The University of Akron
IdeaExchange@UAkron

Spring 2019

Fighting Cancer With Purpose: Best Practices for Charity Event Planning

Emily Bower
elb69@zips.uakron.edu

Fighting Cancer *With Purpose*: Best Practices for Charity Event Planning
Emily Bower
The University of Akron

Abstract

The 2017-2018 school year was the first year The University of Akron competed in the Bateman competition, a national public relations competition. The Bateman competition challenges students to research, execute, and evaluate a public relations plan within their college campus and the surrounding community. Two teams at The University of Akron successfully created and implemented a plan that benefitted the non-profit With Purpose, an organization dedicated to increasing funding and research efforts allocated toward pediatric cancer. As a member of one of those teams, the author was responsible for planning the Bateman team's large event during the implementation period. This paper details the necessary steps one must take in order to host a successful charity event at The University of Akron. It explores, generally, what the best practices are in regard to planning an event, motivating volunteers, and evaluating the success of an event. This paper also details a survey that was conducted among undergraduate students at The University of Akron to learn more about what motivates them to attend events, what types of media students use, and how motivated students feel toward affecting change on a large problem like pediatric cancer. Finally, this paper includes the event plan of a charity event that took place at The University of Akron and a post event evaluation.

Table of Contents

Client Background

In 2013 tragedy struck Erin Bensen's family. Her two-year-old son, Sam, was diagnosed with cancer. Sam was given approximately one year to live and was offered no life-saving treatment options. Ten days after Sam's diagnosis Erin gave birth to twin girls. The young family then proceeded to practically live at the hospital for the next six weeks. Sam ended up living for another two and a half years after his cancer diagnosis, which means Sam actually lived more of his life with cancer than he did without. Throughout all of the confusion and heartache Erin and her family suffered, the one question Erin kept asking herself was, "how is it possible that in 2013 a child gets cancer and has no lifesaving options?" (E. Bensen, personal communication, November 15, 2017).

This question coupled with the passing of her son ignited a fire inside of Erin. This fire eventually led to Erin founding the organization, *With Purpose*. The original goal of With Purpose was to simply organize fundraisers that would benefit pediatric cancer research. During With Purpose's infancy Erin found that oftentimes young people would approach her and ask what they could do to help Sam and Erin's cause. In one particular case, some children who lived down the street from Erin, who were only 8, 9, and 10 years old, saw Erin and Sam one day, and after Erin explained Sam's condition the children asked how they could help her. Erin's young neighbors then proceeded to spend their summer break planning a fun run to benefit Sam that raised over $10,000 in the end, and now this run takes place every year. The success of this event demonstrated the power of youth activism to Erin which caused her to realign With Purpose's mission and give it a stronger focus on empowering young voices to fight pediatric cancer.

Today, With Purpose has chapters on several college campuses across the nation. Her organization is 100% volunteer run, and she tries to have as little overhead as possible so an

impressive 95% of the funds With Purpose raises are donated. In 2018, With Purpose partnered with the Public Relations Society of America to be the non-profit organization used as the client in the Bateman competition.

As part of the Bateman Competition, one of the goals With Purpose asked each team to accomplish is to increase the number of young advocates interacting with their organization via social media and just having a greater awareness of what With Purpose stands for. In an attempt to accomplish this goal, one of the University of Akron Bateman teams, named Fighting Cancer With Purpose, hosted an event to both increase the number of students who were aware of and who supported With Purpose. The following is a literature review addressing the best practices on event planning.

Literature Review

Situational Theory of Publics

The situational theory of publics is a public relations theory that explains why individuals partake in an activity based on their feelings and/or understanding of a situation. The theory states, "three independent variables—problem recognition, constraint recognition, and involvement—predict two dependent variables—information seeking and information processing," (McKeever, 2013). This means that in order for any individual to take action the individual must first become aware of the problem or situation, then the individual must realize the barriers that exist in relation to their acting upon the issue, and involvement refers to how connected the individual feels to the information that they have been exposed to. After completing these three steps individuals will attempt to gain information on their own as McKeever states,

> According to the situational theory of publics, passive or low levels of information gaining may imply that individuals simply receive information presented to them. Active

or higher levels of information gaining, on the other hand, imply that individuals expend effort to locate or consume information about an issue or situation, which may lead to subsequent, relevant behaviors. (McKeever 2013, p. 309).

Thus, the more intensely an individual seeks information related to the message to which they have been exposed, the more likely an individual will be to perform the desired behavior.

The situational theory of publics is useful in determining whether students attend any events held at The University of Akron. Not only must students view information related to the event, but they must also feel as if the message they are receiving is related to a situation they can help to alleviate, and then they must attempt to seek out more information on their own. In order to get students to attend an event specially about pediatric cancer, messages have to be presented in a way that both intrigues students to learn more and inspires them to feel that they are able to make a difference with this cause.

Uses and Gratification Theory

Knowing the channels through which to reach one's intended public is an essential part of any public relations campaign. Uses and gratifications theory states that, "users of media are active and goal oriented, therefore they will be motivated to select a medium that best gratifies their needs" (Hsu, Chang, Lin, & Lin, 2015, p. 372). Typically, individuals use a specific medium with a specific purpose in mind.

In regard to hosting an event at The University of Akron this means that an event organizer has to discover which types of media students are using and why. Once this is discovered event organizers then need to tailor messages for the media that align with both the students' goals for using these media and the event organizers' goals for their message. Otherwise, organizers risk having their messages not resonate with their publics or the message may seem unfit for the channel in question.

6

Event Planning Best Practices

In the book *Event Planning* by Judy Allen (2009), she explains in great detail the event planning process. According to Allen, the key parts of the event planning process are: initial planning and budgeting, organization and timing, location, transportation, guest arrival, venue requirements, knowing the demographics of your guests, food and beverage considerations, and other considerations such as entertainment and themes. This text also includes several examples of cost sheets, payment schedules, and function sheets to help keep beginning event planners stay on track.

While several of these considerations may not be of critical importance for a smaller scale event held at The University of Akron, they should still be taken into consideration. For example, transportation may not be a huge consideration for a small event held at the university since it can be assumed that most people will either drive or walk here. When this is compared to something like making flight arrangements for out of state attendees at a tradeshow transportation can seem like completely irrelevant to a small event. However, small details such as telling guests where to park, providing walking directions, and so on are small, thoughtful details that can help turn an event from good to great. In addition, for a small-scale event at The University of Akron it would still be necessary to follow many of the steps Allen notes including creating a preliminary event vision, creating a preliminary budget, paying attention to venue requirements and staging the venue, researching guest demographics, and obtaining food and beverage for the event.

