

Husky Experience Phase 2: Executive Summary

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In this document, we report on Phase 2 of UW-IT's Husky Experience research. The Husky Experience Discovery report, released by UW-IT in autumn 2014, included findings and recommendations for improving students' ability to discover and act on co-curricular opportunities at the UW. In autumn 2015, UW-IT began the Phase 2 effort, which includes two studies: one to expand our understanding of how undergraduate students consume information (Student Information Consumption study), and one to establish a picture of the existing business processes and tools that administratively enable student engagement (Opportunity Providers study).

The Husky Experience Discovery Report recommended significant improvements to the data and process landscape. The two studies that comprise Phase 2 confirm many of these initial recommendations. Additionally, the studies in Phase 2 provide complementary perspectives on a central problem: How can the UW ensure that efforts to facilitate students' engagement with co-curricular events and opportunities are effective?

Key Findings

Student Information Consumption (SIC):

1. Students consume (receive and seek) information differently based on where they are in their academic career.
2. Students consume information differently based on where they are in their journey toward any one co-curricular experience.
3. The design and source of information greatly influences information consumption.
4. Students use a variety of information channels for different purposes.
5. Students desire a central listing of co-curricular events and opportunities.

Opportunity Providers (OP):

1. OP capacity is diminished by stand-alone, complex, manual tools and processes.
2. OPs have an acknowledged gap in marketing skills.
3. OPs are not benefiting from meaningful program evaluation.

The results indicate that, at present, communication between opportunity providers and students is inefficient—there is a fundamental disconnect between students’ information consumption behavior and OPs’ outreach practices. This is largely due to two factors: 1) OPs’ hands are tied by multiple unintegrated technologies, data gaps and complex business practices, 2) a previous lack of understanding of student behaviors around information consumption and motivations for engagement. Yet it also seems clear that even relatively minor changes—in information design, for example—may yield major improvements in the efforts and satisfaction of both groups studied.

Major Recommendations

The recommendations in this report consider first the student context and students’ changing information needs. Steps 1-3, outlined below, describe a sequential approach that takes into account this student experience. Steps 2 and 3 are directly related to repairing the disconnect between students’ information consumption behavior and OPs’ outreach practices. Steps 4 and 5 address OP capacity and could be implemented in parallel with steps 1-3.

1. **Focus on social catalysts**, the person-to-person interactions that catalyze student interest in co-curriculars. Information about co-curricular activities does not become relevant until students have developed an internal motivation to get involved.
2. **Make sure information can be found.** Once students are interested in co-curricular involvement, their first action is to seek information, typically through Google and other search tools.
3. **Improve outreach and targeting efforts.** OPs can improve their outreach efforts by adopting best practices for information design and using data available in UW systems to target relevant student groups.
4. **Reduce administrative burden and increase OP capacity.** OP’s current tools and processes limit their ability to effectively target and serve students. Their capacity is not sustainable as enrollment increases.
5. **Advance the maturity of program evaluation among OPs to look beyond participation rates.** Over time and with better evaluation data, program offerings will improve, but they need to align to a more clearly articulated Husky Experience.

The report provides further details on how to implement these recommendations.

Table of Contents

Key Findings.....	1
Major Recommendations.....	2
Student Information Consumption (SIC).....	4
Study Overview.....	4
SIC Findings.....	5
1. Students Consume (Receive and Seek) Information Differently Based on Where They Are in Their Academic Career.....	5
2. Students Consume Information Differently Based on Where They Are in Their Journey Toward Any One Co-curricular Experience.....	7
3. Within a Student’s Context, the Design and Source of Information Greatly Influences Information Consumption.....	9
4. Students Use a Variety of Information Channels for Different Purposes.....	11
5. Students Desire a Central Listing of Co-curricular Events and Opportunities.....	14
6. Influences on Attendance.....	14
Opportunity Providers (OPs).....	15
Study Overview.....	15
OP Findings.....	16
1. Stand-Alone, Complex, Manual Tools and Processes Diminish OP Capacity.....	16
2. OPs Acknowledge Skill Gap in Marketing Skills.....	18
3. OPs are Not Benefiting from Meaningful Program Evaluation.....	19
Recommendations.....	19
A. Support a Variety of Methods for Social Catalyzing.....	19
B. Disseminate Information in Alignment with Student Behaviors.....	20
C. Target Communications to Meet Students’ Needs and Interests.....	21
D. Reduce Administrative Burden and Increase OP Capacity.....	22
E. Better Define and Evaluate Success of Husky Experience and OP Programs.....	22
Conclusion.....	23

Husky Experience Phase 2: Report and Recommendations

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Introduction

We report here on Phase 2 of UW-IT's Husky Experience research. The Husky Experience Discovery report, released by UW-IT in autumn 2014, included findings and recommendations for improving students' ability to discover and act on co-curricular opportunities at the UW. In autumn 2015, UW-IT began the Phase 2 effort, which includes two studies: one to expand our understanding of how undergraduate students consume information (Student Information Consumption study), and one to establish a picture of the existing business processes and tools that administratively enable student engagement (Opportunity Providers study). Following are the findings and recommendations from this second phase.

Student Information Consumption (SIC)

The goal of this user research was to understand how students consume information about UW-related events and opportunities in order to identify effective information pathways between students and co-curricular opportunity providers.

Study Overview

We conducted in-depth interviews with 20 students from all three campuses. Our interview participants included women and men from a range of class standings and departments. Interviews focused on understanding students' information ecology by investigating how students find, receive, process and utilize information about UW-related events and opportunities. We sought to identify students' general information consumption behaviors, their preferred information channels and the factors that influence consumption (e.g., information design and format, timing). In addition, we wanted to determine whether students perceive the information they receive as relevant to them, what factors inform this relevance and what improvements students would like to see in information channels.

