

Survey Report

Goals and Context

The purpose of this study is to find out why students, particularly at UW, join clubs and how clubs can most effectively advertise to UW students. The first portion of this study included field observations. During my field observations, I learned that students are more likely to join clubs after holding a conversation with existing club members. In order to have these conversations, clubs that advertise at booths or tables need to be loud and engaging students in conversation. The next step of the study was the interviews. I decided to interview club leaders on what they thought about advertising and why they thought students joined clubs. A major weakness in this part was the fact that the information was all second-hand.

In this last phase of this research study, I have the opportunity to gain information from the actual students that join the clubs. I no longer have to make assumptions based on their actions or rely on the judgement of club officers to report on what students are thinking. I hope to answer why people join, and eventually quit clubs. Understanding why people quit clubs was an aspect that was completely missing from my field observations, so I have no preconceived ideas on what the answer will be. It will also be important to see if the results from these surveys align with what club officers said in their interviews.

Regardless of what the results are, it will be important to let club leaders know if they're making the correct assumptions about their club members or if they need to get to know their members better. The results from this study can provide valuable advice on how clubs can effectively advertise to the student population. A lot of clubs struggle with keeping students coming to clubs, so hopefully I will have some information to report back to club leaders.

One club, in particular, that I would like to help is the Board Games at UW club. The world of board gaming has had an intense increase in popularity in the past 5 years. I want to invite as many people as possible to this hobby as is possible. While the officers do a wonderful job of making people feel welcome when they stumble upon meetings, they are fairly clueless on how to advertise to students.

Method and Approach

My only criteria for participants is whether or not they have participated in a UW club. This would include students that were once part of a club but maybe aren't anymore. This also includes both club members and club officers, because officers were just members at one point in time. They can speak to their experiences when they first joined their club. I created this survey using Google Docs because it's a standard that almost everyone has experience with. I posted my survey onto various UW groups on Facebook. As a result, I didn't have to get rid of any of the responses that were submitted.

I first asked about students' negative experiences with clubs as a whole. I haven't heard a lot about why students quit clubs, so it's important to start with the questions that I don't have

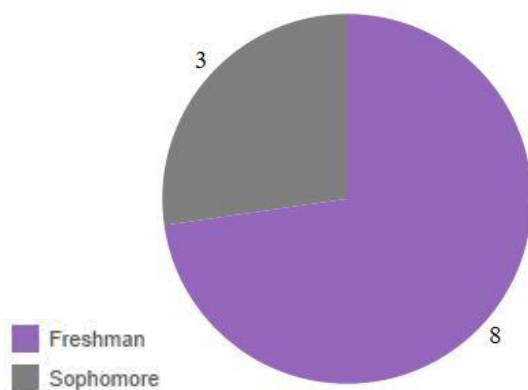
any expectations about. This question was asked using a multiple choice questions with the option of filling in a different response. Another kind of general question about clubs as a whole was requesting to have participants rank the most important aspects of a club. I had asked all of the club officers what they thought was most important for club members and they all responded that the opportunity for friendship and community

In the next section of questions, I asked participants to keep one club in mind while they answer questions about the club they are the most involved with. I asked how they learned about their club in the form of a multiple choice question, then asked them to elaborate through a short answer question. All of the people I interviewed said that they learned about the club they are officers for during the RSO fair at the beginning of the year. From my field observations, I also learned that meaningful conversations are the way to more effectively recruit new students. Hopefully the short answer portion can support this previous finding.

The interview participants had also said that they mostly advertise to freshmen because they are the people that are looking to make friends the most. For this reason, I also asked in what grade they joined the club. My likert question came in the form of asking how comfortable participants were in their first club meeting. From talking to friends that went to one meeting of a club and then never went again, they said it was because they felt very uncomfortable at the first meeting. I don't expect to see any responses where participants report being extremely uncomfortable at their first experience with a club they are still highly involved with.

To analyze the data, I used a combination of Microsoft Excel and the student version of Tableau to create graphs. Google Docs provided really nice graphs as well, which gave me a good starting point to what my graphs would look like. The other sources to make graphs can help with analyzing questions together, rather than looking at them separately. This is necessary to make connections between multiple questions and to take away more meaningful interpretation and analysis.

Results



Lots of freshmen

Majority of people that join clubs are joining as freshmen.

I had expected to see that a lot of people join clubs as freshmen because, from personal experience, it's scary to come to such a large school and not know anybody. I had also learned from my interviews that clubs most often advertise to incoming freshmen. The survey reported that about 73% of students were

freshmen when they joined the club that they are most involved with now. This supports both my personal hypothesis and the hypotheses of the club officers. They are advertising to the right target audience.

How to advertise for clubs

The results regarding the best way to specifically advertise for clubs remains inconclusive.

