Like, Share, Tweet: Using Campus Recreation and Wellness Social Media to Better Understand Effective and Engaging Marketing Strategies

Malinda Massey | Faculty Mentor: Jenny Gregory

ECU

Background

This project analyzes the **social media engagement** patterns of students at ECU based on Campus Recreation and Wellness social media analytics from the last four years. The **goal** of this project is for CRW to be better able to **communicate effectively** with the ECU student body and **increase social media engagement** by incorporating methods of audience attraction and retainment on all social media platforms.

Percent Population Comparison Using Instagram
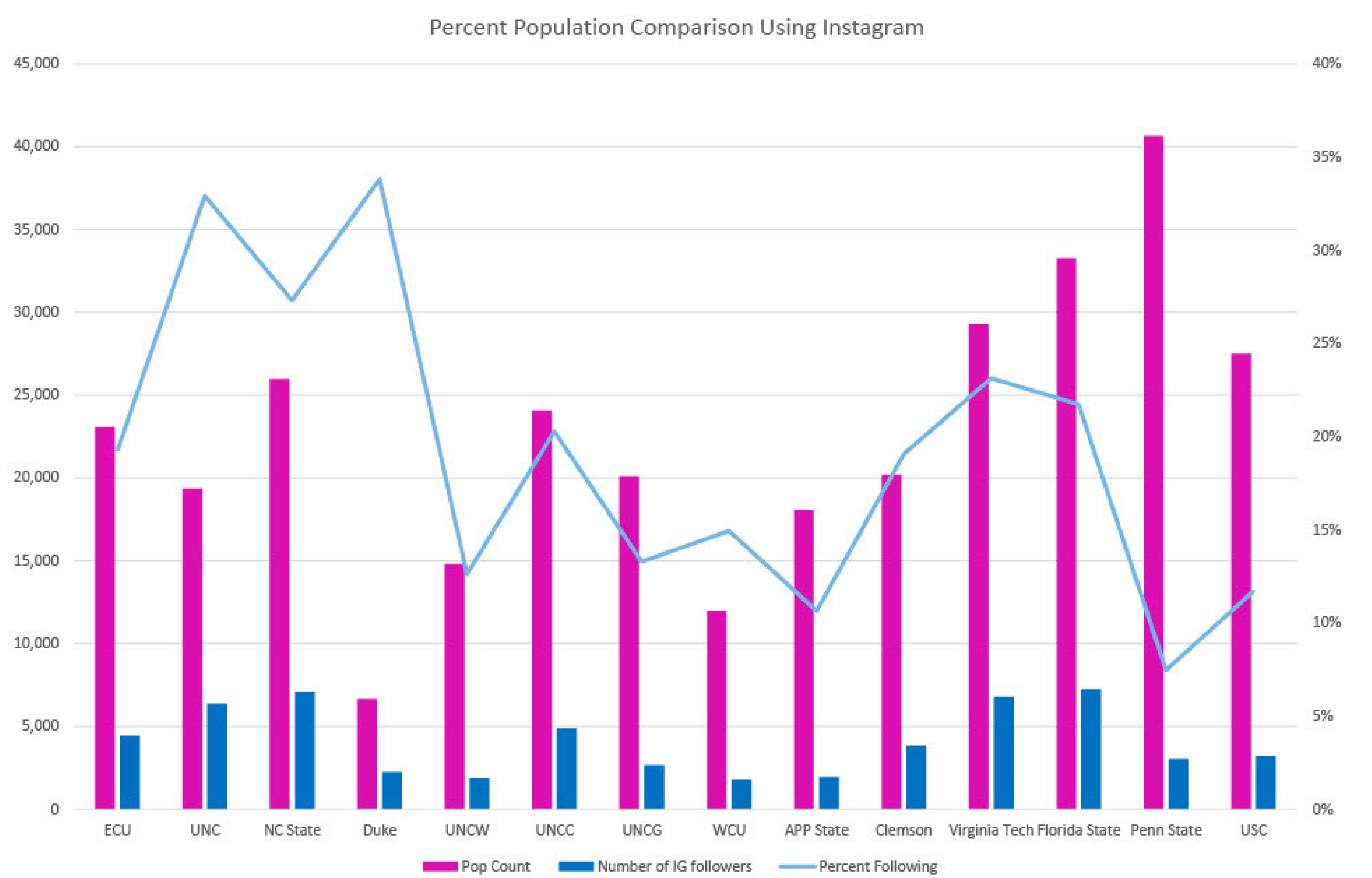
ECU is represented by the far left column on this chart that shows the undergraduate population count from each school (pink) relative to the number of followers that schools' campus recreation center has on Instagram (blue). The light blue trendline shows this relationship as a percent. 19% of ECU's undergraduate population follows CRW social media, which matches the 19% average between all of the schools represented above.