A study published by Phi, Dredge, and Whitford (2014) describes the situation when the New South Wales state government decided to host the Australian World Rally Championship for 2009. Initially, the event was welcomed by the community, since it was promoted as a fun

event that had the potential to bring $20 million worth of economic benefits to the area. However, concern from the community arose after it was discovered that cars would be racing on public roads and through national parks and then even more concerns were raised about the environmental and social impact the event could have. These concerns only worsened when the event planning committee refused to address the public's concerns about the event. To make matters worse, the event planners were granted special legislation to make sure the event would happen, and they were allowed to bypass the usual process which allowed community members to voice their concerns about the event. This lack of communication and concern for the community led to extreme backlash for the event planners while the event was taking place. Many members of the community protested the event leading to overwhelmingly negative press coverage, and a generally negative perception of the event. It was later determined that if the event planners had simply addressed some of the community's concerns, there most likely would have been a different outcome for the event. This case study was a demonstration of the importance of open communication and identifying possible problems with events early on, so they can be addressed.

The lessons learned from this case study can be applied to an event at The University of Akron as well. To plan any kind of event on campus, one must garner the support of the university so that resources such as event space, areas to advertise, and other crucial components can be utilized. In planning an event to host at the university it is very important to understand any possible backlash or barriers to hosting the event (especially if the topic of the event is controversial), and to be prepared to deal with them. Open communication with facilities managers and other administrative staff is important so that the event can be advertised and

hosted properly. If these steps of the event planning process are ignored, then the success of the event could be diminished.

Gathering Volunteers

Gathering volunteers is an essential part of any event, especially events benefitting charities. In order to gather volunteers, one must first understand what makes people attend service-oriented events. A 2009 study at a LiveStrong Challenge in Austin, Texas, conducted by Filo, Funk, and O'Brien, detailed exactly why people attend charity sporting events. This study surveyed a total of 32 participants at the event, 10 were survivors of cancer and the other 22 were not. The main findings in the interviews showed that people participated in charity sporting events because they like the feeling of camaraderie they gain from attending the event, to support the cause, and to prove to themselves that they are competent enough to complete the physical challenge the event presents. These three categories represent the main motivating factors that cause people to volunteer at events. These same three appeals must be included in any successful event held at The University of Akron.

In particular, these findings can be applied by the Bateman Competition team, Fighting Cancer With Purpose, to their event. The event already implicitly accomplishes two of the three appeals without even trying. Since the event encourages people to work in teams, the camaraderie appeal will be met, and the event will be supporting the fight agains childhood cancer which is a cause many people already support. However, if someone does not support this cause it is not difficult to gain their support. Competency is a somewhat more difficult appeal to manage as the event this team is planning to host is not one that involves a physical challenge. However, the event presents somewhat of a mental challenge, and hopefully that will be enough to appeal to the kind of competency people want to demonstrate to themselves.

In an article in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* Kwok (2012) details the reasons people volunteer and keep volunteering for charitable organizations. Kwok explains what makes someone volunteer can be divided into two factors: nature and nurture. She states that nature factors are the more difficult factors to change about an organization including the organization's size and the typical age of volunteers. The nurture factors are the more easily changed factors that include volunteer management and organizational culture. It was found that younger volunteers were linked to fewer volunteer problems, and that organizations whose staff members are trained to work with volunteers, and those who had more welcoming attitudes, had fewer recruitment problems.

These findings boded well for the University of Akron Bateman team, Fighting Cancer With Purpose, as most of their event volunteers would be young people at The University of Akron. This should mean that recruitment would not be a problem, and as long as the Bateman team maintains a welcoming and positive attitude, gaining repeat volunteers should also not be a problem.

Best practices for Event Evaluation

Evaluation is another key part of the event Fighting Cancer With Purpose hosted, as it helps the team to determine whether or not their event was successful. In the case study written by Allison (2013), a detailed explanation is given for how the campus library at the University of Toronto evaluated an event where they had a therapy dog come to the library to help students de-stress during very high stress periods of the semester. To evaluate their event, the university library staff made sure to always have a least one staff member present to monitor the crowd and to urge students at the event to take a paper survey that was available in the room. The library staff also created a virtual version of their survey, and they handed out information about how to

take the survey on bookmarks to students leaving the event. Additionally, the library staff

monitored their social media pages leading up to and during their therapy dog event to watch for

increases in engagement with posts and with followers.

These evaluation tactics offer great insight into how an event at the University of Akron

might be evaluated, as many of their tactics are simple and low cost. These evaluation methods

could very easily be integrated into events Fighting Cancer With Purpose might hold along with

other evaluation tactics the group sees fit to use.

Event Plan

Research and Methodology

To learn more about the event attendance habits of students at The University of Akron a convenience survey was conducted on The University of Akron's campus. Registered as a non-IRB required classroom project (see Appendix E), the survey had over 400 responses and asked a variety of questions regarding the event attendance habits of students and their motivation to attend charity events. The survey also asked questions about what media outlets students use most frequently and collected some basic demographic information. The survey was conducted in Qualtrics and was distributed via email and social media.

In the survey it was discovered that 45% of respondents attend events at The University of Akron once a month or less, and only 27% of students attended events once a week or more (Appendix F, Figure 2). It was also discovered that 51% of respondents were anywhere between neutral to not likely at all to attend an event that was held on the weekend (Appendix F, Figure 1). Email was found, by far, to be the most frequently used media outlet among students at UA with various forms of social media following close behind (Appendix F, Figure 3). Additionally, 85.9% of survey respondents indicated that they were either very likely or likely to volunteer with a charity with which they have a close personal connection. For a more visual representation of the data mentioned above please refer to Appendix F.

Event Overview

The idea for the With Purpose Hackathon was born out of "hackathons" that people within the tech community participate in. These events are typically day long commitments where participants are challenged to create an app or solve the world's problems within 24 hours. This event attempted to bring a very abbreviated version of this to UA and tailor it to a charity setting. For this event student organizations at the University of Akron were challenged to create

events that would benefit the charity With Purpose. It was hoped that one of these student organizations would host the event they planned at the Hackathon on their own. To help attract student organizations to come to the event a cash prize of $100 was awarded to the winning student organization. The prize was donated by the School of Communication.

