Lafayette College Technology Clinic

An Analysis of Communications at Lafayette College

-Midyear Report Spring 2018-

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OUR TEAM

Meet the Team

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Charge

The Lafayette College Technology Clinic was tasked with analyzing and assessing Lafayette College's current system of communications. This project involves identifying the college's target demographic constituents, meaningful forms of content and methods for distributing said content. The two sponsors of this research, Lafayette College Communications Division and the Office of Development, have provided guidance and meaningful mentorship throughout the process. The main challenge involves evaluating what methods of communication currently being utilized by the college are working, how can the department continue to adapt its operations to fit the needs and desires of generationally distinct constituents and in what ways can the department better position itself as a pioneer in the world of higher education communications. This bureaucratic project has required a skillful blending of psychology, economics and sociology, with an eye towards entrepreneurship and computer technology.

Clients

Our three clients for this project are Lafayette College Communication Division, the Office of Development and Alumni Relations and the Office of Admissions. Working closely with one another and often with other collegiate departments, each division is personally invested in better understanding the different audiences' preferences and the effectiveness of Lafayette College content, as it pertains to aging consumers and fast-paced technology platform development.
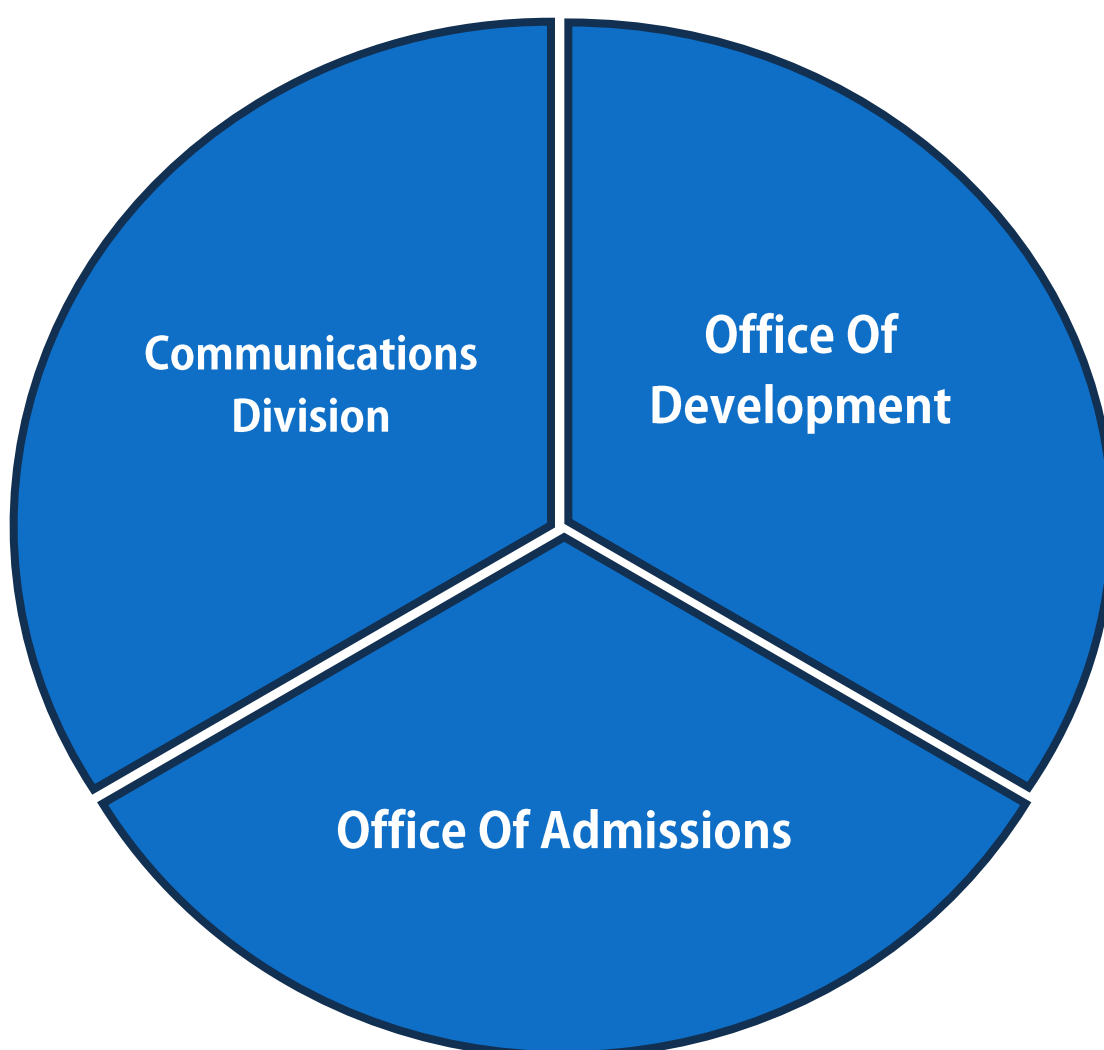
✓Lafayette College Communications Division:

Lafayette's communications team is responsible for creating and sharing captivating and digestible content through multiple channels and across numerous departments. The division has been represented by Stephen Wilson, the Executive Director of Editorial Services. Wilson is highly invested in the future of Lafayette Communications and as such, has demonstrated strong interest in the team's understanding of the task and proposed ideas.

✓Lafayette College Office Of Development:

The primary focus of the Office of Development is to support the overall functioning and future success of the college. Under the Office of Development is Alumni Relations, a department that relies heavily on effective communications for connecting alumni and organizing events. Alumni Relations has been represented by the Executive Director, Rachel Moeller '88. Moeller has provided the team with meaningful insight into the department's current affairs and challenges.

✓Lafayette College Office Of Admissions:

The Office of Admissions, represented by Matthew Hyde, Dean of Admissions, and Carol Rowlands, assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management, and the communications division are highly intersecting departments. As the project continues into its second semester, the team will work with Hyde, Rowlands, and other departments to develop a clever and adaptive marketing strategy that will entice and engage prospective students.

Each client has been immensely supportive in providing the team with a nuanced understanding of the current modus operandi in communications both across administrative departments and outside of the college. Given this information and freedom to problem-solve, the team has been able to gradually assess and think critically about the complex levels and cross-intersection of communications. The clients' excitement about the project and willingness to engage with the team has set a solid foundation for creativity, facilitating the creation of a unique set of possible suggestions, solutions and ideas.

Project Significance

Making communications at the college compelling and engaging to all audiences are meaningful goals for the Communications Division, Office of Development and Alumni Relations, and Lafayette Admissions. Especially in today's age of rapid technological development, it becomes increasingly important for colleges to showcase the most relevant content in uniquely compelling ways. We see this mid-year report as a tool for enhancing Lafayette's engagement across different demographics: current students, prospective students, alumni and parents. We hope our assessment of current communications will shed light on the fast paced evolution of communications technology and media, trigger dialogue about opportunities for improvement, and show the potential for the college to fully leverage the activity and creative assets already present on its campus. Proper assessment and vetting of current and potential methods will ensure the most effective strategy going forward.

Why Does This Matter?

For Students:

- Current students represent the heart of Lafayette through their participation in campus activities, academics, and innovative projects. It is important to highlight student involvement and events to maximize participation and cultivate an actively engaged and invested student body. Engaging with the current student body and connecting them to internal and external opportunities can also help garner outside financial investment and continued support.

For Alumni:

- Communicating effectively with alumni across multiple generations is necessary for maintaining campus programs and infrastructure, advancing institutional leadership and improving the strength and longevity of the college. As a small private institution, many Lafayette alumni continue to feel well connected to the college for a variety of reasons. Understanding how alumni stay connected and through what modes they stay engaged post-graduation will help to tailor communication strategy with alumni cross-generationally.
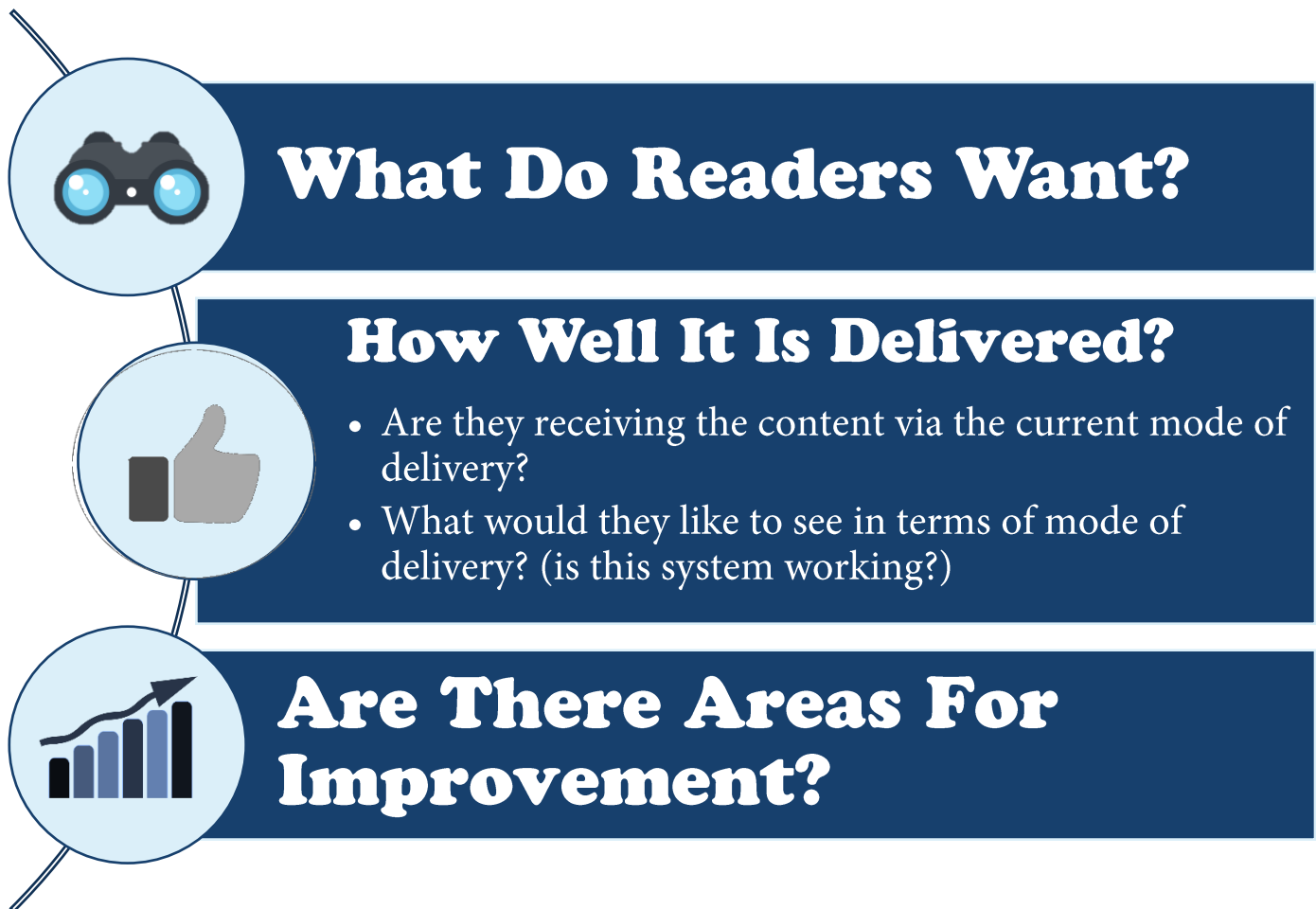
For Others:

- Prospective students and parents can be challenging demographics to communicate with because they are not directly or not yet involved in the college. That being said, communicating effectively with prospective students and Lafayette families is crucial for recruiting exceptional future students and maintaining continued and active parental support.
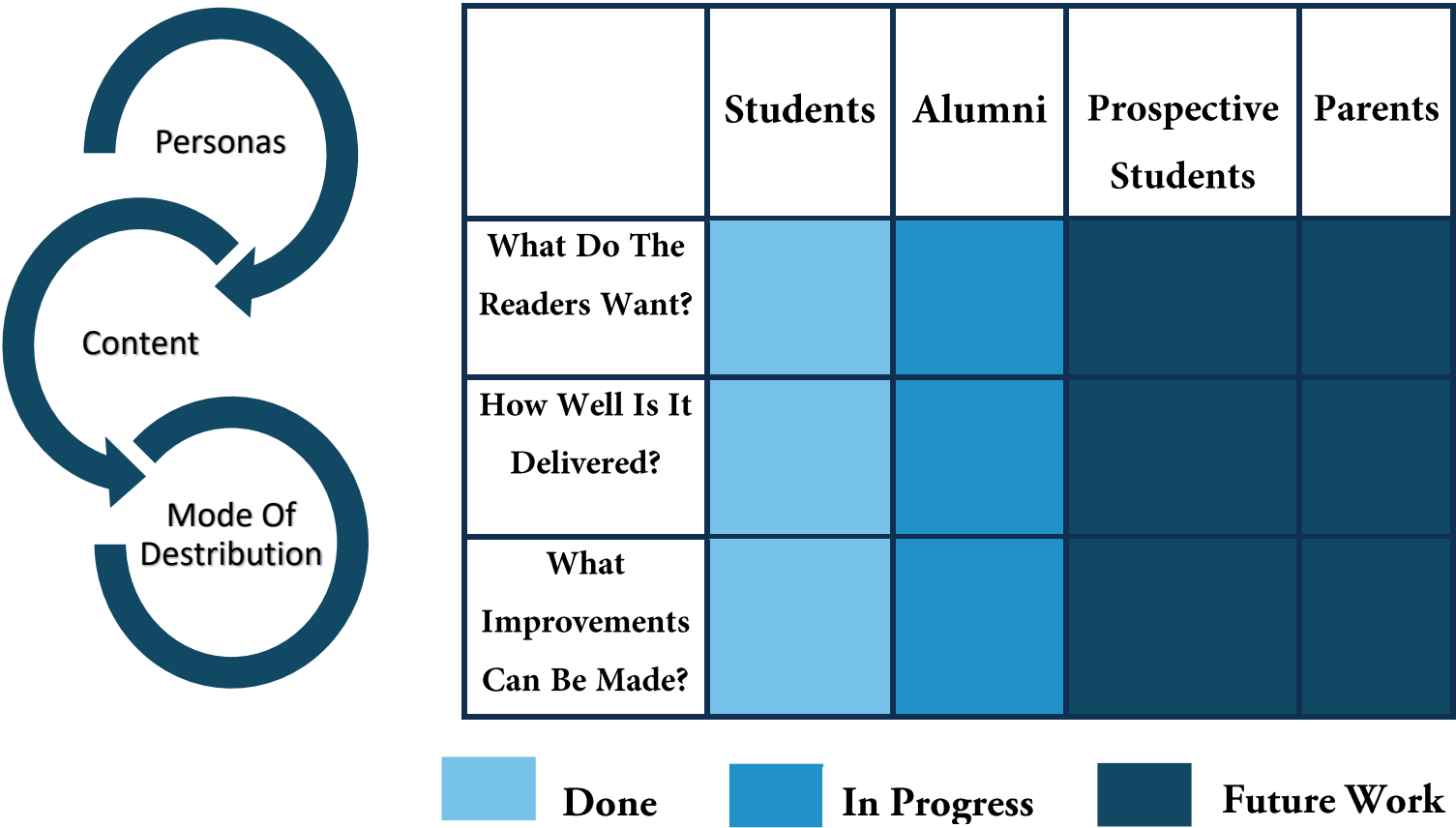
Focus

(Goals / What We Are Thinking About)

Focus

At the start of this project, the team identified three main questions that would provide a direction for future problem-solving. The first question, "what do readers want" addresses the type of content most relevant and desired by students and other audiences. In simpler terms, what do consumers want to hear about and/or know more about? The second question gets at the effectiveness of current content delivery methods and consumer satisfaction with these methods. Specifically, is the content reaching its audience through the current mode of distribution and is the audience satisfied with how it receives information. The final question serves as a response to the first two questions, leaving room for improvements.

What Do Readers Want?

How Well It Is Delivered?

- Are they receiving the content via the current mode of delivery?
- What would they like to see in terms of mode of delivery? (is this system working?)

Are There Areas For Improvement?

These questions led us to identify three key aspects of strategic communications we then used to structure our research. This three-part model is applied throughout the report as way of assessing Lafayette's current system of communication, its efficacy, and areas where possible improvements might be made. With the rapid turnover of communication technologies and media platforms, understanding who Lafayette is communicating with, what information is most relevant, and how this information is best received become the project's leading objectives.

	Students	Alumni	Prospective Students	Parents
What Do The Readers Want?				
How Well Is It Delivered?				
What Improvements Can Be Made?				

Personas → Content → Mode Of Destribution
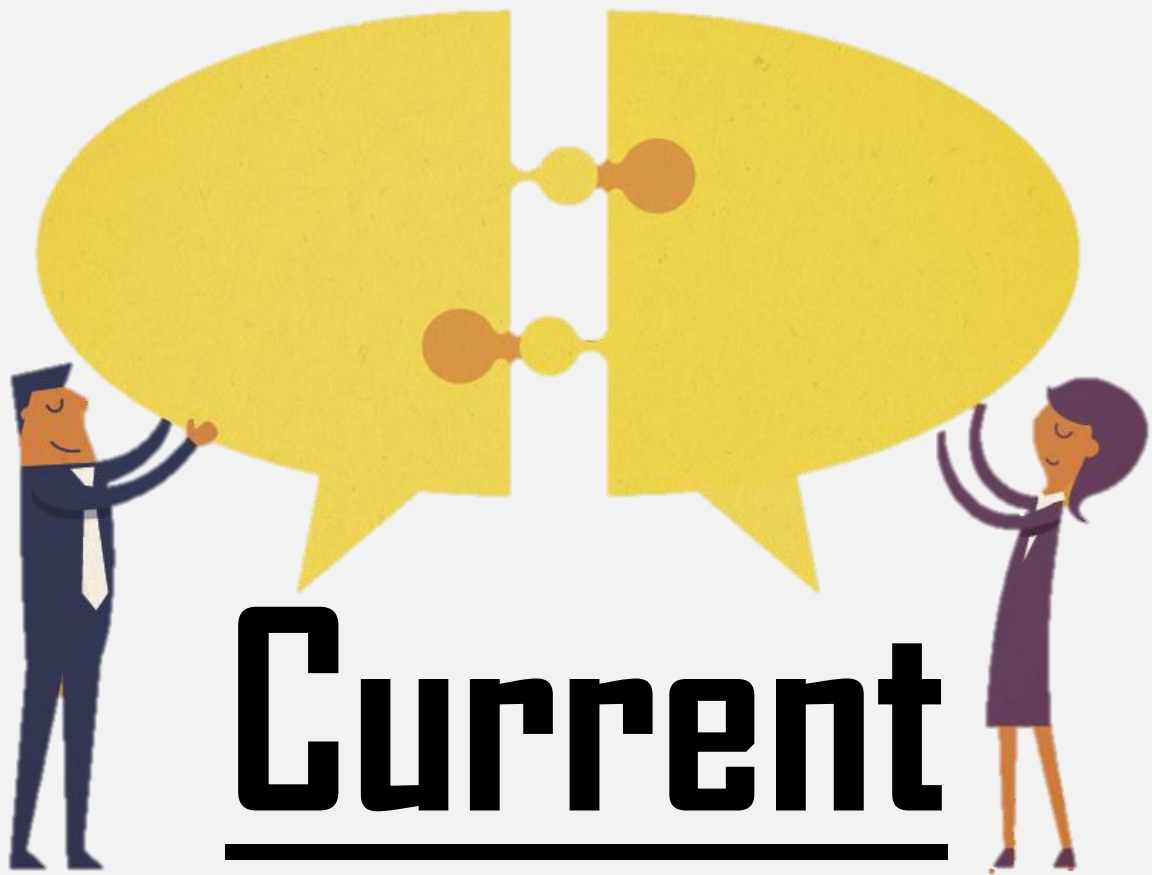
Done   **In Progress**   **Future Work**

The matrix above serves as a guide for the work we have done this spring and the work we will continue doing come Fall 2018. We hope to be able to expand on the 'student' persona as we gather more communications data about alumni, prospective students and parents.

Understanding Personas
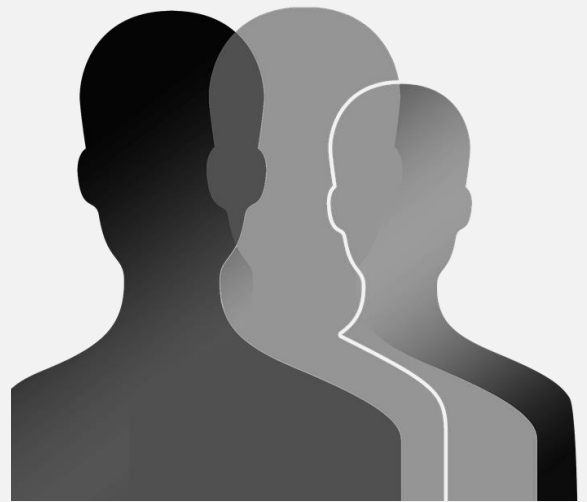
Identifying and assessing the different audiences Lafayette Communications wants to reach is key to understanding and improving communications. The first and primary persona that the TC has unpacked this semester is current, full-time Lafayette students. The second group the team has identified as key to communications is former students, or alumni. Due to the variety of people under the umbrella of the alumni persona, the team plans on gathering more information during this summer's reunion and throughout next semester to more accurately evaluate alumni preferences and identities. Currently, the Office of Development and Alumni Relations communicate with alumni by grouping them into clusters based on age and graduation year. In general, it is assumed that older alumni prefer to receive information in print form, such as the Lafayette Magazine, while younger alumni respond better to modern forms such as social media. The third persona that both the college and TC team recognize as a crucial audience is prospective students. As our team works more with the Office of Admissions at Lafayette next semester, we plan to more clearly define and understand the prospective students' persona; currently however, prospective students are those looking at or are interested in the college, those that have already applied, and those that have been accepted to Lafayette's class of 2022. The last persona the team sees as crucial to the college is parents. Currently, this persona represents family members of current Lafayette students. Similar to prospective students, we hope to further develop the parent identity in our next semester through data collection surveys, just as we did with current students on campus. The team is looking toward parents' weekend, XLC Day and other high traffic, campus-wide events as potential times for collecting this information from parents and students.