ECU CRW Social Media Over the Years

SM Following 2017-2020
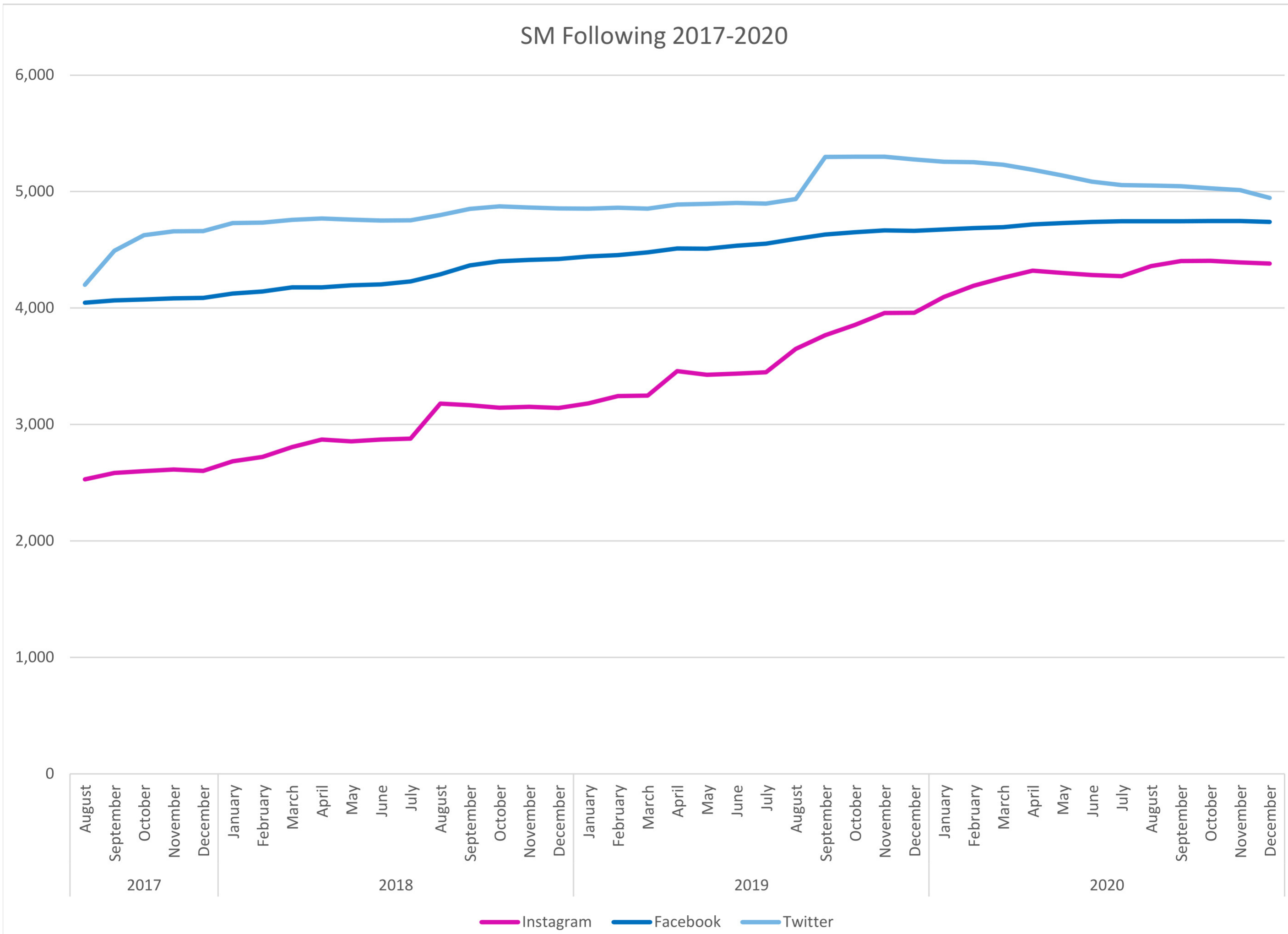
Methods

The taper in social media following from the graph on the bottom left indicates a need for updates to CRW social media engagement strategies. Engagement analytics from the programs largest events have been used to determine the most successful marketing strategies incorporated by CRW. Below is a representation of Polar Bear Plunge marketing from the years 2019 and 2020.

Polar Bear Plunge

	2019	2020
# IG Posts	3	15
Total IG Engagement	522 likes 4,466 reach	1,118 likes 26,686 reach
# FB Posts	2	11
Total FB Engagement	112 likes 30 shares	91 likes 19 shares
# Tweets	12	11
Total TW Engagement	41 retweets 76 likes	23 retweets 65 likes
# Tik Toks	0	4
Tik Tok Engagement	0	120 likes 4,996 views
# YouTube Videos	1 video 55 views	2 videos 49 views
Date of Initial Promo	12/17/18	12/19/19
Promo Items	T-shirt/ Stuff Plush	Beanies T-shirt
Giveaway ?	No	Yes (Instagram)
# Jumpers	**≈640**	**840**

Based on the chart above, the following promotional event strategies are the most effective with the goal of increasing event participation (# of jumpers):

- Earlier event promotion. Though both years had advertisement in the month before the event, 2020 saw more frequent, earlier promotional posts.
- Additional clothing item as a part of freebie giveaway at event (2020)
- Giveaway prior to the event (2020's giveaway had 331 entries)
- Alternative means of event promotion (2020 promo included use of TikTok)

Similar large event engagement patterns were observed when analyzing data from CRW events like Raid the Rec, Spring Fest, and Beach Fest

Moving Forward

Suggested strategies for implementation with the goal of increasing social media engagement across all platforms used by Campus Recreation and Wellness:

- For Facebook
  - Establish a deeper connection with CRW FB audience. By offering more of a conversational relationship to followers that shows an investment from page admin, followers will be more likely to actively engage and promote/share page content.