I had expected to see a majority of people reporting that they heard about their club from the RSO fair after my interviews. I was surprised that almost every person reported a different method of hearing about their club. Participants said that they heard about their club through the Engineering Club Fair, RSO fair, tabling outside of the HUB, from friends, Dawg Daze (outside of RSO Fair), and posters. Two students said that they knew about the club before they came to UW. It was only about 18% of survey students that said they learned about their club through the RSO fair.

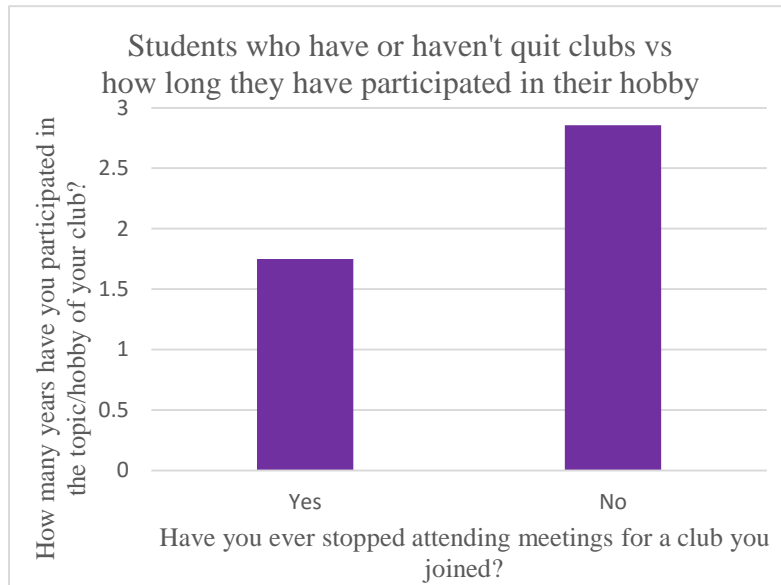
I did ask a follow up question regarding why they felt where they heard about their club was effective in recruiting them. Most students mentioned in this follow up question the effectiveness of speaking to existing club members. While my initial hypothesis regarding where students hear about clubs was incorrect, previous information regarding the effectiveness of conversation of recruiting was supported. Interview participants said that they liked people that they talked with at the RSO fair, which made them decide to join the club. I also observed that club tables outside the HUB were more successful when they were talking with students that were walking through the HUB area.

Why people leave clubs

Students cite large time commitments as the main reason they quit club.

I had no previous ideas on why people quit clubs because there was no way to observe this. The interview participants talked about their methods on keeping students in clubs, but they couldn't comment on why students quit clubs. 14 of the 22 total participants said that they have stopped attending meetings for a club that they were a part of. Given that they stopped attending meetings, about 71% of students say that they stopped attending meetings because it was too much of a time commitment or there was a time conflict. College students are extremely busy and have to ration out their time wisely. The number one priority for students is to study and attend classes, so clubs and hobbies can sometimes take a backseat to studies.

Disinterest in the topic, unfriendly club members, and lack of appreciation are other cited reasons for quitting clubs that can't really be helped. Part of the college experience is to try around with clubs to see what works and sometimes a toxic community is an unfortunate reality of some hobbies.



One finding from the data, depicted in the graph titled “Students who have or haven't quit clubs vs how long they have participated in their hobby” was that students are less likely to quit clubs if they have hobbies that they have been involved with for a very long time. Both of the participants that said that they heard about their club before coming to UW had also responded that they hadn't ever stopped attending meetings of a club they had joined. Students

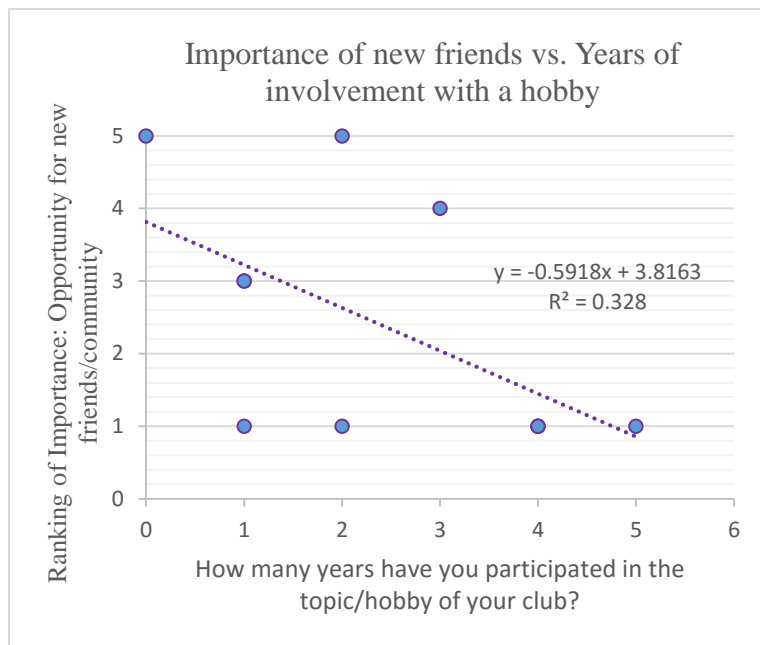
with longtime hobbies are joining clubs that they know they will enjoy, and so they aren't going to be quitting clubs unless they really can't fit it into their schedule.

