# Social Media Integration for Promoting Academic Programs and Events

By Keyang Li, Jinjia Ou, Belle Sethachutkul, & Hanru (Candy) Zhang

Social Media Integration for Promoting Academic Programs and Events

An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Science

by
Keyang Li
Jinjia Ou
Belle Sethachutkul
Hanru (Candy) Zhang

Date:
7 August 2023

Report Submitted to:
Professor Esther Boucher-Yip
Humanities and Arts Department
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Abstract

Social media is a powerful tool for communication and engagement within educational institutions. It provides a platform for fostering collaboration, inclusion, and a sense of community among students. The goal of this project is to investigate how WPI students learn about campus events and if social media integration would be a beneficial tool to increase student attendance in academic activities. We developed and distributed a survey questionnaire, interviewed students from a variety of organizations, and conducted desktop research. We found that events promoted through email and social media platforms such as Instagram were the most effective ways to inform students about campus activities. We recommend that event organizers integrate the use of social media, create a web-based calendar of events, and post attractive flyers on bulletin boards for a successful promotion of events on campus.

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Introduction

Attending college campus activities such as co-curricular and extra-curricular programs helps university students find a good balance between life and work but also aids in socialization. There are also other reasons for attending campus events such as networking and career opportunities, personal development, and expanding knowledge.

This project addresses the issue of low attendance at on-campus events at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). While WPI offers a wide array of engaging extracurricular activities and events organized by various student clubs and departments, some events experience minimal participation, leading to cancellations and disheartening outcomes for organizers. To address this problem, our team conducted a study to understand how students at WPI currently learn about on-campus events and what influences their decision to attend. Our research involved gathering information through a combination of surveys, interviews, and desktop research.

At WPI, academic activities are promoted and advertised through email correspondence. Most faculty recognize the importance of connecting with students through their inboxes. Some faculty and staff go the extra mile by individually advertising events, providing comprehensive details and engaging students personally. A weekly email bulletin further ensures all students are aware of upcoming events, reaching a wider audience and minimizing the chances of students missing out due to lack of awareness. Additionally, traditional bulletin boards strategically placed across campus offer a constant reminder of events. This approach may be appealing to students who may miss reading email announcements. However, as students increasingly hold multiple social media accounts, the promotion of campus events through multiple platforms may help disseminate information.

The purpose of this project was to investigate how WPI students use social media to learn about campus events and programs. The team studied how inclusive practices and social media can be used to disseminate information on campus. To achieve this goal, our team created three objectives:

1. Assess the effectiveness of using social media to promote academic activities on campus.

2. Compare how events are promoted at WPI and MIT.

3. Identify best practices of promoting academic events using social media accounts.

Methodology

To achieve the first objective, we created a questionnaire survey and distributed it to students through email and social media platforms. We received 606 responses from students which provided insights into students' social media usage, observance of promotional activities, and preferences for receiving information about academic events. We also interviewed 15 WPI students who are involved in student organizations and clubs. The second objective aimed to compare event promotion methods at WPI and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), focusing on social media outreach. Desktop research was conducted to analyze WPI and MIT's social media accounts, with a specific focus on Instagram and TikTok. While WPI had more accessible resources, the data collected allowed us to compare promotional practices between the two institutions. The third objective focused on identifying best practices for promoting academic events using social media accounts at WPI. We used the Internet to investigate several WPI social media accounts, including Instagram, TikTok, Student Government Association, and the International Student Council. The information we gathered allowed us to analyze the engagement metrics and content styles of the posts.

Results

Our key findings include: (1) More than half of the students learned about and participated in at least 1-5 different academic events through various ways in academic year 2022-23 and 11.3% of the sample population did not attend a single event. (2) A majority of the sample population reported that they learned about academic events from emails and word of mouth from friends or faculties. Students reported that they have a good habit of checking email, 96.2% of the interviewed students check email at least once a day. (3) Campus bulletin boards located around campus are not an effective way of disseminating information. (4) Half of the students surveyed reported missing the events they are interested in because of the lack of information. Among those students 63.6% of them think there will be more students showing up to events if WPI did a better job with student outreach. (5) Of the sample population, 89.5% of surveyed students use Instagram and 88.1% of the surveyed students pay attention to and use various social media every day. (6). In comparison to WPI, MIT uses Twitter and YouTube effectively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

By integrating digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok with traditional methods, campus event organizers could adopt a holistic approach to event promotion, catering to the diverse preferences of the student body and ensuring equal opportunities for student participation in the vibrant academic life at WPI. We recommend campus event organizers take the following actions:

- Implement an online calendar system: a digital platform with a calendar of events that are updated regularly will help students plan their schedule.
- Provides in-depth information about guest speakers: when students know more about a speaker's biodata and their expertise, they are likely to attend the event.
- Implement a system of frequent updates and quality checks for bulletin boards: the advertising information on these boards should be both relevant and timely. This may involve assigning a dedicated team or individual to oversee the bulletin board and ensure its content remains fresh, accurate and appealing to a wide range of fields.
- Each department and academic office should build a strong presence on Instagram. These accounts should post regular updates about upcoming events, engaging content like behind-the-scenes stories, and highlights from past events.
- Promote events three to four weeks before the event: this provides ample time for students to learn about events, adjust their schedules as needed and confirm their attendance. As the event date approaches, regular reminders and updates on Instagram can be shared to maintain interest and ensure the event stays in the spotlight.
- Use compelling and catchy headlines on flyers and posts that spark curiosity and clearly indicate the theme of the event.

A successful on-campus event should be well attended and advertised effectively to attract all students enrolled at WPI. It is our hope that event organizers at WPI will leverage on the popularity of social media use among students to promote and advertise activities on campus as well as distribute flyers in an effective and impactful manner.

Authorship

Section	Primary Author(s)	Primary Editor(s)
Abstract	Belle Sethachutkul	Hanru (Candy) Zhang
Acknowledgements	Belle Sethachutkul	Keyang Li, Jinjia Ou, Hanru (Candy) Zhang
Executive Summary	Hanru (Candy) Zhang	Keyang Li, Jinjia Ou, & Belle Sethachutkul
Introduction	Hanru (Candy) Zhang	Belle Sethachutkul
Background	Keyang Li & Jinjia Ou	Belle Sethachutkul & Hanru (Candy) Zhang
Methodology	Belle Sethachutkul	Keyang Li
Results and Analysis Introduction	Belle Sethachutkul	Keyang Li
Results and Analysis: Section 1	Keyang Li & Belle Sethachutkul	Jinjia Ou & Hanru (Candy) Zhang
Results and Analysis: Section 2	Jinjia Ou	Keyang Li & Belle Sethachutkul
Results and Analysis: Section 3	Belle Sethachutkul & Hanru (Candy) Zhang	Keyang Li & Jinjia Ou
Conclusion and Recommendations	Keyang Li & Jinjia Ou	Belle Sethachutkul & Hanru (Candy) Zhang

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

University co-curricular and extracurricular activities

At most universities, there are several programs in which students can participate outside the classroom. In general, there are two types of programs: co-curricular programs and extracurricular programs. Co-curricular programs are defined as activities that enrich and enhance the regular curriculum during the normal school day. These programs provide additional learning opportunities and experiences that complement the academic coursework. Examples of co-curricular programs include tutoring sessions, academic advising, workshops, seminars, and collaborative projects. Extracurricular programs are defined as activities that broaden the educational experience and typically occur outside of the regular school day. These programs offer students opportunities to explore their interests, develop new skills, and engage in activities beyond the scope of the standard curriculum. Examples of extracurricular programs include sports teams, clubs, performing arts groups, community service initiatives, and student organizations. These activities provide students with a chance to pursue their passions, build relationships, and contribute to the school community in diverse ways.

Reasons for students attending campus activities and events

Attending college campus activities such as co-curricular and extracurricular programs help university students find a good balance between life and work but also aids in socialization. There are also other reasons for attending campus events such as networking and career opportunities, personal development, and expanding knowledge. In college, numerous events are held throughout the school year, including those organized by different clubs such as sports, performing arts, academics, and official school events like career fairs or academic advising. These extracurricular activities are common events held on university campuses worldwide.

Most events held at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) are considered on-campus events. At WPI, it is reported on the university website that there are over 235 student organizations where students can engage in activities outside the classroom based on their personal interests. Students can meet other students with shared passions and interests. Attending clubs and events based on their major or interests can introduce them to other students who have common interests or career paths, which can also add to their sense of involvement or belonging on campus and provide friendships and/or study partners. Students can be involved in sports,

while others can participate in performing arts such as dance teams, theater, music clubs, and more. Additionally, students can join major-related clubs like the American Institute of Chemical Engineers to connect with peers in the same field and gain career-related knowledge. The choirs and orchestra in the Humanities and Arts Department offer students multiple opportunities to perform at various events and holidays. These clubs provide a platform for students to showcase their musical talents and skills. Additionally, members of these clubs even have the chance to travel to Portugal to perform and participate in master classes, further enhancing their musical abilities and cultural experiences. On the other hand, the Mathematics Department offers tutoring sessions throughout the academic year to support students who require additional assistance with their math coursework. These tutoring sessions are available all day long, ensuring that students have access to the help they need to succeed in their math classes at WPI. The Academic Advising Office and the Career Development Center also host workshops and events regularly.

Advertising campus events at WPI

Certain events attract a larger number of participants. For example, there are three annual career fairs open to all students, including alumni. With approximately 9,000 students at WPI, it was reported that approximately 3,000 participants attended these events. Other successful events with high attendance include the Pep Rally organized by the Student Government Association and the annual Relay for Life held by the American Cancer Society at WPI. Furthermore, student-led clubs, such as the International Student Council, organize food events throughout the academic year that attract a large number of students.

A common method to advertise and promote campus events is through posters pinned on bulletin boards (*Figure 1*) or digital TV (*Figure 2*). Sometimes, club leaders or faculty members would announce upcoming events in the classroom, ensuring that everyone in the class was aware of them. Additionally, if one student is aware of an upcoming event, they would often share the information with their friends, potentially convincing them to attend as well, thus spreading the word through word-of-mouth.

Figure 1: Bulletin board in Salisbury Labs on May 6th, 2023

Figure 2: Digital TV in Rubin Campus Center on May 6th, 2023

While posters on bulletin boards and digital TVs have been effective in reaching students across campus, the advent of internet technology has led to an increasing number of students obtaining information through social media. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok provide a means for people not only to communicate with each other through direct messages but also to post content. Many businesses utilize social media as an advertising tool, creating their own pages and sharing content about their products. For example, by using hashtags, businesses make it easier for people interested in their specific product to find and explore their posts. Business owners can also include website links in their bios, allowing people who like their products to make purchases simply by clicking the link and placing an order. Numerous businesses have thrived after utilizing social media platforms to promote their products.

Based on Daniel Ruby's study, approximately 90% of the U.S. population uses social media platforms to obtain information. In another study, Zhou reported that among the population, the younger generation, particularly those aged 19-29, utilize social media the most. Universities across the country have also created social media accounts for students, parents, faculty, and alumni to stay updated on events happening within the institution. Increasingly, students rely on social media platforms to receive information rather than physically checking bulletin boards or flyers. Given that the majority of students at WPI utilize social media platforms, they can stay informed about campus happenings by following the school's related pages or receiving information about on-campus events through their friends' posts. There are several social media platforms that WPI uses to advertise and update what's happening on campus such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn. WPI's main Instagram page has 21.7K followers, and their Facebook page has 34K followers. When WPI posts something, a significant number of people see the post and become aware of what is happening on campus. Moreover, many other clubs on campus also have their own social media accounts for people to follow. By accessing the information shared through these posts, individuals can make informed decisions about whether to attend certain on-campus events.

Low turnout at events

While some on-campus events attract a large number of attendees, others experience low turnout due to various reasons such as inadequate promotion or the use of unpopular promotion methods. Students are more likely to attend an event when they received information about it.

4

Although personal reasons may play a role in students' decision to attend certain events, all students should have access to information and the dissemination of information should reach all students. Students who are general members of a particular club are more likely to attend events hosted by that club since they have already established connections with its members. However, the activities of that club may also interest or benefit non-members. Similarly, students serving on the executive board of clubs may have specific responsibilities to fulfill by attending certain events. On the other hand, students may be too busy with their schoolwork to participate in events, or they may simply lack interest in certain types of events. Low turnout events have their downsides. When there are only a few attendees, the event may become less engaging as there are fewer interactions among participants. Additionally, if organizers invest significant time and effort in preparing an event that ends up having minimal participation, it can be disheartening and a missed opportunity for students. Moreover, if students notice that certain events consistently have low turnout, they may be discouraged from attending future events.