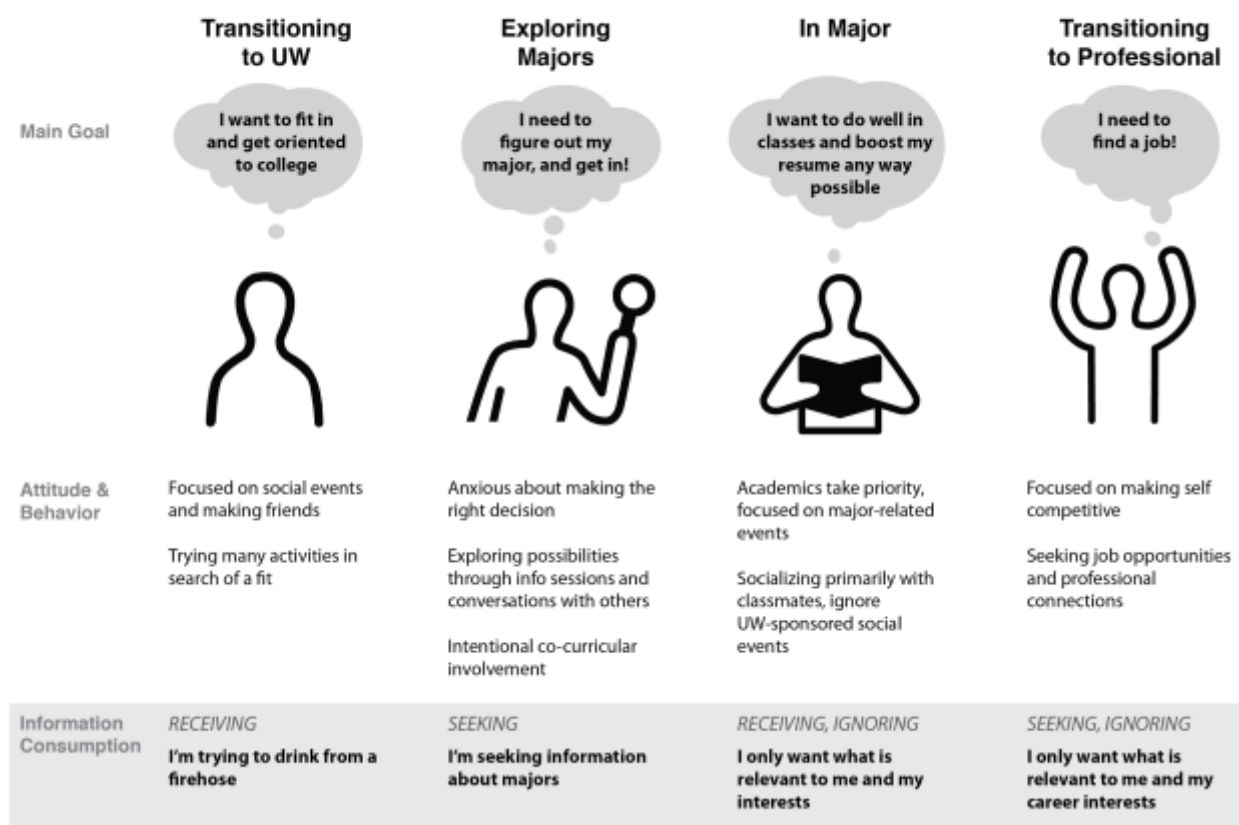
We conducted a second round of interviews with five students to better understand how students came to participate in larger opportunities (jobs, internships, etc.), what influenced their planning and decision-making, and what role information played in this process. The interviewees included both women and men, freshmen through juniors, from a range of departments.

SIC Findings

1. Students Consume (Receive and Seek) Information Differently Based on Where They Are in Their Academic Career

Students' information consumption behaviors change as they move through their academic careers and their goals and interests become more defined. We identified four stages of a student's academic career in which these behaviors differ: when they are first *transitioning to the UW*; when they are *exploring majors*; when they are *in their major*; and when they are *transitioning to the professional realm*. These stages roughly align with class standing but may overlap. We found that students in each stage were consumed with a particular goal, and that these goals in turn affected students' attitudes and behaviors, and ultimately, their information consumption (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Academic Career: A Student's Context



1a. Transition to the UW

Students in this stage of their academic career are focused on finding their way at the University and figuring out how they fit in. They receive a deluge of information from a variety of sources about “what’s going on” on campus, usually “today or this week”—information that might quickly be passed on to friends. These students are especially interested in social events—sponsored by Student Life, residence halls, clubs and so on. Regardless of the event, they are likely to prefer attending with a friend or group of friends.

1b. Exploring Majors

Settled in to UW life but not yet in a major, these students are consumed with choosing and applying to a major and identifying a backup in case they do not get into their major of choice. They are focused on learning about major course requirements, comparative ease of acceptance, etc., and they seek this information through department websites, info sessions and upperclassmen; almost all the students we spoke with told us they did not seek this information from an adviser. Several students cited involvement in co-curriculars, especially academic-related clubs, as helping them to decide on their major.

1c. In Major

Once students have chosen and been accepted into a major, they tend to devote themselves almost entirely to their schoolwork, and have little time for much else. Their world narrows; students in this stage attend events primarily in their own school or department, and socialize primarily with classmates or close friends. They also use strategies to filter email and other information channels to receive only relevant material; messages about UW-sponsored social events are commonly ignored in favor of department-related information and information related to internships, research or leadership opportunities—any interesting experience that will look good on their résumés.

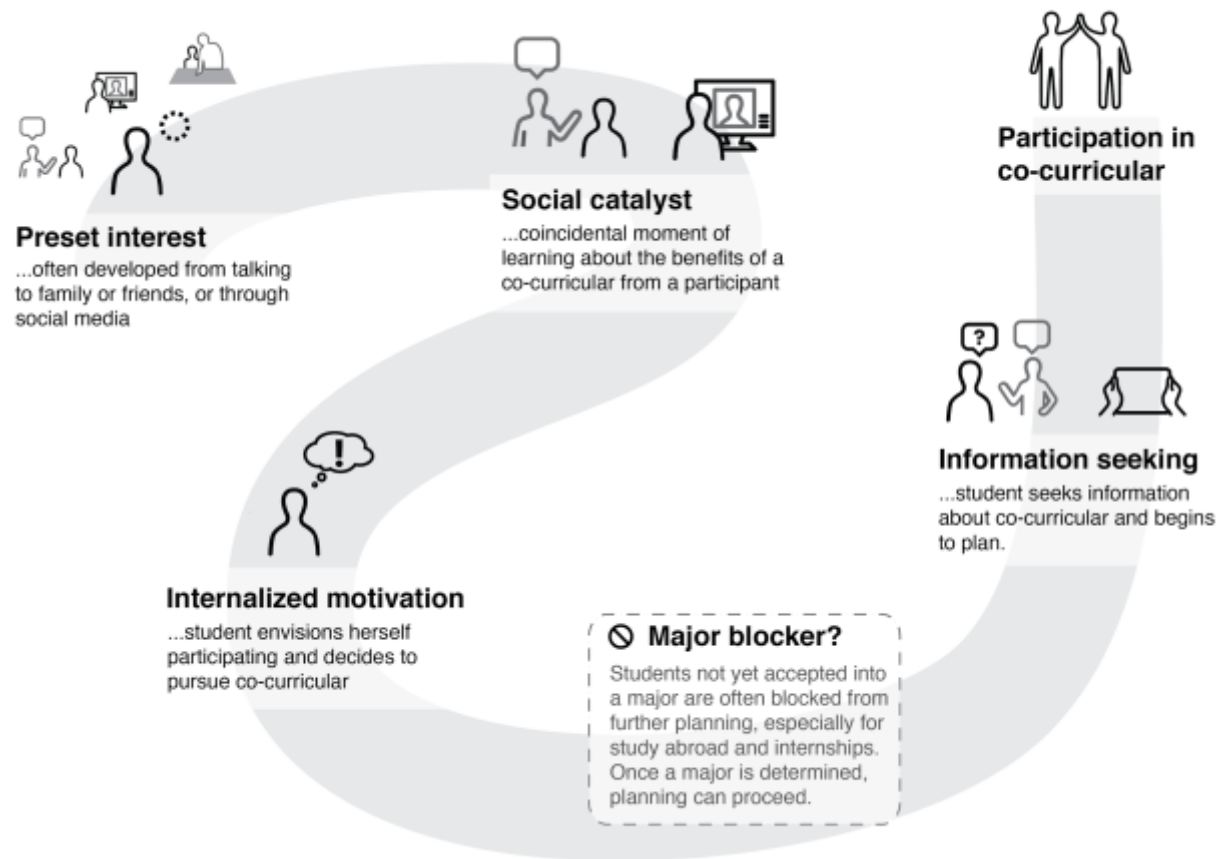
1d. Transition to Professional

In this stage of their academic career, students are focused on getting a job in their field of interest. Students report polishing their résumé and interview skills, attending job fairs and other career-related events, and enhancing their professional networks. They focus on any information that is specifically relevant to their career interests or sent from someone who knew of their interests; other information is usually ignored.