At the event, participating organizations were given worksheets to fill out that helped them determine many of the different aspects that go into event planning. This worksheet included questions that would help participants determine a budget, determine how they would promote the event, and determine what the goals of their event would be. A copy of this worksheet is included in Appendix B of this report. Participants also had to create a poster for their event with provided craft materials. The winning poster created at this event is also available in the Appendix B of this report. Participants were given one hour to complete their worksheets and then their event ideas were judged by a panel of three judges who were also present at the event. The winning student organization was Black Students United. Judge Angela Bozic even approached the winning team after the event to explore the possibility of actually implementing the event the group created for one of the charities Bozic works with.

This event was also meant to educate students about With Purpose, so a presentation was made that stated many of the current problems that exist with treating childhood cancer. One of the judges present at the event, Angela Bozic, also told her son's story of battling childhood cancer which helped further motivate the event attendees as they created their events.

Event Goal, Objectives, Strategies, and Tactics

GOAL: Increase the number of young advocates at the University of Akron who become involved with With Purpose.

OBJECTIVE 1: To have an effect on action, specifically to have 15 event ideas submitted to the With Purpose website by students who attend the event by March 7, 2018.

OBJECTIVE 2: To have an effect on action, specifically, to attract 50 students, faculty and staff members to attend an event focused on creating event ideas for With Purpose by March 7, 2018.

STRATEGY 1: Event strategy: Host a mini Hackathon at The University of Akron that will encourage students to submit event ideas to the With Purpose website.

Tactic 1: Plan the Hackathon. Secure a prize for the winners of the Hackathon.

Overview: The idea for the With Purpose Hackathon was born out of the Hackathons people within the tech community participate in. These events are typically 24-hour long commitments where participants are challenged to create an app or solve the world's problems within a short time frame. The goal of this event was to bring a very abbreviated version of a Hackathon to UA students. For this event student organizations at the University of Akron were challenged to create events that would benefit With Purpose in one hour, and it was hoped that either these student organizations or With Purpose themselves could then actually host these events once they were planned.

Research/Preparation: Several steps must be taken in order to plan the Hackathon these include:

1. Select a location
2. Secure a prize
3. Procure audio-visual equipment
4. Obtain food
5. Invite judges to the event

Deliverable: Having a location for the event, having a prize at the event, having audio/visual equipment, having donated food at the event, and having judges at the event.

Message: The messaging for this tactic will stress the prize money, the chance to help a charity, and that it will be a fun team bonding experience.

Communication: Several different people will have to be involved in booking the room, contacting judges, getting food donated, and getting a prize.

Follow-Up: Judges will have to be followed up within a few weeks and then a few days before the event. The room will have to be reconfirmed the day before the event, and food donations will have to be confirmed.

Budget:

- $100 prize to the first-place team

Tactic 2: Email student organizations invitations to the Hackathon.

Overview: Emails will be sent to student organizations telling them about the Hackathon. Cancer related student organizations will receive special attention as they have a vested interested in this cause.

Research/Preparation: Email addresses for the presidents of many of the student organizations on campus will have to be found. Part of this can be done through looking for contact information on OrgSync and part of this can be done through team members using the connections they have to student organizations on campus to send out emails.

Deliverable: An email template will have to be created to ensure that all messaging and information going out about the Hackathon is consistent.

Message: These emails will convey the message that even though pediatric cancer is a large problem here is something small your group can do to help all while having your team bond. The

emails will also give a brief overview of With Purpose and what the event will be. It will also heavily emphasize the cash prize.

Communication: Email will be the main form of communication for this tactic.

Follow-Up: Reminder emails will be sent the week leading up to the event.

Budget: NA

Tactic 3: Create flyers about the Hackathon to hang up around campus and pass out to students.

Overview: Flyers for the Hackathon will be designed, printed, and passed out/hung up in high traffic areas around The University of Akron campus.

Research/Preparation: To raise awareness about the Hackathon, posters will be hung around campus and flyers will be passed out when the group tables in the Student Union. Content will have to be created for these posters and sample messages will have to be tested in focus groups held at Highland High School before the implementation period.

Deliverable: Full sized posters and smaller handbill sized posters must be created.

Message: The message on these flyers will pertain solely to the Hackathon. They will prominently advertise the fact that there is a cash prize for student orgs and that it is for charity.

Communication: Written communication will be the main form of communication for this tactic.

Follow-Up: No follow up will be necessary.

Budget:

- 30 8.5" X 11" posters - $3.00

Tactic 4: Create social media posts to advertise the Hackathon.

Overview: Social media posts will be created to promote the Hackathon.

Research/Preparation: Survey research has shown that Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram are the best platforms to post information. Information about the Hackathon will be posted on these platforms from the beginning of the implementation period until the day of the event. Posts about the event will be created beforehand.

Deliverable: Creating posts on Snapchat, Facebook, and Instagram that mention the Hackathon will serve as the deliverable for this tactic.

Message: These posts will stress the cash prize available to student orgs and the fact that it is a charitable event where their organizations can bond.

Communication: Communication for these posts will take place digitally.

Follow-Up: Replying to comments on posts will be necessary follow up.

Budget: NA

Tactic 5: Create presentation about With Purpose and how the event will run, to begin the Hackathon.

Overview: A brief 5 to 10 minute presentation will be created that will aim to get people excited and educated about With Purpose, introduce the judges, and explain the contest.

Research/Preparation: A presentation about With Purpose's history and mission will have to be created for the Hackathon. Event rules and specific guidelines will also have to be written so that they can be put into the presentation and explained to the event participants.

Deliverable: Creating a presentation that explains With Purpose and the competition rules will serve as the deliverable for this tactic.

Message: The main message of this presentation will be to raise awareness for With Purpose's history/mission and to explain the contest rules to the participating groups, and to introduce the judges.

Communication: This presentation will be given orally at the beginning of the event; it should be no longer than 5 to 10 minutes.

Follow-Up: No follow up will be needed for this presentation.