The most important parts of clubs

The most important aspect of a club depends on the student. The amount of time a student has participated in the topic of a club is one aspect of determining what the most important part of a club is for students.

A very important question that motivated this study is “What do people look for in clubs?” In this survey, I had participants rank the most important factors of a club from most important to least important (on a scale from 1-5). Originally, I thought that the access to resources would be the most important aspect. After the interviews, it sounded more probable that students joining clubs are looking for friendships and the ability to build community.

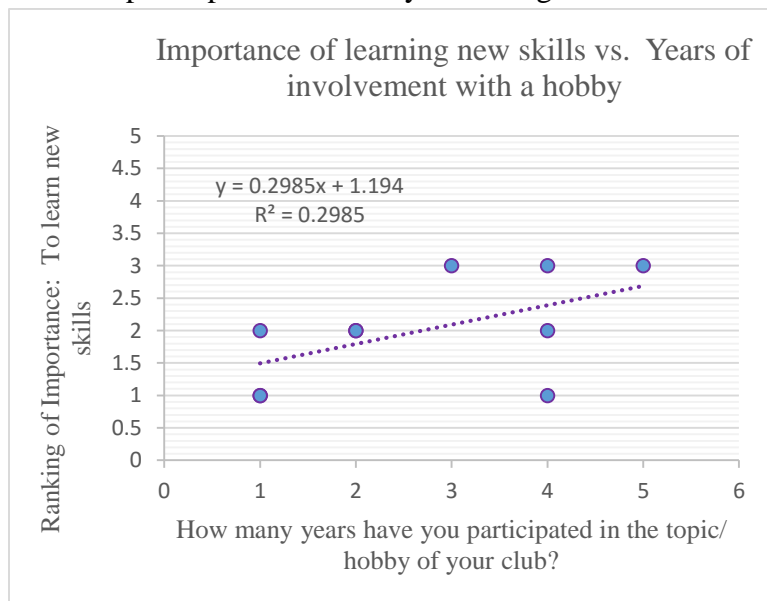
The actual results are much more complicated than being able to give one definite answer. The possibility of friendship/ community received the largest number of #1/ most important votes, but two people also ranked it as least important. The ability to learn new skills, however, was always in the top 3 most important factors. The resources a club provides had the second largest number of #1 votes, and also didn't have any #5 votes. This variance on answers can speak to the fact that not everybody has the same goals going into clubs. Club leaders need to get to know their club on an individual basis and see what they need to provide to their students.



The graph titled “Importance of new friends vs. Years of involvement with a hobby” shows a negative correlation between the number of years a student has participated in their hobby and the way they ranked the importance of making new friends. This means that making friends is most important for students that have a hobby they have been practicing for a long time. Students that are extremely involved in a hobby want to come to UW and meet people that are interested in the same thing. The R^2 value shows

that the amount of years a student participates in their hobby is responsible for about 33% of the variation. Therefore, there are many reasons why students would value making friends in a club, but the amount of experience with the hobby has a sizeable effect.

There was no distinct correlations regarding the most important aspects for people that have not participated in a hobby for a long amount of time. The closest comparison is shown in



the graph titled “Importance of learning new skills vs. Years of involvement with a hobby. The graph shows a weak correlation between number of years participating in a hobby and the importance of learning a new skill. The participants that are relatively new to their hobby are slightly more likely to prioritize the ability to learn a new skill in a club, which makes sense. The R^2 value states that the number of years participating in a hobby accounts for about 30% of the variation.

This supports the earlier graph, stating that the years involved with a hobby can account for about one third of the rationale regarding what parts of a club are most important to students.

Discussion

A major consideration from this study has been the fact that not all clubs on campus are identical, dealing with the same problems. The results from these studies can give a nice structure for how clubs can interact with students, but it's not a definitive rulebook for how all clubs need to act. There are around 800 clubs on campus, so there have to be some clubs that don't need help on advertising, or don't care about recruiting new members. It's also important to consider that students are joining clubs because they want to. A major and obvious motivation in joining clubs in high school was to have extra things to include on a college application. This motivation doesn't exist in this college atmosphere, so we have to consider other motivations regarding why student join clubs.