2. Students Consume Information Differently Based on Where They Are in Their Journey Toward Any One Co-Curricular Experience

Students may get involved in any number of co-curricular activities during their time at the UW, but information in and of itself is not enough to inspire students' participation. Rather, in our research, we found that interactions with experienced participants were necessary precursors to making any information about a co-curricular relevant.

Figure 2. Journey Towards a Co-curricular



The data we gathered about student involvement in co-curricular activities was remarkably consistent, allowing us to map a typical “journey toward co-curriculars.” Regardless of where students were in their academic career or which co-curricular experience they were talking about, they described the same progression of phases. It was common for students to be at different phases of the journey for different co-curricular experiences. We outline the journey in Figure 2 and below.

2a. Preset Interest

A student almost always develops an initial, general interest in a co-curricular activity from a family member or friend who emphasizes or models the value of that experience. This may

happen in person or through social media, and it often happens before a student starts college: “My mom is a project manager, so it is just been ingrained in me since I was young. ‘Be a leader in some way’.” Sometimes it is a student’s own previous experience that generates the interest: “I lived in Italy for 3 years and went to a public high school, and it was great learning material from different points of view.” At this stage, the interest exists but is dormant.

2b. Social Catalyst

This dormant interest is activated when a student hears about how a particular co-curricular experience personally benefited a peer or older student. This almost always occurs through an incidental social interaction in person or via social media: “My roommate is a bio major and got involved in a bio lab fall of sophomore year. She had a great mentor and was put on a project she was really excited about. I wanted an experience like that.” Sometimes a student’s social context can also act as a catalyst: “Everyone around me was starting to apply for internships, putting together an online portfolio, and I thought I should, too.”

2c. Personal Motivation

At this point in the journey, the student decides to get involved. She can envision herself participating in this co-curricular opportunity and has a good idea of what she might gain from the experience.

2d. Information Seeking

At this stage, a student finally seeks information about how to get involved in a co-curricular and begins to plan. Students typically seek information about their selected co-curricular activity via Google search and their social network. Friends and classmates are primary sources of information. Other information sources that we heard mentioned were HuskyJobs and department websites for internship opportunities, and department websites and advisers in the Study Abroad Office for study abroad opportunities. While students in this stage may pay more attention to emails, posters and other notices about events relevant to their particular co-curricular interest (e.g., job fair, résumé-writing workshops), they were much more likely to seek information than to wait to receive it.

2e. Major Blocker

Many students reported a common roadblock on the co-curricular journey. Students often get stalled in their planning during the process of applying to or being accepted into a major, especially if they are interested in study abroad or internships. They may have gathered enough information to know that the options open to them will differ greatly based on their major or having “in major” status. For example, all students we spoke with wanted an internship but had trouble finding one they were suited for or that matched their interests. They described applying to internships only to repeatedly learn that they needed to be in a major, or have more experience. Some departments sponsor internship and job fairs open only to majors.

In addition, the ease with which students can study abroad is often determined by a major's course requirements and if/when the department offers their own study abroad programs. As one student told us, "Getting into my major is my first priority. Then figuring out how I can use study abroad to take classes related to my major comes second." Selecting and applying to a major weighs heavily on students' minds and often blocks them from taking further action: "Well, I wasn't accepted into the Informatics program at that point, and I was like, I can't do a whole quarter/semester of study abroad, in case I don't get into my major and I have to rethink the whole 'What am I going to do with my life?' thing." Students at all levels perceived the curricular logistics associated with study abroad as challenging.

With most other co-curricular activities, students did not encounter this major roadblock. Students not yet in a major were more likely to be involved in co-curricular activities that had a low barrier to entry, such as clubs or student-run organizations. The students we interviewed reported high participation in clubs, especially Freshman year. Fellow club members often became social catalysts for new co-curricular journeys. Some students, for example, took on leadership positions in clubs and spoke about club members who encouraged them to run for office. Clubs also provided opportunities for community engagement. However, pre-major students suspected that they were missing out on certain valuable major-specific co-curricular opportunities, such as lectures and panels, because they were only available to students already in the major.

3. Within a Student's Context, the Design and Source of Information Greatly Influences Information Consumption

Three factors—where a student is in their academic career, where they are in their journey towards a particular co-curricular, and their mindset (goals, attitudes)—appear to be the most important factors in determining whether a student finds information from an opportunity provider *useful*. Two additional factors, the design of the information (its presentation) and the source (sender), greatly influence whether a student *consumes* the information.