Budget: NA

Event Description

On the day of this event, I showed up about a half hour early to make sure the room had been set up properly, and to connect and test my laptop to make sure there were no technical difficulties. As my teammates and I started setting up the room the event judges started to show up, so I made sure that they were comfortable. I explained the judging process to all of them, and I gave them the judging worksheets I had created to help facilitate this process. About five or ten minutes before the event most of the attendees started to arrive. I went around to each group and gave them a worksheet I had created that had all of the criteria the judges would be looking for in an event which included things like a budget, details for how the event would be advertised, event goals, etc. While all of this was happening, I was also trying to solve some of

A sign advertising the With Purpose event planning competition.

the technical problems that were occurring with my laptop. Eventually these were solved but it caused the event to start roughly 20 minutes late. Once my laptop finally started cooperating I began giving my introductory presentation that explained what With Purpose supported, its

origins, and I gave the audience some information about some of the current issues surrounding pediatric cancer research. About half way through this presentation one of the event judges, Angela Bozic, came to the front of the room to tell the story of how she and her family dealt with her son being diagnosed with pediatric cancer. After Angela spoke the hackathon portion of the event began. Each group was given one hour to plan an event that met all of the criteria on the worksheet I gave them. During this hour

Emily Bower giving an informational With Purpose presentation.

myself and my teammates went around to each group to make sure they understood what they were doing, and we took time to speak with the judges and make sure they were comfortable.

After the one-hour mark, I had each group briefly present what they came up with, and then I collected the worksheets and gave them to the judges, so they could go deliberate. While

the judges were scoring each event, I had the attendees compete in a Kahoot quiz that I created based off of the presentation that I gave. The idea behind this was to reinforce all of the information I had given everyone about With Purpose during my presentation. The winner of this quiz was given candy as a prize.

Judge, Angela Bozic, with a photo of her son, a pediatric cancer survivor.

After about 20 minutes of deliberation, the judges decided that Black Student's United was the winner of the event, so my teammates and I presented them with a large check for the $100 they won. After the event winners were announced everyone mingled for a little while and took photos, bringing the night to a successful end.

Winners, Black Students United, with their $100 of prize money.

Event Evaluation

OBJECTIVE 1: *To have an effect on action, specifically to have 15 event ideas submitted to the With Purpose website by students who attend the event by March 7, 2018.*

- The original intent of this event was to submit the events created at the Hackathon to the With Purpose website, as it was stated in several of the client materials that is was something they would have liked. Upon closer inspection after the event there appeared to be no place on the website where event ideas could be submitted, so none of the events were actually submitted to the With Purpose website. However, after the event Angela Bozic approached the winning team about actually hosting the event they created, so the ideas generated at this event were not wasted. There were also only five events created at the Hackathon, as there were not many teams there, but the events that were created were of quality.

OBJECTIVE 2: *To have an effect on action. Specifically, to attract 50 students, faculty and staff members to attend an event focused on creating event ideas for With Purpose by March 7, 2018.*

- This event ended up attracting about 20 students from the university. It fell a little bit short of the goal of 50 students, however, this was a brand-new event for UA and it was somewhat complicated to explain, so this was not necessarily surprising. There was also another With Purpose related event going on at the same time which detracted from the event attendance as well. If this event were to be held again and became more of a yearly tradition at UA it would mostly likely pick up more traction, but a more realistic number for attendance could be set as well.

STRATEGY #1: Host a Hackathon at The University of Akron that will encourage students to submit event ideas to the With Purpose website.

Tactic 1: Plan the Hackathon. Secure a prize for the winners of the Hackathon.

- The Hackathon was successfully held on March 7, 2018 in The University of Akron Student Union. A total of 15 students from 5 different student organizations were present at the event. A panel of three judges was also secured for the event. This panel included: McKenna Vietmeier, a professor at The University of Akron who teaches an event planning course, Kelley Gifford, another professor at The University of Akron who has experience working with the American Cancer Society, and Akron community member and childhood cancer activist, Angela Bozic, who works with a local group that also strives to end childhood cancer.

- The winning team at the Hackathon received $100 in prize money for their student organization that was taken from the $300 the Bateman team had to spend via the School of Communication.

- Brownies were baked for the event and audio-visual equipment was provided at no cost by the Student Union.

- The winning event entailed survivors of childhood cancer coming dressed up as superheroes to an art auction where paintings that the children made would be sold and the proceeds would then be donated to With Purpose.

Tactic 2: Email student organizations invitations to the Hackathon.

- An email list of board members of UA student organizations was compiled by the Bateman team through an online directory of all of the student organizations at The University of Akron called OrgSync, a service to which all UA students have access. The Bateman team also emailed friends they knew were involved with student organizations about the event.

Tactic 3: Create flyers about the Hackathon to be hung up around campus and passed out to students.

- A flyer was created for the Hackathon and it was hung in highly trafficked academic buildings at The University of Akron. A digital version of the flyer was also distributed via email and via social media.

Tactic 4: Create social media posts to advertise the Hackathon.

- A Facebook event was created for the Hackathon to help make people aware of the event and a digital version of the poster was shared on Instagram.

Tactic 5: Create a presentation about With Purpose and how the event will run to begin the Hackathon.

- A PowerPoint that explained the current deficiencies in childhood cancer treatment options and the With Purpose mission was created to present at the event. Event judge Angela Bozic also told the story of her son's own experience with childhood cancer during this presentation. Several students present at the event remarked that they

thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and that it helped to inspire them while they were

creating their events students to submit event ideas to the With Purpose website.

Recommendations for the Future

For someone else trying to host an event similar to this one it would be highly advisable

to begin advertising at least three to four weeks in advance. This event was only advertised for

about two weeks and that simply was not enough time to convince people to attend. However,

emailing student organizations directly about this event seemed to be a fantastic way to persuade

people into coming as it was the best way to communicate what exactly the event was and how it

would work. It appeared that using the name "Hackathon" was not the best way to advertise this

event as this only served to confuse many people. Luckily, this was realized before the event was

heavily advertised and the name was changed to "Fighting Cancer With Purpose" which proved

to be a slightly less confusing name. There were also a few technical problems at the beginning

of the event which caused it to run late, so it would also be advisable to test any kind of

technology one plans to use beforehand and to make sure one has all of the proper equipment.

Communication is also key for an event like this one. Aside from emailing student

organizations directly, another aspect that worked well for this event was communicating with

the judges on a semi-regular basis. The judges were sent emails weekly, and the day before the

event as well, to remind them of the event's time and location. All of the judges stated that the

emails were a nice reminder, so something similar to this should be done for similar future

events.