✓ Introduction:

Our primary intention was to determine what our potential stakeholders were with respect to the Communications Division. Hence, the chart in "Appendix A" was acquired in order to develop a sound understanding of how disparate departments currently functioned in relation to one another. According to this structural map, we narrowed down our focus to Alumni Relations and Communications Departments for the Spring 2018 which directed us to analyze how any type of information was conveyed to Lafayette's student body and alumni. In this regard, we are also motivated to expand our scope in Fall 2018 and looking forward to collaborating with the Office of Development and the Office of Admissions.

✓ Students:

Lafayette College's student body represents students of diverse backgrounds (such as US-citizens, international students, first generation college students etc.) who are involved with a wide variety of on-campus organizations (such as Varsity Athletic teams, ethnicity-based groups, Greek life etc.). Due to the multiplicities of identities and a broad spectrum of interests, we proceeded with categorizing the means of communication utilized by the student body and assessed the effectiveness of these channels. Here is a list of the most current and predominant communication channels available to students:

- ❈ **Calendar of events notifications:** Several emails are sent over the weekends and throughout the week regarding the individual events happening on campus.

Current Communications

✤ **LafSync:** LafSync comprises all campus clubs and organizations while tracking events and engagement. Students can enroll in as many of these groups as they wish. They, then, receive emails about the events based on what groups they are subscribed to, and can locate important documents about applications, track community work projects and gain general information about the student club they are interested in.

✤ **Flyers:** Printed posters are placed in academic buildings, classrooms, elevators, dining hall tables, bathroom stalls and other locations on campus. The purpose of the posters is to raise awareness of campus events in a visual and time-efficient manner.

✓ Alumni:

In order to develop a sound understanding of Alumni Relations' current strategies, the Tech Clinic team has collaborated closely with the department. Through many conversations and meetings, the team has learned that Alumni Relations employs specific communication channels based on different classes and hence, a wide variety of age ranges. The following list briefly underlines the use and significance of this method:

✤ **1960s and Below:** Due to a smaller class size, alumni who graduated during this time are more likely to know each other. Therefore, when deciding on how best to relay information to this alumni group, a class-based communications approach is preferred by Alumni Relations. Although most of these alumni have access to both technological means and print, the primary mode of information delivery is through

personalized letters and the Lafayette magazine since these class years tend to follow more conventional communication methods. According to Alumni Relations, these alumni have integrated Lafayette mail into their routines and expect to receive certain documents such as donation envelopes and Lafayette magazine on a regular basis. Reunion is, also, of importance to these classes.

✽ **1970s – 1980s:** This generation is highly responsive to content sent via email or text message. Currently, each class year has four class representatives who keep the alumni informed about events on campus such as reunions, philanthropy and so on.

✽ **1990s – Early 2000:** Instead of having only four class representatives, these class years prefer that everyone, if they wish to, should have the opportunity to undertake a leadership role for any given Lafayette event

✽ **Late 2000s and On:** These youngest generations represent the most complex and challenging alumni group. Although the most recent alumni engage with social media and are more likely to embrace technological advancements, these classes tend to be more unresponsive than former classes due to the abundance of information being sent and received in these networks.

It is important to note that even though the information provided is a series of valid generalizations, there are certainly exceptional cases and/or classes. This outline merely aims to provide an in-depth overview about how the age ranges of Lafayette alumni influence how they prefer to be communicated with.
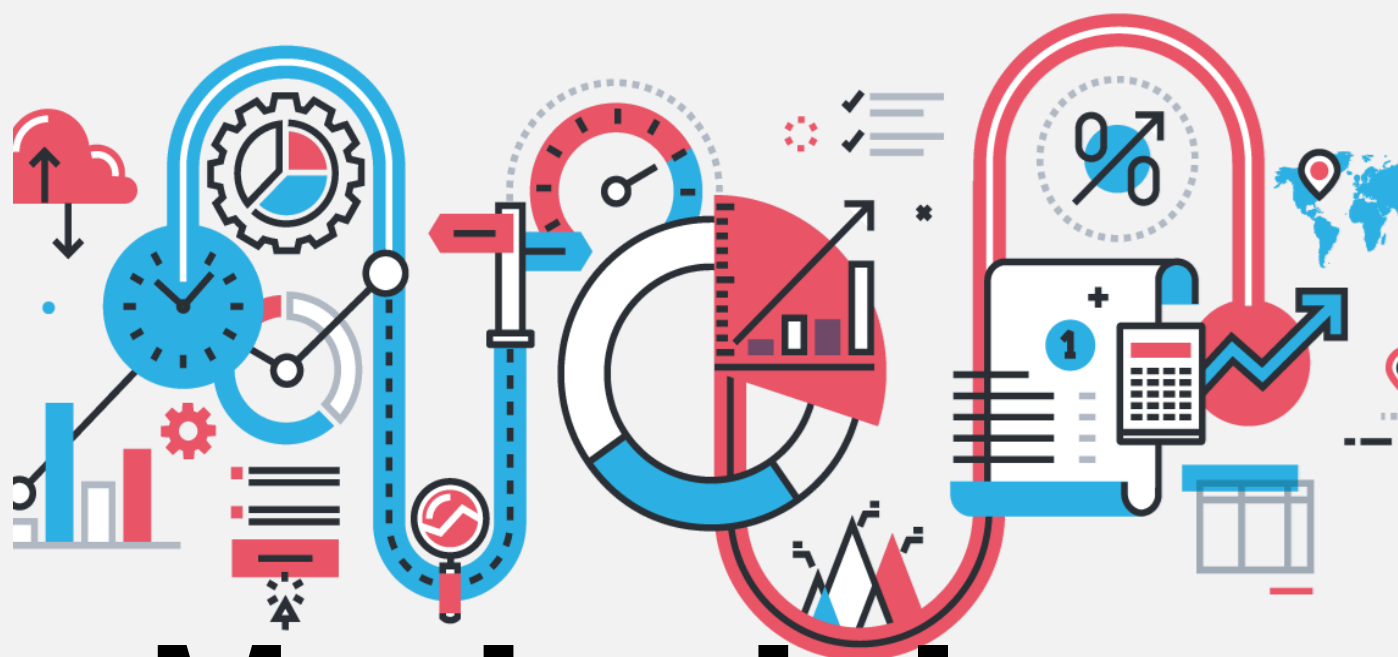
Methodology

In order to address how well the College delivers information to students, what information students want to receive, and what improvements can be made to current communications, we first had to understand the current system of communications on campus. We began to uncover the current communications workings by scheduling meetings with and interviewing Lafayette College staff involved with communications on campus. This included staff members from the Communications Division, the Office of Alumni Relations, the Office of the President, and the Athletics Communications Division.

With this general idea of how communications operates on campus, we proceeded to pursue how students feel about the how they are communicated with. We approached this by creating a survey that addressed our three guiding questions. After finalizing our survey, we sent it out to as broad a student sample as possible by using the resident advisor network to administer it. We incentivized the survey by providing the resident group with the highest participation percentage a pizza party and the resident advisor at $20 Wawa gift card. Additionally, we sent the survey out the entire student population via email to sample any students who didn't receive the survey from their resident advisor.

To gain further insight on the future of communications and possible improvements that can be made on campus, we also scheduled interviews with alumni involved in communications focused industries. Additionally, we spoke with alumni and current students of other colleges to gain insight on how students are communicated with on other campuses.

The approach we have adopted to understand Lafayette communications mainly aims at identifying improvement possibilities through the guiding questions. In the process, we educated ourselves by gaining insights into the current modes of communication by means of the multiple interviews we conducted. Finally we took that understanding to

bring a different standpoint. Since our ultimate goal is to improve and maximize the efficiency of communicating with the different personas, we first had to understand current communication strategies. In our research, we lacked enough information about these personas. Therefore, we sought other method to acquire the base knowledge. Thus, we built our own knowledge base with the contribution of the Communication Division, Development Division, external experts, and insights from strategies that other colleges and universities have adopted.

✓ Interviews:

While the technology clinic team gathered valuable information from our meetings with experts on campus, it was important to collect information about communications from other industries. Particularly, what does the future of technology and communications look like, and how do Lafayette alumni feel about they are being communicated with?

☙   Our first interviewee was Angel Mendez, Chief Operating Officer of HERE, a global company that works with location intelligence and is at the forefront of mapping and automotive technology. Mr. Mendez, also a Lafayette alumnus and member of the Board of Trustees and Executive Council, shared his thoughts on the TC team's approach to the project. He also offered his personal opinion as an alumnus of the college. Mendez's company, HERE uses multiple channels, including: yammer, slack, spark, corporate blogs, and an internal and external internet site to interact with employees and clients. With so many channels, Mendez highlighted the importance of three elements: persona, content, and method and distribution of that content, in communicating a breadth of information to a variety of people.

Mendez proposed the three elements as axes where when all three work together, the content reaches the intended persona through an effective distribution method that matches the persona's preferences. This axis approach served as an outline for our work this semester. Branding was another key topic of the interview, as Mendez noted the multiple channels employed by Lafayette for disseminating information. According to Mendez, this multiplicity makes it difficult to unify a communications brand. This connects back to the importance of information distribution in addition to effective content. In addition, Mendez stressed the importance of incentives in gathering information about different personas, such as by giving school store coupon codes to alumni or parents that complete feedback surveys during registration for events such as homecoming or reunion. Overall, Mr. Mendez offered the team a new perspective on communications strategy and personal insight about alumni.

ℰ Our second outside interviewee was Dr. Asela Gunawardana, a Lafayette College graduate and current software engineer at Google. Dr. Gunawardana has worked on numerous programs and patents in his work. At google, collaboration is primarily done through Google Email, Hangouts, and Groups services, while social media is often used for smaller groups. In addition to Gunawardana's Google mail account, which often gets flooded with over five hundred emails a day, he uses instant messaging and Slack, a multichannel communication platform, as supplementary means of communication. With regards to the TC's work, Dr. Gunawardana agreed that the team is on the right track in identifying a variety of personas, though he warned us not to attempt to target readers too specifically. Each reader is unique and individual in their preferences and thus shared personas should be

emphasized over individual ones. Moreover, Gunawardana noted that personally, he is much more likely to respond to classmates than the administration. Thus, improved collaboration between alumni could improve both alumni and administration relations. Finally, Dr. Gunawardana recommended that Lafayette create a system that would allow alumni to choose what information they want to receive from the college.

The team then spoke with Dr. James Higa, the former CEO at Apple, and current Executive Director of the Philanthropic Ventures Foundation and mentor at Index Ventures, a venture capital firm. While Higa did not attend Lafayette College, he has shared his time and expertise to support a variety of programs at the college, including the Technology Clinic. During the meeting, Dr. Higa emphasized the importance of intentional content over delivery. After figuring out what is the most relevant and effective content, delivery of said content then becomes important. According to Dr. Higa, there should ideally be 5-6 separate channels for sharing content, with each channel catering to different age ranges and distributive preferences. Higa pointed out that if only one source is used to distribute all content, readers will grow weary of that platform and it will become outdated quickly. Dr. Higa also suggested that the team find new ways to encourage alumni-giving during reunions and graduation. For example, using the app Venmo would make payment easier for new graduates and creating hashtags that tailor to specific student group interests such as "#LafayetteAthletics" or "#LafayetteEngineering" would personalize giving.