Despite the presence of flyers posted throughout campus, some events still experience very low attendance, with only a few individuals showing up. In some cases, those who do attend are members of the executive board who are required to participate. For example, during the Arts and Sciences Week, the turnout for the activities organized by the School of Arts and Sciences varies from a big crowd to several students.

Purpose of project and research approach

To address the issue of low attendance at on-campus events, the team aims to identify the most effective methods of promoting these events. We are interested in investigating how students at WPI currently learn about on-campus events and their level of participation. The project will involve distributing questionnaire surveys, interviewing students, and conducting desktop research to gather relevant data and insights. By conducting surveys, the team can collect quantitative data on how students at WPI hear about on-campus events and understand their reasons for attending or not attending. The survey includes questions about their preferred social media platforms, the types of events they are interested in, and the factors that influence their decision to attend. This data will provide valuable insights into the existing patterns and preferences of the target audience. In addition to surveys, conducting interviews with students and WPI social media account holders will allow for more in-depth qualitative analysis. The interviews can explore personal experiences, motivations, and barriers related to event

attendance. By engaging in direct conversations, the team can gain a deeper understanding of the individuals' perspectives and gather valuable feedback on the effectiveness of current promotion methods. To supplement the primary research, the team will also conduct desktop research to explore best practices and successful strategies used by other universities or organizations to promote on-campus events. This analysis will provide insights into the most effective promotion methods for on-campus events at WPI. Based on the results, the team can develop recommendations and strategies to enhance event promotion, increase attendance, and create more engaging experiences for the WPI community.

Chapter 2: Background

In this chapter, we discuss the impact of social media on youths in the United States and the use of social media at other universities and highlight the challenges social media poses to the communication of academic and non-academic activities at WPI.

2.1. Impact of Social Medial on Youths

Social media has become a powerful tool for communication and engagement within educational institutions, providing a platform for fostering collaboration, inclusion, and a sense of community among students. At the same time, social media provides a dynamic method of promoting events, programs and programs given their broad reach, immediacy, and accessibility.

According to the agency Omnicore, in the mid-2000s, platforms such as MySpace and Facebook launched, providing a new and exciting way for people to connect and share their lives. They offered a virtual space where users could express themselves, interact with others, share photos, music, and videos, creating a sense of community. The agency reported that Facebook, in particular, quickly became popular among college students and eventually opened up to the public, leading to a surge in its popularity. As of February 6, 2023, with nearly 3 billion monthly active users, Facebook and other social media platforms continue to play a pivotal role in the United States, profoundly impacting several facets of American society. Omnicore also argued that their influence stretches from personal communication to global politics, business, and even the dissemination of news and information (Omnicore, 2023). Figure 3 shows the use of social media in the United States in the 21st century.
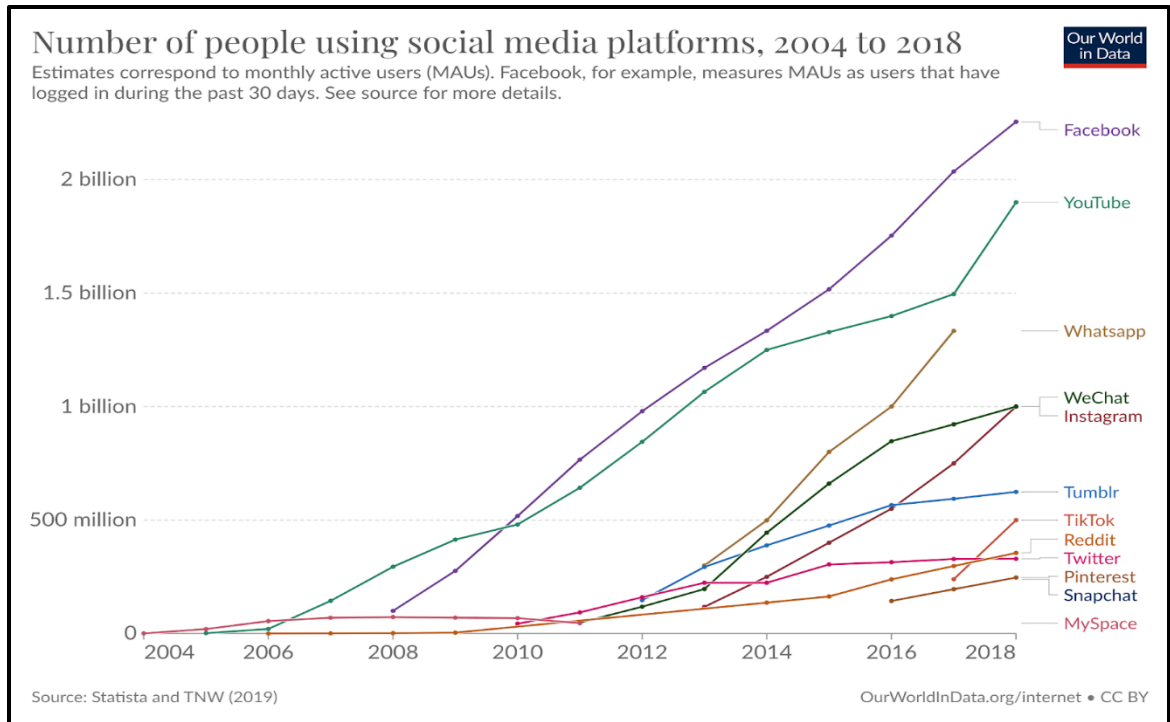
Figure 3: Number of people using social media platforms from 2004 to 2018
(Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2023)

The popularity of social media among youths has been a profound socio-cultural shift over the past few decades. The introduction of platforms such as Facebook, and later Instagram and Snapchat provided teens with an exciting new realm of interaction and self-expression. The Pew Research Center reported that unlike previous generations, these young digital natives grew up with the internet, and social media became a natural extension of their lives. Facebook initially became popular among teenagers for its novelty and ability to connect with friends, express their individuality and create a virtual social space. As platforms evolved, they began to support a variety of media types, including images, video, and music, adding more dimensions to self-expression. With the advent of smartphones and the ubiquity of Wi-Fi and cellular data networks, the shift to mobile connectivity is a big factor in the growing popularity of social media among teens. Platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat, designed with mobile first, have gained enormous popularity because they provide teens with an instant, visual and highly interactive way to connect with their peers. Additionally, social media platforms are starting to become a major source of news, entertainment, and a way for them to follow their favorite celebrities and influencers. This "behind-the-scenes" access to the lives of public figures,

combined with the ability to share and comment on content, is hugely appealing to the teenage crowd. According to Lenhart, teenagers are branching out in their use of social media platforms, with the majority (71%) utilizing multiple networking sites. Among the minority of teens (22%) who exclusively use one social networking site, the majority, 66%, prefer Facebook, followed by 13% who use Google+ and 13% who use Instagram, while Snapchat is used by 3% of these teens (Lenhart, 2015). Figure 4 shows how teenagers use different social platforms.

Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat Top Social Media Platforms for Teens

% of all teens 13 to 17 who use ...

Platform	%
Facebook	71%
Instagram	52
Snapchat	41
Twitter	33
Google+	33
Vine	24
Tumblr	14
Different social media site	11

Source: Pew Research Center's Teens Relationships Survey, Sept. 25-Oct. 9, 2014 and Feb. 10-Mar. 16, 2015. (n=1,060 teens ages 13 to 17).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
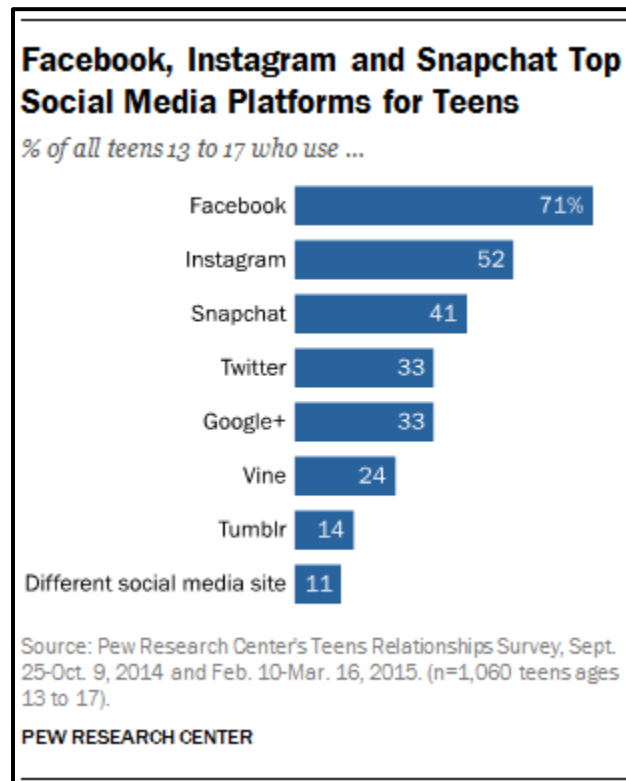
Figure 4: Use of different social platforms by teenagers (Lenhart, 2015).

The emergence of short video content platforms, most notably TikTok, is another major shift. The ease of content creation and the opportunity to go viral has attracted teens in droves. It allows them to showcase their creativity and talents, engage with trends and challenges, and even advocate for social issues, all while connecting with a global audience. According to a 2022 Pew survey, approximately two-thirds of American teenagers reported having a TikTok account, with 16% admitting to continuous usage. The daily average duration spent by children and teenagers on TikTok increased to 91 minutes in 2021, a rise from the previous year's average of 82 minutes, as per a TechCrunch report (Kohli, 2023). One of the key features that makes TikTok resonate with teens is its simplicity and creative freedom. The app offers a variety of tools such

as filters, music, and special effects, allowing users to create and share fun, creative and expressive content. This format gives teens the opportunity to showcase their talent, humor, and creativity through short, easy-to-understand content. Plus, TikTok's format encourages virality, a concept that's especially appealing to teens. The desire to achieve viral fame, combined with the app's unique "for you" algorithm, has resulted in a culture of challenge and trend. Teens are constantly involved in creating or participating in these viral trends, whether it's a dance move, a song, or a comedy sketch, fueling an engagement cycle that keeps the platform fresh and exciting.

2.2. Social Media in Higher Education

Social media has proven itself to be an influential tool in the higher education context, reshaping the way institutions connect and share vital information with their student body. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and most recently TikTok are often used by universities and colleges around the world to promote campus events, programs, and engage with students in an environment they are familiar with and comfortable with. Figure 5 shows Boston University's use of social media to communicate with students.
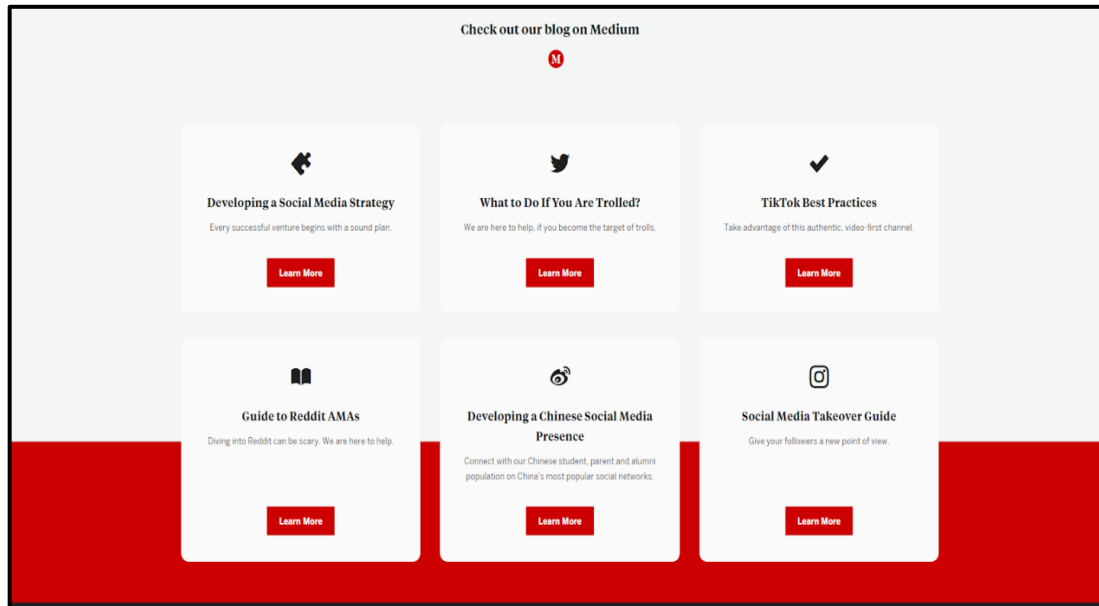
Figure 5: Boston University Social Media Directory (Social Media: PR Social)

The advent of social media has transformed communication dynamics, facilitating a shift from one-sided to reciprocal communication. In the past, universities predominantly relied on conventional channels, including bulletins, posters, or emails, to disseminate information from the institution to students. However, social media has revolutionized this approach, permitted not only the transmission of information but also fostered student participation, feedback, and dialogue.

