Title: The Good, the Bad & the Ugly: a Practitioner's Look "Under the Hood" of Implemented Program Recommendations Four Years After a Needs Assessment

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Kathy has served as Director of Women in Engineering at RIT (WE@RIT) since 2015, and brings a rich array of life experiences to the position. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in Public Affairs from a women's college where she learned first-hand the value of a female-centric support network, Kathy made her way to Silicon Valley. There she studied CMOS Mask Layout Design which eventually led her to a position in IT for a semiconductor IP start-up. Fast forward through coast-to-coast moves to Boston, San Diego and finally Rochester, Kathy spent many years in the fitness industry while raising her daughter, wearing every hat from personal trainer and cycling instructor to owner and director of Cycledelic Indoor Cycling Studio. Kathy draws upon these many diverse career and life experiences while directing WE@RIT.

In the spring of 2020, Kathy earned her Master of Science degree in Program Design, Analysis & Management through RIT's School of Individualized Study, combining concentrations in Project Management, Analytics and Research, & Group Leadership and Development. An unabashed introvert, Kathy enjoys reading WWII historical fiction, listening to podcasts, spending time with her family, exploring the world of craft cocktails, enjoying Finger Lakes wineries, and making a fuss over her Boston Terrier, Gatsby.

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The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly:
A Practitioner's Look "Under the Hood" of Implemented Program Recommendations Four Years Following a Needs Assessment

By **Kathy Ehrlich-Scheffer**
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Defining the acronyms:

RIT   Rochester Institute of Technology, located in Rochester, NY

WE@RIT   Women in Engineering Program at RIT in the college of engineering

KGCOE   Kate Gleason College of Engineering at RIT

ECCO   Engineers of Color Creating Opportunities; our minorities in engineering program within KGCOE at RIT

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Defining the Problem

Why was WE@RIT seeing a sudden decline in _current_ student engagement beginning in 2017?

- 50%+++ no-show rates
- Programs relying on student volunteers in jeopardy of running, as volunteerism rates dropped by ~50%
- Sponsor & Stakeholder relationships suffered
- Thousands of dollars in food and supply waste
- Drop was sudden, beginning in 2017. Why?

Defining the Problem

Why was WE@RIT seeing a marked decline in *current* student engagement beginning around 2017?

- Same Director
- Same Programs/Events
- Same Marketing
- ➢ Different Students

WE@RIT (Women in Engineering) Program

- Founded in early 2000's in beginning of Millennial era
- Programmatically tooled for Millennials:
    - One-off events; Short-term programs
        - Symptom focus
        - Little opportunity for ongoing relationships
    - Top-down approach w/little student voice; no democratic component

WE@RIT was founded during the early Millennial era in the early 2000's and its engagement playbook worked famously right up through the end of the Millennial era (the last class of Millennials graduated in 2018).

Millennials were quick to sign up and show up for one-off events and programs.
Gen Z is slower to sign-up and far more likely to no-show if they do sign up.

Millennials took no issue in being part of programs that addressed symptoms of greater problems. Examples: speakers and panels about women in STEM fields; volunteering to host students overnight in a bid to get more women to attend KGCOE. Gen Z is less excited about these opportunities, and questions if such programming is worth time away from their studies. Moreover, they also question if such programming is "big enough" to have any real impact. (National Examples of Gen Z engagement include Greta Thunberg; #MarchFor Our Lives = seeking systemic change).

Millennials may have checked in with their friends before going to an event, but by and large that didn't keep them as a cohort from attending.
Gen Z is likely to no-show, cancel or not sign up in the first place if their friends are

not also committed to and excited about attending.

The Gen Z focus on "We" rather than "Me" makes them democratic in their decision-making process. They expect accountability from leadership, and a seat at the table. They are largely distrustful of leaders and systems that have led to, as they see it, irreversible climate change despite decades of warning, an erosion of democracy and discourse, a broken system of funding college studies, and senseless mass gun deaths on their campuses among many, many other things. Getting Gen Z buy-in means being authentic and transparent, building individual relationships and giving them voice. It also means realizing that a program or event has to have something of great value to win out over academics for their time.