Figure 3. Student Context and Information Consumption

Example: Junior, In Major

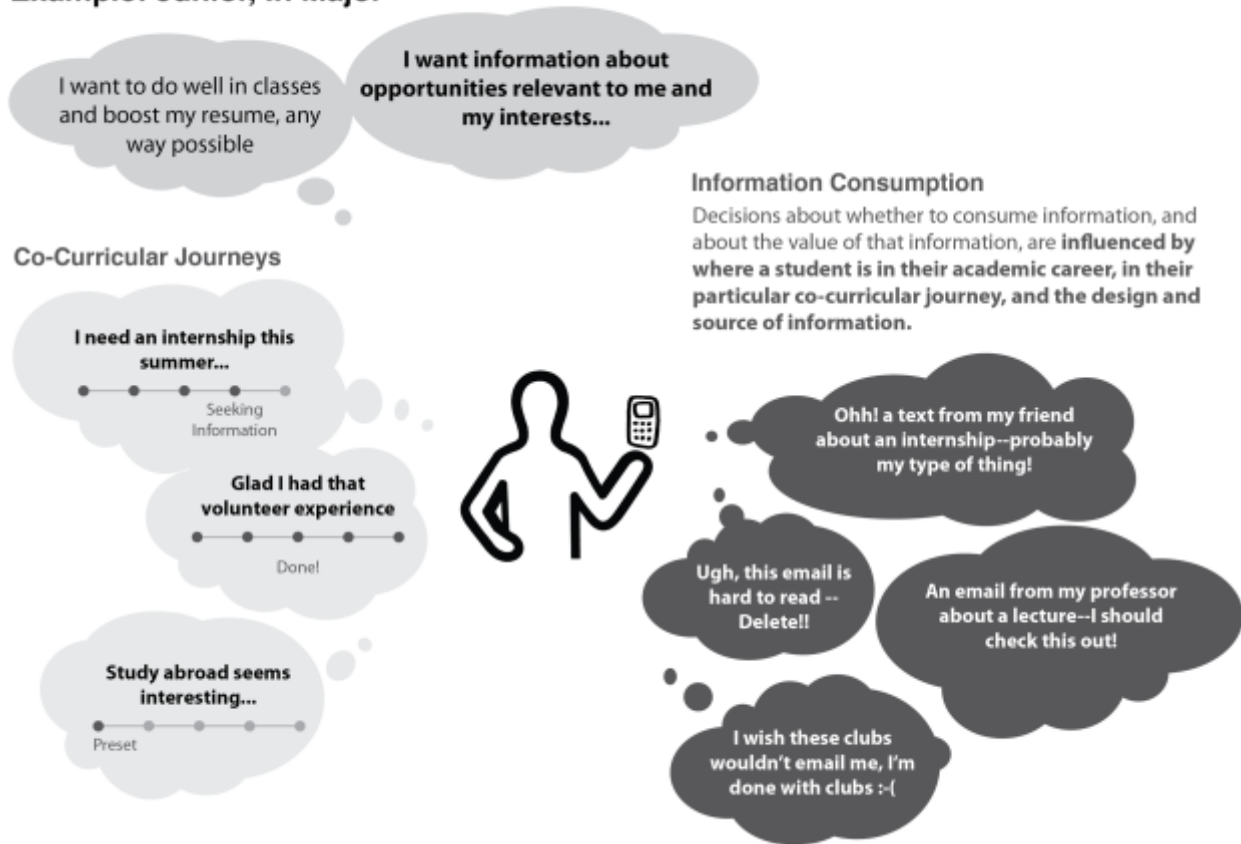


Figure 3 illustrates a student's entire information consumption context. In this example, the student is a junior in the "In Major" phase of her academic career. As a result, she's focused on her classwork and on acquiring experiences that will look good on a résumé. The lower left of Figure 3 shows where the student is in her journey for three co-curricular opportunities: She's now in the "Seeking Information" stage for an internship, and she's grateful for the experience she gained from volunteering and has no information needs for this co-curricular. Study abroad is just a preset interest at this point. The thought bubbles to the right of the student indicate how the design and source of information she's receiving influence whether or not she wants to read the message and whether she thinks it will be of value.

3a. Design

Information design is key—the visual presentation and organization of information came up repeatedly in our interviews with students. Students want to be able to get all the basic information at a glance, including the title, location and time of an event as well as enough description for them to decide if they want to attend. Facebook, for example, allows students to easily scan postings for critical event information (name, time, location) and drill down to find

additional details if needed. Several students said that a clear, succinct and informative subject line for an email helped them decide if they would read it or not. Students were appreciative of posters that had “eye-catching designs,” but also remarked that posters often failed to provide enough detail to make a decision about attending.

Information design plays a role in ease of reading as well. Students remarked that long emails or newsletters were cumbersome and difficult to scan for items of interest or relevant information about an event or opportunity (e.g., application criteria). Students rarely read these in their entirety. The issues students raised about clarity and visual presentation are addressed in well-established best practices for information design.

3b. Source

The source of information also influenced students’ information consumption. Students described assigning a relative importance or value to information based on the sender. For example, students expected that information sent from friends would likely be of interest since friends knew them well. In addition, they believed emails from instructors or lab directors were likely to contain information that would be highly relevant to class or to lab research. Some students mentioned instructors who had taken it upon themselves to send or publish a list of curated events targeted to their students—these provided a source of information about events and opportunities relevant to their careers that students did not find anywhere else.

Students also evaluated the sender’s relationship to the content being sent; they looked for reputable sources—Is the sender an authority on the subject/content?—and assessed whether the content was “appropriate” or “right” for the sender to send. Students were more likely to read an email about a hiking trip if sent from a friend, for example, than if by the institution.

4. Students Use a Variety of Information Channels for Different Purposes

Students do not have a preferred information channel; they use a variety of information channels and platforms for different purposes and are likely to continue to do so. Their behavior is influenced in part by the information available in each channel, by channel features (e.g., good information design, notifications) and by a desire to clearly separate social and academic communications. In addition, we found that students change how they use different information channels over the course of their college career, due to changing goals and mindset.

We were not surprised to find that tools/platforms like Facebook featured prominently as a source of co-curricular information for students, but we were surprised to learn the degree to which word-of-mouth also played a prominent role in learning about co-curricular opportunities. We learned that, in general, students *do not* feel overwhelmed by the email they get. They have a variety of strategies for dealing with the deluge of email, and many reported reading their email. The specific findings about each information channel are organized in Table 1 below.

Aside from Facebook, no other popular social network platform (e.g., SnapChat, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) was used by students for obtaining information about co-curricular events and opportunities. In fact, students reported not using Twitter and LinkedIn much at all.

Also of note is that students reported that several UW information channels—UW Campus Calendar, UW.edu, digital displays (found in the HUB, residence halls and libraries) and the daily student newspapers—are rarely if ever relied upon as sources of information. Students described a variety of reasons why these channels were not useful: because the information channel has poor usability, because they do not know a particular information channel exists, or because the information provided in a channel isn't timely.

In general, the students we spoke to did not find redundancy of information (information seen in more than one channel) to be a problem. In fact, most often redundancy was welcomed. Students reported that information cross-posting, as well as event reminders, signaled to them that the event was well-planned.

Table 1. Specific Information Channel Findings

Information Channel	Channel Uses
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Used heavily by UW Seattle and Tacoma students to find out about and to track events. UW Bothell students did not use FB as much. ● Allows students to easily scan postings for critical event information (name, time, location) and to drill down to find additional details if needed. ● Students appreciated (and frequently relied upon) notification feature, and the ease with which they could share information with others via forwarding or tagging. ● Students did not want to receive information from high-level UW services or administration in Facebook, and they wanted to receive event information from UW departments in places in addition to FB (e.g., emails, MyUW) because those events do not tend to “rise to the top” on FB. ● Some students have little desire to use, or are not accustomed to using FB.
Word-of-mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 60% of students hear about events from their peers. ● Word-of-mouth was especially important to Tacoma and Bothell students for learning about events; it was used more often than FB on these campuses.
Texting (SMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students use SMS, not email, to pass information about events and opportunities to one another. ● Students often send each other photos of posters via SMS. ● WeChat was important to international community, because group SMS is problematic for international phones/phone plans.

Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most frequent source of emails about events and opportunities come from department listservs. 70% of students reported receiving these emails at least weekly. • Students rarely send email to each other. Students are far more likely to text their friends than email. • Students do not report feeling overwhelmed by email. • Students have filtering strategies for email; few students read all the email they receive. • Long emails were difficult to scan for items of interest or relevant information (e.g., application criteria), often not read in entirety.
SnapChat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snapchats did not contain enough details about events to be useful, and students often received information about an event while or after it happened.
Department web sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students often access department websites prior to enrolling in major; they go there to find out about info sessions and program requirements, may find out about events here incidentally. • A couple of students mentioned going to department websites to look for job opportunities or internships.
UW.edu (UW main website)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students reported not using the main UW website after arriving to campus and first enrolling in classes.
UW Campus Calendar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most students were unaware of the UW campus calendars, what they contain, and how to access them.
Posters & flyers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A frequent source of information about events and opportunities, with posters were more frequent sources than handouts/flyers. • Usually seen in places where students have time to linger/are forced to linger (bathroom, elevator, microwave, hallway outside of class, place where they work). • Students were appreciative of posters that had “eye-catching designs,” but also remarked that posters often failed to provide enough detail to make a decision about attending. • Similarly, they described disorganized bulletin boards that do not provide any means for filtering the information. (An exception was a bulletin board at UWT that separated postings for different types of events.)
Sandwich boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signify big and/or well planned and promoted event.
Digital displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students saw displays but did not consider them a useful source of information. • "Carousel" content passes too quickly, does not engage students. • Students tend to know where these displays are, but do not always frequent those areas.
Daily student newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically students only find information about events that have already passed.

5. Students Desire a Central Listing of Co-Curricular Events and Opportunities

Despite a lack of a preferred information channel, students desire a central, comprehensive listing of events and opportunities. We heard that students sometimes do not find out about opportunities in time for them to act on them, and students are aware that there are UW events and opportunities that they are not hearing about. Students want a central resource that they can filter or personalize based on their current interests and academic career phase, one that they can continue to utilize as their interests and needs change.

Students expressed a variety of formats for this central resource, including a listing that can be subscribed to and/or is emailed to them; a listing that is presented on a calendar; or a listing that is shown in MyUW.

Students also described a central resource that is filterable based on interests, academic career phase, topical interest, class, major or intended major, department, campus, type of event or opportunity.

Students want to easily identify new listings and each entry's critical information, such as deadlines and inclusion/exclusion criteria. They also want to easily drill down into entries to get further information.

Finally, it is worth considering key features from other platforms—like Facebook's tagging, event forwarding or notification—that easily enable students to pass on or act on the information once they receive it.

While these findings identify the need for a central and comprehensive listing, and while students articulated desired features of a system, specific requirements for such a system would need to be identified through a user-centered design process.

6. Influences on Attendance

Even when students were interested in events they heard about, a number of factors influenced whether or not they would—or could—attend.

6a. Event timing

One of the greatest factors was timing and compatibility with students' schedules. We found that students typically added more events to their calendar than they actually attended, knowing that last-minute decisions would be made based on their current workload or available energy. While most students are busy, commuting students and those with heavy job schedules told us it was particularly difficult for them to attend events because of schedule conflicts. They complained that many events were held in the evening, after their last bus left or during a time they had to work.

6b. Information Timing

In addition, students spoke about not getting information about events in time to adequately plan. This was especially true for events in which students needed to prepare materials in advance, such as a résumé, or opportunities with an application deadline. Most students reported planning their schedules at least one week in advance; two or more weeks were preferred in some cases. Students said more lead time allowed them to shift their work schedule in order to attend an event or rally buddies to join them.

6c. Companions

Friends, not surprisingly, were a major influence on students' attendance at events. Students were more likely to attend events when they had buddies to go with, or if they knew other acquaintances would be there, especially for social events or events they were attending for the first time. More surprising was that students' perceptions of how well an event was planned influenced whether they wanted to attend. Events that were advertised in multiple channels and that had reminders close to/including the day of the event were perceived as being better planned.

Opportunity Providers (OPs)

The goal of this analysis was to understand how administrative offices (“opportunity providers” or “OPs”) facilitate student engagement with co-curricular opportunities.

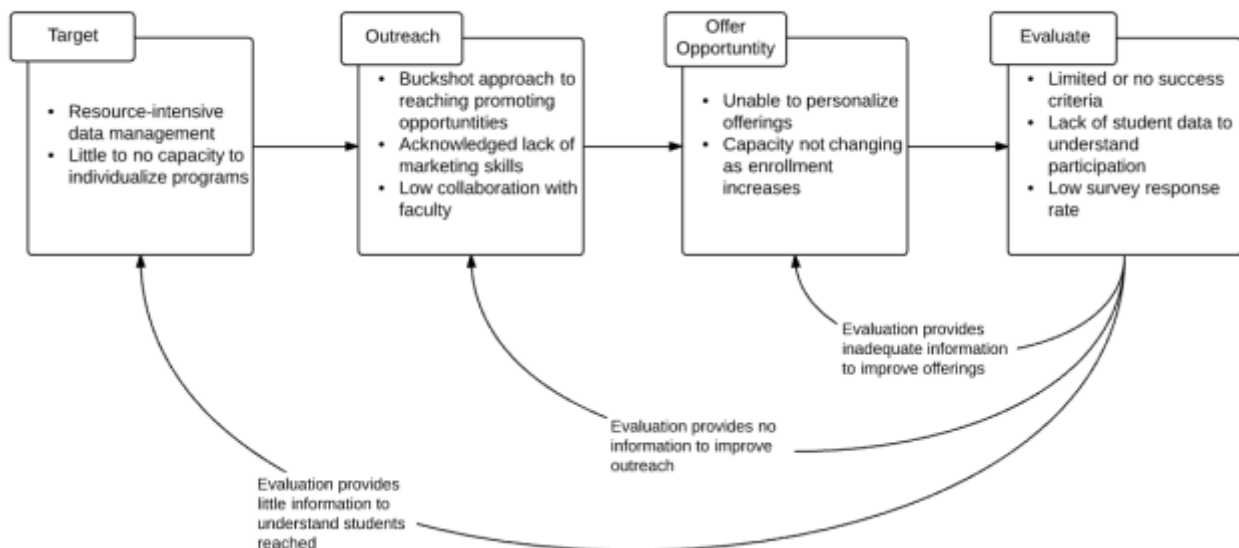
Study Overview

In collaboration with leadership in UW-IT, UAA and the Provost's Husky Experience taskforces, a small team of analysts identified a list of 25 OPs to target for one-on-one and small group interviews. This list consisted of programs varying in size and covering each of the themes of the Husky Experience within the offices of UAA, Student Life and OMAD across all three campuses. We asked this group to describe their end-to-end process for offering co-curricular events or opportunities, including how they planned for, advertised, conducted and evaluated these offerings. As they were mentioned, we captured the tools that are used to support work in this space. We analyzed the results from all OPs and in so doing, categories for activities (e.g., “message groups of students”) emerged and are discussed throughout our findings. More about technical tools can be found in the Systems Inventory Appendix. We also interviewed staff from four academic departments that represented a range of competitiveness, size and resources to support student engagement. Because OPs rely on the advising community as a critical step in the process of connecting students with opportunities, we also conducted a series of focus groups with advisers, with participants representing pre-major advising, departmental advising and the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity.

OP Findings

OPs manage their programs using a wide variety of unintegrated tools and manual processes, both of which result in a significant amount of manual and redundant work. Most OPs report that they do not have access to the data to inform a strategy for targeting their desired student population. They also lack the data to gauge the success of their programs and outreach efforts, and to make adjustments to better serve students. OPs are administratively taxed and report struggling with connecting students to the opportunities that make up the Husky Experience.