Wilson and Gore reported that the two-way communication facilitated by social media can bolster student engagement, foster a sense of community, and may even have a positive impact on academic outcomes. Indeed, social media fosters a network of connections, with studies suggesting that students who forge extensive links within their university are more likely to complete their degree successfully compared to those with limited connections (Wilson & Gore, 2013).

Thus, social media, with its inherent interactivity, may significantly contribute to a student's academic journey, promoting engagement, a sense of belonging, and potentially influencing academic success. This underscores the need for universities, like WPI, to harness the potential of these digital platforms, tailoring them to best serve the academic and social needs of their diverse student bodies.

One-way social media differs from traditional means of communication is its potential for personalized and targeted messaging. Using data analytics, universities can tailor messages to student groups, making communications more relevant and effective. This personalized approach is not only about broadcasting messages that are more likely to engage, but it also involves creating a more meaningful and responsive communication channel. By aligning content with student interests and needs, colleges can increase the likelihood that their messages will be seen, understood and acted upon. For example, a social media post about an upcoming career fair might be specifically aimed at graduating students or students seeking internships, while information about incoming freshman admissions might be aimed at incoming students. The survey findings suggested that students tend to utilize Facebook as a tool to acclimate to college life. During the survey period from April to June 2008, it was reported that students, on average, had about 81 friends within the college's Facebook network (Madge et al., 2009).

By harnessing the power of personalized and targeted messaging, universities can transform their communication strategies to be more engaging, effective, and student centric. In

the context of WPI, understanding how students use social media to learn about campus events and programs could greatly enhance the reach and effectiveness of their communication efforts.

2.3 The Use of Social Media at WPI

As a university known for its emphasis on project-based learning, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) faces slightly different dilemmas and challenges than other universities that focus on other fields. There are many good or suitable programs on campus, many of which are hosted by experienced professors and administrators. To get enough students to participate in these activities, we use bulletin boards and emails to publicize, and some professors choose to announce in their classes. Unfortunately, the results have been minimal, and there are still many projects that have to be terminated due to insufficient student participation. Take the community news board as an example. There is a common problem of messy posting on the community news board on campus. Students cannot find the information they want among the many posters. Figure 6 shows the status of the community news board on campus.

Figure 6: WPI community news board (photo credit: Jinjia, 2023)

The student-teacher ratio at Worcester Polytechnic Institute is 14:1 (USNews, 2023), which is excellent educationally for students as it allows for better direct communication with professors. But from a publicity point of view, this means that often only a few dozen students get information about specific projects directly from the professor, and this is also the reason why participation in many events and projects is very low. In today's digital age, it will undoubtedly be a good choice to advance with the way of publicity. Students and professors have different schedules every day, and it is undoubtedly one of the low-efficiency and low-yielding methods to still use direct publicity in most cases.

This project investigates how students use social media to learn about campus events and programs, and how to choose activities that are suitable for them or that interest them. Surveying WPI students' use of social media to learn about campus events and programs provides insight into how inclusive practices and social media outreach are being selected and used to reach and engage more students to participate. In doing so, this study will provide valuable insights into increasing recognition and participation in WPI campus events and programs. It will also be an important step in developing WPI's communication strategy to adapt to the digital age and meet the needs and preferences of its diverse students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this project was to investigate how WPI students use social media to learn about campus events and programs. The team studied how inclusive practices and social media can be used to disseminate information on campus. To achieve this goal, our team created three objectives to focus on:

1. Assess the effectiveness of using social media to promote academic activities on campus
2. Compare how events are promoted at WPI and MIT social media accounts
3. Identify best practices for promoting academic events using social media accounts

This chapter describes the methods our team used to gather and analyze data from the sample population.

Objective 1: Assess the effectiveness of using social media to promote academic activities.

Our first objective was to assess the effectiveness of using social media to promote academic activities. For our team to understand why students do not attend certain academic events, we wanted to learn from WPI students their opinions and habits related to learning about campus

activities. Our team achieved this objective through two data collection methods. Our team surveyed and interviewed current students.

Questionnaire survey

Our team used questionnaire surveys to collect quantitative data. According to Judith Bell, surveys are a great way to reach larger populations for sampling. Since surveys are generally quick and simple to complete because they do not need an interviewer present, they can be sent to a mass amount of people to optimize the number of responses. Larger amounts of responses allowed our team to draw conclusions about the general sampled population. Although surveys provide a great tool for data collection, they do present some disadvantages. One disadvantage is the potential underrepresentation within the sample population. Although the survey can be distributed to many people, we will not be able to choose the participants. This could potentially lead to discrepancies within who chooses to answer the survey which could lead to underrepresentation of certain groups like women, men, socioeconomic groups, and more. Another disadvantage with surveys is that questions are up for interpretation. Each participant is given the same questions and no team member is present to elaborate on the question to help with understanding. Some participants may interpret questions differently than our team intended, which could affect our survey outcomes (Bell, 2010, p.11-12).

The questionnaire survey (Appendix A) was created using Google forms due to Google's easy to use interface and its capability to link it to a spreadsheet. It was composed of 12 optional multiple choices and check all that apply questions. Additionally, the team added a space on the survey where participants had the option to expand on any of the questions or give their general opinions about the topic of using social media for promoting academic events. This space for comments was used to obtain student quotes, ideas, and opinions. In learning about survey creation from published IQP reports (Flegel et al., 2022, p.12) we realized that some participants may not take the survey seriously and could potentially randomly click answers. To reduce the number of phony responses, our team added a question in a random place of the survey where the participant would need to mark the right answer for their responses to be recorded in our findings and for them to have eligibility to a raffle.

The survey was sent out to the full student body email which included every student enrolled at WPI at the time of June 9th, 2023. The survey was also sent out to distribution lists such as student organizations and clubs. Each team member shared the survey link through text, slack, and

social media platforms such as Instagram to reach as many students as possible. To incentivize students to take the survey and to ensure our team had a wide participation, our team held a raffle for 10 people to win a $5 Dunkin donut gift card. The survey was open for two weeks from June 9th to June 23rd.

Once the two weeks were over, the data obtained from the survey was exported to a spreadsheet using google sheets. Participants were given the option to provide their WPI email to be entered into the raffle. The emails were numbered on the spreadsheet and the google random number generator was used to generate ten different numbers which corresponded to ten different students. Each student was emailed to coordinate when it would be best for them to receive their prize. Our team approximated that the survey was sent out to all WPI students both undergraduate and graduate which is about 7,000 students. Out of the 7,000 students, 606 students responded, which is approximately 9% of WPI's student population.

Semi-structured interviews

We also interviewed students using a semi-structured approach (Appendix B). Our team chose to do semi-structured interviews to gain qualitative information on student perspectives. Judith Bell argues that interviews are a great method of data collection because of its adaptability. Our team was able to ask questions and based on the response of the participants we asked follow-up questions, which is something that questionaries lack. Conducting interviews allowed our team to observe the participants' tone, body language and choice of words. From this, our team was able to access our participants' general emotions and feelings toward a particular subject. Interviews can also be a great tool to help clarify any questions and avoid confusion. Since interviews need to be held with the person present, we as the interviewer were able to elaborate more on the question to help make it more understandable for the participant. Although there are many upsides to interviews, our team acknowledged that there are some downsides. One disadvantage of interviews is that they are time consuming. Since interviews are held with the interviewer and participant present, it takes a significantly longer time to complete than a questionnaire. This is mostly since interviews simulate a conversation in which the follow-up questions can be asked, and answers can be elaborated on. Since interviews are time consuming, the team was able to only interview a small number of people. This potentially can lead to bias in data since there wouldn't be a wide sampling in the interviews (Bell, 2010, p.161).

From June 13th to June 21st, the team conducted a total of 15 student interviews each with a time duration of 30 minutes to 1 hour. These 15 students were a mix of our network of friends at WPI and participants who provided their school emails from the questionnaire survey. The interview participants were of different majors, class year, backgrounds, genders, and campus involvement. The participants had various overall backgrounds to ensure that our team had a wide range of insights. All interviews were conducted online through the application Zoom. The students interviewed varied in major, year, background, sexual orientation, campus involvement, and extracurriculars. Also, our team deduced that most of the interviews would probably be closer to an hour long, which eventually was the case.

The purpose of the interviews and surveys were to gain data on students' habits on social media as well as how students receive information regarding academic events. Students were asked questions on multiple topics such as their social media usage, how observant they are on campus about the promotion of events, future directions, and availability of information. The questions around social media usage were used to gauge how much time students spent on social media applications such as Snap chat, Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok and more. The questions around the observance of students around campus were used to understand whether students paid attention to promotional activities on campus and their email. Our team focused these questions around whether students noticed professors promoting academic events using bulletin boards, informational stands, and emails. The questions around future directions focused on promoting the idea of using social media as a new way to disseminate information. This was used to examine whether students would be willing to shift to social media to obtain academic information and whether this would be easier for them. Questions around availability of information were used to see if the reason for poor attendance at academic events was due to a lack of information.

Objective 2: Compare how events are promoted on WPI and MIT social media accounts

Our second objective was to compare how events are promoted at other university campuses and WPI's campus. We wanted to understand the current outreach methods that faculty/offices use. To achieve this objective, our team used desktop research as our data collection method. The team chose to compare our campus with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) because it is a popular and well-attended STEM school. On top of this, our team wanted to select a university that was like WPI. Our team focused on the more public promotional methods that

MIT uses like social media platforms since our team did not have access to information like flyers, bulletin boards or emails. Since we had more access to WPI's resources, our team focused our desktop research for WPI's promotional methods on emails and notice boards as well as other methods seen around campus.

Objective 3: Identify best practices for promoting academic events using social media accounts.

Our third objective was to identify how academic events are promoted using WPI social media accounts. We wanted to learn how successful student outreach is conducted on campus and understand current student engagement on social media as well as what generally intrigues students to click or look at a post.

Desktop research

To achieve this objective our team first conducted desktop research on WPI and club social media accounts. We identified and tracked accounts such as WPI Instagram, WPI Tik Tok, Student Government Association at WPI and the International Student Council at WPI. The team chose to research these accounts for two main reasons. The first reason is because all the accounts above are popular on campus. The second reason for choosing these accounts is because many of the members of our team follow these accounts as well. The team focused our research on the number of people who follow the account as well as the amount of 'likes' and reposts that the account received. Our team also focused on the style of the post whether it had pictures, words, colors and more.

Semi-structured interviews

To identify best practices for promoting events, we asked our interviewees several questions about how they distribute information on social media in a way to capture the interest of students (Appendix C). Interviews are a great method of data collection because of its adaptability.

Our team interviewed members of popular organizations with social accounts such as Student Government Association, WPI Tik Tok and International Student Council. Members from these 3 organizations/social accounts were interviewed because they have a large following of WPI students and generally hold events with high attendance. Ultimately through this objective our team wanted to learn from those in charge of organization social media accounts on how they pick which announcements to post and how they make decisions on the design of the post (such as more pictures or videos or words).

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

Our team investigated what sources WPI students currently use to learn about campus events and programs to evaluate if social media integration would be beneficial for event organizers. In this chapter, our findings are discussed and organized according to our project objectives.

4.1 Assessing the effectiveness of using social media to promote academic activities

Finding #1: Students do attend university events

To better understand students' views on campus events and publicity from the perspective of students, we sent questionnaires to students by email. The number of surveys received was 606. Of the sample population, 51.9% reported that they learned about and participated in at least 1-5 different academic events through various ways last year.
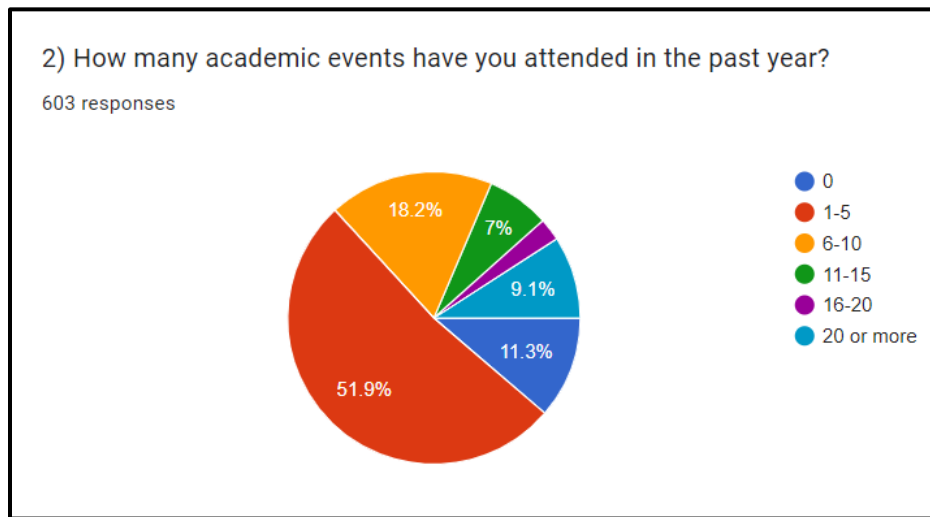
Figure 7: Number of academic events students attended

Figure 7 shows that the majority of the students surveyed have attended at least one event organized on campus. From the sample population it was reported that 11.3% did not attend a single event.