Gen Z needs to know what they will receive in exchange for the time away from their academics. Constant cost-benefit analysis:
- Is there a clear *relational* gain? And is it *authentic*?
- Is there a clear *academic* gain?
- Is there a clear *professional* gain?
- Is there a chance to affect *real change*?

NOTE: academics are almost always going to win out with Gen Z. They can't afford for them not to.

Millennial Engagement

- Me-Centric
- Focus: symptoms of greater problems; short-term; one-off's

- Midstream Millennial volunteerism rate on college campuses (~2008-2010): **70%**
- Trailing Millennial volunteerism rate on college campuses (~2016-2018): **47%**
- Little push-back on required volunteer hours

Gen Z Engagement

- We-Centric
- Focus: root cause of greater problems; long-term; system change

- % of college-bound Z's who intend to volunteer on campuses: **33%**
- % of Z's who volunteer on campuses: **6%**
- Resent being "voluntold"
- Entrepreneurial in solutions
- **Always weighing cost-benefit to engagement**

Why was I seeing steep engagement decline by 2017?
Through much background research, I felt reasonably confident in concluding that the engagement decline being seen by WE@RIT was best explained by a generational shift taking place, cited by researchers Seemiller & Grace as the fastest generational changeover ever seen. Gen Z's arrival on college campuses began in the fall of 2013, becoming more and more entrenched over time. By the time I was seeing steep engagement declines around 2017, Gen Z made up the majority of college students. The arrival of COVID sped up and amplified these trends.

Gen Z is not Millennials 2.0. Whereas the Millennials before them were known for being digitally connected, optimistic and me-centric, Generation Z is digitally native, risk-averse, pragmatic, we-centric, and places a high value on personal relationships. They are also driven, open-minded and compassionate as a cohort.

The engagement of Millennials looked quite different from the engagement of Gen Z on campus, and I was seeing impact of this dwindling engagement at WE@RIT.

(Note: Millennial data cited here comes from researchers Seemiller & Grace; Gen Z

data comes from a study by Barnes & Noble College, cited by Rickes. It's different studies, but it does start to provide context.)

The Research Process

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design:

1. Background research on Cohort
   <u>Overarching Question</u>: *Who are these students?*
   (done throughout 2019)
2. Needs Assessment Survey to all UG Women KGCOE students
   <u>Overarching Question</u>: *What are the needs of these students?*
   (39% response rate, or 257 students; January 2020)
3. Three Focus Groups of UG Women KGCOE students
   <u>Overarching Question</u>: *How do we meet the needs of these students? (used to flesh out the survey outcomes)*
   (late February 2020)

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My Master's Capstone provided the perfect opportunity to attempt to answer the declining engagement question. I designed an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study following extensive background research done on the cohort throughout 2019. In Spring 2020, a quantitative survey was sent to all undergraduate women in KGCOE with the overarching aim to define the needs of these students. The survey was followed by three student Focus Groups to further refine those needs and to better understand how those needs might be met.

While the Focus Groups were taking place, I was also conducting Contextual as well as Stakeholder Interviews. The Contextual Interviews served to gain an understanding about what other RIT clubs, programs and organizations were seeing in terms of current student engagement, and to draw any possible conclusions about best practices taking place on campus. The Stakeholder Interviews served to define expectations held of the WE@RIT program by those involved in its administration and funding. Finally, all pieces were synthesized together into a Formal Needs Assessment Report. That Report presented the case for recommendations that would better meet the needs of WE@RIT students, align with stakeholder expectations, and improve overall current student engagement in WE@RIT. Well, that was 4 years ago. So what happened?

I have previously presented on the quantitative and qualitative aspects of my research, but I've held off on presenting anything detailed about the specific recommendations coming out of the Needs Assessment. I believe that any endeavor needs time in order to assess its effectiveness or lack thereof, and this is where I am focusing today: what were those recommendations, how were they implemented and what have we learned in the process? I promise you some good, some bad, and yes, even some ugly.