  - Answer questions, provide information, refrain from overwhelming the page with information.
- For Instagram
  - Post pictures that highlight campus emblems as well as popular Greenville/Greater Greenville locations
  - Incorporate more competitions/giveaways into our posts to encourage page activity
  - Develop better relationships with other campus organizations as a means for cross-promotion of events
  - Refrain from "news" style information/posts
  - Continue to increase photo quality/ page aesthetic
  - Offer followers more frequent opportunities to win prizes
  - Encourage productive and positive interactions between media team and followers in the comments
- For Twitter
  - Display a consistent professional voice across all tweeted information
  - Increase amount of visual content posted
  - Collaborate with other University accounts (internal and external)
  - Incorporate more hashtags into tweets
  - Draw in new followers from other social media platforms

Plan for Implementation

While CRW could have effectively implemented these strategic recommendations over the course of the last two semesters, data readings would have returned as inaccurate due to the nature of virtual events.

As programming returns to an in person environment the CRW marketing team plans to incorporate these marketing tactics with projections of increased engagement across all social media platforms. This process will begin during the Fall of 2021 and analytics will be reviewed in the Spring of 2022 to evaluate effectiveness.

References

María del Rocío Bonilla Quijada, et al. (2021) Engaging students through social media. Findings for the top five universities in the world, Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, DOI: 10.1080/08841241.2020.1841069
Assimakopoulos, C., et al. (2017), "Effective social media marketing strategy: Facebook as an opportunity for universities", International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management, Vol. 45 No. 5, pp. 532-549. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-11-2016-0211