Finding #2: Students learn about events through email

Most students (81. 4%) reported that they learn about university events from e-mails sent by the school and word of mouth among friends (77.6%) or faculties (55.4%). Although WPI also

publicizes events on social media and bulletin boards, this result suggests that students do not pay much attention to these forms of advertising.
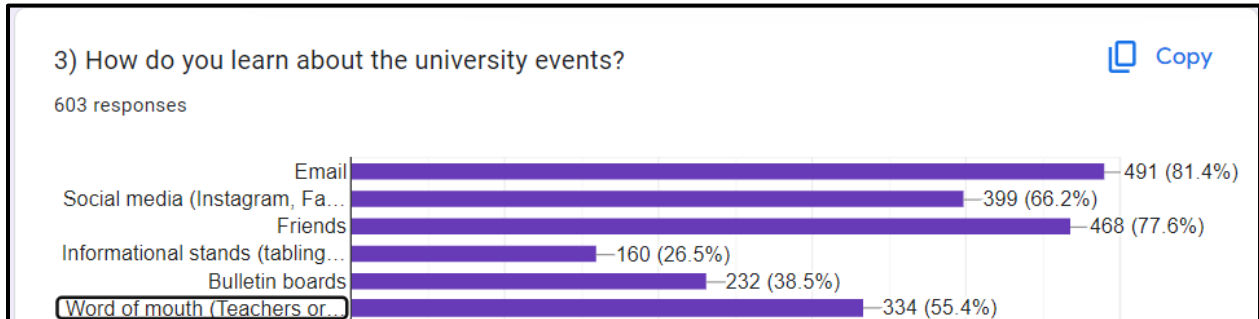
Figure 8: Sources of information about campus events. n = 603.

Students reported that they read their email messages frequently. 96.2% of the interviewed students check email at least once a day. This allows them to discover relevant information very well, which is probably why they feel that they can always get useful information from emails. Additionally, 38.3% of students who responded to the survey reported that they check their email daily or once a week (*Figure 9*).
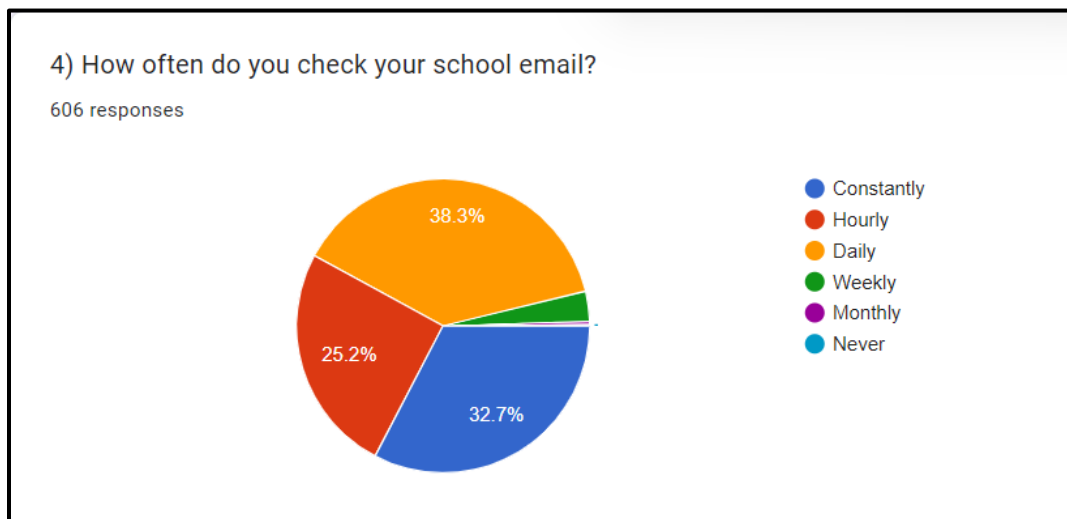
Figure 9: Frequency of checking emails messages. n = 606.

Finding #3: Students do not pay attention to information on bulletin boards

Although most students are aware that there are some bulletin boards in the campus and WPI social media promotes academic events (*Figure 8*), according to the answer to another question in the questionnaire (How do you learn about the university events?), the result suggests that students do not really get effective information in these two ways of publicity.
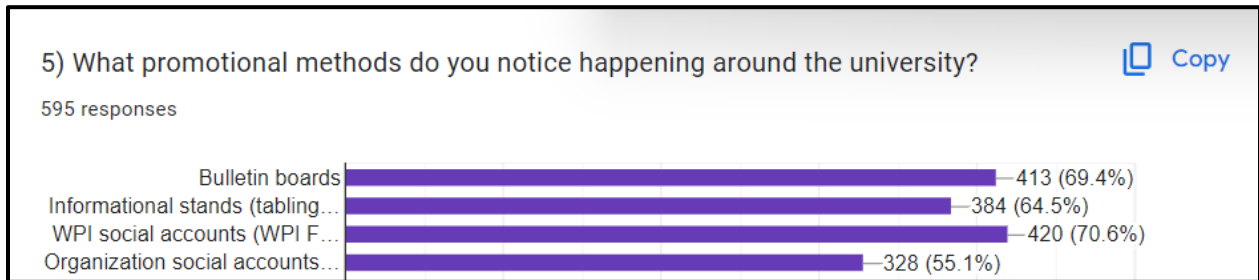
Figure 10: Promotional methods students noticed. n = 595.

To the question, "How often do you read/check bulletin boards?", only 14.8% of the surveyed students paid attention to the content on the bulletin board every day, and 19.1% of the surveyed students reported not paying attention to the bulletin board at all.
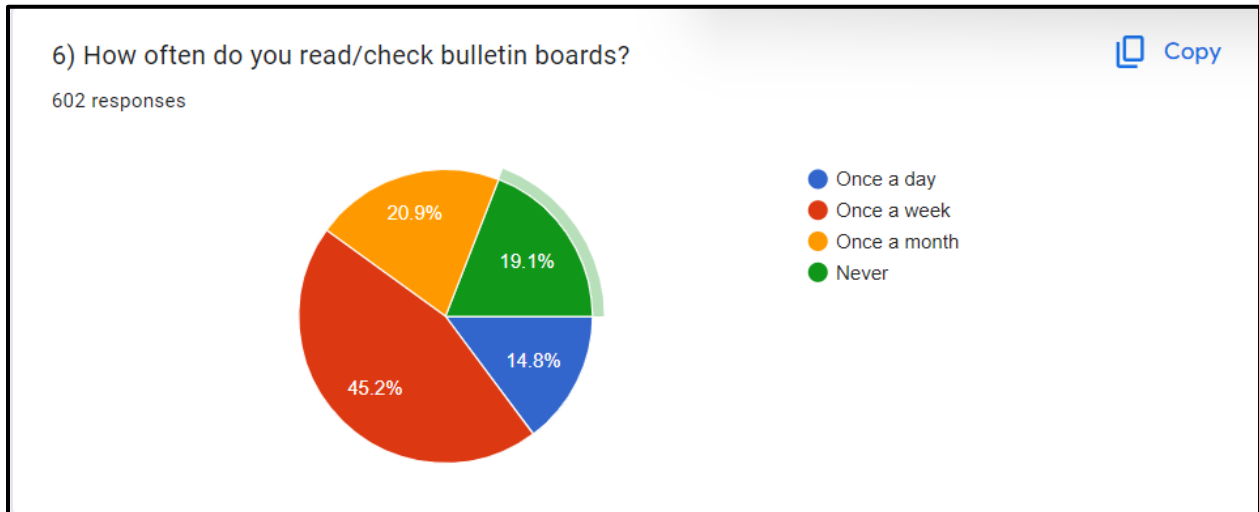
Figure 11: Frequency of students checking bulletin boards

From the sample population, students reported that they no longer depend on bulletin boards to get information because they think that they cannot get any useful and timely

information from the bulletin board. Some surveyed students said that sometimes the information on the bulletin board is still three or four months old, and this information is useless to them. Additionally, out of the 15 students interviewed, 2 students do not rely on social accounts to obtain school information. Both students shared that they rely on the weekly emails from the Student Government Association and bulletin boards even though they revealed that sometimes bulletin boards are not that reliable since they are not updated regularly.

Finding #4: Students want more outreach activities

Nearly half of the students surveyed felt that they missed attending academic events they were interested in because they did not get enough information. Out of the 15 students that were interviewed, 13 students said that the main motivators for going to events were that their friends were attending the event, their availability, and their interest in the event. When prompted the follow up question of why they do not attend as many academic events, 14 out of the 15 students replied that the main reason is because they did not know about the event until it has passed, or it was too late to accommodate it into their schedule. Many students claimed that if the university were to expand their outreach methods to reach students in a timely manner and keep them updated, then they would more likely attend the event because they can schedule it ahead of time. Although many of the interviewed students did cite interest as a motivation to attend events, they also reported that even if they were not initially interested in the event they would attend if they knew about the event. Of the sample population, 63.5% of the students thought that if the school could better inform students of upcoming academic events, then there would be more students willing to show up.

Finding #5 Students rely on social media for information
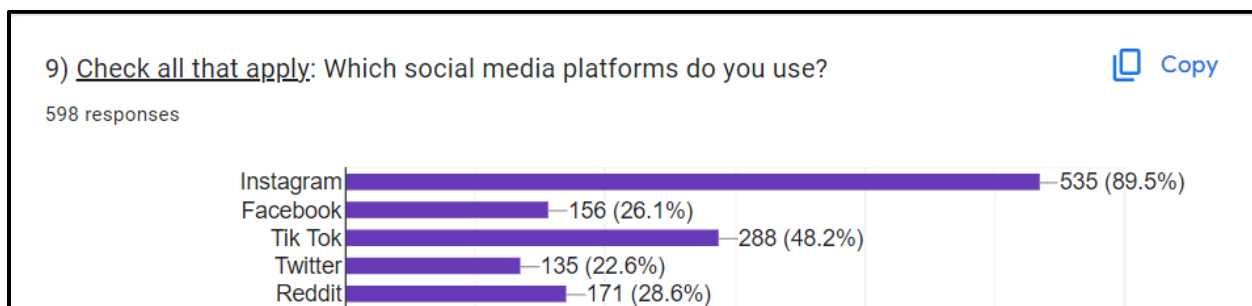
Figure 12: Popular social media platforms used by WPI students. n =598.

10) How often do you check social media?

606 responses

- Constantly
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- I don't/barely use social media
- Hourly
- I have taken a hiatus from social media and it's very mentally beneficial
- During the weekends somewhat but w...
- insta constantly, twitter constantly, red...

59.4%
28.7%
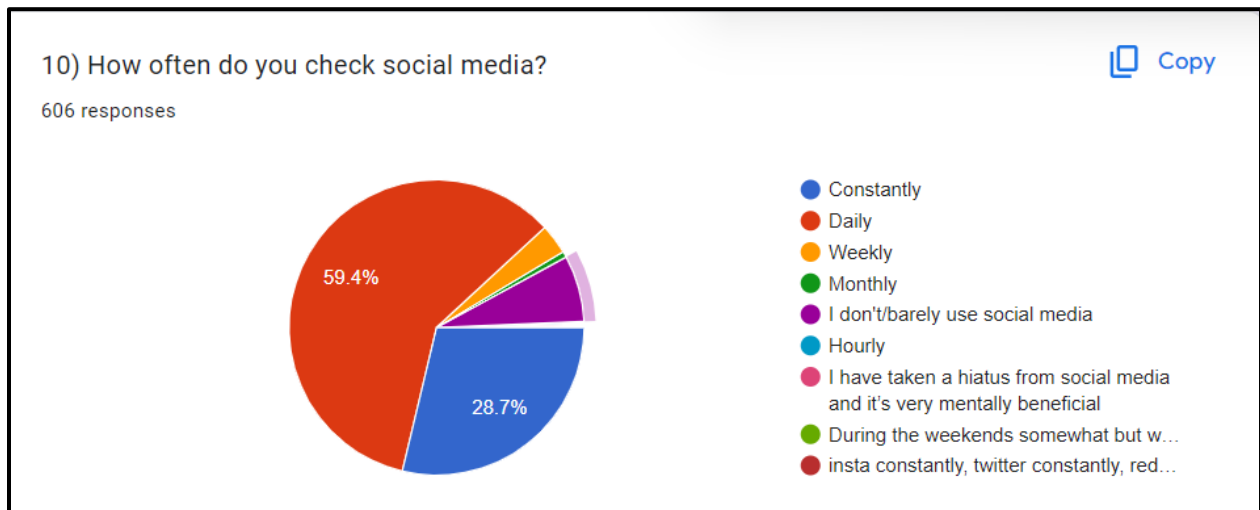
Figure 13: Frequency of students checking social media. n = 606.