Recommendations From the Needs Assessment Fell Into 3 Categories:

1. Program Recommendations
2. Communication Recommendations
3. Recommendations to Assure Attendance

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Those recommendations coming from the Needs Assessment Report fell into three categories.

The first category was program recommendations, or things having to do with what programs and events WE@RIT put on, for who, how and where.

The second category was communication recommendations for current student events which were further broken down by events involving program sponsors and events without program sponsor participation.

The final category of recommendations were things to assure better current student attendance at events (less ghosting) from those who had signed up for them.

Program Recommendations

1. Create a Student Leadership Board for current student programming;
2. Create a physical lounge space for WE@RIT (& ECCO);
3. Pilot a peer mentoring program for older and newer students;
4. Collaborate with ECCO and other diverse constituencies in KGCOE for some programming;
5. Engage a wider range of corporations in programming.

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The five program recommendations from the Needs Assessment process were:

1. To create a student leadership board for current student programming.
2. Create a physical lounge space for WE@RIT (& ECCO);
3. Pilot a peer mentoring program for older and newer students;
4. Collaborate with ECCO and other diverse constituencies in KGCOE for some programming;
5. Engage a wider range of corporations in programming.

Program Recommendation #1:
Create a Student Leadership Board

Scope: Plan & Implement events for current students

Implemented: Fall 2021 (delayed by COVID)

The Good: student voice created buy-in for events (over time); more efficient use of WE staff

The Bad: Too many cooks in the kitchen at first

The Ugly: Growing pains: power and expectations of students within a college program vs student club

Going Forward: Cont. use of Group contract; clearly defined roles & expectations of LB & WE staff

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The Leadership Board was implemented in the Fall of 2021 and has continued every semester since. Their scope is to assist WE@RIT in planning and implementing events for current students. Sometimes these events are social in nature, such as our monthly pop-up lounge series or Stress Relief Extravaganza before finals, and sometimes they are more professional/academic in nature, such as resume reviews, corporate visits and alumnae panels to name just a few. Their scope does not include New Student programming or K-12 outreach.

The Good:
The Leadership Board has overall been a positive change for WE@RIT. Having student voice involved in event planning has meant greater buy-in for events over time, and new events taking place because of the fresh perspectives brought by an ever-rotating membership. Having the Board also allows me as a Director to utilize my student staff more efficiently. Instead of stretching my staff thin to cover planning, set-up, check-in, & clean-up of all events, I now have LB members in that volunteer role for the majority of them. The staff is now deployed strategically at larger events or events involving program sponsors, and only one of them is dedicated to all things behind-the-scenes of event planning (registration and its management, emails,

nametags, check-in sheets, ordering food, etc…)

The Bad:
The LB initially began with a goal of 12-14 students. In actuality we ran our first year with 14 students, which proved to be too large. Some LB members did next to nothing, happy to let others carry most of the load. In our second year we began with a goal of 10-12 students. The first semester we had 12; the second 11. Again, too many people. The same problem of the same faces stepping up time and again to lead events. Mid-year of the second year (December of '22) I led a dialogue with the Board to better understand what expectations *should* be for LB members, and we all agreed that it was fair to expect LB member attendance at all but one monthly standing meeting each semester; and for each member to plan 2 or more events per semester.   During Spring of 2023 I kept track of how many LB members fulfilled those expectations: 8 of 11. So this year we are starting off with 8 LB Members. Already there is a marked change in the dynamics of the LB, and the work is being much more evenly shared. Often just one LB member is placed on an event instead of 2-3 as in years past. This change is already resulting in increased accountability from those leading events, though it does mean that the WE@RIT staff is covering the earlier and/or larger semester events without LB assistance or input. We also had one of the 8 Board members resign in early October, and I can say for certain that 8 is most definitely a minimum number for the Board. We are all making the most out of a 7-member Board for the remaining semester, but we all look forward to the return of a full Board in the Spring semester when 2 Board members will return from co-op.

