value beliefs.

(2) Develop long-term goals and plans

Universities can assign advisory faculty to help student cadres formulate personalized long-term and short-term development goals based on their strengths, interests, and career aspirations, breaking these down into actionable steps. Advisors can require cadres to set staged objectives and deadlines. Cadres

should also conduct regular self-assessments and make adjustments. Organizing experience-sharing sessions on goal management, where successful cadres share strategies, can provide insights and methods for others, enhancing the team's awareness and initiative in goal management.

(3) Learn time management and task delegation

Universities can offer training courses on time management and task allocation, covering theories and practical methods like the Pomodoro Technique or Eisenhower Matrix. Guiding cadres to use calendars, task management software, etc., for recording, categorizing, and prioritizing academic and work tasks can help them allocate time effectively and manage workloads according to urgency and importance.

5.2. Institutional level

(1) Establish diversified incentive mechanisms

Universities should construct multi-dimensional incentive systems encompassing material, spiritual, and opportunity-based rewards, providing a conducive development environment for student cadres.

(A) Material incentives: Beyond standard honorary certificates and monetary rewards, offer more targeted, differentiated, and practical rewards based on actual performance for more direct and noticeable motivational impact.

(B) Spiritual incentives: Utilize commendations and publicity of deeds to enhance cadres' sense of achievement and belonging. Feature columns like "Outstanding Student Cadre Profiles" on university websites, newspapers, and WeChat platforms can showcase their accomplishments, leveraging their role as "locomotives" for inspiration.

(C) Opportunity incentives: Provide more opportunities for cadres to exercise skills, innovate, and showcase abilities. Recommend outstanding cadres for high-level student leadership training or corporate internships, allowing them to demonstrate talent on broader platforms and lay a solid foundation for future careers.

(2) Improve assessment and supervision systems

Develop scientific and standardized evaluation criteria for student cadres. Standardize assessment standards and procedures, scientifically designing quantifiable indicators for work attitude, capability, performance, and teamwork. Establish a scientific evaluation system combining regular reviews and routine assessments, incorporating methods like student democratic evaluation, faculty advisor assessment, cadre self-reflection reports, and peer reviews to comprehensively and fairly reflect actual work performance.

5.3. Environmental level

(1) Strengthen campus culture construction

Organize cultural weeks, science and technology festivals, sports events, and other activities to foster a positive and uplifting campus culture, cultivating a spirit of unity, collaboration, and dedication among cadres. Enhance the promotion and guidance of campus culture through media like campus radio, bulletin boards, and websites to reinforce cadres' team consciousness and commitment to service.

(2) Implement peer education and mutual aid

Regularly hold exchange meetings or seminars for cadres to share experiences, summarize lessons, and learn from each other. Address common work issues through forum discussions to analyze causes,

find solutions, and establish cooperative support networks. Furthermore, create structured peer support groups for student cadres based on majors, strengths, or work areas, facilitating regular internal communication and mutual assistance. This peer education and support model enhances cohesion and solidarity within the cadre team, promoting collective improvement.

(3) Optimize faculty-student communication and feedback mechanisms

Create favorable conditions for communication between student cadres and faculty. Cadres should proactively communicate with advisors, reporting on work, raising issues, seeking help, and accepting guidance. Faculty, in turn, should initiate communication with cadres, understanding their work and personal circumstances, showing concern for academic and life challenges, and providing guidance and support. Simultaneously, establish robust feedback mechanisms allowing cadres to promptly receive evaluations and suggestions from faculty and peers, enabling targeted improvements in work methods and behavior. Implementing reward mechanisms for constructive communication and continuous improvement based on feedback can stimulate intrinsic motivation for self-refinement and enhance overall competence.

6. Conclusion

In summary, this paper identifies the phenomenon of work slackening among university student cadres post-award, outlining issues related to attitude, efficiency, teamwork, and impacts on the individual, organization, and campus. Analysis from the individual, institutional, and environmental perspectives reveals contributing factors. Corresponding countermeasures are proposed: individuals need to establish correct values, set ambitious goals, and enhance time management awareness; institutionally, it is essential to improve incentives, assessment, supervision, and long-term cultivation systems; environmentally, efforts should focus on refining the campus and peer milieu, along with faculty-student communication mechanisms, to foster the development of university student cadres.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Gong S, 2021, Teaching Reform of Statistics Mass Innovation talent Training under the background of Big Data. *Science and Education Forum*, 2021(9): 67–69.
- [2] Han C, 2022, Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity for Building a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects—Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. People's Publishing House, Beijing: 36.
- [3] Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, Ministry of Finance of the People's Republic of China, National Development and Reform Commission, 2018, Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of “Double First-Class” in Higher Education Institutions. Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, visited on November 12, 2025, http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A22/moe_843/201808/t20180823_345987.html.
- [4] Fei L, Shen L, Chen S, 2015, An Empirical Study on the Construction of a Cultivation System for Young

University Student Leaders. *China Youth Study*, 2015(8): 93–96 + 87.

- [5] Pei F, Wang K, Zhou D, et al., 2010, Causes and Countermeasures for the Decline in Work Enthusiasm of University Student Cadres. *Journal of Ningbo Institute of Education*, 12(6): 32–34.
- [6] Zhou R, 2016, Causes and Countermeasures for the Attenuation of Work Enthusiasm Among University Student Cadres. *Western China Quality Education*, 2(14): 41 + 43.
- [7] Pei F, Wang K, Zhou D, et al., 2010, Causes and Countermeasures for the Decline in Work Enthusiasm of University Student Cadres. *Journal of Ningbo Institute of Education*, 12(6): 32–34.

Publisher's note

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.