To understand students' habits of using social media, we found that 89.5% of the surveyed students are using Instagram (*Figure 12*), and 88.1% of the surveyed students pay attention to and use various social media every day (*Figure 13*). This suggests that Instagram can be a good publicity platform.

Out of the 15 students interviewed, 2 students do not rely on social media to get information about university events. They recommended that the university create a university wide calendar which clubs, organizations, professors, and offices can get permission to edit to have a place where all events can be found. They both suggested that the school should send an email updating students on what events are to come in the month ahead or a link to the calendar. 13 out of 15 of the students rely on social media for information. They recommended that departments and professors utilize Instagram. 14 out of 15 of the students interviewed follow WPI Instagram and 13 of those students say they routinely check the account during the week. The main recommendation was that departments should create Instagram accounts to post events.

4.2: A comparison of how events are promoted at WPI and at other campuses

Finding #1: WPI and MIT use similar social media platforms

	Instagram	Twitter	YouTube	Tik Tok	Facebook
WPI	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
MIT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 14: A comparison of social media platforms

Both WPI and MIT utilize social media platforms such as Twitter as part of their communications strategies. They use the platform to share the latest information on academic research, achievements, events, and important announcements to their respective communities. These institutions leverage the immediacy and broad reach of the platform to connect with students, faculty, alumni and the wider public. Twitter acts as a digital bridge, allowing both universities to showcase their unique campus cultures, highlight academic excellence and promote their contributions to the scientific community.

While MIT and WPI both used Twitter as a platform for their outreach campaigns, there were marked differences in their approach and effectiveness. MIT Twitter is characterized by cutting-edge content that is both intellectually stimulating and technically engaging. They typically tweet about groundbreaking research advances, advanced technological discoveries, or innovative ideas developed within the community. Their event promotions frequently feature prominent guest speakers from across technology and science, prestigious research sessions and exclusive technology expos. This focus on exciting and revolutionary aspects of technology and innovation generates high levels of interest among followers and appeals to a wider audience beyond the immediate community. By emphasizing the novelty and impact of the event, MIT was able to attract greater engagement and participation.

On the other hand, WPI's Twitter strategy appears to be less effective at garnering similar levels of interest and engagement. While they do promote their events on the platform, the content shared does not always elicit the same level of engagement as MIT. WPI tends to focus on a wider range of activities, which may include general campus events, community outreach programs and student life initiatives. While these are certainly important to the WPI community, they may not appeal to a wider audience the way MIT's technological breakthroughs and

innovations do. As such, WPI's promotion of the event on Twitter may not generate the same level of excitement or interest, especially among those outside of the WPI community. Figure 15 shows a typical tweet posted on WPI's Twitter account.

Figure 15: WPI twitter posted on July 14th , 2023

Finding #2: MIT uses YouTube and Twitter effectively

MIT's YouTube channel has more than 20,000 subscribers (*Figure 16*), providing a large audience for promoting their campus events. The university frequently uploads videos detailing upcoming events, lectures, or seminars. These videos include interviews with guest speakers or presenters, brief overviews of topics covered, or glimpses at previous similar events to give potential attendees an idea of what to expect.
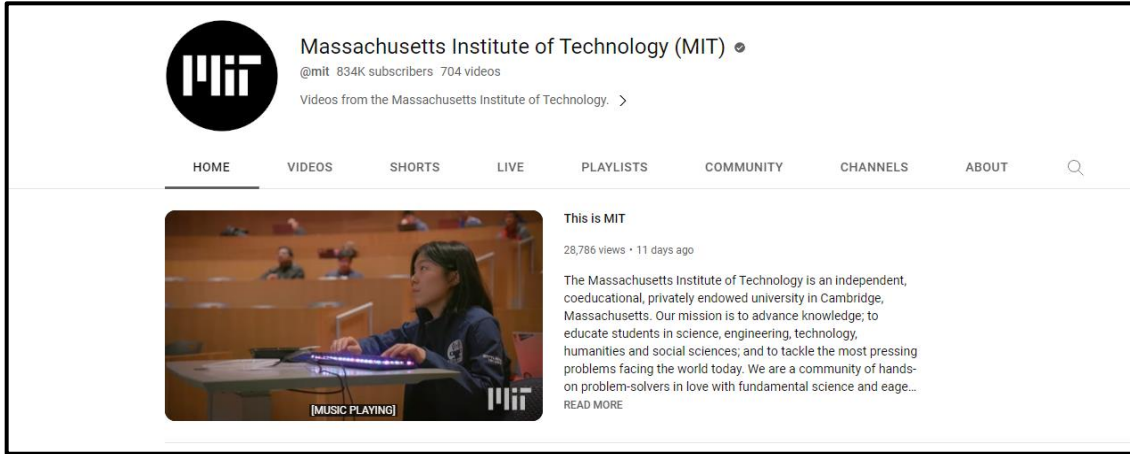
Figure 16: MIT YouTube on July 14th, 2023

On Twitter, MIT has 1.304 million followers (*Figure 17*). A large audience makes Twitter a powerful platform for event promotion. Twitter's character-limited posts promote concise, immediate communication, which is great for keeping followers informed about upcoming events. The platform enables universities to quickly disseminate important details such as dates, times, and speakers, along with a compelling call to action.

Figure 17: MIT Twitter on July 16th, 2023

Twitter's retweet feature is another important tool MIT uses to increase the visibility of its activities. When followers retweet the event announcement, they share these details with their own followers, significantly increasing the reach of the event.

Both YouTube and Twitter have provided MIT with a platform to share information and engage with audiences, broadening its appeal and capturing the attention of a global audience. Using these social media platforms, MIT can reach diverse groups of students and scholars, increase the accessibility and visibility of its events, and foster a strong and inclusive academic community.

4.3: Best practices for promoting academic events

Finding #1: Use WPI social media accounts

We found that WPI social media accounts are active and there are followers. WPI Facebook page has 35K followers and 33K likes on the page. It has a rating of 4.6 stars out of 5 and 482 reviews. There are different types of posts. The frequent posts include the 'goat of the week', the sports news, campus update, new students' news etc. Usually, the content WPI post on Facebook has around 10-200 likes and a few shares. When there's a bigger post, for example, the graduation related posts with all the pictures of the graduates have around 400 likes and the news post which has the title "Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the College of the Holy Cross to develop innovative programs" has around 560 likes.

Figure 18: WPI Facebook page

WPI Twitter has 18.2K followers and it seems like there are many similar posts that are posted on both Facebook and Twitter simultaneously. But each post on twitter only has a very few likes that is around less than ten. The new post which has the title "Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the College of the Holy Cross to develop innovative programs" has around 560 likes on Facebook only has 57 likes on Twitter. The WPI account on Twitter has significantly less interactions than the account on Facebook.

WPI Instagram has 21.7K followers and it has pretty much everything that is posted on Facebook but it's more visual. It means each post on Instagram, unlike on Facebook and Twitter, people can only post pictures and videos on Instagram whereas both Facebook and Twitter allow people to post texts only. It seems that each post on Instagram has significantly higher numbers of likes than on both Facebook and Twitter. There are at least 300 likes on each post and some of the posts reach 3000-4000 likes. The news post "Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the College of the Holy Cross to develop innovative programs" that has around 560 likes on Facebook and 57 likes on Twitter has 3393 likes on Instagram.

WPI TikTok page is new compared with the other platforms. The first TikTok post WPI posted was in November 2021. It currently has 559 followers, and each post has at least hundreds of view counts and thousands the most. The 'like' on each post varies between 10-250. Unlike all the other platforms, TikTok can only allow users to post videos. Thus, each WPI TikTok has short videos of what's going on around the campus and sometimes it has fun TikTok videos such as interviewing people around the campus during Pi Day asking how much WPI students know about Pi and how many digits of pi can you name. When food delivery robots became a thing, WPI also posted video about it on TikTok so it can share with many people on the platform.
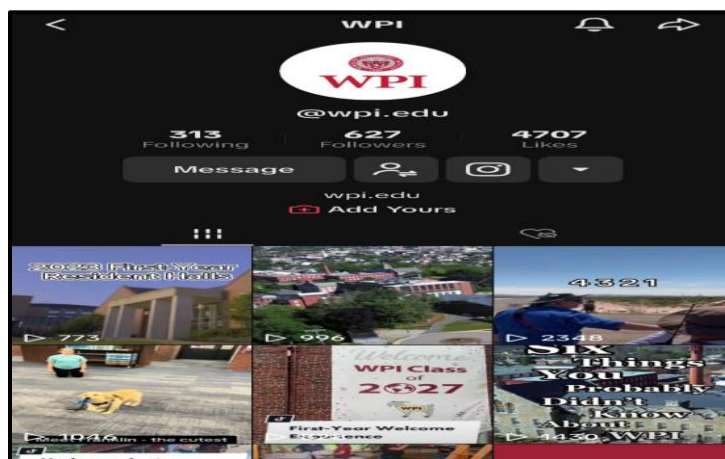
Figure 19: WPI Tik Tok page

Another example of 'best practice' in promoting events is exemplified by the SGA. We found that this student organization sends weekly emails about the upcoming events during the week. It has a title and description of the events. SGA uses both Instagram and Facebook. However, we found that SGA no longer posts events on their Facebook account. The last post was in December 2022. The Instagram account still posts regularly. SGA has 2224 followers and that's a lot of followers compared with other smaller clubs which has followers around 50 people. The SGA Instagram usually posts about event highlights and there are different posts being posted on the account. Sometimes they also post events that are organized by SGA. Usually, each post varies between around 30-200 likes.

WPI International Student Counsel has both Facebook and Instagram accounts, but it seems like ISC has not updated Facebook posts since February. ISC mainly posts about events organized by ISC, Annually ISC also posts the new exec board letting people know who will oversee the clubs depending on the position. Each post from ISC has around 10-60 likes.

Finding #2: Use promotional materials that are short and interesting

From the interviews with students in charge of the organization's social accounts, we found that the best way to design promotion materials is to keep it short and interesting. All the account managers said that the events' promotional materials normally have a compelling title, 2-3 sentences about the event itself, the time and place of where the event is held, and a little incentive such as food, prizes, or the chance to socialize with fellow students. Many of the accounts managers said they use this general format, but with more pictures to gain attention.

27

Finding #3: Use email to promote events

An email from the Office of Academic Advising that promoted academic advising was an example of an effective method to attract students to attend academic advising sessions throughout the academic year. The email was sent to all undergraduate students at the beginning of each academic term at WPI. The majority of the undergraduate students attended at least once during their college career at WPI. Many students reported that they learned about the event by reading their email.

Dear Students,
The Office of Academic Advising would like to welcome you back for D Term! We hope you have had an enjoyable spring break. As usual, we will be offering virtual drop-in advising during the initial no-fee add/drop period (dates and times below). Please feel free to stop by virtual drop-ins if you need assistance completing or adjusting your D term schedule.
Please note that we are keeping drop-ins virtual to accommodate as many students as possible while keeping the capacity of our office limited. We ask that you do not come in person to the office for drop-ins as you will be directed to join virtually.
For assistance with anything other than D term schedules, please make an appointment with your academic support advisor using Tutortrac, or contact your faculty advisor directly.
We wish you a successful start to the term and look forward to assisting you!
The Office of Academic Advising

Virtual Drop-In Dates:
Monday, March 13th 8:30am – 4:30pm
Tuesday, March 14th 8:30am – 4:30pm
Wednesday, March 15 10:00am – 4:00pm
Thursday, March 16 10:00am – 4:00pm
Friday, March 17 10:00am – 4:00pm
Drop-ins can be accessed using the following link: https://wpi.zoom.us/j/98008754563

Figure 20: Academic Office Email to students

Finding #4: Use Flyers and Instagram posts

Many of the students use social media as a means of gaining information about university events and activities, mainly Instagram. Board members of popular organizations such as Student Government Association and the International Student Council revealed that they like to use the poster format for Instagram post and vice versa. Combining the use of flyers and posts on Instagram helped the promotions of specific events.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of social media in the academic field has grown beyond just a communication tool for students. University faculty and staff have also begun to use social media to effectively promote academic activities. Social media provides a direct, efficient, and interactive way to reach a larger audience, especially students who make up the majority of social media users.