The Ugly:
There have been some growing pains of note as the Leadership Board finds its voice and footing within the construct of a college program. There was a great deal of push-pull between the Board Membership of the inaugural year, the WE staff, and the WE Director. The Board wanted more responsibility behind the scenes of planning, wanted the ability to speak on behalf of the WE@RIT program, wanted to operate as a student club with democratically elected Board Members & officers but still enjoy the perks of being a college program, wanted to challenge established RIT policies and procedures especially if they could point to examples of other programs/clubs not following them, & questioned the role and authority of the WE@RIT staff. That year I was also the one leading the LB meetings.

Going Forward:
Following that inaugural year full of growing pains, the LB for AY 23 spent the summer of '22 refining a Group Contract that clearly spelled out the scope of the LB, the roles of the LB members, of the co-leads (we decided on co-leads versus officers) and very clearly laid out the expectations of LB members and WE staff. Specifically, we agreed to add the wording that WE@RIT was a college program, not a student club, and that

the Director is ultimately responsible for all program activities. We also agreed that LB members and WE staff would adhere to all ratified RIT and KGCOE policies and procedures. A final change was that outside of the first meeting of the academic year, the two co-leads would plan and run each LB meeting. This change was wonderful! The Board ended up being far more productive as a result, with a greater sense of autonomy but within agreed upon parameters. Finally, this past summer, the LB for this AY '24 in conjunction with WE@RIT staff, added in process documents to explain the event planning process and the workflow of the WE office as it pertains to current students events. There is a much greater understanding of everybody's role, of who to go to for support, and of the resources at everyone's disposal. We are committed to the Group Contract process for the WE@RIT Leadership Board going forward, and making sure that we have everyone's buy-in before the document is signed off on.

Program Recommendation #2:
Create a physical lounge space for WE@RIT (& ECCO)

Scope: a physical multi-use lounge space for the WE@RIT & ECCO community

Implemented: n/a

The Good: Much WE@RIT & ECCO community support

The Bad: No funding

The Ugly: Space constraints + Political environment + Lack of support

Going Forward: On hold indefinitely

One of the biggest recommendations coming out of our student focus groups was the need for a physical lounge space for WE@RIT. It was clear when consulting with other campus groups that those with dedicated physical space where students can gather enjoyed a greater sense of community and higher engagement rates at events.

The Good:
- The idea has widespread support from within the WE@RIT & ECCO communities, with both groups noting that they feel they don't have a physical place to call home, and hence have trouble creating organic community with others in the organizations.
- There was also hope a couple of years back that once our new classroom and makerspace building opened (The SHED), it would also be an opportunity to convert this lounge space outside the WE office as many brand new general-use lounge and multi-use classroom spaces came online.

The Bad:
There are no funds to transform a current student lounge into this multi-use diversity space.

The Ugly:
- The opening of the SHED has not as of yet resulted in less student usage of the area outside the WE Office as we had hoped. Restricting a popular student study space in the present environment would not be the most prudent move.
- Our sister organization ECCO has since been relocated to a different floor of the building with a new space being constructed that does include a small lounge for student use. We are absolutely thrilled for ECCO and celebrate their new space, but saddened that the joint vision of a shared diversity lounge slipped further from view due to this relocation.
- The current political environment makes it so any reserved use of community spaces by WE@RIT is sometimes met with hostility from some male members of the student engineering community, and this didn't used to be the case to the extent it is today.
- The politics of running a college prioritize lab research space and efforts that bring in funding. This lounge would not bring in funding and would add to tensions already being felt in the college concerning gender-based programming (however- a different STEM-based college at the university has successfully opened such a space, highlighting the differently resourced and supported "Women In" programs across our university.)

Going Forward:
Without a large restricted gift from an outside donor and steadfast support from above, this recommendation will remain on hold indefinitely.

Program Recommendation #3:
Pilot a Peer Mentoring Program

Scope: A peer mentoring program between 1st year and upper class students.

Implemented: piloted Fall '22; launched full year Fall '23.