✓ Institutional Review:

A third component of the methodology involved reviewing communication strategies employed by other academic institutions. The team engaged in public and private, formal and informal conversations with peers at Bucknell, Colgate, Columbia, Duke, Emory, Fairfield, Fordham, Harvard, Lehigh, University of Miami, University of Michigan, Saint Andrews, Stanford, Temple and Virginia Tech. The TC team asked current students about what communication methods their schools use to convey information. Through these conversations the team gained insight about communications practices that was then used to draw comparisons and make recommendations about alternative distribution methods.

✓ Student Survey:

The students on campus are one of the most important recipients of communications for the college. They are one of the identified personas that the college needs to more about in terms of communications. That being said, we consider a direct feedback from this population an invaluable source of information that would give us insights into enhancing the current communication system.

To harness students' feedback, we decided to develop a survey for on-campus students. The survey was designed to help answer the three major questions of our project.

We believe this survey reflects students' general attitudes towards current college communications. In the following section, we provide an analysis of data from the survey and its implications.

Understanding Content

The survey we conducted provided insight about what content students want to receive, how well Lafayette currently delivers information to students, and what improvements might be made in the future. In total, we received 447 responses from students across campus. We did our best to ensure that this was a representative sample of the entire Lafayette population by surveying students from all parts of campus through the resident advisor network to administer the survey. Also, we sent the survey out to the entire campus to sample students who might not have received the survey from their resident advisor. Some questions in the survey were left up to the interpretation of the participant, such as "would you like to learn more about arts on campus?" This allowed some of the questions to be interpreted rather broadly.
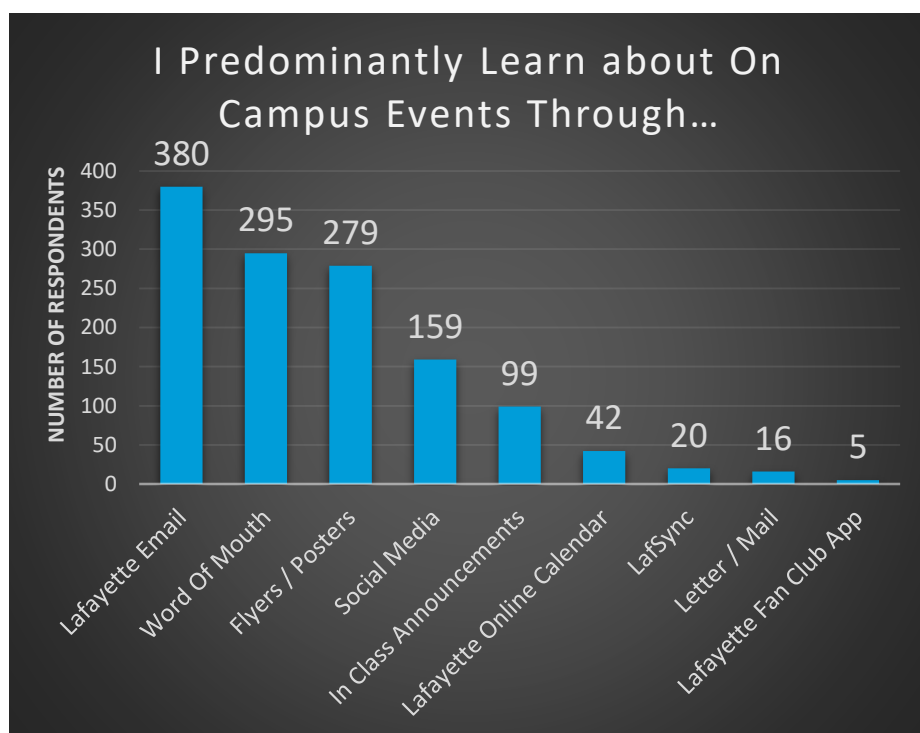

Figure 1. Survey responses about which method of communication students predominantly use to learn about on-campus events.

When attempting to disperse information to students, it is important to do so through the methods of communication that they use most. Data from the survey suggests that email is the primary method of communication that students use to get and receive information about campus events at Lafayette. A total of 380 of 447 respondents (85%) indicated that they predominantly learn about on campus events via email. Additionally, respondents indicated that email is used on a daily basis more frequently than other methods of communication, with 95.3% of respondents (426 of 447) indicating that they use email daily. This data provides evidence that email could currently be the most effective way to reach students, and that the College does well to disperse a lot of information through email. However, students could be using email more than other methods of communication simply because the College uses it frequently as well.
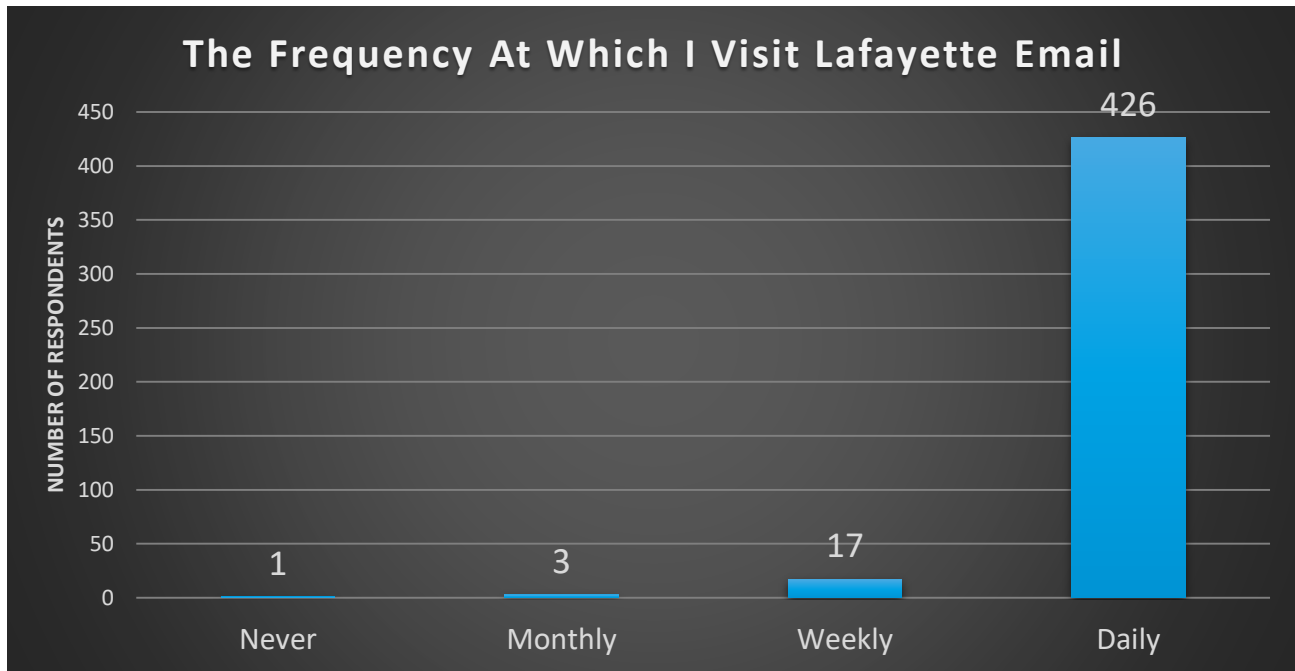
Figure 2. Survey results depicting the frequency with which respondents access their Lafayette email accounts.

Interestingly, 298 of 447 respondents (66.7%) indicated that they predominantly receive information about on campus events through flyers and posters, suggesting that flyers are an effective way to reach students. However, flyers and posters are often sporadically placed around campus, thus a possible improvement to this system could be to condense these announcements to a centralized location or a summarizing poster. Additionally, 189 of 447 respondents (42.3%) stated that they predominantly learn about on campus events through social media. As Brian Ludrof of the Athletics Communications Division pointed out, it is important to embrace social media platforms that students regularly use. While Lafayette currently does not use Snapchat, a popular social media platform amongst students, Mr. Ludrof identified that the Athletics Communications Division has had success with their Snapchat account. This calls for further investigation into what social media is used most by students at Lafayette. With this knowledge of which social media site students use most, the College could increase communications on this site to better reach students.
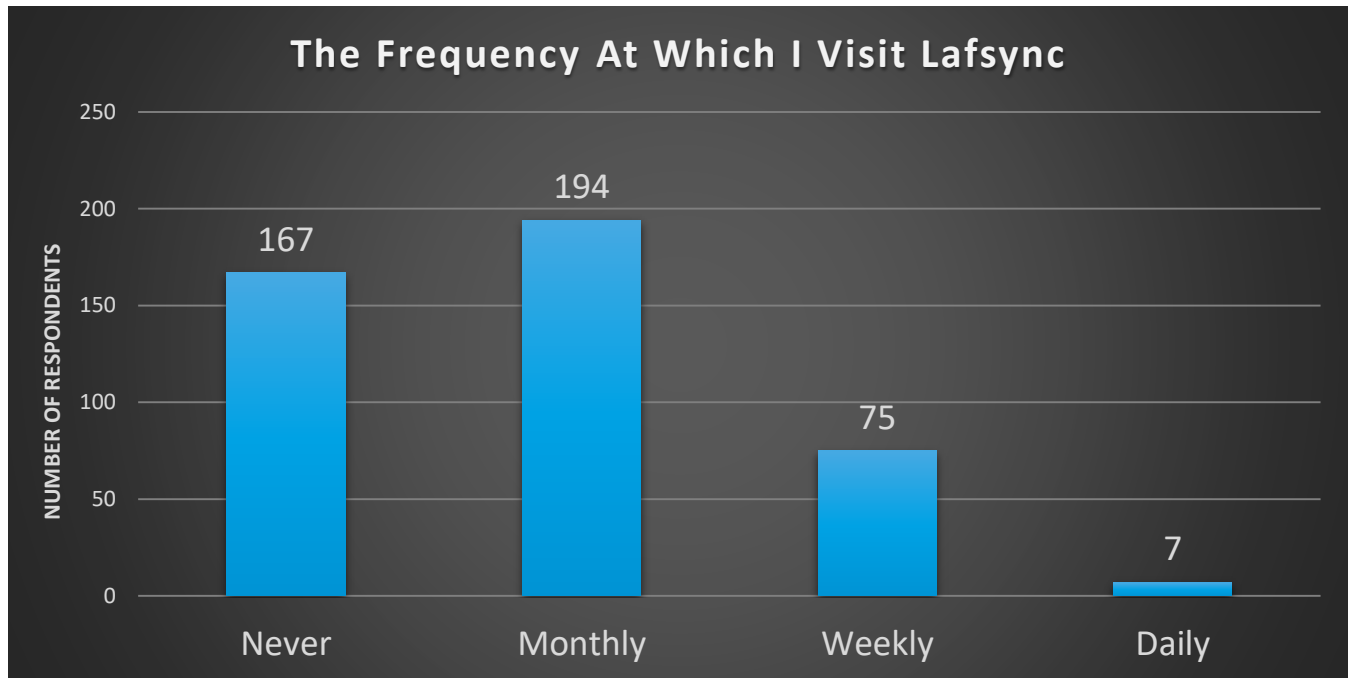
Figure 3. Survey results depicting the frequency with which respondents access LafSync.