One of the ways professors and most universities use social media is by creating event pages or posts on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Twitter. These pages provide all the necessary details about the event such as date, time, venue, purpose, and speakers. With the click of a button, students can indicate their interest or confirm their attendance. Professors can track these responses, providing them with reliable estimates of activity participation. In our study, we found that this way of using social media is very similar to the suggestions made by the students we interviewed, so we believe that using social media for publicity is a very effective way that meets the needs of WPI students.

According to Jeni Rogers, editor at Wheelhouse.com, promoting exciting campus events through social media platforms is a powerful strategy for stimulating engagement among current students while also attracting the attention of prospective students and parents considering college. These platforms offer a plethora of tools to highlight events; event organizers can spread details and photos, invite students to comment and share posts, and even set up groups or events to foster interaction between interested people. This recommendation aligns well with our project goal of enabling more students to learn about and participate in academic activities.

Social media platforms also enable professors and staff to leverage their network of followers. They often encourage students, faculty, and other stakeholders to share the event within their circles. This strategy has the potential to significantly expand the reach of event promotions. A single share by a student or staff member can expose an event to hundreds of other potential attendees. In Stacey McLachlan's blog, she mentions students actively participating in discussions, interacting with professors, voicing their concerns, participating in fashion trends, critiquing the quality of cafeteria meals, and stimulating intellectual debate. Such lively conversations can reveal interesting perspectives about campus life or draw attention to underlying issues that may have been overlooked (McLachlan, 2023). This suggests that social media can do a great job of helping teachers get to know their students better and communicate better with them. Additionally, social media platforms are spaces where professors interact directly with students. They can respond to inquiries, address concerns, and receive feedback in real time. This level of interaction can create a sense of community around the event, enhancing anticipation and engagement.

Finally, a university can use the popular social application Snapchat creatively to facilitate student engagement and host question-and-answer sessions. In addition to these

educational activities, colleges often use Snapchat for lighter, more fun activities. In Roger's study, one institution shared squirrel sketches, asked students to creatively add their own doodles, and shared the results through the app. This whimsical approach encourages students to actively use Snapchat and fosters further engagement.

Recommendations

At WPI, integrating social media with traditional methods of promoting events and programs is critical. We collected students' perspectives about social media use and learned about their social media habits. We also learned about how traditional methods of promoting campus events affected students. We make the following recommendations to promote academic events on campus, which can increase student attendance and engagement:

1. Implement an online calendar system:

    WPI currently has a calendar, but many students during the interview said that the calendar does not have much information on academic events and activities. From our research, our team suggest that the school implements a digital platform with a calendar of events that are updated regularly with all activities including clubs, organizations, and academic related ones. This will not only help students plan out their schedule ahead of time, but it will allow all students (especially those without social media) to have access to a plethora of information about campus events.

2. Provide in-depth information about guest speakers:

    When students know more about a speaker's biodata and their expertise, they are likely to attend the event. However, when promoting these activities, refrain from putting too much wordy information on any promotional device. Adding the information to keep the student informed but keep it concise and limited to about 2-3 sentences. Additionally, we recommend a link with more information for the student to have the opportunity to click if they want to learn more information.

3. Implement a system of frequent updates and quality checks for bulletin boards:

    The advertising information on these boards should be both relevant and timely. This may involve assigning a dedicated team or individual to oversee the bulletin board and ensure its content remains fresh, accurate and appealing to a wide range of student interests.

4. Each department and academic office should build a strong presence on social media:

Our team recommends the use of Instagram to promote academic events and
activities since most of the student population both in the questionnaire and interview
expressed that they use Instagram the most. Instagram is widely used by clubs and
organizations on campus to distribute information about events. Additionally,
organizations like the Student Government Association are willing to help promote and
repost any academic event or activity promoted through Instagram. Many of the WPI
social media accounts can be reached out to by emailing the manager of the account or
direct messaging the account through the platform.

5. Promote events as early as possible:

The ideal amount of time to start promoting an event is three to four weeks before
the event or activity. This provides ample time for students to learn about events, adjust
their schedules as needed and confirm their attendance. As the event date approaches,
regular reminders and updates on Instagram or through email which can be shared to
maintain interest and ensure the event stays in the spotlight. A successful and intriguing
post should have a short and interesting description, providing enough information about
the purpose and benefits of the campaign. Incorporating high-quality, relevant images or
graphics is key, as visuals can have a major impact on attracting attention and conveying
the essence of an event. Including images of similar past events also provides a realistic
preview of what attendees can expect. Important information such as date, time and
location should be highlighted, along with platform details for the virtual event.
Encourage audience engagement through comments, likes, shares, and replies, and
leverage relevant, popular hashtags to increase post visibility. The aim is not only to
educate students about the activity, but to spark their interest and engage them, increasing
the likelihood that they will participate and be further promoted among their peers.

Figure 21: Recommended Instagram Post (Appendix E)

Figure 21 is an example of an ideal Instagram post that our team created based on our research and recommendations from popular organization and social media members at WPI. This post encompasses the best practices that we found to be the most prevalent since it includes compelling pictures and colors and a few sentences that promote the important information such as time, place and where to get more information. Additionally, this format is very versatile. Our team suggest this format to be used not only for Instagram post, but also posters and emails too since this format has a very compelling and intriguing layout that still does the job of providing necessary information.
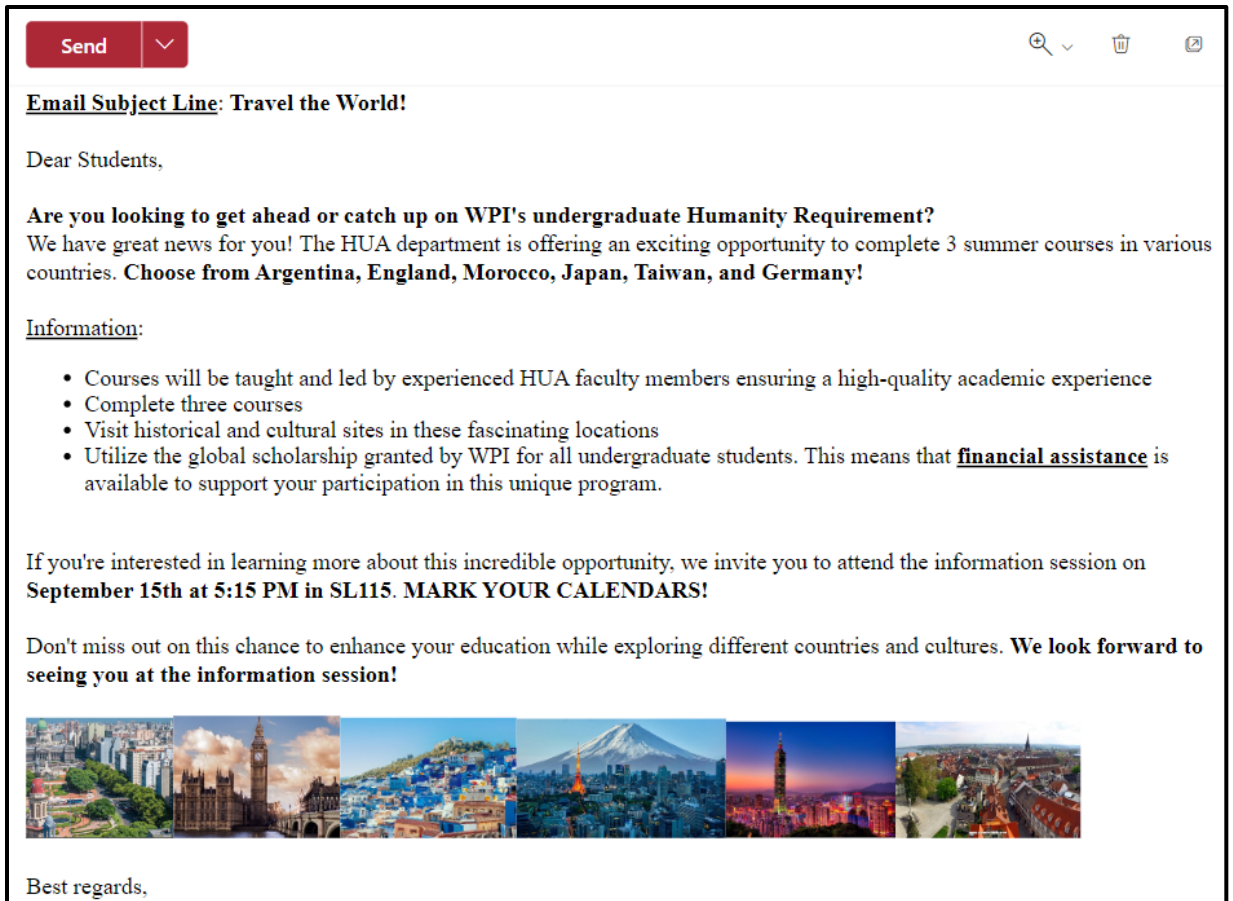
Figure 22: Recommended Email (Appendix D)

Our team also suggest promoting regularly through email since there is a population of students who does not have any social media accounts and rely heavily on email to obtain information. An example of a best practice email to promote academic activities and events can be found in Figure 22. This email encompasses the best practices that were found to be the most important since it includes a compelling subject line and a few sentences about the event which do not overwhelm the student with too much information.

6. Use compelling and catchy headlines:

This will help spark curiosity and clearly indicate the theme of the event. Students rely on the titles of flyers, post, and emails to gauge whether they will continue reading through the information or leave. We suggest using compelling and catchy headlines on any promotional method because it is the first thing that will catch the students' eyes and it will affect their initial interest.

A successful on-campus event should be well attended and advertised effectively to attract all students enrolled at WPI. It is our hope that event organizers at WPI will leverage on the popularity of social media use among students to promote and advertise activities on campus as well as distribute flyers in an effective and impactful manner.

Future research

Future IQP teams undertaking research on this topic are strongly encouraged to consider engaging directly with university professors and relevant staff to gain their perspective on social media use and event promotion. The study could include investigating their social media habits and how they engage with students through these platforms. It can reveal practical considerations, potential challenges, and innovative strategies not readily apparent through secondary research. It is also worth studying promotion strategies that peer institutions implement for outreach purposes. Other STEM universities with larger student populations may have innovative methods in promoting campus events. Learning about these strategies may help WPI in reaching out to a diverse student population.

References

Aslam, S. (2023, July 17). *80+ facebook statistics you need to know in 2023*. Omnicore Agency. https://www.omnicoreagency.com/Facebook-statistics/

Flegel, D., Judy, M., Leserman, J., & Shea, M. (2022). *Growing the London Humanity and Arts Project Center.* Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Kohli, A. (2023, March 2). *Why TikTok's new teen time limit may not do much*. Time. https://time.com/6259863/tiktok-time-limit-teens/

Lenhart, A. (2015, April 9). *Teens, Social Media & Technology Overview 2015*. Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech. https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/

Zhou, L. (2023, January 12). *Social Media Demographics: The Definitive Guide in 2023*. Luisa Zhou. https://www.luisazhou.com/blog/social-media-demographics/

Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J., & Hooley, T. (2009*).* Facebook, social integration and informal learning at university: 'it is more for socialising and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work.' *Learning, Media and Technology,* 34(2), 141–155. *https://doi.org/10.1080/17439880902923606*

McLachlan, S. (2023, June 26). *Social Media in higher education: 14 essential tips*. Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard. https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-in-higher-education/

Ortiz-Ospina, E., & Roser, M. (2023, May 25). *The rise of Social Media*. Our World in Data. https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media

Rogers, J. (n.d.). *How universities use social media for marketing*. Full Fabric. https://www.fullfabric.com/articles/how-universities-use-social-media-for-marketing

Ruby, D. (2023, August 1). *Social Media Users 2023 - (global demographics)*. DemandSage. https://www.demandsage.com/social-media-users/

Worcester Polytechnic Institute. (2022, August 23).

https://www.wpi.edu/student-experience/getting-involved/clubs-organizations

Boston University. *Social Media: PR Social*. (n.d.).

https://www.bu.edu/prsocial/best-practices/social-media/

Wilson, S., & Gore, J. (2013, February 8). An attachment model of university connectedness -
taylor & francis online.