Personal Reflection

On a more personal note, I was very satisfied with the outcome of this event. When I first

conceptualized hosting an event like this I immediately thought my teammates would be against

it because it was kind of an odd idea, and it was definitely something that would be hard to explain. My goal with this event was to do something unique that was going to stand out from the other types of events that Bateman teams at other schools would host. After looking the winning Bateman contest entries from last year, I think my team was definitely successful in this

Ron Simpson working with his organization, the Akron Running Club.

because many of the groups held events centered around fund raising, which was not even something the client had asked for. I wanted to have an event that would stand out from the plethora of fundraising events I was fairly certain other schools were going to host, so my event was more about awareness and including students in undertaking the huge task of eliminating pediatric cancer. If we're being honest I was also thinking about how college students are generally richer in ideas than they are in actual money, and the fact that it's difficult to walk ten feet on this campus without being asked to donate to a cause.

I certainly faced a lot of obstacles while trying to plan this event. I learned that it is extremely difficult to reserve any spaces on this campus if you are not part of a student organization. However, this problem was

Students working on their event plans.

eventually solved by myself and my teammates with some creative maneuvering. Originally, I thought holding this event in the Student Union ballroom would be a good idea, but when I tried to reserve this room I was told that there was no availability during the time I wanted it. However, this turned out to be a blessing in disguise since I only had 15 people show up to this

event to begin with, so having it in the ballroom would have made the event look like a complete flop. The event ended up being held in one of the smaller classrooms on the third floor of the Student Union, and this proved to be a much more suitable location for the number of people who ended up attending.

Judge McKenna Vietmeier thoughtfully deliberating.

Advertising for this event ended up being a little more difficult than I thought it would be as well because it wasn't until I sat down and tried to explain the concept of this event on a poster that I realized how hard it was to explain. One thing I realized about half way through the planning process was that people were not nearly as familiar with the term "hackathon" as I thought they were, and they certainly were not familiar with what I was trying to do because I was hosting a pretty unconventional version of a hackathon. I tried to fix this problem by referring to my event as an "event planning competition" in most of the marketing materials I created. I also created a list of student leaders from UA student organizations that I contacted via email to further explain what my event was, who it was benefitting, and so on. I wanted to include an email element into the marketing of my event because the results from the campus wide survey my teammates and I conducted showed, overwhelmingly, that email was the best way to reach UA students.

I thought that finding judges for this event would be one of the most difficult tasks that I had, but everyone I reached out to was really excited about the event and receptive to being involved. Having Angela Bozic come to the event was an

Abeer Ewald presenting her group's event proposal.

26

even better addition than I could have imagined because she had a personal story about her son's battle with cancer that added depth to the entire event that I never thought it would have. It was also apparent that after hearing Angela's story everyone at the event was more motivated to create a meaningful event. The actual mechanics of the event came together much easier than I thought they would, too. Once I sat down and thought about how the event would flow it was very easy for me to make the presentation I gave at the beginning, figure out when Angela would speak, and I quickly realized I would need to make a worksheet or provide some kind of guidelines for what I was expecting from the events the competitors created.

When the actual day of my event came I was incredibly nervous that no one was going to

Group photo of everyone who participated in the Hackathon.

come. I knew that the concept was kind of difficult for a lot of people to understand and I was afraid that I had not started advertising the event soon enough (which I probably did not). I had a ton of problems trying to connect my laptop to the projector which delayed that start time of the event by about

20 minutes and for a while in the beginning there were only two or three people in the room. The event was supposed to start at 7:00 pm and around the 6:55 mark when my laptop was showing no signs that it was going to start working and there still were only a couple people in the room I had the feeling that I'm sure many event planners have had where you feel like all of your efforts went to waste and you just want to cry a little and call the whole thing off. I quickly shoved that feeling aside because in my opinion even if only three people came to my event they, along with my teammates, and the judges cared enough to take time out of their night to come to the event,

27

so the show must go on. And, eventually, more people came, my computer started working, and the dark cloud over me was lifted and I was excited to get started.

It was also really interesting to see the insights from all of the public relations theories I have learned about in class come into play for this event. For instance, I was able to incorporate the situational theory of publics by making sure that all of my messaging for this event made the receivers feel that they could make a difference in fighting pediatric cancer, making attendance at this event more likely. I incorporated the guidance provided by uses and gratifications theory which states that individuals use certain media for specific reasons. With this in mind, I paid special attention to the kinds of messaging people expect to see on various forms of social media and in email to ensure that my messages achieved the maximum amount of resonance with my audience.

In the end all of the event ideas that the different student organizations produced were high quality and creative. I could not have been more pleased with the results and I think everyone who was present at the event learned something and had fun, which was really all I could ask.

References

Allen, J. (2009). *Event planning the ultimate guide to successful meetings, corporate events,*
fundraising galas, conferences, conventions, incentives and other special events. Ontario,
Canada: John Wiley & Sons.

Allison, B. (2013). Paws for a study break: Running an animal-assisted therapy program at the
Gerstein Science Information Centre. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library and*
Information Practice and Research, 8(1). 1.

Filo, K., Funk, D. C., & O'Brien, D. (2009). The meaning behind attachment: Exploring
camaraderie, cause, and competency at a charity sport event. *Journal of Sport*
Management, *23*(3), 361-387.

Kwok, R. (2012). Getting volunteers in the door. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, *10*(4), 9.

McKeever, B. W. (2013). From awareness to advocacy: Understanding nonprofit
communication, participation, and support. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *25*(4),
307–328. doi: 10.1080/1062726X.2013.806868

 Hsu, M.-H., Chang, C.-M., Lin, H.-C., & Lin, Y.-W. (2015). Determinants of continued use of
social media: The perspectives of uses and gratifications theory and perceived
interactivity. *Information Research, 20*(2), 1–14. Retrieved from
http://ezproxy.uakron.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=
true&db=lih&AN=110284336&site=eds-live

Phi, G., Dredge, D., & Whitford, M. (2014). Understanding conflicting perspectives in event
planning and management using Q method. *Tourism Management*, *40,* 406-415.
doi:10.1016/j.tourman.2013.07.012.