LafSync is a website and mobile device app used by the College dedicated largely to event and program announcements. Despite its usefulness as a centralized location for information about things happening at Lafayette and in Easton, LafSync is used infrequently by students according to the survey. Only 20 of 447 respondents (4.5%) indicated that they predominantly learn about on campus events through LafSync. Upon being asked how often they use LafSync, 194 of 447 respondents (43.4%) indicated that they use it on a monthly basis, 168 of 447 (37.6%) stated they never use it, and only 7 of 447 respondents (1.5%) said they use it daily. This calls for a more thorough examination of LafSync to identify why it is underused.
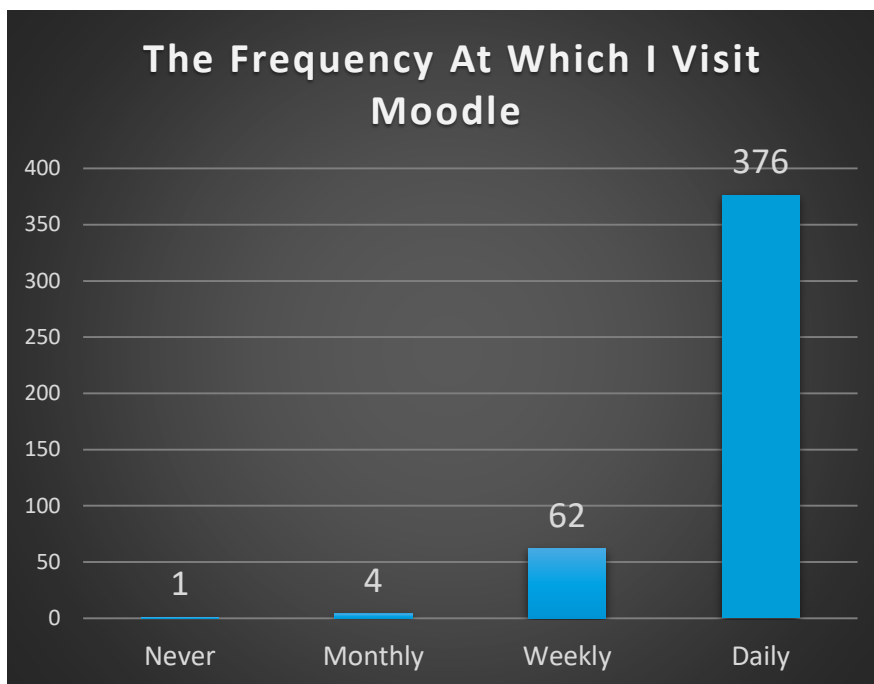
Figure 4. Survey results depicting the frequency with which respondents access Moodle.
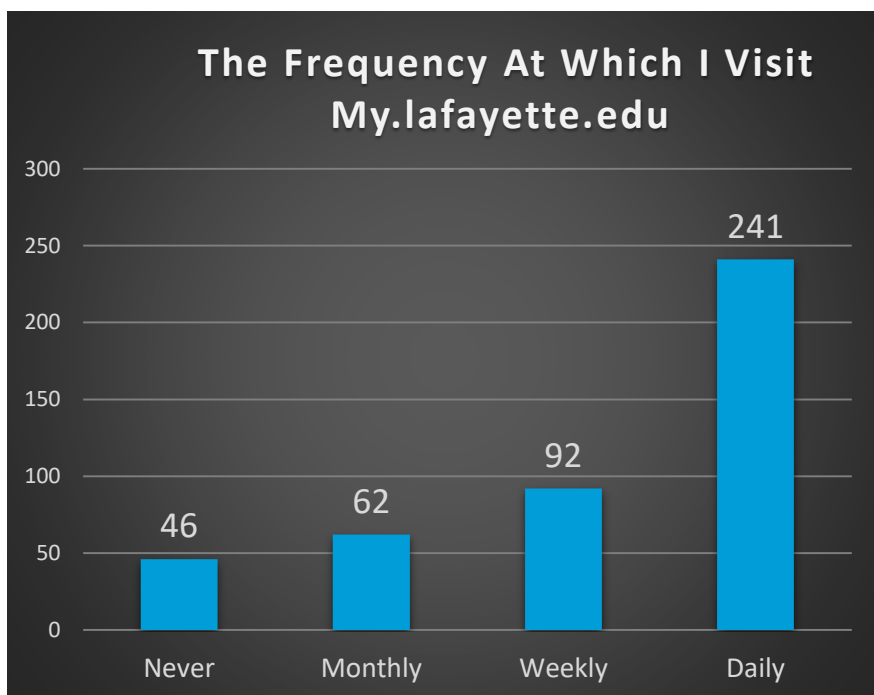

Figure 5. Survey results depicting the frequency with which respondents access My.Lafayette.edu

Moodle and My.Lafayette.edu also have a significant number of daily visitors. According to the survey, 336 of 447 respondents (75.2%) visit Moodle daily, and 241 of 447 respondents (53.9%) visit My.Lafayette.edu daily. These communications channels seem to have potential to reach a wide range of students on a daily basis, however they are not primarily used for communication. My.Lafayette.edu has a campus events calendar, that when clicked on, directs the reader to the Lafayette Online Calendar website. However, survey data suggests that students do not fully use this feature, as only 16 of 447 respondents (3.5%) indicated they visit the Lafayette Online Calendar daily, and 63 of 447 respondents (14.1%) indicated that they visit it weekly. This evidence that students do not regularly use the Lafayette Online Calendar as a source of event information is supported by the fact that only 42 of 447 respondents (9.4%) indicated they predominantly learn about on campus events on this site. It seems like the centralized source of event information that is the Lafayette Online Calendar, is largely neglected by the student body.

Email seems to be the most frequently used platform for students to receive announcements from the College. In this sense, the Communications Division does well to use email regularly to engage with the student audience. The survey also addresses how well the current email announcement protocol delivers its content to students.
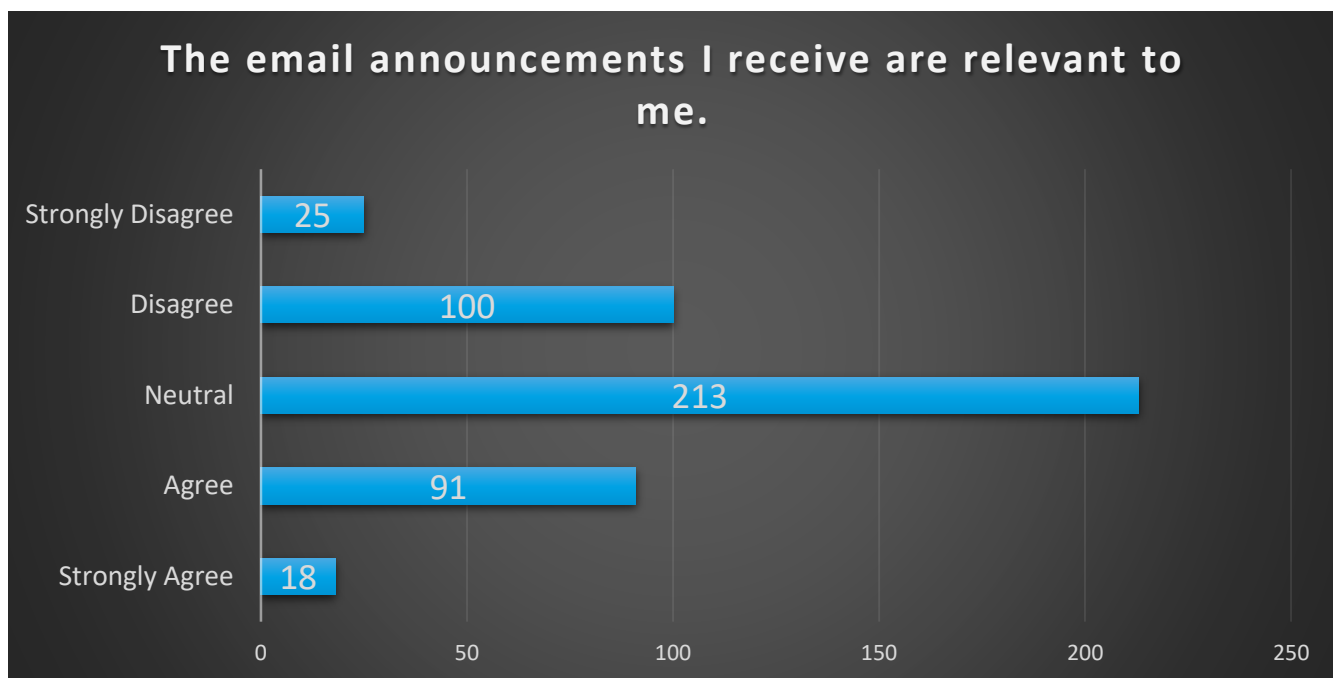

The email announcements I receive are relevant to me.

Response	Count
Strongly Disagree	25
Disagree	100
Neutral	213
Agree	91
Strongly Agree	18

Figure 6. Survey responses indicating how relevant respondents feel email announcements are to them.