Figure 4. Resource-intensive tools and processes to organize data and promote opportunities



1. Stand-Alone, Complex, Manual Tools and Processes Diminish OP Capacity

As a group, the OPs we talked to identified 70, mostly decentralized, online and desktop tools they use to manage their programs, which require significant maintenance, redundant work and a great deal of staff capacity. OPs report inadequate staff to handle outreach and support for students and express concern about scalability of their programs as enrollment increases.

1a. Maintaining student lists and messaging groups causes excess administrative burden

Messaging groups, which OPs use to promote opportunities, send reminders, newsletters, deadlines, surveys, etc., emerged in our research as the most significant source of administrative burden. Building and maintaining lists of students to message is the most complex sub-process, as it involves multiple steps, stand-alone tools (e.g., Enterprise Data Warehouse, Convio, Listservs) and lots of manual work.

The Enterprise Data Warehouse (EDW) is the most common source of student information for these lists, though it is accessed inconsistently by OPs. Some pull the student data themselves, while many do not have the training or permissions to do so and rely instead on colleagues across campus for help. Typically, data is gathered from the EDW on an annual or quarterly basis. While this keeps data roughly up to date with the changing student population, it also requires students who wish to opt out of communication to do so on a regular, repetitive basis.

OPs also often populate the lists of students to contact manually, with students opting into communication, for example via paper sign-up sheets or from liking a particular facebook page. Opting in is more common when targeting is based on sensitive or personal information, such as minority or LGBTQ status.

Once the OP gathers lists of students, they are most commonly maintained in multiple Excel spreadsheets. In one case, we heard an OP state that “hundreds of groups” are created and maintained in Excel every year.

Using these lists to send messages to students introduces a related set of challenges. OPs heavily rely on Convio and listservs as promotional channels. Because Convio does not provide sorting functionality, student lists must be maintained separately in Excel. Each time the data needs to be changed, OPs need to manually re-load to Convio.

The most commonly used channel for messaging students is the advising listserv (advisers@uw.edu). Almost all OPs utilize the advising listserv as a primary means of getting their message out, and most do so with little confidence. We heard from advisers that they do not forward the majority of the messages they receive from the listserv, highlighting a key breakdown in the messaging process as well as a tremendous amount of misdirected effort.

1b. OPs maintain complex processes to schedule programs and manage calendars

Promoting offerings is not the only source of administrative burden; scheduling activities also takes significant OP capacity. Scheduling activities can range from one-on-one advising to selecting dates for events of all sizes and arranging event space up to several years in advance of an event. Currently, the OP community uses 20 unintegrated systems, requiring staff to manually enter scheduling information in multiple places, resulting in redundancy, complexity and mistakes. In one case, the entire OP office is required to participate in double checking calendars for schedule conflicts. In other cases, the calendar that the staff uses internally does not extend to students. Finally, depending on the tool used, many OPs are unable to view space availability. Due to the unnecessary complexity of the tools and processes available, what should be a routine administrative task requires significant effort, strategic thinking, long term planning, personal relationships and tenacity.

1c. Lack of available student data compounds problems with targeting and evaluating

OPs lack the data they need for targeting the right student audience as well as understanding the counts and profiles of those who do participate.

While we know that targeted messages are more effective overall, OPs generally reach out to the entire undergraduate population, via numerous channels and without precision. Many student attributes are known and available in existing systems but access is problematic. For example, class standing can critically influence the timeliness of an opportunity. Because of the difficulty of extracting this data from the EDW (or other sources) and manually adding data to their existing lists, these valuable attributes are difficult to use in targeting.

Some attributes are not yet available in existing systems, as they are voluntarily disclosed by students directly to an OP. For example, a first-generation student might opt into a list with a single OP. Since this student attribute is not available to other OPs with an interest in increasing participation among first generation students, OPs will miss an opportunity to specifically engage these students.

Weak attendance-tracking processes at events is another missed opportunity for gathering student data. A handful of OPs utilize a system that lets students swipe their Husky card. This provides some student data, which is most frequently stored and managed in Excel spreadsheets. Without a swipe system at larger events, attendance is estimated. At smaller events, a paper sign-in sheet may be used, then manually entered into various systems by OP staff.

In many cases, OPs do not have the data to determine whether they are engaging students. Even for those who do know they are engaging students, OPs often do not have an accurate picture of how many students they reach and if those students are their target audience. For example, if an estimated 100 students show up at several Peer Health Education events, it is unknown if they are the same 100 students each time, or whether they are students most vulnerable to common health and wellness risks.

2. OPs Acknowledge a Gap in Marketing Skills

Publicizing events and opportunities is by far the activity that requires the most OP effort. And yet, most OPs flounder when it comes to marketing in general and social media strategy in particular. We learned that OPs are using 27 unique channels to promote their offerings, often with a buckshot approach and without data supporting the most effective choice. For example, nearly all OPs report using the advisers@uw.edu listserv as a primary channel for getting the word out to students, while advisers report that they do not forward the majority of the messages they receive. In general, most OPs are not yet considering evaluating effectiveness of their outreach efforts. At this point, OPs focus more on getting their messages out than on effectiveness.

3. OPs are Not Benefiting from Meaningful Program Evaluation

3a. Strategic objectives of the Husky Experience are not well understood

OPs report that students are unaware of the full benefits of co-curricular engagement or the extent to which involvement can shape their lives and/or careers. In addition, many OPs report that faculty endorsements can generate significant student interest, yet faculty are indifferent to, or not supportive of, participation in co-curricular opportunities. Bothell is an exception, as they have taken steps to include service learning in each of their academic programs.

3b. Qualitative evaluation is out of reach for most OPs

OPs express a strong interest in evaluating and improving impact and effectiveness of their programs. Despite their interest, they have not been successful at defining learning outcomes or collecting the data necessary to measure student progress. At this point, most are evaluating programs based on attendance or participation and, due to data gaps and access issues mentioned above, these participation numbers are often merely estimates.

For programs attempting evaluation beyond participation, about half are using Catalyst WebQ to survey students. Some others are using paper evaluation forms. OPs find it difficult to get students to respond to surveys, and even more, to achieve a meaningful evaluation of their program.

Recommendations

The University needs to pivot to a new way of connecting the right students to the right opportunity at the right time. Our recommendations below begin with first considering the context of the student, because without this, any proposed solutions may fall short of meeting student needs.

A. Support a Variety of Methods for Social Catalyzing

A student's motivation to get involved in a particular co-curricular activity almost always develops out of a social interaction with an experienced participant rather than in response to a message an OP sends.

A1. Support more occasions and a variety of formats for students to learn from peers and upperclassmen about how they benefited from participation in co-curriculars.

- Emphasize to students the importance of social interactions in hearing about all that the UW has to offer. Share with students various strategies for connecting to others face-to-face and online.
- Offer small and large gatherings at different times of the day, and face-to-face as well as virtual and asynchronous opportunities (i.e., through social media).

