Student Communication at Kenyon

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Methodology

This report is based on a survey designed to gathered information on the methods and tools that students use to learn about events on campus. The survey was sent to 600 students beginning in mid-March 2015, and 203 completed the survey (34%). Of respondents, 33% were sophomores, 27.1% were seniors, 24.6% were first-years, and 15.3% were juniors.

Highlights

- Face-to-face contact is the most frequently used method of hearing about events on campus.
- Despite a dissatisfaction with the amount and redundancy of email they receive, email was a primary source of information, about events and campus wide deadlines.

Survey Results

Survey respondents indicated that they felt well-informed about events on campus, with 57.3% indicating that they felt "very well-informed" or "well-informed". The majority of students stated that they attend a Kenyon event once a week or 2-3 times a month (63.8% of respondents), while 20.2% of respondents indicated that they attend a Kenyon event once a month. Only .4% of respondents indicated that they never attend Kenyon events.

When and Why Students Attend Events

Students most often attend Kenyon events because it is of personal interest; 69.8% of respondents attend a Kenyon event once a month or more for this reason. Similarly, 64.4% of respondents attend a Kenyon event at least once a month in support of their friends. Only 29.2% of respondents attended a Kenyon event once a month or more because it is a course requirement.
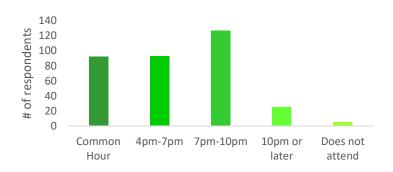
Figure 1. Preferred time to attend Kenyon events during the week.

Kenyon events happen at varying times during the week and weekend, but some time periods are more popular than others. As shown in Figures 1 and 2, Students indicated that they would be most likely to attend

an event if it took place between 7pm and 10pm on weekdays or between 4pm and 7pm on weekends (61% and 64%, respectively). Common hour was another popular weekday time (45%), as was 4pm to 7pm (47%).
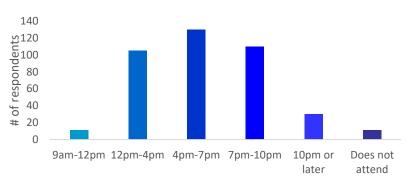
Figure 2. Preferred time to attend a Kenyon event during the weekend.

Class schedule (27%), work schedule (24%), and personal reasons (21%) were most commonly cited as the factors behind students choosing not to attend Kenyon events.

Sources of Information
Respondents indicated the sources they used most often to find out about events on campus are face-to-face communication, posters, Facebook, and Student-info emails, as shown in Figure 3.
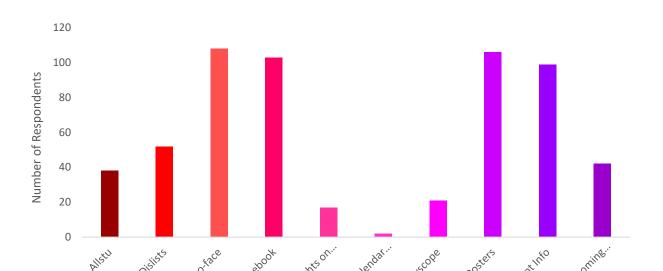
Figure 3. The number of student respondents using a specific source to find out about events on campus.

Facebook
Eighty-one percent of the respondents have a Facebook account and check it frequently. There is no significant difference between the classes, but a smaller percentage of first years have and frequently use Facebook than other classes. This could indicate the beginning of a trend of decreased reliance on Facebook for each incoming cohort. For the students who do have a Facebook, students "like" Facebook pages related

to Kenyon student organizations (70%) more than they "like" Facebook pages related to Kenyon offices (45%).

Event Advertising

Students express frustration with the amount of advertising for various events on campus. A majority of respondents (85.1%) stated that event advertising should begin 1 to 2 weeks before the event. The majority of respondents (57.8%) indicated that 1 to 2 reminder emails are appropriate for the week leading up to an event, though a sizeable group (39.7%) selected 3 to 5 reminder emails as appropriate.