When given the prompt "the email announcements I receive are relevant to me", respondents most frequently answered that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement (213 or 477 answered neutral). Data from the responses to this survey question roughly follows a normal distribution centered on the neutral response. Since event announcements are currently sent in individual emails for each event to the entire school, it is unlikely that each and every email a student receives is relevant to them. This is supported by the normal distribution of responses to this question. If the event announcement system were to be switched to bulk emails, a shift in the data toward more relevant might be observed.
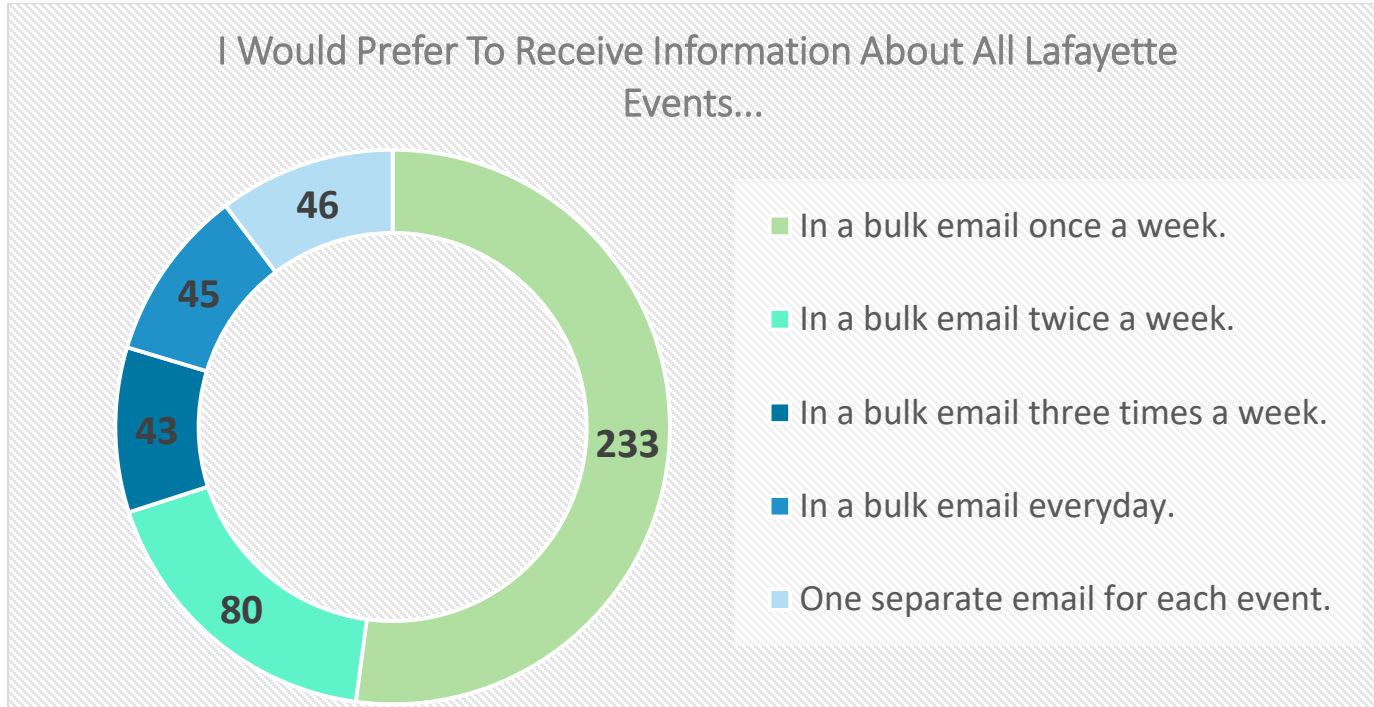
Figure 7. Survey responses about participants' preferences for email announcement format.

Additionally, the survey provides evidence that the formatting of event emails could be improved to better satisfy students. Two hundred and thirty-three respondents (52.1% of respondents) indicated that they would like to receive all Lafayette announcements in a bulk email once a week. However, this single bulk email may be impractical as events could be canceled or rescheduled after the time they are announced. A single bulk email a week would fail to update students on any changes made to the event. Eighty respondents (17.9%) indicated that they would like to receive a bulk email of all Lafayette events twice a week. This frequency of bulk event announcements could provide a better platform to accommodate for last minute cancellations or changes, as event updates would be sent out twice a week. Importantly, only 46 respondents (10.3%) indicated that they prefer the current model of sending out a separate email for each event. This data suggests that condensing the Calendar of Events emails into fewer bulk emails would be preferred by the majority of the student body.
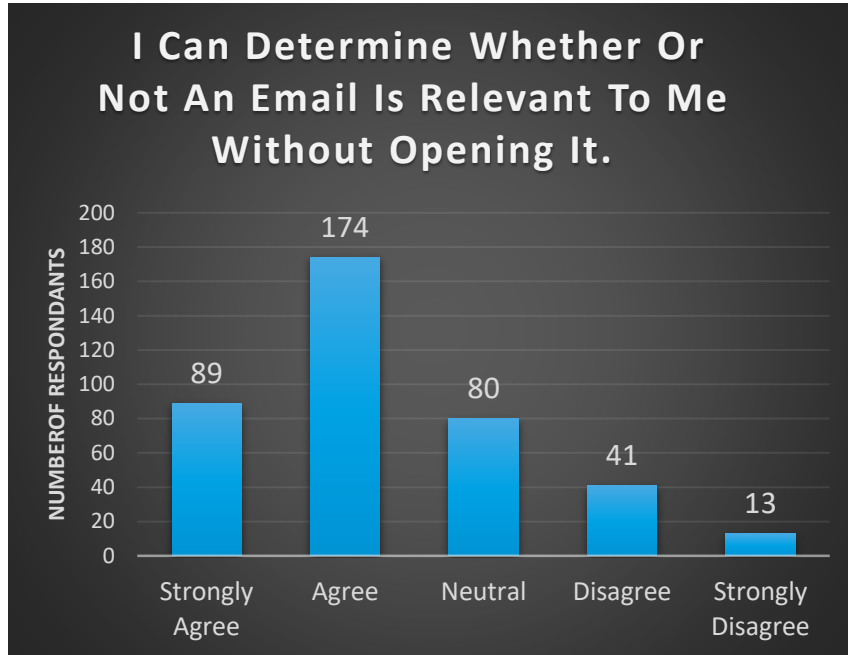
I Can Determine Whether Or Not An Email Is Relevant To Me Without Opening It.

Figure 8. Survey responses regarding whether or not participants' feel they can determine the relevancy of an email to them without opening it.

I Am Well-informed About Campus Events

Figure 9. Survey responses regarding how well-informed participants feel they are about on campus events.

Survey data also provides evidence that the sender of the email and subject are important. Three hundred and thirteen students of 447 (70.2%) responded that they can determine whether or not an email is relevant to them without opening it. When constructing emails, this provides evidence that the sender and subject should be carefully crafted when targeting students.

Through all current channels of communications, the survey suggests that students generally feel well-informed about on campus events. In fact, 318 of 447 respondents (71.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that they are well-informed about on campus events. With a median response of 4 on the survey question, this suggests that the average student feels they are well-informed about on campus events. This is encouraging, as it suggests that college communications are working well enough to keep students well informed about events happening on campus.

I would Like To Receive More Information About

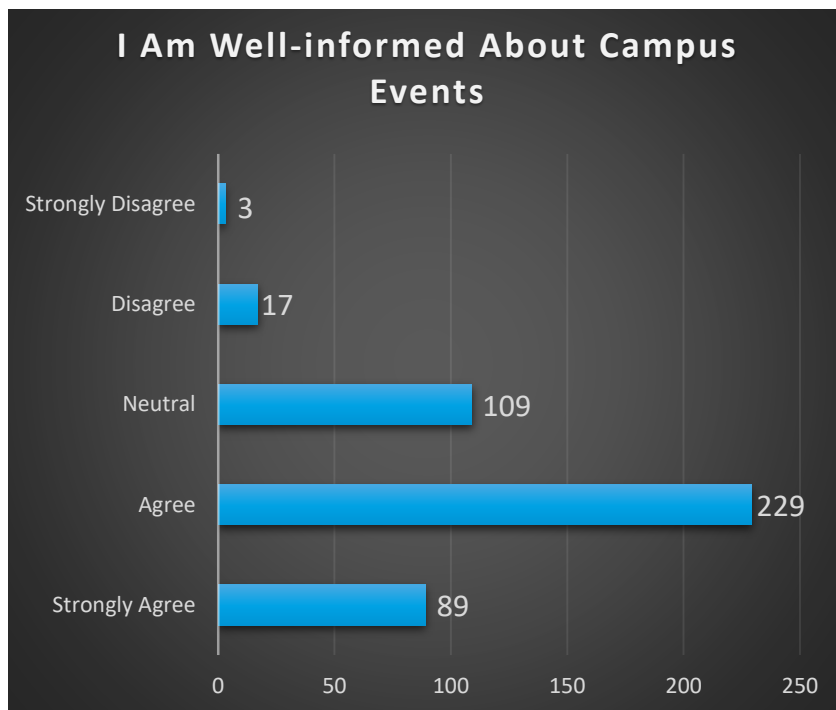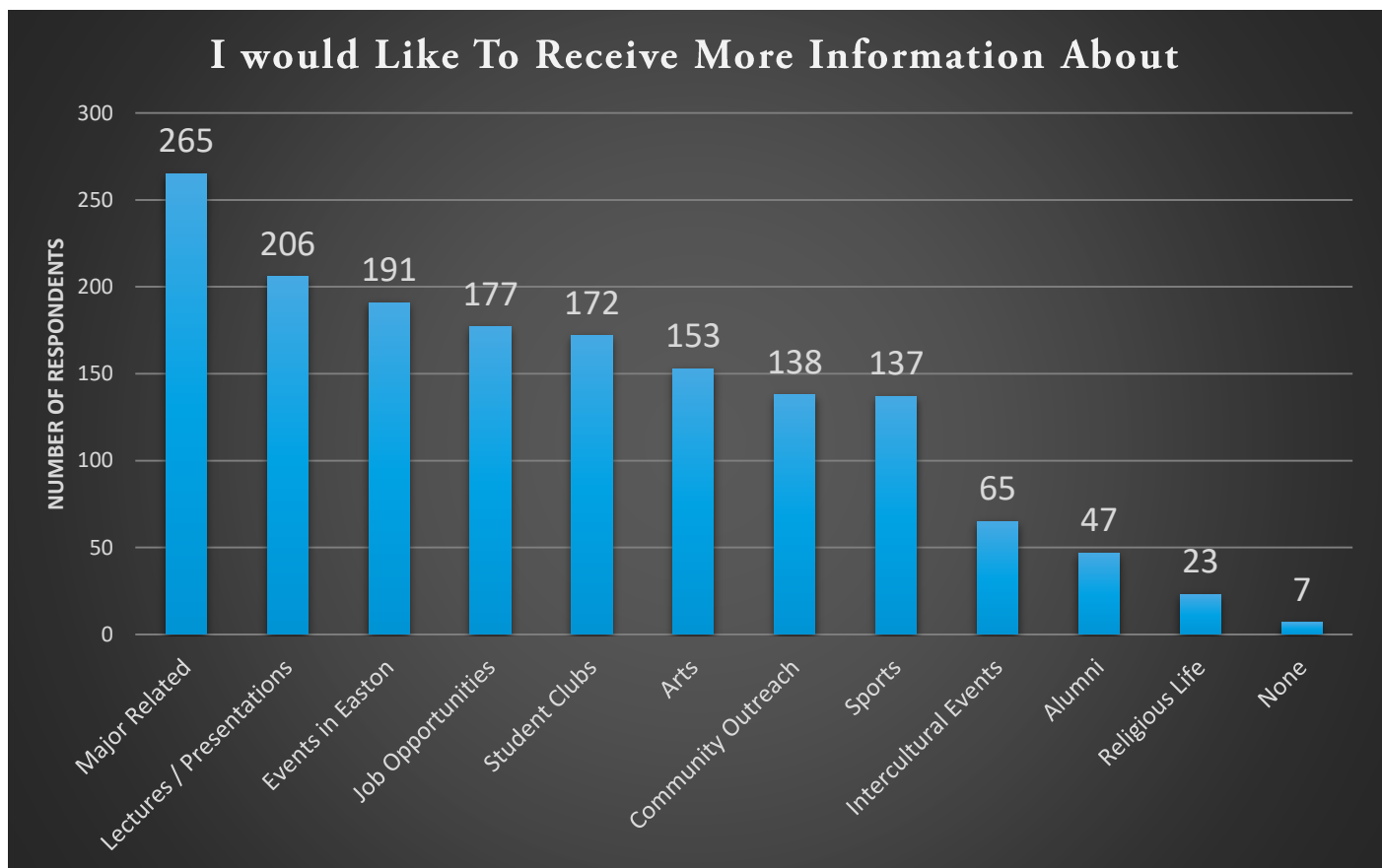

Figure 10. Survey responses regarding how well-informed participants feel they are about on campus events.