- Offer for-credit, introductory seminars that prepare students to participate in specific co-curricular opportunities (e.g., study abroad seminar; professionalism course).
- Encourage students who have completed co-curricular opportunities to share their experiences informally (e.g., social meetups).
- Encourage students to post experiences on social media. Gathering these posts in a central UW system would make them accessible to a wider audience.

B. Disseminate Information in Alignment with Student Behaviors

OPs broadcast information without a clear understanding of students' information consumption behaviors. For example, students receive a large volume of information about co-curriculars through email, posters and other messaging yet at certain points in their academic career they prefer to seek out such information through self-directed search. The recommendations below include best practices for both information dissemination and discovery.

B1. Make existing resources search-engine friendly.

- Provide OPs with training opportunities and reference materials covering the basics of search engine optimization that they can implement in their existing online materials.

B2. Provide a central, comprehensive and filterable listing of events and opportunities to better support discovery.

- Enable students to filter events based on their current interests and academic career phase.
- Consider a variety of formats for this central resource, including a listing that can be subscribed to and/or emailed to students; a listing that is presented on a calendar; or a listing that is shown in MyUW.
- Determine the specific requirements for the system through a user-centered design process.

B3. Learn and follow best practices for information design to improve message consumption.

- Highlight basic information about an event or opportunity, including the title, location and time of the event for scannability
- Create succinct and clear email subject lines, enabling students to quickly identify whether or not the contents of the message will be relevant to them. Avoid generic, catch-all subject lines such as "Weekly Update."
- Help students to quickly identify the target audience, especially when an event or opportunity is restricted to a specific population.
- Provide sufficient description of events to help students know what to expect and decide if they want to attend.
- Consolidate these and additional best practices into reference materials that OPs can access as needed.

B4. Leverage the strengths of specific information channels/platforms to match student expectations and support follow up behaviors.

- Consider promoting events across multiple channels. Not all students use all platforms and redundancy was often appreciated by those who do use multiple platforms.
- Consider promoting non-academic social and club-related events on Facebook, where students can see who is going, easily share an event with others, and receive notifications and reminders.
- Understand that posts often get “lost” in Facebook feeds; only a subset of followers will see each post in their news feed. Therefore, Facebook should not be relied upon for critical information.
- Send messaging about jobs, internships, study abroad and department-related events through email. And consider an additional location (e.g., website or blog) for this information where students can find the information when they seek it.
- Do not rely on digital displays or UW campus calendar, as students rarely use these information channels.
- Refer to *Table 1. Specific Information Channel Findings* for more details on student behavior and expectations with regard to specific information channels.

C. Target Communications to Meet Students’ Needs and Interests

Currently, OPs lack the tools and data needed to target students. And accordingly, students perceive the information they receive about co-curricular events as being “hit or miss” in terms of its relevance to them.

C1. Utilize basic demographic information to personalize information sent about co-curricular events and opportunities

- Provide OPs with the means to access student demographic data currently captured in the SDB.
- Use data on students’ class status and other demographics where applicable (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity) to personalize messaging, especially when events and opportunities are restricted to particular types of students, e.g., scholarships or programs aimed at women or minorities.

C2. Consider a student’s place in their academic career and different phases of the co-curricular journey when communicating

- Where relevant, communicate the phase of a student’s academic career to which an event or opportunity is most suited. For example, if an opportunity is best suited to students who are transitioning to the professional realm, students at earlier phases of their academic career should be able to quickly identify that the opportunity is not aimed at them.
- Offer events that are targeted to students at each stage of the co-curricular journey. For example, offer social catalyzing events for students with a preset interest in a co-curricular and information and advising sessions for students who are ready to take the next steps.

C3. Leverage student-created profiles to gather data for better targeting

- Find a place in the UW ecosystem (e.g., MyUW, MyPlan) where students can create and maintain profiles of their interests, and where the data can be made accessible to OPs.

D. Reduce Administrative Burden and Increase OP Capacity

OP's current tools and processes limit their ability to effectively target and serve students. Their capacity is not sustainable as enrollment increases.

D1. Improve efficiency of managing and messaging target student groups

- Investigate solutions to streamline the multiple-step processes OPs use to manage mailing lists.
- Inform OPs that advisers most often do not forward messages sent to advisers@uw.edu that are intended for students.

D2. Address gaps in and access to student data

- Develop EDW training targeted at non-technical users.
- Provide centralized data repository for self-identified or program-specific data attributes.

D3. Simplify tools and processes for scheduling

- Support a central calendar that OPs can use for planning events up to several years out.
- Provide a central solution for space reservation.
- Better integrate student and staff calendaring tools.

E. Better Define and Evaluate Success of Husky Experience and OP Programs

OPs report that students are unaware of the full benefits of co-curricular engagement or the extent to which involvement can shape their lives and/or careers.

E1. Advance maturity of program evaluation among OPs to look beyond participation rates

- Clarify and communicate the strategic objectives and benefits of the Husky Experience.
- Help OP's successfully define learning outcomes and collect the data necessary to measure student progress.
- Equip OPs with comprehensive program evaluation tools and processes.

Conclusion

The Husky Experience Discovery Report recommended significant improvements to the data and process landscape. The two studies that comprise Phase 2 confirm many of these initial recommendations. Additionally, the studies in Phase 2 provide complementary perspectives on a central problem: How can the UW ensure that efforts to facilitate students' engagement with co-curricular events and opportunities are effective?

The results indicate that, at present, communication between opportunity providers and students is inefficient—there is a fundamental disconnect between students' information consumption behavior and OPs' outreach practices. This is largely due to two factors: 1) OPs' hands are tied by multiple unintegrated technologies, data gaps and complex business practices, 2) a previous lack of understanding of student behaviors around information consumption and motivations for engagement. Yet it also seems clear that even relatively minor changes—in information design, for example—may yield major improvements in the efforts and satisfaction of both groups studied.

As stated earlier, we recommend that the university implement recommendations in this report by first considering the student context and students' changing information needs. Steps 1-3 outlined below describe a sequential approach that takes into account this student experience. Steps 2 and 3 are directly related to repairing the disconnect between students' information consumption behavior and OPs' outreach practices.

1. Focus on social catalysts, which are essential for student interest in co-curriculars. Information about co-curricular activities does not become relevant until students have developed an internal motivation to get involved. The recommendations described in the “*A. Support a Variety of Methods for Social Catalyzing*” section can all help meet this need.
2. Make sure information is able to be found. Once students are interested in co-curricular involvement, their first action is to seek information, typically through Google and other search tools. Specific recommendations that address this step are listed under the headings “*B1. Make existing resources search-engine friendly*” and “*B2. Provide a central, comprehensive and filterable listing of events and opportunities to better support discovery.*”
3. Improve outreach and targeting efforts. OPs have put most of their effort into sending information to students instead of making that information findable. They can improve their outreach and targeting efforts by starting with the recommendations in “*B3. Learn and follow best practices for information design to improve message consumption.*” Other recommendations that can help improve outreach efforts are found in the sections “*B4. Leverage the strengths of specific information channels/platforms to match student expectations and support follow up behaviors,*” “*C2. Consider a student's place in academic career and different phases of the co-curricular journey when communicating,*”

“C1. Utilize basic demographic information to personalize information sent about co-curricular events and opportunities,” and “C3. Leverage student-created profiles to gather data for better targeting.”