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00220973.2012.699902

Worcester Polytechnic Institute Student Life - US News Best Colleges. USNews. (n.d.).
https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/wpi-2233/student-life

Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

Topic: Student Habits on social media

Dear WPI Student,

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by an IQP group investigating the to investigate how WPI students use social media to learn about campus events and programs. Participation should take approximately 2-3 minutes to complete.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You may skip any question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Our team is offering a $5 Dunkin gift card to 10 different students who successfully complete the survey and provide their WPI email to be added to the drawing. If you choose to provide your contact information such as your email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, no names or identifying information would be included in any publications or presentations based on these data, and your responses to this survey will remain confidential.

BENEFITS & RISKS

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about student habits on social media. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other.

1) What events do you attend at the university?

        Academic

        Social (i.e: Music events, Meet new people, etc.)

        Clubs

        Sports

        Performing Arts

        Other…

2) How many academic events have you attended in the past year?

        0

        1-5

        6-10

        11-15

        16-20

        20 or more

3) How do you learn about the university events?

        Email

        Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Discord, etc.)

        Friends

        Informational stands (tabling) /sessions

        Bulletin boards

        Word of mouth (Teachers or other students)

        Other…

4) How often do you check your school email?

        Constantly

        Hourly

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

Never

5) What promotional methods do you notice happening around the university?

Bulletin boards

Informational stands (tabling) /sessions

WPI social accounts (WPI Facebook, WPI Instagram, WPI Tik Tok)

Organization social accounts (SGA, etc.)

Other…

6) How often do you read/check bulletin boards?

Once a day

Once a week

Once a month

Never

7) What is the reason why you don't attend certain academic events?

Busy due to academic courses

Not interested in the events

Never got any information on them (didn't know about the event)

Other…

Please select the box marked mostly so our team knows you aren't randomly checking boxes.

Always

Sometimes

Mostly

Occasionally

Never

8) Would you attend more academic events if there were better outreach programs in place?

Yes, These events seem really interesting and beneficial. The only problem is I don't know about the events most of the time.

No, These events don't interest me at all.

Maybe, These events could potentially interest me. I think the school struggles with informing its students about these events, so if there was better outreach in place then more people may want to show up (including myself).

Other…

9) Check all that apply: Which social media platforms do you use?

Instagram

Facebook

Tik Tok

Twitter

Reddit

Other…

10) How often do you check social media?

Constantly

Daily

Weekly

Monthly

I don't/barely use social media

Other…

11) Check all that apply: Do you follow any school related social media pages?

WPI Tik Tok

WPI Instagram

WPI Facebook

WPI Twitter

Other…

12) Do you think social media is a more beneficial tool to gain information from? *if you want to write out a response, you can in the category labeled other*

Yes, I think social media is a great tool. I think there are many people on campus who have social media, so it would be a great tool for student outreach.

No, I think social media is useless. I think there are better ways for student outreach.

Maybe, It could potentially be a great tool. I kind of use social media, but if the school were to promote on social media platforms, I would probably use it more to get information. I am open to using social media.

Other…

Please feel free to use this space:

A) To expand on one of the questions asked above (just include the question you are expanding on)

B) To express your opinions on how you think the university could improve their outreach to students about academic programs/events (use social media, more emails, ways to make academic events fun and intriguing, etc.)

C) To explain your opinion further if you choose maybe on the last question!!

Choose one of the options above, you do not have to use the entire space

We need more people to be interviewed (remote/written)! If you would like to be interviewed about this topic, please provide your email below and a member of our team will be in contact with you. If you don't want to be interviewed, leave this question blank.

If you would like to be entered into the raffle to be one of the 10 people to win a $5 Dunkin gift card, please enter your WPI email address!!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns please use this space to express them and a member of our team will be in contact with you (if you choose to provide your email)

Appendix B: Student Interview

We appreciate you taking the time to participate in our short interview. We are a team of 4 university students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute working with Professor Esther Boucher-Yip, Humanities and Arts Department, to survey the university to find the most effective way for student outreach. Our findings will be published in a report that will be used to analyze student habits to potentially increase the effectiveness and efficiency for faculty, organizations, and offices to promote their academic events.

The goal of our project is to investigate how WPI students use social media to learn about campus events and programs. The team will study how inclusive practices and social media can be used to disseminate information on campus. Through this interview, we hope to understand the social media habits of WPI students as well as how they obtain information regarding academic events.

All interviews will be conducted through Zoom or Facetime. To record the interview data, the team will engage in asking questions in a conversational approach. If you prefer to have only one team member present, that member will bring a writing utensil and notebook to take minutes during the meeting while remaining fully engaged in the conversation. If you are comfortable with the whole team or multiple members being present, one team member will be assigned as the main interviewer, responsible for asking questions and giving their full attention to the participant. Another team member will act as the scribe, taking notes on all topics and opinions discussed during the interview. These notes will then be transferred to a team shared Google document, ensuring anonymity by removing names from the answers.

The interview may be stopped at any time and any response given that you wish not to have used will be docked from the meeting minutes. Although our team would appreciate full participation, all questions are optional so you will have the chance to skip any question you feel uncomfortable answering. The information that will be collected is solely for research purposes and will not be used to harm your reputation or status of employment. Lastly to reiterate, all

personal information (i.e., name, email, or other) provided will not be kept or distributed unless consent is given beforehand. If any questions, comments, or concerns arise please reach out to one of our team members. Do you understand everything that I just went over? And do you give your consent to participate in this interview? Can this meeting be recorded?

1. What were the events that you attended within the last year (could be hosted or attended as a student)?

        a. Out of all the events that you attended, which one was your favorite and why?

2. How do you learn about these events?

        a. Friends?

        b. Clubs/organizations?

        c. Social media?

        d. Others?

3. What is the main factor that pushes you to go to certain events?

        a. Fun?

        b. Friends?

        c. Need a break?

        d. Free food?

4.   What is the main reason for not attending certain events?

5.   How many academic activities have you attended in the past year?

      a.   What are your opinions on the activities? Fun or boring or something else?

      b.   What was the activity?

      c.   What caused you to go?

6.   How many academic events have you seen being promoted?

7.   Do you think academic events are promoted well on campus?

8.   Would you go to more academic events if there was a better outreach where students were able to get more information?

9.   What are your thoughts on social media?

      a.   What do you use social media for?

      b.   How much time do you spend on social media?

10. Do you think social media would be a great way for faculty to promote their academic activities and reach more students?

11. Do you follow any WPI social media accounts whether it is the WPI accounts or clubs or organizations?

12. Are you interested in learning about academic events?

    1.   If so, what events/programs would interest you?

Appendix C: Social Media/Organization Interview

We appreciate you taking the time to participate in our short interview. We are a team of 4 university students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute working with Professor Esther Boucher-Yip, Humanities and Arts Department, to survey the university to find the most effective way for student outreach. Our findings will be published in a report that will be used to analyze student habits to potentially increase the effectiveness and efficiency for faculty, organizations, and offices to promote their academic events.

The goal of our project is to investigate how WPI students use social media to learn about campus events and programs. The team will study how inclusive practices and social media can be used to disseminate information on campus. Through this interview, we hope to understand how active students are on social media and what information students find interesting.

All interviews will be conducted through Zoom or Facetime. To record the interview data, the team will engage in asking questions in a conversational approach. If you prefer to have only one team member present, that member will bring a writing utensil and notebook to take minutes during the meeting while remaining fully engaged in the conversation. If you are comfortable with the whole team or multiple members being present, one team member will be assigned as the main interviewer, responsible for asking questions and giving their full attention to the participant. Another team member will act as the scribe, taking notes on all topics and opinions discussed during the interview. These notes will then be transferred to a team shared Google document, ensuring anonymity by removing names from the answers.

The interview may be stopped at any time and any response given that you wish not to have used will be docked from the meeting minutes. Although our team would appreciate full participation, all questions are optional so you will have the chance to skip any question you feel

uncomfortable answering. The information that will be collected is solely for research purposes and will not be used to harm your reputation or status of employment. Lastly to reiterate, all personal information (i.e., name, email, or other) provided will not be kept or distributed unless consent is given beforehand. If any questions, comments, or concerns arise please reach out to one of our team members. Do you understand everything that I just went over? And do you give your consent to participate in this interview? Can this meeting be recorded?

1. What club/organization are you from (if applicable)?

   a. What is your role in the club/organization?

2. How frequently does your organization post on your social account?

3. What promotional content is posted on your social account? (to promote events/programs)

   a. Fun?

   b. Social?

   c. Academic?

   d. All types?

4. Which type of post gets the most likes?

   a. Academic, social, etc.?

   b. More pictures, videos, or words?

5. How many likes do you get generally in a day?

   a. How many people view your post each day

   i. If it varies, can you speak more about that? What are the trends?

6. How many people repost your materials?

7. How do you decide what to post? Do you limit what type of event you post (ie social, academic, cultural, etc)?

8.	How do you decide what the design is for your post? (Is the design altered to get more people to pay attention to the activity)

9.	Do you think social media is a great tool for student outreach?

   a. Do you think it is the most effective tool for student outreach? If not, what is in your opinion the best tool?

      i. Do you have data to support your claim? (Have you seen significantly more students go to one event than another?)

   b. What are some of the downsides?

10. What do people message you asking about events?

11. Who normally reaches out to your organization to have their events promoted?

12. Would you say your organization's social presence plays a big part in the attendance to events?

13. If WPI academic offices, departments and professors were to reach out to your organization to help promote their event, would you promote the event? How would you go about promoting it (in order to increase attendance and get more people interested)?

14. How often do you send emails? Have you gotten feedback on this? What day is the best to send emails and how many emails are effective to promote an activity?

Appendix D: Best Practices: Recommended email message

Email Subject Line: **Travel the World!**

Dear Students,

Are you looking to get ahead or catch up on WPI's undergraduate Humanity Requirement?
We have great news for you! The HUA department is offering an exciting opportunity to complete 3 summer courses in various countries. **Choose from Argentina, England, Morocco, Japan, Taiwan, and Germany!**

Information:

- Courses will be taught and led by experienced HUA faculty members ensuring a high-quality academic experience
- Complete three courses
- Visit historical and cultural sites in these fascinating locations
- Utilize the global scholarship granted by WPI for all undergraduate students. This means that **financial assistance** is available to support your participation in this unique program.

If you're interested in learning more about this incredible opportunity, we invite you to attend the information session on **September 15th at 5:15 PM in SL115. MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

Don't miss out on this chance to enhance your education while exploring different countries and cultures. **We look forward to seeing you at the information session!**

Best regards,

Appendix E: Best Practices: Recommended poster/Instagram post

Appendix F: Sample Transcript from Student Interviews

Student A recounted their experiences as group leader for two years and chair for one and a half years, during which time they supported and shared culture with other students. They organize events such as the International Dinner, attended by about 300 people, showcasing culture through performances and food. To connect with the team of over 800 members, they initially relied on email and Outlook invites, but have transitioned to a more effective method of communication via Instagram. Post once or twice a week. Attendance varies, with large events attracting 250-300, smaller events 70-100, and plenary sessions 20-30. To boost attendance, they offer incentives like food and donate proceeds. These events are usually scheduled at popular times, such as lunchtime or after 6pm. Interactive events, such as question-and-answer sessions, are preferred over traditional lectures. WhatsApp groups and Instagram posts are also used for

communication between graduate students. Student A believes that repetition, fun motivation, and effective communication can increase activity participation. Improving email subject lines to attract more attention will be noted in future work.

Student B shared their experiences of participating in college events, which they often choose based on their relationship to their major, interests, or as breaks in their daily lives. They attend career fairs, guest speaker sessions, and Major Qualification Project (MQP) presentations, though sometimes the timing doesn't fit their schedule. The speaker felt that the job fair was well advertised, but other event information came mostly from professors, not social media. They check college Instagram once a week, but only fully explore the details of events that pique their interest, fit their schedule, and where their friends will be attending. The ideal event time is between 7pm and 8pm, and he would like to receive information about the event more than a week in advance. They find free stuff or food and opportunities to network with professors and departmental colleagues as good incentives to attend the event. They diligently check all emails and believe that more academic event promotion efforts will improve their attendance. They spend about 7 hours a week using social media to connect with friends and follow pages of interest. Student B expressed a desire to promote social events more and provide a calendar with scheduled events.

Student C attends college events that spark their interest, provide free food, or provide extra credit, especially if the events include useful information or an opportunity to learn from others. Earn extra credit for participating in academic events and watch online presentations such as IQP and MQP to get an overview of them. Student C felt that the publicity of academic activities was not good, and most of the information came from professors or a few leaflets. Student C does not follow any university social media accounts and suggests that the faculty should share more details about the guest speakers, including their fields and dates of activity. Student C would consider an active event even if free food was offered and would be more likely to attend if the title of the event was fun and they were supporting a friend. They preferred to receive at least a week's notice of the event and believed that the name of the event and their personal interests would heavily influence their decision to attend. Student C indicated that they were less likely to be influenced by social media and would prefer to receive a weekly email or calendar of

upcoming events. In the end, Student C felt that a better flyer and strategic placement would have attracted more students' attention.