Appendices

Appendix A: The flyer that was distributed to promote this event.
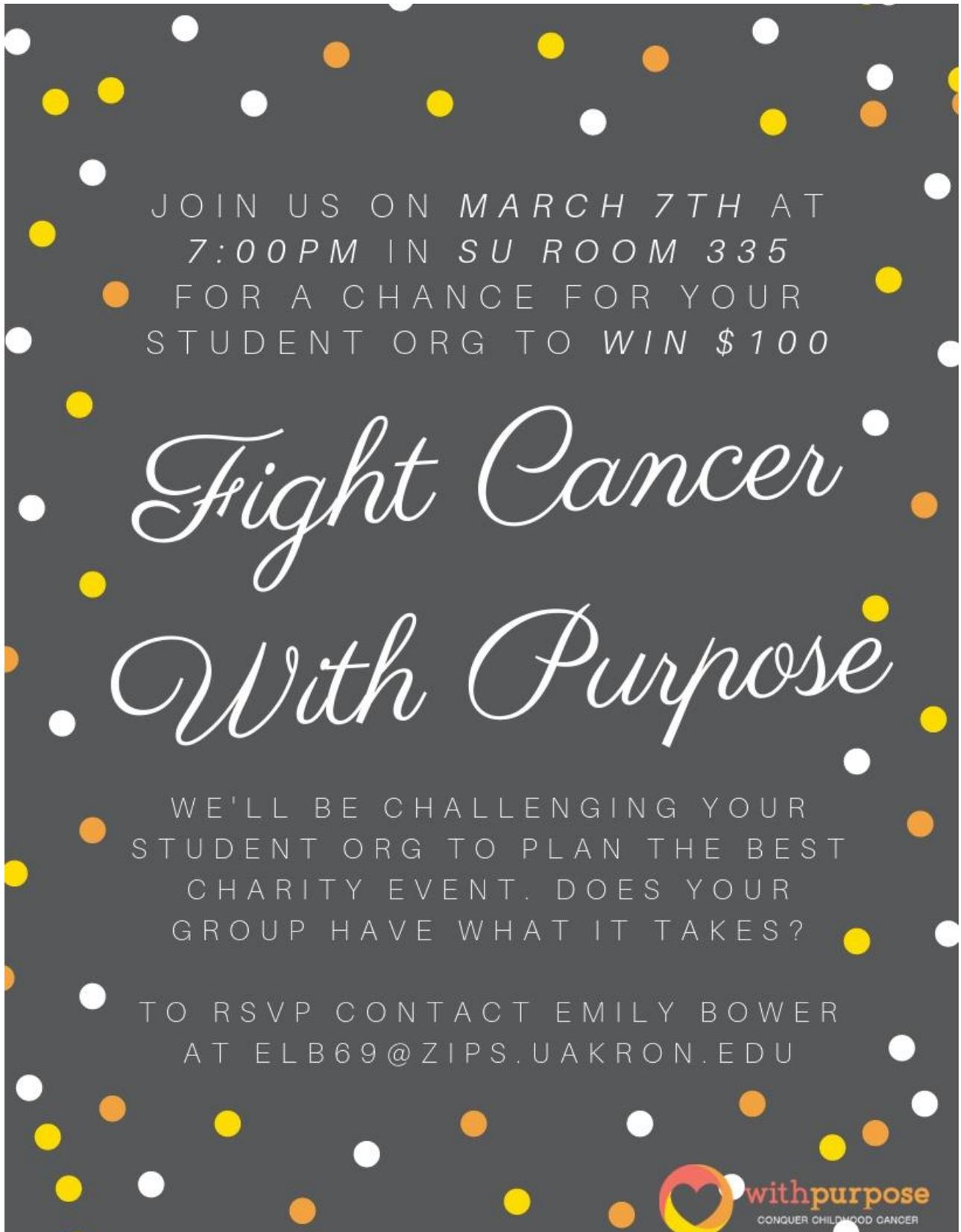
Appendix B: The winning event submission from Black Students United. (1/4)

Team Member Names: Wynter Mason, Tanira Bradwiley, Jonathon Pope

Instruction:
Welcome to the With Purpose Charity Event! Your challenge this evening is to create a fundraising event with your team that either your student organization could host or that With Purpose themselves could host. The event should raise money for With Purpose while also raising awareness for their cause. You will turn this sheet into the judges at the end of the brainstorming period. Please make sure that all parts are filled out legibly and good luck!

Event Overview: We're going to have an event that involves a comic book contest. the kids are going to come dressed up of what they see what their power is. The room is going to be decorated with different superhero, lightening bolts etc. We're going to have individuals who have had pediatric cancer come tell their story of how they survived. The kids are going to be able to create their own mains. we're going to have a photographer that is an expert in editing and have him take a pic of the kids in there suits and pick a backuround that describes them. The pics would be sent in the mail.

Event Objectives: : Our objectives are to empower and educate the individuals on the factors of pediatric cancer within families and the community. To make this event change the view points of those who don't see this as a critical issue

EMPOWER & Educate

Event Goals: Our goal is to raise 15,000, and gain sponsors so we can continue to do this event anually and continue to increase the money we raise

Key Messages for Promoting the Event: Key messages include to educate, empower, and envision.

Hypothetical Date and Time: June 21st, 2018 9:00am - 2:00pm

Event Hashtag: # you can save the day

Sample email: Subject line - # You can save the day

Email - Hello, I'm a Representative of Black Students United. We just wanted to inform you that we will be having an event that will raise awarness for pediatric cancer. The kids will be able to come dressed up as their vision of a super-hero. There will be activities and arts and crafts. The event will take place on June 21st 2018 from 11am to 2pm at the John S. Knight centre. All donations are welcomed! Thank you and we hope to see you there!