Kenyon Calendar

Two-thirds (67%) of respondents are aware of the Kenyon calendar, but only 2.5% of those use it regularly. The most frequently cited reason for not using the calendar was that respondents forget about it (66%), the second reason was in the "Other" category (13%). Respondents who chose "Other" were prompted to fill out an open response question. The most common answer was that other sources are more readily and easily available, like Student Info and the "Upcoming events at Kenyon" emails. Many also added "all of the above" in their open response, indicating they would have chosen all options if possible (the options being: It does not contain the events I am interested in, it is difficult to find, it is difficult to use, and I forget about it).

Of the 33% that do not know about the Kenyon calendar, over half (56%) said they would be interested in learning more about the calendar, most of whom indicated they want to learn more about the calendar through email (92%). On the other hand, 44% said they were not interested in learning more. In total, 15% of all respondents in the survey were not aware of the calendar and were not interested in learning more.

Official Campus-wide Deadlines

As shown below in Figure 4, respondents most often use Student Info emails (46%), followed by Kenyon class email lists (14%) to find out about campus-wide deadlines, such as registration.
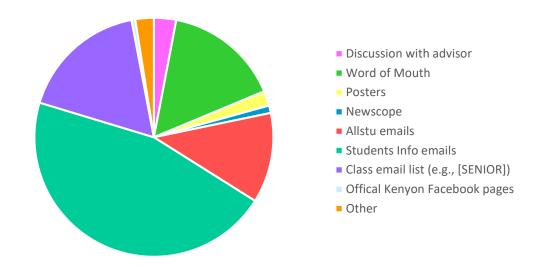
Figure 4. Sources respondents use to find out about campus-wide deadlines.

Alternative Options for Campus Communication

When asked about text message alerts, 48% of respondents indicated that they were interested in receiving messages concerning maintenance; 40% said they would like to receive text message alerts about important

deadlines. Nearly one-in-five respondents (18%) said they did not want to receive any text message alerts besides emergency messages.

Another option presented to respondents to improve communication is introducing subscription bases email lists. Overall, 47% of the respondents reported they probably would be interested in subscribing to an email list based on a specific interest. Currently, 45% of respondents are subscribed to three to five student organization distribution lists.

Open Responses

Respondents had the opportunity to respond to an open-ended question asking for suggestion or any other ideas or thoughts they wanted to share. The overarching theme was a general request to reduce the number of emails received on a daily basis. More specifically, reduce the number of event and personal interest emails sent through channels like the residence hall or the class email dis-lists. About a third of the open-ended responses described frustration with "dis-list abuse" and that there should be some kind of control or penalty for sending inappropriate emails, like the student food service Nite Bites sending emails to a residence hall dis-list. Many respondents said there should be a way to monitor these dis-lists to separate out emails that are pertinent to the appropriate list.

In terms of content of emails and number of emails, respondents do not want to receive emails that are not intended for them and do not want to receive multiple emails advertising the same event. Many respondents noted that if there were less repeating emails, then students might be more apt to read them in the first place. Some respondents said they lost or missed important information due to the over flow of emails in their inboxes, including housing lottery information, dates for course evaluations, and important speakers.

Conclusions

While there is a clear frustration with email, particularly the amount and redundancy, many students still rely on the method for finding out about events and deadlines. Since "personal interest" is a primary motivator in attending events, it may be worth it to try to develop a system of more specified email distribution lists (such as anthropology, poetry, etc.). However, this would require a re-education for groups promoting events on campus so that they promote their event only within specific related lists, and they do not use the new system to send redundant promotion to all lists. Additionally, trying to come up with promotional guidelines such as when to send an email, where to send it, and how often, may help to decrease the amount of messages and increase their impact.