Students D participate in activities related to their club interests and academic development, attending approximately five academic events and many clubs social gatherings. They value the connections made at these events and appreciate the guest speakers. They pay attention to flyers and club event announcements, always checking for updates on what's happening on campus. The timing of the event and the lure of free food were important factors in their attendance. They read the email carefully and suggested that the details of the event, especially the timing, should be clearly stated on the flyer. Although they are actively involved in club social activities, a heavy academic load during periods such as midterm or final weeks may prevent them from participating in academic activities. They note that there are 1 or 2 academic event promotions per week and are more likely to attend an event if all the necessary details are provided in advance, thereby minimizing the need for further inquiries. They prefer to receive more detailed information through social media posts or leaflets and spend 2-3 hours a day on social media, increasing on weekends or holidays. They believe that social media is the best and easiest way to reach students and create connections between teachers and students. They feel that the current flyer provides sufficient information about the event. They believe that social media is the best and easiest way to reach students and create connections between teachers and students. They feel that the current flyer provides sufficient information about the event. They believe that social media is the best and easiest way to reach students and create connections between teachers and students. They feel that the current flyer provides sufficient information about the event.

Student E participates in activities with friends, hosted by the club or their own department. They participate in a variety of activities including mentoring sessions, career fairs, cultural events, fun events, and workshops that will benefit their professional future. They feel that the promotion of the event is not done well, mainly relying on the professor. They argue that event posters are often restricted to specific buildings, making it difficult for those who don't frequent the locations to learn about the events. They regularly check WPI's Instagram account, which they consider to be their primary source of activity updates. They appreciate the advocacy work of

International House via email and Instagram. Their decision to attend an event depends on the sponsoring department, the nature and timing of the event. They emphasized the importance of knowing whether their friends would attend and expressed indifference to free food. They preferred a different schedule for the event, saying they couldn't attend at 5pm. They pay attention to emails and fully read those that interest them or are necessary. Their event preferences lean more toward fun activities, and they won't attend an event if they don't agree with the premise of the event, are too busy, or if the event doesn't align with their major. They observed frequent promotion of academic events, often by email or by professors. They acknowledge the potential of social media for event promotion but are also wary of the negative impact of comments. They spend a lot of time on Instagram, about 3 hours a day.

Student F participates in an activity where friends are present, and the nature of the activity is clearly defined. They attended fewer than five academic events and showed a preference for social events where they could interact with classmates and professors. They are delighted that their departments invite PhD students to events, as it can give them insight into the future of their profession and an opportunity to network. They argue that some departments, such as RBE and BME, do a better job of publicizing their campaigns. They found that the job fair was well publicized, attributing to the importance of the event to universities and students. They suggest that a calendar listing event dates would be useful. They follow multiple WPI social media accounts for updates on sports, clubs and social events, mostly checking Instagram and TikTok. They prefer smaller events with friends and less teacher involvement. The presence of friends, free food, potential career insights, curriculum, and teacher interaction at social events appeal to them. They felt that posters were ineffective for event promotion and suggested that a comprehensive event calendar would be helpful. They find the format of event-related emails unattractive and tend to skim them unless they are interesting or necessary. They check email a lot and receive most of their academic information via email and social updates via Instagram.

Student G, who is a member of the student activities committee, explained their process for disseminating information about the event. The main sources of content are email, tech syncs and social media. They promote a wide range of events open to all students and avoid those with political or religious themes. Decisions about what to share were made based on Sunday night's

tech sync list, and an email about daily events was sent out accordingly. The publicity content includes the academic activities of professors and departments, and there is less information about SGA-related activities. Feedback indicated that the weekly emails sent from a student perspective were appreciated. The best time to send these emails is Monday morning. These emails are strategically designed with more high-profile events listed at the top, with detailed descriptions coming directly from TechSync. Their social media mostly retweets content from other clubs and event organizers, with an emphasis on high-profile events, freebies, and succinct descriptions. Respondents acknowledged that social media can be a more effective student outreach tool than email due to increased usage. However, email is still important for certain types of information.

Student H attends events mainly for fun, learning and good advertising, and has participated in about 15 events in the last year. Friend influence and effective promotion are key motivators. They felt that scholarly events were not well publicized, resulting in missing information. Following the club and the WPI Instagram account will keep them informed about events, and more event information will increase their interest. Attractive elements include free food and games, though low turnout may be off-putting. They pored over their emails once a day, and the on-campus games were their favorite because of the chance to meet new people. The main reason they do not attend events is time conflicts. They feel that there are fewer academic events on campus than social events, and most academic event promotions are via email. They believe that better event promotion can improve student attendance. They use social media 1-2 hours per day for fun and to connect with others, seeing it as a beneficial channel for teacher advocacy.

Student I attends a social event recommended by a friend and receives free food. She prefers free events and events she would attend again if it was fun. She used services such as math tutoring but found it difficult to attend guest speaking events due to scheduling issues that were often announced at the last minute. She would have liked to have been notified earlier so she could better organize her time. She found Instagram useful for information, especially departmental academic news, but she felt smaller events were not being promoted either. She suggested that more specific details of activities in promotional materials would be helpful, especially for younger students. She scans her emails, usually just checking the headers, and relies heavily on

social media and word of mouth for information. She also highlighted the event's timing, location, and inclusion of free items to entice attendees. She believes that using social media for event promotion can significantly increase event attendance.

Student J participated in and helped organize the bi-annual event, which provided free food and served as a platform for academics. They found the experience satisfying and beneficial for resume building and self-improvement. Information about such events is primarily obtained through word of mouth and individuals actively following relevant social media accounts such as club pages and WPI pages. Social media is mostly used on the weekends and only uses 30-40 minutes a day for communication and leisure activities like TikTok. Freebies and peer influence were the main drivers of participation, although timing conflicts sometimes hindered attendance. Their favorite activity is a trip to Washington DC. Emails are not checked often, and they feel that improved promotions will not necessarily increase their event participation.

Out of interest and a desire to connect with others, Student K regularly participates in activities such as study groups, tutorial sessions, and BMES meetings. They particularly found tutoring helpful, but were less satisfied with other activities. Their attendance is often influenced by the presence of friends and the offer of free food. They value the opportunity to gain insights from speakers sharing experiences beyond their classroom knowledge. They often check school email and use Slack for chats and Outlook for meetings. Reasons for not attending an event include busyness, lack of participation from friends, or lack of interest. Although not seeing much academic promotion beyond tutoring, they admit that if there were more promotions, they might have attended. They spend about 4 hours a day on social media,

Student K's interest in the activity was primarily driven by the presence of friends and potential academic usefulness. They often come across event posters but find them cluttered and unclear. They do not follow any WPI-related social media other than the WPI 2025 account. Their willingness to participate in an activity largely depends on the learning potential of the activity. They want a clear list detailing the nature of various events. When they check their email, only those with compelling subject lines are read. They're more likely to go to events with friends and skip those that don't interest them. Social media use is limited to chatting with friends 2-3 times a

day and largely ignores WPI content. They argue that the effectiveness of social media for event promotion depends on how students use it, and that meetings about events or clubs can enhance event promotion. They expressed a preference for activities related to their profession.

Student L tends to participate in social activities for fun and to make friends, but has low awareness or participation in academic activities and has not participated in any academic activities in the past year. Their awareness of the event usually comes from the speakers in the class, but their attendance is mostly based on personal interest, especially if the event contributes to their project and offers freebies. They felt that academic activities were not well advertised on campus, and while they checked the bulletin boards daily, they found updates were few and mostly club related. They get information from SGA emails and Instagram, but don't read it all and want a full list of upcoming events. They focus on photography and food accounts, but don't see the benefit of school-related social media accounts. They occasionally share event details with friends and trust event speakers to make the event more engaging. Their attendance is limited by free time, off-campus weekends, and the pursuit of fun things. Time conflicts, such as having to skip class to attend events such as job fairs, can also dampen attendance. Last year, they mostly read emails and attended 9-10 events, with the highest number of attendees offering free food and good promotions. They believe that Snapchat, with its discovery and story features, is a better promotional tool than TikTok, and suggest that teachers can effectively promote events on social media with a clear purpose and plenty of visuals. Time conflicts, such as having to skip class to attend events such as job fairs, can also dampen attendance. Last year, they mostly read emails and attended 9-10 events, with the highest number of attendees offering free food and good promotions. They believe that Snapchat, with its discovery and story features, is a better promotional tool than TikTok, and suggest that teachers can effectively promote events on social media with a clear purpose and plenty of visuals. Time conflicts, such as having to skip class to attend events such as job fairs, can also dampen attendance. Last year, they mostly read emails and attended 9-10 events, with the highest number of attendees offering free food and good promotions. They believe that Snapchat, with its discovery and story features, is a better promotional tool than TikTok, and suggest that teachers can effectively promote events on social media with a clear purpose and plenty of visuals.

Appendix G: Sample Transcript from social media/Organization Interviews

The ISC Representative says that the organization uses the method of emails since there are more than 800 members in the group. When using emails, they use interesting and captivating titles for their subject line to hook the members into reading about the event. On top of this they use outlook invites so that members have it marked in their calendars, so they are aware if there are any scheduling conflicts ahead of time. This also helps the organization keep track of potential attendance because people can directly accept or decline the invitation. As of lately, the organization has shifted towards using social media platforms such as Instagram since it is widely used. The student said, "Instagram is more effective because all students get to access it since it is an open account, and it is more open toward graduate students as well". However, if a faculty member is invited, the organization reaches out using outlook with an invitation since it is more formal. The organization promotes their events a few weeks prior to the event date which includes pictures, time and a link for more information if interested. Normally they post 1-2 weeks before an event and post their story everyday if an event is coming. People, clubs, and committees are tagged in collaboration to promote them. Food is a persuasive incentive for attendance as one of their more attended events is the International Dinner. Time is also a factor in attendance. They hold events generally on Wednesdays 6-8pm since many people on campus have a relaxed schedule on Wednesdays. On top of this, they like to avoid times where most people have lunch like around 12, so they will reserve big events for times after 6pm normally.

The SGA Representative says that the organization uses both emails and social media to distribute information about upcoming events. The Promotional content is a list of events which are open to all of campus. Previously if a club, organization, etc. wanted their event on the email blast then they would need to put it on tech synch, however this has now changed. The member said that normally they promote activities and events if it is available to all students, so they tend to stay away from political or religious events. If a sports game or an office hour wanted to be promoted, it is a judgement call for the club leaders. Although the methods of getting you event promoted by SGA, the member said that academic events by professors and departments were also considered. On top of this, if professors, departments, faculty or offices were to reach out by either messaging the SGA account or tagging them on Instagram, they would support the event

and help repost and promote it as well. The problem is the organization isn't really approached by academic offices, departments, or professors about academic events. For emails, they tend to send one email a week with a summary of the events to come. Not many people reach out for more information. It is good that the emails are only sent once a week to not overwhelm the students. Also, it is better that it comes from a student not only because they are a peer but also it helps with not sending the email to the spam folder. Emails are best sent out on Monday morning at 8 or 10 am. Posts events mostly on Instagram stories and anyone who posts something, and tags SGA will get reposted. They keep their post with not many words and more pictures. The types of post with the most likes seem to be those that are fun and interactive events, free food, and free stuff. Social media is a great tool for student outreach because people are on it a lot more than on their email plus according to this member not many people really read through their emails. For promoting events with an email, they normally promote a week ahead. For social media promotion, they will promote as soon as the club starts advertising and tags them.

The WPI Tik Tok Representative's role is to help make content that would be able to push out to prospective students and students on campus. They are new and are trying to find ways to gain more views and more of a presence on social media. They will post on Tik Tok and will also post on their Instagram stories. For WPI, they post once a week, sometimes once every week and a half to two weeks. The main thing about using Tik Tok is that things are always popping up on peoples' feed, so you still want to maintain a constant presence to keep them informed. However, you must balance it out too. By using social media, you want to have a presence and be able to inform but not bombard the students constantly with information because many use the platforms for fun as well. The biggest thing they are trying to capture is raw experiences of student life on campus to get more people excited but also not to forget about the other important things like fun facts about the school, more focused and academic events, and fairs. They don't really have any limitations content wise and say that they post a pretty well-rounded amount of information. Social media is a very strong way to get people to see things. Emails are great, but when it comes to an event you can make the promotion more colorful and visually appealing on social media. You can change the colors, add more pictures, and overall have a more popping and intriguing presence than an email.