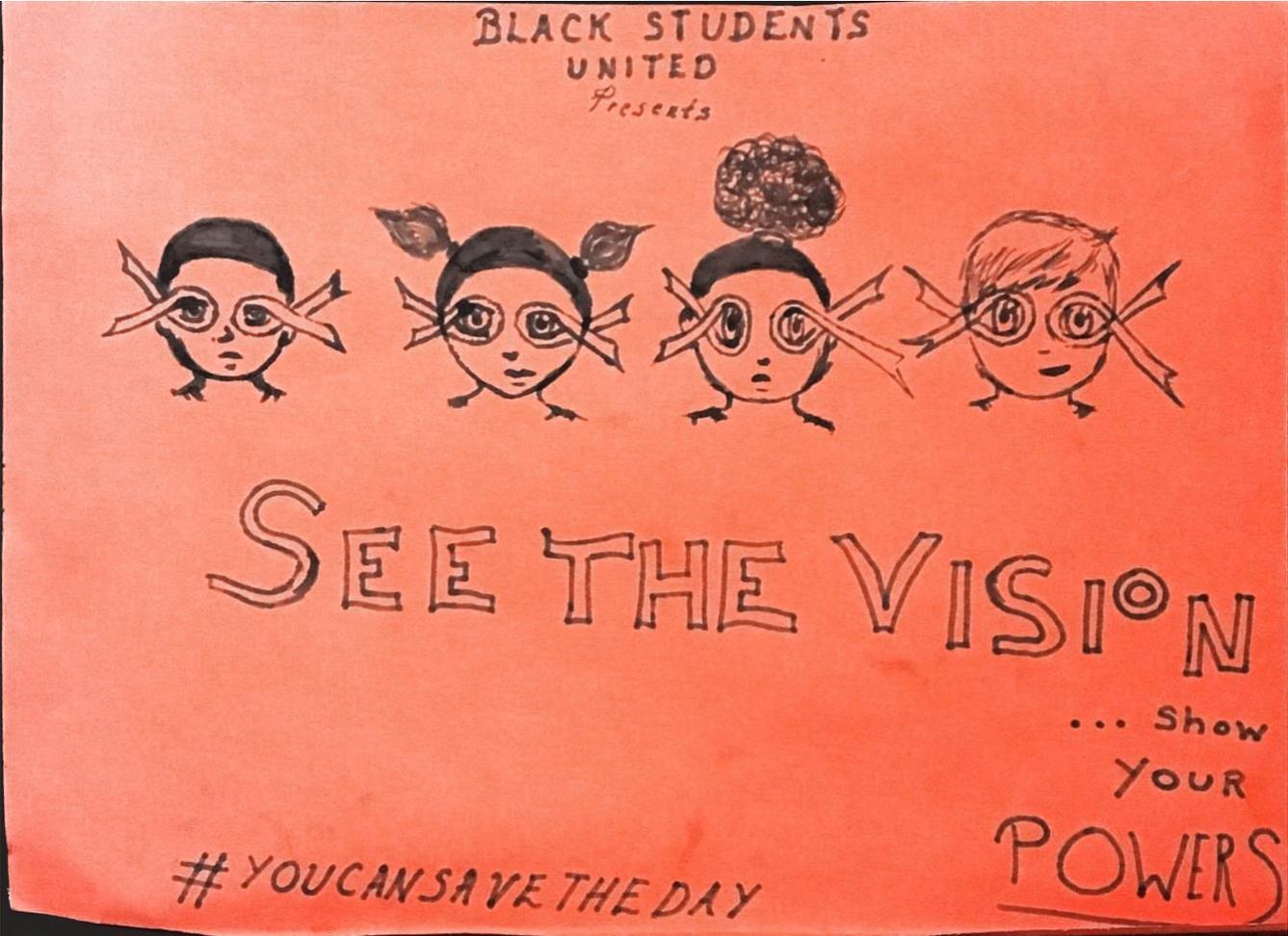**Presentation Notes (only if applicable this portion will not be judged):**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

With Purpose Hackathon Event Itinerary

Event Organizers' Arrival: 6:30 PM
- Begin setting up room with teammates
- Hook up laptop and pull up presentation
- Decorate tables and lay out materials

Judge/Participant Arrival: 6:45- 7:05 PM
- Judges and teams will begin to arrive
- People are always late to events so starting at 7:05 will be beneficial

Informational With Purpose Presentation/Event Explanation: 7:05- 7:30 PM
- Start by giving With Purpose informational presentation
- Angela Bozic will be invited to the front of the room halfway through to share her story
- After the informational presentation explain the rules of the contest and how it will run
- Announce the start of the hour time limit

Team Event Planning: 7:30- 8:30 PM
- Teams will begin their events
- Walk around room to help facilitate
- Intermittently talk to judges and ask if they need anything
- Make announcements about remaining time at a half hour, fifteen minutes, and one minutes
- Play upbeat music during this time

Judge Deliberation: 8:30- 8:50 PM
- Teams will give brief one-minute presentations about what they came up with during the hour
- After this the judges will move into the hallway to deliberate
- While this is happening, the teams will play a Kahoot based off of the presentation
- The winner of the Kahoot will receive a small prize
- The judges will then come back into the room and announce the winner

Event Wrap-up: 8:50- 9:00 PM
- The winning team will be presented with their check
- I will make closing remarks
- We will take photos and then begin cleaning up the room

Appendix D: The judging rubric that was used at the event.

Quick Rubric

Fighting Cancer With Purpose Judging Rubric					
	Excellent *5 Points*	**Above Average** *4 Points*	**Average** *3 Points*	**Below Average** *2 Points*	**Unsatisfactory** *1 Points*
Creativity/Neatness Is the event, poster and hashtag creative? Are all of the materials submitted neat?					
Is the event feasible? Could they actually achieve their proposed goals and is their proposed budget enough?					
Have all of the requirements on the worksheet been met?					
Is the messaging for the event consistent?					
Are the messages for this event effective? Is the sample email effective? Would their key messages work?					
This rubric was created with **Quick Rubric** and can be found at - http://www.quickrubric.com/r#/qr/emily_bower/fighting-cancer-with-purpose-judging-rubric					

Appendix E: The signed IRB registration form for this project's primary research. (1/2)

IRB USE ONLY	*Excluded from IRB Review:* _____	*Date:* 10/17/17

Registration Form

Please complete this form if you propose to conduct a project that involves interaction/intervention with or collection of information from individuals that meets one or more of the criteria below. IRB review is not required because:

☒ The project does not meet the Common Rule definition of research.
☐ The project does not collect information "about" the individuals with whom the researcher is interacting.
☒ Results will be shared only with the client or stakeholder(s) for private use for evaluation of an established program or for other non-research purposes.
☐ The project utilizes only data from secondary sources that are not individually identifiable.
☐ The project is an internal evaluation intended for quality control of ongoing program only.
☐ The project involves only oral history activities, such as open ended interviews, that ONLY document a specific event, or the experiences of individuals without intent to draw conclusions, generalize findings, or influence policy or practice.

Project Title:	The Bateman Competition Publics Research
Principal Investigator (PI):	Classroom Project (students listed below)
PI Department:	The School of Communication
PI Phone & email:	Advisor contact: 330-972-6914, julieca@uakron.edu
Co-Investigators (list all co-investigators):	Emily Bower, Cortney Ellis, Megan Hanft, Katherine Hickman, Elyssa Kline, Kelly Lauck, Lydia Mainzer, Erika Newcome, Kayla Pretzer, Morgan Ross. Alisa Tsypin, Kelly Unger, Hannah Wall
Faculty Advisor (if PI is a student):	Julie A Cajigas

Provide below a brief description of the purpose of this study and the type and source of the information on individuals that you will use. (The space will expand as you type.)