A large limiting factor with surveys is the fact that it is self-reported. There is no way to truly know if the given responses were truthful and completely accurate. I am also asking participants to report on what they were thinking about during events that could have happened years ago. A mistake that was made with the survey was caught early on, but still affected my data. For the first few people that took the survey, if they said that they had stopped attending meetings to a club they had joined, they were never directed to the main set of questions asking about the club they are currently most involved with. I fixed the mistake after about seven people took the survey and made sure that ten people answered every question, but my mistake caused some questions to have a much larger sample than others.

It would have been more ideal to have a large number of people to contact directly in order to take the survey. The fact that I posted my links on Facebook excludes UW students that attend clubs. The Facebook responses also created a large population of responses coming from special interest clubs, rather than academic, professional, and athletic clubs. In possible future iterations of this study, I repeat that I want to be more inclusive on different types of clubs.

Implications for Design

With these results, the Student Organization Resource Center (SORC) can provide all kinds of information for clubs that might be struggling with recruitment and advertising. There is a page on the UW HUB website¹ where clubs can find information on what physical resources they can use to advertise, but it provides no advice on how to advertise. A section could be added to give some tips on how to effectively advertise. After seeing that a majority of students joining clubs are freshmen, this section could recommend advertising in dorms, which is where a lot of freshmen live. They should also stress the importance of advertising at Dawg Daze and specifically, the RSO fair.

More club fairs can also be put on through the year. The HUB crawl is the only event that I know of that highlights special interest clubs, and that's still limited to gaming clubs. The IMA hosts a night where all the club sports have the opportunity to table to students who are interested in exercising. Similarly, events like the Engineering Club Fair allows engineering clubs to speak to their appropriate audience. More of these smaller club fairs can be held for other kinds of special interest clubs and for cultural clubs. The RSO fair should also take place

multiple times throughout the year, maybe once a quarter. The beginning of the year can be an extremely hectic time, especially for new students that are still getting used to a new campus and general student life. When things settle down, in winter quarter for example, students may still be looking for clubs to be a part of.

The problem regarding clubs being too much of a time commitment is difficult to make recommendations for. It's not my place to tell club leaders how much they should expect from their members. I also have no say in how students should be spending their time anyways. A great resource for students looking to join clubs could be an actually easy to access website where they can look for clubs they are wanting to join. The existing site² that hosts the UW RSO directory is near impossible to find. One has to go through multiple redirects from the actual HUB website, then the website itself is not the nicest thing to look at. The website could improve in both of these aspects. They could have a front page that features clubs that don't have a very large time commitment, since that is a common problem for students.

Other kinds of things to be featured on the front page could be the unique and sometimes strange clubs that UW hosts. I've learned about so many on-campus clubs throughout the course of this study that I would have never found if I wasn't putting so much effort into learning about this topic. For example, I had no idea that UW hosts the American Society of Bagels. If there was a nice site that students knew about, clubs would also be incentivized to update their information on the site. In the current website, there's barely any updated information on this year's officers, let alone on their meeting dates. A new website might also increase the amount of students that are learning about their clubs before they come to UW. The survey results show that both of the students that heard about their clubs before coming to UW had not stopped attending any meetings of clubs they have joined. Therefore, this may be a way to prevent future students from quitting clubs.

References

¹ The HUB website, Advertise Your RSO, <http://depts.washington.edu/thehub/the-sorc/advertise-your-rso/>

² The HUB, RSO Community, <https://uws-community.symplicity.com/index.php?au=&ck=>

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

- Have you ever been involved with a club at the UW?
 - Yes
 - No
- Which clubs have you/ are you a part of? [open-ended]
- Have you ever been part of club leadership?
 - Yes
 - No
- Have you ever stopped attending meetings for a club you joined?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, why?
 - Not interested in club topic
 - Officers were unfriendly
 - Other club members were unfriendly
 - Too much of a time commitment
 - Other: please specify
- Which clubs are you currently most involved with (Answer the rest of the questions with this club in mind) [open-ended]
- How many years have you participated in the topic/hobby of that club?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5+
- How did you hear about this club?
 - RSO Fair
 - Tabling outside of the HUB or in Red Square
 - Posters
 - From friends
 - Heard about it before coming to UW
 - Online
 - Other: Please specify
- Do you think this was an effective method of advertising?
 - Yes
 - No
- Why do you feel that way? [open-ended]
- What year did you start attending the club?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Super Senior
 - Grad Student
- Rank the most important aspects of a club. 1 is most important and 5 is least important
 - Possible new friends/community
 - The resources the club provides (equipment, technology, etc.)
 - To learn new skills

- To practice an old hobby
- The space where the meetings take place
- How comfortable did you feel in your first meeting with the club? [likert scale from 1 to 5]
- Do you have any other comments or questions?