The survey also identified several topics that respondents indicated they were interested in learning more about. We have grouped these responses into announcements controlled by on campus organizations and announcements that could be dispersed through the communications division. Within the on campus organizations group, 59.3% of respondents (265 of 447), indicated that they would like to receive more information about major-related material. Additionally, 38.5% of respondents (172 of 447) indicated an interest in receiving more information from student clubs, and 39.6% of respondents (177 of 447) relayed that they want to receive more information about job opportunities. In terms of announcements that could be controlled by the communications division, 46.1% of respondents (206 of 447) indicated a desire to learn more about lectures and events on campus, 42.7% of respondents (191 of 447) indicated a desire to hear more about events in Easton, and 34.2% (153 of 447) responded that they want to receive more information about arts events occurring on campus. These are the top categories of information that students want to receive more information

Suggestions

✓ Calendar Of Events:

One of the earliest steps that can be taken is to alter the way Calendar of Events currently delivers information about on-campus events. As evidenced by the survey (please refer to Figure 9), the majority of students prefer to receive information about upcoming events and activities in a bulk email rather than as a daily reminder. Hence, in accordance with the data gathered from the student survey, the Tech Clinic team suggests that Calendar of Events could be send out in bulk emails twice a week to deliver accurate and timely information about weekly events.

✓ Installments and Stall Talks:

The addition of poster calendars dating all important on-campus and off-campus events on the back of toilet stalls would increase student knowledgeability about event happenings and enhance participation. Similar to Stall Talk, Installment posters would be produced on a monthly basis and be distributed by Resident Advisors. Despite the incumbent printing costs and upfront organization of events that would be necessary this program to function, calendar posters would grant visibility to campus events and activities, thereby serving as a new channel of content distribution for students.

✓ Podcasts:

Podcasts have become an increasingly popular pastime, with 17%, or 48 million Americans listening to podcasts weekly, up from 15% in 2017 (https://www.podcastinsights.com/podcast-statistics/). Taking this listener data into account, combining the concept of podcasts with an operating system such as Calendar of Events could be a new forum through which the college could establish effective communication with the student body. Possible advantages of podcasts would be that there are no reminders or a "white noise effect" that can be created by emails. Moreover, sections such as Arts, Lectures and Presentations, Athletics and Community Work can be created to involve events and increase awareness about active   groups on campus. A podcast system could also potentially create student jobs since it would require regular recording of campus events. From a financial perspective, this new system would have minimal costs since the college already has a radio station and the necessary equipment to record podcasts. The most significant shortcoming would be that in case of a last minute event change and/or cancellation, it would be challenging to update the entire campus. Yet, because an email will surely be sent out in such circumstance, the aforementioned shortcoming does not present a significant concern.

Suggestions

✓ Lafsync:

At least within the last two years, Lafayette College has been collaborating with Orientation Leaders team in order to both introduce LafSync to first-year students and encourage them to get in the habit of using it. These efforts include distributing the orientation schedule through LafSync which requires first-year students to download it. In addition to these efforts, we believe that the practicality of LafSync should be reanalyzed in order to make sure that its app is user-friendly. After this is achieved, several workshops about how to use LafSync more efficiently and how to incorporate it into other available Zimbra functions such as the calendar and the email database could be offered. This would strengthen students' understanding of the platform and encourage its use for both academic and social purposes.

✓ Google:

Our institutional review revealed that colleges such as the College of the Holy Cross and Cornell University prefer to use Google as an operating system. Hence, in addition to improving LafSync, substituting some or all functions of Zimbra with available Google functions should be taken into consideration. This can be particularly useful for tracking disparate on-campus events since Google Calendar offers a themed-calendar option. The students, then, can incorporate the events they are interested in into their own calendars to ensure they get informed.

✓ Student App:

Besides LafSync, which according to the survey is underutilized by students, Lafayette does not have a student app. In a typical student app, like the one at Shady Side Academy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, users can access a digital version of their ID, class schedule, dining hall menus, event calendars, general announcements, athletic scores, and even laundry machine availability. Implementing a student app at Lafayette could be an effective tool for students to learn about on campus events and receive announcements from the College. Due to the wide-usage of smartphones among college students today, a well-designed and well-advertised student app could potentially prove to be a successful mode of college communications in the future.

✓ Choosing Platforms:

After our meeting with Dr. James Higa, we came to realize that determining several different channels of communication from miscellaneous platforms would be more advantageous for the Lafayette community. For instance, sending out a campus-wide email can potentially be better when reaching out to the entire Lafayette community including students, faculty, and staff than sending out a text message. In contrast, for student clubs and groups, a group chat in apps such as Groupme or Slack can suffice when exchanging ideas or organizing an event. Therefore, we propose various forms of communication to be considered with respect to the size of the group being contacted, the amount of the information being delivered and the purpose/content of the message.

Future Work:

Summer Reunion and Fall 2018

✓ Reunion:

A team of Tech Clinic students will attend this spring's Lafayette College Reunion on June 1-3, 2018 to meet with and talk to alumni. The goal of this is to gather large amounts of data regarding alumni opinions and perspectives on the college's current communications. The students will interview alumni based on the same overarching questions that were asked of the students - what content do the alumni want to receive, how well they are currently communicated with, and what improvements could be made to the current communications protocol.

✓ Fall 2018:

Beginning in the Fall of 2018, the Tech Clinic team will begin to gather information from the two remaining personas - prospective students and parents. Through orientation leaders and specific events during orientation, Tech Clinic students will collect data and information from the incoming class of Lafayette students about how they were communicated with as prospective students. The first year students' fresh perspectives will provide valuable information about how they perceived college communications during the application process. Parents of current students at Lafayette, are the most far removed persona in this project, and therefore the Tech Clinic team will collect data for this group, last. The team is looking to collect information parental communications during parents' weekend, homecoming, and possibly graduation for the class of 2019.

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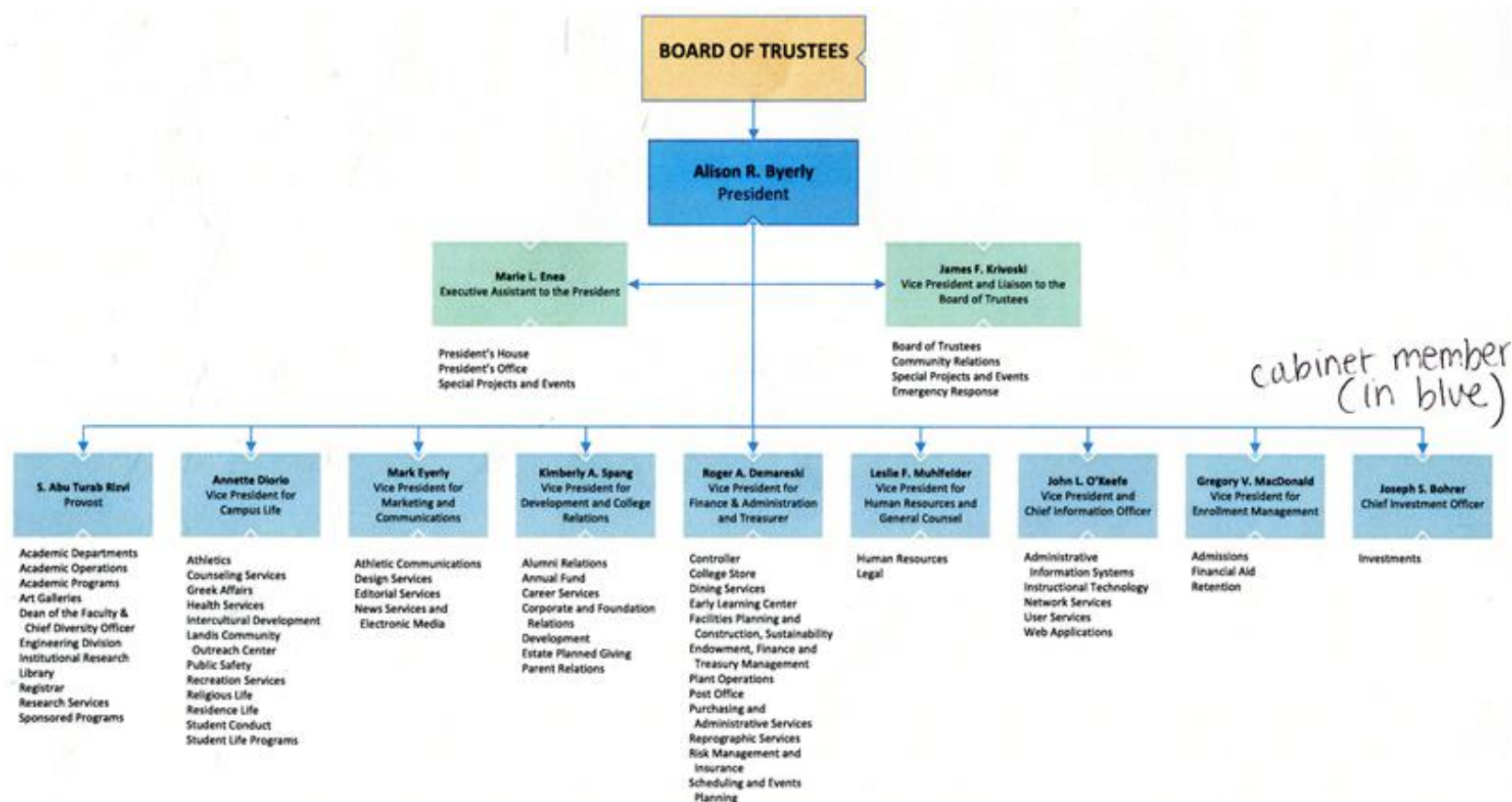   Trustees and Executive Council at Lafayette College.

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Appendix

Appendix A

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Executive Assistant to the President

President's House
President's Office
Special Projects and Events

James F. Krivoski
Vice President and Liaison to the
Board of Trustees

Board of Trustees
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Special Projects and Events
Emergency Response

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Engineering Division
Institutional Research
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	Athletics
	Counseling Services
	Greek Affairs
	Health Services
	Intercultural Development
	Landis Community
	  Outreach Center
	Public Safety
	Recreation Services
	Religious Life
	Residence Life
	Student Conduct
	Student Life Programs
		Athletic Communications
		Design Services
		Editorial Services
		News Services and
		Electronic Media
			Alumni Relations
			Annual Fund
			Career Services
			Corporate and Foundation
			  Relations
			Development
			Estate Planned Giving
			Parent Relations
				Controller
				College Store
				Dining Services
				Early Learning Center
				Facilities Planning and
				  Construction, Sustainability
				Endowment, Finance and
				  Treasury Management
				Plant Operations
				Post Office
				Purchasing and
				  Administrative Services
				Reprographic Services
				Risk Management and
				  Insurance
				Scheduling and Events
				  Planning
					Human Resources
					Legal
						Administrative
						  Information Systems
						Instructional Technology
						Network Services
						User Services
						Web Applications
							Admissions
							Financial Aid
							Retention
								Investments

Updated July 2017

Appendix B

Survey Questions:

1.) I am well informed about on campus events.