The Bateman Competition is a national Public Relations Student Society of America competition, where students are given a client (With Purpose) and are asked to create and implement a campaign for that client. The research being conducted here through surveys of high school age, college age and adult individuals measures each individual's:

1. Awareness about childhood cancer, childhood cancer funding and childhood cancer organizations
2. Media usage and media preferences
3. Interest in volunteering and current volunteering behaviors

The above questions are being answered through survey, focus and interview research. Two groups are planning to hold focus groups within the Akron City School System, and have begun to approach schools about the application process.

In addition to the above, two of the groups are conducting interviews of campus organizations that attempt to ascertain how they have been successful in promoting involvement and volunteerism on campus.

All survey responses will be anonymous. The focus groups will be confidential. The in-depth interviews of campus organizations will be neither anonymous nor confidential, but will not contain any potentially sensitive questions.

The results of the above inquiries will only be shared with the Bateman Competition judges and the client, With Purpose. Therefore, they do not fall under the definition of research.

Investigator's Assurance

I certify that the information provided in this Registration Form is complete and accurate. I understand that as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the ethical conduct of this project.
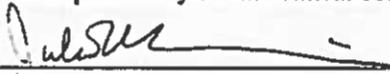
Principal Investigator: _____   ~   Confirmed f at co-investigators)   Date: __10/16/17__

Faculty Advisor's Assurance

I certify that the student is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing the research and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study.
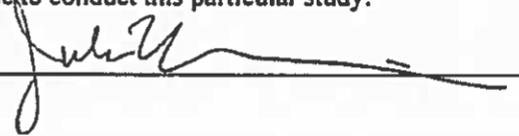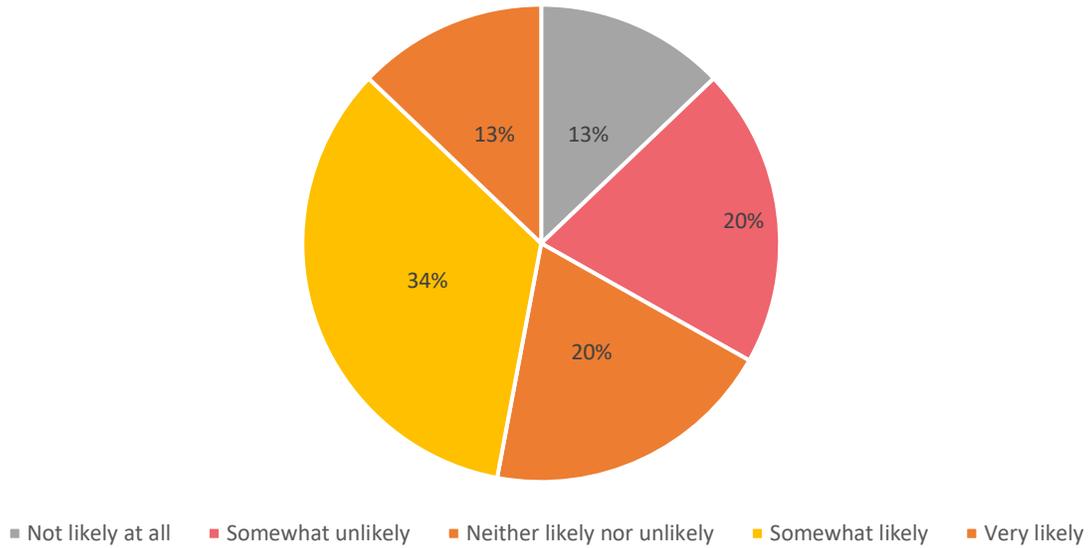
Faculty Advisor: _____   Date: __10/16/17__

Please submit this form to the IRB, c/o ORSSP, 284 Polsky, 44325-2102

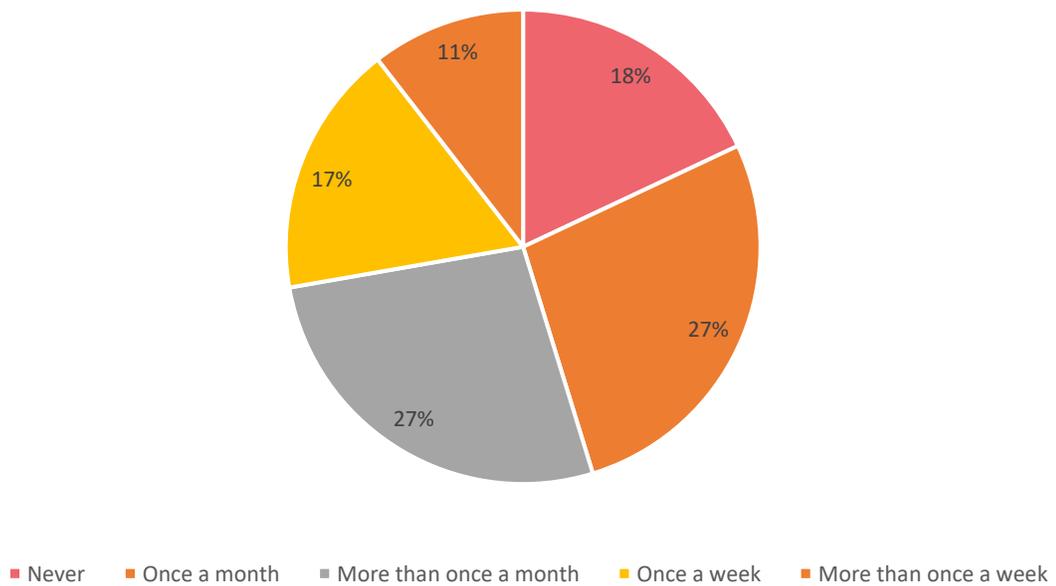**Appendix F:** Charts that represent various data that was collected during the research process. (1/2)

Figure 1

Responses to "How likely are you to attend a service event on the weekend?"

- Not likely at all
- Somewhat unlikely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Somewhat likely
- Very likely

Figure 2

Responses to "How frequently to you attend events at your school or in your community?"

- Never
- Once a month
- More than once a month
- Once a week
- More than once a week

Appendix F: (2/2)

Figure 3

Media Outlets used "Very Frequently"

■ Facebook ■ Instagram ■ Twitter ■ Snapchat ■ Print Newspaper ■ Online Newspaper ■ Radio ■ Email ■ Text Message Reminders