The ~~Good~~ Great: Growing participation, Program Expansion, Sponsor opportunities.

The Bad: Gender dysphoria experienced by non-binary students; Factoring in Co-Op blocks for Mentors.

The Ugly: n/a

Going Forward: Continuous improvement of program.

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The student survey and the student focus groups demonstrated a clear need for the implementation of a peer mentoring program. Up to this point, WE@RIT had short-term mentoring in very specific programs lasting up to 4 days long, but nothing that had mentoring as a component over time. The students were also clear in wanting a peer focus to mentoring, not alumni or corporate.

The Great:
- Program demand doubled from our pilot semester in Fall '22 to this present academic year.
- Pilot feedback allowed us to expand a custom program which is hybrid in structure (small group meet-ups + WE@RIT planned workshops); flexible in execution (many options for suggested programming for mentors, small groups meet when all are available; 3 "free" absences for mentees); and timely in topic (monthly issues facing 1st years at KGCOE).
- Workshop opportunities for major sponsors to get in front of 1st year students and mentors (1 per sponsor per year).

The Bad:

- A few non-binary students in the pilot reported experiencing gender dysphoria as a result of attending mentoring events hosted by WE@RIT. They cited use of the word "women" and programs predominantly led by femme-presenting women. Ultimately, these students decided it was best for their mental health to drop from the program. I acknowledge that this topic alone could be its own standalone presentation, and unfortunately I do not have time in this particular presentation to do justice to this topic.
- Since RIT is a co-op school, it is always a challenge including 3rd and 4th year students in year-long initiatives since they spend half of each year on co-op. We are piloting this year with one mentor leaving after fall and a different mentor returning for spring to see if this flip-flopped arrangement works out.

The Ugly:
n/a

Going Forward:
The Peer Mentoring Program is slated to continue and possibly grow even larger. WE@RIT has a system of gathering monthly mentor feedback, as well as administering surveys at each individual WE@RIT event, as well as at the end of the peer mentor program itself from both mentors and mentees. This feedback allows for continuous improvement of the peer mentoring program.

These are just some of the mentor small group meet-ups that took place in the month of September. The 2023 program got off to a much stronger start thanks to lessons learned during our pilot program the previous fall. Of the 119 1st year students who signed up to participate in the program, 107 of them attended at least one small group meet-up in September. I've drawn heavily from background research on this cohort as well as things coming out of the student focus groups to design a program that is "Capital "F" Flexible," incentivizes participation with topics, food & prizes, and equips the mentors with tools and best practices for engaging their peers.

Program Recommendation #4:
Collaborate with ECCO & other Diverse Groups
Scope: Hold some joint events with ECCO & others
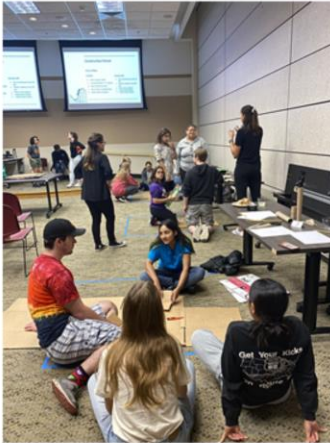
Implemented: Fall of '21

The Good: WE & ECCO communities rate joint collabs between the two programs highly; Club collabs offer diverse perspectives & opportunities.

The ~~Bad~~ Challenging: Student club collabs are subject to more relaxed standards of planning & organization; Last-minute requests; Requests for funding.

The Ugly: n/a

Going Forward: Continue with ECCO collabs; Cont. working with clubs to make collaborations more effective/efficient.

WE@RIT & sister program ECCO have had numerous collaborations beginning in Fall '21. Each collaboration has been highly rated by both WE & ECCO community members.
WE@RIT has had a few collaborations with other student clubs which typically have not been as successful as our collaborations with sister program, ECCO.

The Good:
Collaborating with ECCO is advantageous to each program and its members. Our members establish new community connections, and our program sponsors get in front of two minority groups at once without the Directors needing to do twice the work. As programs, we are each resourced to fund hospitality and to help with event staffing. We also tend to plan farther in advance as programs and have solid systems in place to ensure positive event results.