In parallel to the above efforts that better align the OP’s outreach efforts to student needs and behaviors, the UW should be focusing on improving OP capacity. Specific recommendations in the following sections address OP capacity: *“D1. Improve efficiency of managing and messaging student segment groups,” “D2. Address gaps in and access to student data,” and “D3. Simplify tools and processes for scheduling.”*

Over time and with better evaluation data, program offerings will improve, but they need to align to a more clearly articulated Husky Experience. Recommendations in the section *“E1. Advance maturity of program evaluation among OPs to look beyond participation rates”* will achieve this goal. The specific recommendation to *“Clarify and communicate the strategic objectives and benefits of the Husky Experience” (within E1)* would be a necessary first step.

In closing, we are grateful for the University’s investment in better understanding the disconnect between students and co-curricular opportunity providers. We were impressed with the OPs’ high quality programming and their sincere desire to improve communication with students. We were also inspired by students’ eagerness to participate in the Husky Experience.

We are confident that by crafting solutions grounded in students’ experiences and needs, the disconnect we identified can be resolved. We have the collective willingness and expertise to greatly improve both the lives of students and the effectiveness of the OPs. In the process, we will all continue to learn more about the UW’s ever-evolving communication ecosystem.

Appendix: Co-Curricular Engagement Systems Inventory

Student Engagement Platforms

What follows is a list of tools customized to the co-curricular engagement space that came up multiple times in recent research with co-curricular opportunity providers. With the exception of Campus Quad, each of these tools are in use by one or more administrative offices at the University of Washington. More analysis is needed in order to determine whether any of these tools could serve a broader campus audience.

EXP-Online

- Product Category: Home Grown
- Current Users: all groups within the Center for Experiential Learning and Diversity (Carlson Center, Mary Gates Endowment, Pipeline, etc.)
- Features in use (not exhaustive):
 - Associate opportunities with requirements and learning outcomes
 - Document management
 - Get data from SDB (mailing address, course rosters)
 - Receive external submissions of opportunities
 - Receive, track and process opportunity applications
 - Run reports
 - Send messages to individuals and groups
 - Track participation in opportunities

CollegiateLink

- Product Category: Vendor
- Current Users: Ethnic Cultural Center (branded as “Husky Link”) and multiple offices at UW Tacoma (branded as “Dawg Den”)
- Features in use (not exhaustive):
 - Co-curricular transcript
 - Directory of opportunities/clubs
 - Document management
 - Event/opportunity calendar
 - Group pages that support photos, posts, applications for funding
 - Interfaces with “swipe systems” at the UW that track attendance
 - Manage advertising requests
 - Manage facility requests
 - Run reports
 - Send messages to individuals and groups
 - Student profile with customized opportunity recommendations

OrgSync

- Product Category: Vendor product
- Current Users: Several UW Bothell offices including Recreation and Wellness, Student Engagement and Activities and the Office of Orientation and Transition Programs.
- Features in use (not exhaustive):
 - Document management
 - Manage lists of students
 - Scheduling
 - Send messages to individuals and groups
 - Student profile

Campus Quad

- Product Category: Vendor product
- Current users: none. This tool is not currently in use at the UW but is under investigation by UW-IT along with partners at UW Bothell and UW Tacoma. There is a strong working relationship between the vendor and UW-IT/AXDD with the possibility for UW needs to drive the Campus Quad roadmap.
- Features in use (not exhaustive):
 - Integration engine: flexible, open API that takes “any live data source” (including OrgSync, CollegiateLink, Facebook groups, websites, calendars) and normalizes them for mobile. Roadmap includes integration with Trumba.
 - Mobile app for students: displays aggregate content including a map of events and opportunities.
 - Administrative dashboard: tracks attendance through three levels of check-in (proximity, self-check-in, verified check-in), analytics, etc.
 - Roadmap includes integration with Trumba.

Most commonly mentioned tools

In recent research with co-curricular opportunity providers, the following were mentioned most commonly as tools used to support work in this space. Note that because the research protocol was aimed at understanding the landscape of tools and processes used, these tools may or may not be the most commonly *used* tools.

- **Outlook Email:** used to send messages to individuals and groups, publicize opportunities, distribute surveys, coordinate with other groups to reserve dates/places/people.
- **Facebook:** used to publicize opportunities, identify students to target, send announcements and send reminders including deadlines.
- **Listservs (general):** used to send announcements, send reminders including deadlines, send messages to groups, publicize opportunities. An attempt to “target” particular groups.
- **Catalyst WebQ:** evaluate events and opportunities, track registrations/applications for participation.

- **Twitter:** used to publicize opportunities, send announcements and send reminders.
- **Excel:** used to evaluate opportunities (including survey results and budget info), organize student data and track registration/attendance.
- **Advisers@uw.edu:** used to message groups and publicize opportunities. Note that most opportunity providers use the advising listserv to publicize opportunities.
- **Instagram:** used to publicize opportunities, send announcements and send reminders including deadlines.
- **Convio:** used to send messages to individuals and groups, publicize opportunities and distribute surveys.

Complete list of tools

These are all the systems used to support co-curricular engagement processes at the UW. The number of times each tool was mentioned is included, but note, as above, that this count represents how often a tool was mentioned, rather than how often it is used.

Tool	# of Mentions
Outlook Email	19
Facebook	19
Other listserv	16
Catalyst WebQ	16
Twitter	9
Excel	8
Advisers@uw.edu	7
Instagram	6
Convio	6
CollegiateLink	6
SDB	5
Newsletter	5
Trumba	4
Outlook Calendar	4
Mailchimp	4
LinkedIn	4
Canvas	4
C3M	4
Website	3
WC Online	3
Tablet	3
OrgSync	3
Google Forms	3
EMS	3

Titanium	2
Text Message	2
Survey Monkey	2
SnapChat	2
ScheduleOnce	2
R25	2
Google Calendar	2
Fusion	2
Exponline	2
Eventbrite	2
The EDW	2
Doodle	2
BI Portal	2
Access db	2
YouTube	1
Wiggo	1
Volunteermatch	1
UUF	1
University Tickets	1
Typeform	1
Tumblr	1
Trello	1
Tableau	1
Studio Abroad	1
SOARS	1
Skype	1
Simplicity	1
Pinterest	1
Phone	1
Panopto	1
OS Ticket	1
Orientation System	1
Open Room	1
MyPlan	1
MyFinancial.desktop	1
Mobius	1
Microsoft Publisher	1
Legit	1

Javascript Highcharts	1
IMLeagues	1
HuskyJobs	1
Hootsuite	1
Guidebook	1
Google Docs	1
Dropbox	1
Dreamsys	1
CMS	1
Blog	1
Advance	1
Adobe PDF	1
Adobe Connect	1