    1- Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5- Strongly Agree

2.) I predominantly learn about on campus events through.

- Lafayette Email
- Social Media
- Flyers/Posters
- Letter/Mail
- Word of Mouth
- In Class Announcements
- Lafayette Online Calendar
- Lafayette Fan Club App
- LafSync
- Other

3.) The frequency at which I visit the following is. (Never, Monthly, Weekly, or Daily),

- My.Lafayette.edu
- Lafayette Email
- Moodle
- LafSync
- Farinon Mailbox
- Lafayette Fan Club App
- Online Calendar of Events

4.) The email announcements I receive are relevant to me.

   1- Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5- Strongly Agree

5.) Of these announcements that are relevant to me, I participate in_% of events.

   0% - 20% - 40% - 60% - 80% - 100%

6.) I can determine whether or not an email is relevant to me without opening it.

   1- Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Neutral 4- Agree 5- Strongly Agree

7.) I would prefer to receive information about all Lafayette events…

   -In a bulk email once a week.

   -In a bulk email twice a week.

   -In a bulk email three times a week.

   -In a bulk email every day.

   -One separate email for each event.

8.) I would like to receive more information about. Pick your top three.

   -Arts

   -Sports

   -Lectures/Presentations

   -Greek Life Events

   -Community Outreach

   -Major Related

   -Religious Life

   -Intercultural Events

   -Job Opportunities

   -Student Clubs

   -Events in Easton

   -Alumni

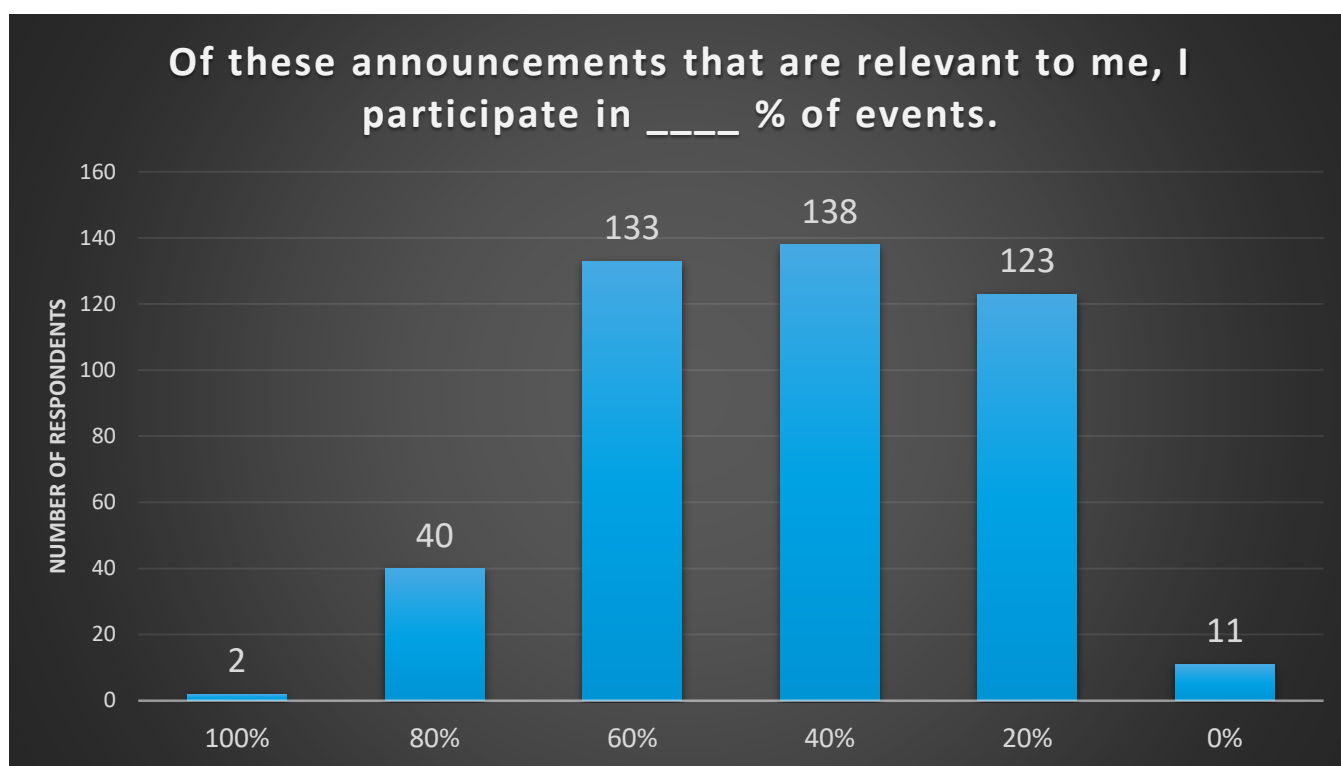   -None

   -Other

Appendix C

<u>Other Data:</u>

Figure 11. Survey results regarding respondent's estimates of how often they attend the corresponding events to relevant announcements to them.

Survey data suggests that even when students receive relevant announcements to them, the majority infrequently attend the announced event with 60.9% of respondents (267) indicating that they attend 40% or fewer of the relevant events to them. With a mean response of 2.17, this suggests that the average student attends approximately 40% of the events that are relevant to them.
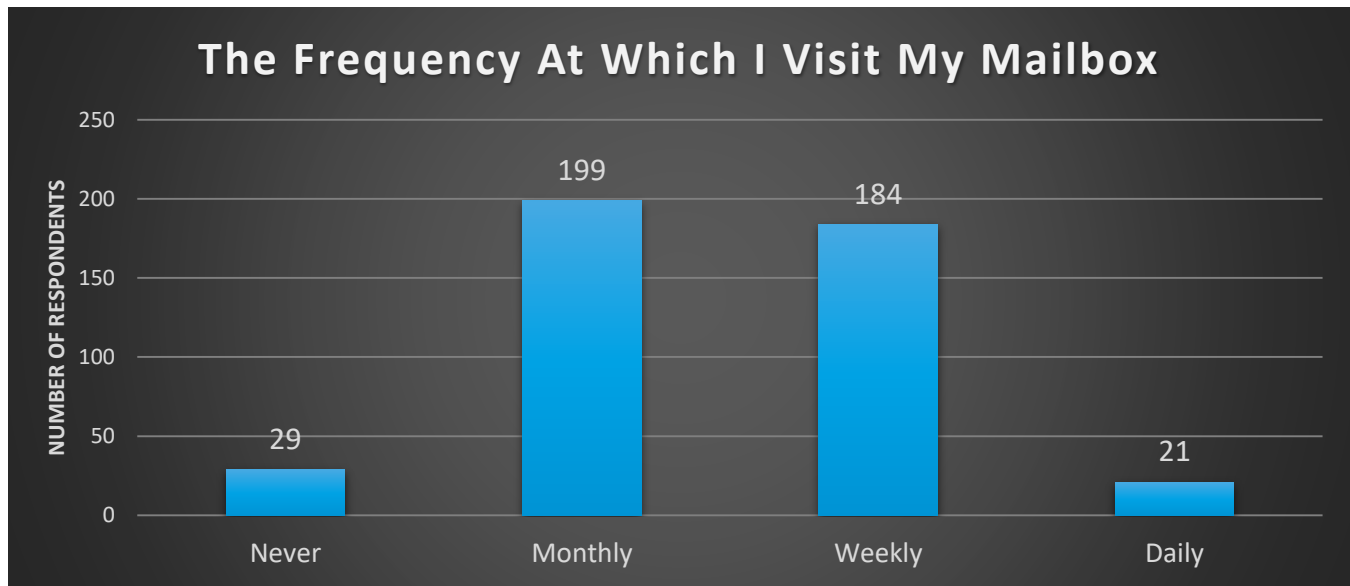
Figure 12. Survey results regarding the frequency with which respondents visit their Farinon mailbox.

Survey data suggests that students do not frequently use their Farinon mailbox. With 383 of 447 respondents (85.6%), indicating that they only visit it on a weekly or monthly basis, the mailbox does not seem to be an effective method of communication to contact students on a daily basis.
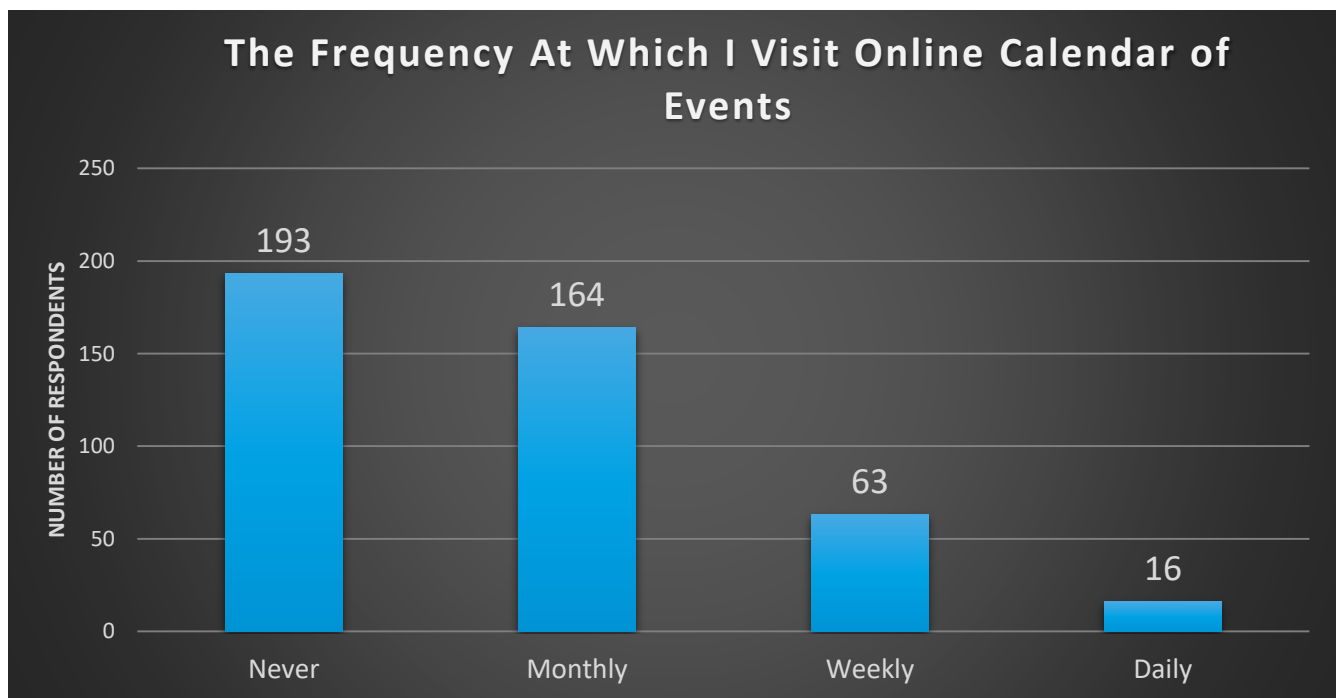

Figure 13. Survey results depicting the frequency that respondents access the Online Calendar of Events.

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