The Challenging:
Student club collaborations present unique challenges. Since clubs are run by students and largely funded by student fundraising efforts, the clubs are typically under-resourced. Requests to collaborate with student clubs are largely made last-

15

minute by the clubs and may come with requests to fully fund the collaboration. Communication may vary, and clubs are bound by numerous policies and procedures that programs are not. However, these collaborations are also unique opportunities to get different diverse communities working together.

The Ugly:
n/a

Going Forward:
WE@RIT and ECCO are both excited to continue collaborations, as it's a win for everybody.
WE@RIT will continue to work with student clubs and make suggestions for more effective/efficient planning and implementation.

Program Recommendation #5:
Engage a Wider Range of Corps. In Programming

Scope: Eliminate deeply structured sponsorship model of pay *x* get *y*; Switch to more flexible structure which highlights varying levels of event and relationship stewardship for sponsors-only; Non-sponsor engagements only by current student request (and not advertised).

Implemented: Fall '21; Tweaks made Fall '23 and in process for Fall '24

The Good: Gives power to the students to request engagements; allows for strong corporate relationships to be built over time with major sponsors;

The Bad: Non-sponsors and low-dollar sponsors

The Ugly: Ongoing push/pull between Career Services-WE@RIT-Advancement continues

Going Forward: Continuously assess

Both the student survey and focus groups uncovered student frustration with corporate events limited only to WE@RIT sponsors. Students wanted the ability to engage with a wider range of corporations; but WE@RIT needed a way to incentivize corporations to sponsor WE@RIT financially. Eliminating the highly structured, tiered sponsorship model was a frightening thought. Our first attempt at loosening the model in Fall '21 through Fall '22 proved "too loose," meaning there weren't any entry points for sponsors below $10k; and there were too many advantages being taken by corporate sponsors at or above $10k, overtaxing the WE@RIT office in the process and overwhelming our program schedule in a way that made it virtually impossible to accommodate additional high dollar sponsors. Our Fall '23 tweak to the model giving non-sponsor corporations the ability to submit engagement proposals via our student Leadership Board proved overtaxing to that group of volunteers, and caused company disappointment when those student-lead events resulted in poor participation from students.

WE@RIT is presently engaged in developing its next iteration of its sponsorship model, which seeks to bring back a little more structure while still allowing for student voice. Under this model, still in development, there will be four levels, beginning at $5k and going up to $20k+, with each level benefitting from different

levels of priority stewardship of the WE-company relationship as well as number of engagements, event planning and event management. Meanwhile, the WE@RIT program will encourage current students to submit requests for engagements with companies they are interested in learning more about which the WE@RIT office will work to plan, time permitting.

The Good:
- The emphasis on corporate stewardship has resulted in the strongest corporate relationships WE@RIT has perhaps ever had, and also allowed for plenty of flexibility and creativity in planning engagements, especially for major sponsors. Our major sponsors give glowing reviews of their engagements with WE@RIT, with our largest sponsor reducing giving in all areas across campus last year except for WE@RIT.
- Going forward we hope that the student requests for engagement allow the students to feel heard and for other important corporate relationships to form as a result of these student-generated requests.

The Bad:
- Non-sponsors and low-dollar sponsors were feeling discouraged using the request process to engage via our student Leadership Board. Also, this system resulted in corporations requesting engagements, not the students. Ultimately it wasn't giving the students more voice, but rather corporations were using this as a tool to try to engage at no cost while off-putting planning onto student volunteers already time constrained.
- Going forward we hope that discontinuing any non-sponsor corporate engagements initiated by corporations in favor of pursuing only those initiated by students will offer clarity to corporations, but also voice to students without taxing them with event planning, as well as new avenues to WE@RIT engagement for non-sponsors who students are interested in learning more about.

The Ugly:
Under the model in development, WE@RIT will revert back to the push/pull relationship it finds itself in between Advancement, which advocates for all corporations to be sponsors in order to engage with WE@RIT; and Career Services, which advocates for WE@RIT to engage with any and all interested corporations.

Going Forward:
WE@RIT will continually assess for:
- The model's ability to keep the lights on by funding WE@RIT
- The model's ability to incorporate student voice without overtaxing students
- The model's ability to grow and develop sponsor relationships
- The model's ability to fit within the bandwidth of the WE@RIT program and

available staff
- The model's ability to explore relationships with non-sponsors and the likelihood of those engagements leading to funding down the road

Communication Recommendations

1. Tiered approach to event reminders based on level of sponsor/stakeholder involvement in event.
2. Integrate student-to-student marketing into events planned by Leadership Board.

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Communication Recommendations #1 & #2:
Tiered Approach to Event Reminders; Use Student Socials

Scope:

Events w/ Stakeholders & VIPS: Use calendar invitations; add text message reminders for VIP events.

Events Planned by LB: Begin asking LB members to use personal socials to market events they planned.

All Events: WE@RIT website, digital sign, socials, mass e-mail; Slack.

Implemented: Fall 2021

The Good: Calendar invites and text messages are VERY effective but only if used sparingly (<= 1 event/semester)

The Bad: Students very reticent to use personal socials for program marketing; different for Club marketing. Slack was ineffective and discontinued.

Events w/ Stakeholders/VIP's:
Our tiered approach to event reminders comes down to stakeholder/VIP involvement. It was brought about after numerous events involving either high profile alumni and/or program donors were ghosted by students, leaving WE@RIT embarrassed, alumni angered, and funding at stake. Now, students signed up for events involving our main program sponsors or prominent alumni, especially where time slots are involved (ex: Resume Reviews/Mock Interviews), receive individualized calendar invitations in lieu of an email reminder. We may sometimes send text messages as well.

Events Planned by LB:
We began asking LB members to use their personal social media platforms like Instagram and SnapChat to help spread the word about events they were planning for WE@RIT. The Needs Assessment revealed higher engagement in student clubs for clubs whose leaders did this.

All Events:
Finally, all of our events were marketed by WE@RIT using our website, digital sign, social media, mass emails and Slack.

The Good:
Calendar invites and text messages are extremely effective; but they should be used sparingly. Sponsor or alumni-based timeslot events are best for these communication channels. Using them more frequently was not received well by the students; but using them sparingly and pointedly is.

The Bad:
Students may be willing to use their own social media platforms to plug their student clubs, but they are very reticent to do so for a college program, even if they are key to planning its events. We no longer even ask as it just created awkward looks and silences.

Slack was ineffective for marketing program events (as later was Discord). These social media tools are seen as the arena of clubs, not programs, at least at RIT. We discontinued using each for mass marketing and/or reminders, but we do utilize Slack very effectively for communicating with our Leadership Board as well as our Mentors. They've proven effective as Leadership Communication tools, but not community communication tools for us.

The Ugly:
n/a

Going Forward:
WE@RIT will continue with its tiered and targeted approach for stakeholder/VIP events, and utilize all of its own channels for all events. WE@RIT no longer asks students use their personal socials for anything WE@RIT related regardless of their role in it.

Attendance Recommendations

1. Implement two-stage ticketing for events with catered meals
2. Distribute event follow-up surveys for all events

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Attendance Recommendation #1:
Two-stage ticketing for events with catered meals

Scope: Registration followed by 3-5 day window to pick up ticket right before final counts are due. Final counts based on # of tickets picked up. Those with tickets get in line first.

Implemented: Fall 2021

The Good: reduced no-shows to a trickle; cut food & financial waste to near 0; caused students to think before committing; no financial pain passed to students

The Bad: minimal grumbling

The Ugly: n/a

Going Forward: Continue!

Two-stage ticketing was brought about by a 50% or higher event no-show rate, including to events with catered meals. WE@RIT was spending thousands of dollars for uneaten food, a drain on the budget as well as the environment. WE@RIT was also hesitant to administer event registration fees due to equity issues.

With two-stage ticketing, we still have an event registration as per usual. The difference is that over a 3-5 day window before final counts are due, registered students must pick up a physical ticket in the WE@RIT office (or have a friend pick it up). We then base our catering counts on the number of tickets picked up. At the event, students with tickets are invited into the food line first. Those without tickets may join the line for as long as the food lasts.

The Good:
This change has resulted in a marked improvement in no-shows (closer to 10-15%); as well as an increase in walk-in's willing to "take their chances." These walk-ins have always offset the no-shows, resulting in no food or financial waste at catered events. Students are now also thinking hard before committing, double checking availability, etc…
Finally, no financial pain was passed onto students.

The Bad:
Initially there was some student grumbling, but once the situation was clearly explained they quickly got on board.

The Ugly:
n/a

Going Forward:
WE@RIT will continue with 2-stage ticketing for catered meals.

Attendance Recommendation #2:
Administer Event Follow-Up Surveys

Scope: Developed and administered a standardized post survey following *all* WE@RIT events. Sent to all students who attend each event.

Implemented: Fall 2020

The Good: helpful and comparative "pulse check" on each event; used in continuous improvement efforts

The Bad: survey responses are dwindling over time

The Ugly: n/a

Going Forward: Continue; Survey QR code now shown *at* each event, which has vastly improved response rates in Fall '23

WE@RIT historically only administered surveys for its new students and K-12 initiatives. I decided it was time to administer short post-event surveys for each current student event as well. All post surveys are developed into a report that is shared with the student Leadership Board as we continuously strive to make our events better.

The Good:
The survey follows the same format each time, letting us compare events easily; the report that is developed contains helpful feedback for WE@RIT and the student LB.

The Bad:
Over time, survey response rates have dwindled. Sometimes no one fills it out anymore.

The Ugly:
n/a

Going Forward:
WE@RIT will continue with surveys, now going a step farther to bring post-survey

signs with the survey QR code to all events. Having QR codes at the actual events has vastly improved post-survey response rates.

Evaluating the Results:

Program Recommendations	Implemented?	Grade
1. Create student Leadership Board	x	A-/A
2. Create a physical lounge space		
3. Pilot a peer mentoring program	x	A+
4. Collaborate w/ ECCO, etc…	x	B-
5. Engage wider range of corps.	x	A-/A

Communication Recommendations	Implemented?	Grade
1. Tiered event reminders (re: sponsor eng)	x	A
2. Student-to-student marketing	x	F

Attendance Recommendations	Implemented?	Grade
1. Two-stage ticketing (re: meals)	x	A/A+
2. Event follow-up surveys	x	B

CoNECD

I believe WE@RIT has done a very decent job of implementing most of the recommendations from our 2020 Needs Assessment.
I give us scores of B or above in most areas, with concrete plans for improvement in those areas going forward.

Standout Failures:
1. Creation of a physical lounge space: showing a need based in data does not equate to support or resources for the project.
2. Student-to-student event marketing: though it is most effective as a marketing tool, it is also off the table if there isn't buy-in.

Standout Wins:
1. Peer Mentor Program: successful beyond my wildest dreams. 2x participation in a year, a vehicle to consistent student engagement and an opportunity to build corporate sponsorships and relationships.
2. Two-stage ticketing: food waste nearly eliminated altogether; registration not an inhibitor to attendance (with regard to time or $... No fees passed to students, and students are welcome to attend and not eat or get in line last if they didn't register.)

3. Tiered event reminders: using texts/calendar reminders sparingly means students are showing up and on-time to events with stakeholders, with little ghosting taking place for those events specifically.
4. Creation of Student Leadership Board: more student voice and buy-in; influx of new ideas; more people to assist with putting on events to meet student needs
5. Engaging more corporations via an ongoing stewardship model: no longer limited by sponsorship model in corporate engagement; corporations still incentivized to give; large donors happy with new model as its hyper flexible for both sides and can adapt quickly to changing needs; LB no longer spending countless hours event planning for non-sponsors.