1. Project Overview

1.1. Project Goals, Context, and Design

Higher education is evolving rapidly. Many factors contribute to this shift, including the emergence of innovative teaching strategies, advancements in online learning environments, new visions for classroom design, and an increasing emphasis on connecting learning experiences gained inside the classroom with real-life experiences gained outside (or in tandem with) the classroom. Our research explores the last factor, often referred to as co-curricular experiences. In addition to enhancing learning and persistence, co-curricular activities provide invaluable skills and experiences that contribute greatly to student growth and development. Service learning, for example, can help students develop networking and soft skills. Study abroad can enhance cultural awareness and broaden one’s worldview. Character building and personal growth coupled with the expertise gained via co-curriculums give graduates an edge in a highly competitive professional job market. Additionally, these experiences can develop students into lifelong learners, independent thinkers, and well-informed citizens with a global perspective.

To help create a transformative co-curricular learning experience that enables students to discover their passions in life and develop the skills needed to pursue those passions, the University of Washington (UW) Strategic Planning Committee developed the Husky Experience Initiative (HEI), which has focused on personal development in six areas: lifelong learning; leadership; career strategy; cultural understanding; community engagement and public service; and health and wellness.

In support of the HEI, the UW Information Technology (UW-IT) Husky Experience Discovery Project team undertook a research project with the goal of understanding how online tools and systems can better enhance the student co-curricular experience and maximize development in the areas that the Husky Experience comprises. Before we could recommend solutions, we needed to survey the current state of
the co-curricular space at UW. In this case study, we focus on three research goals, developed to guide our understanding of the UW co-curricular landscape:

- Identify current levels of student participation in co-curricular activities
- Compare actual versus desired participation in co-curricular activities
- Identify the greatest-impact co-curricular activities (actual and expected) and related benefits

HEI campus partners include the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity, Student Life, Undergraduate Academic Affairs, Graduate School, the College of Arts & Sciences, UW-IT, UW Alumni Association, University Marketing and Communications, and Advancement.

1.2. Data-Collection Methods

We collected data from students and campus units encompassing a broad spectrum of co-curricular programs. Methods included student interviews, a student survey, group discussions with campus partners, and a campus partner survey. (See the appendices for interview protocol, format of group discussions, and text of surveys.)

**Student interviews.** We interviewed 11 students with different experiences and attributes: field of study; number and type of co-curricular experiences; transfer, international, undergraduate, and graduate student status; and so on. During hour-long individual interviews, students were asked to describe the co-curricular activities in which they had participated, noting how and when they got involved, whether they experienced any challenges in the process, and what they felt they had gained from the experience. We also asked students what other types of experiences might confer the same benefits they described and which co-curricular activity had the greatest impact on them. In addition, we asked students if there were other co-curricular activities in which they would like to participate but had not been able, and what challenges and benefits they anticipated with regard to participation in these activities.

**Student survey.** In an 18-question online survey, students were asked a number of demographic questions, as well as whether they had attended a campus event (e.g., a career fair) or participated in any of 13 co-curricular activities. Those who indicated they had participated in one or more activities were asked additional questions about which activity had the greatest impact and what benefits they gained from the experience. Participators, as well as students who reported that they had not participated in any activities, were asked to indicate, from among the co-curricular activities in which they had not yet participated, which they would like to pursue and what obstacles they faced to participation. Survey respondents then selected the activities they thought would have the greatest impact and indicated what benefits they believed participation in the co-curricular activity might confer. Write-in questions asked students to name the single most important thing that UW could do to ensure more students were able to participate in their selected high-impact activity. A total of 1,109 students responded from the UW Seattle campus.

**Group discussions with campus partners.** Six focus groups were held with campus partners associated with each of the six areas of personal development of the Husky Experience. Attendees were asked to describe how they currently reach and serve students and what obstacles students face in connecting with them or taking advantage of the services they offer. In addition, we shared preliminary data from the student survey regarding participation and nonparticipation in activities related to the partners’ service area and discussed potential solutions to support students in becoming more involved in these activities. A total of 28 representatives from 24 campus units participated in the six focus groups.
Campus partner survey. A link to a brief, six-question online survey was sent to all campus partners who were invited to participate in the group discussions. The survey asked partners to describe the services they provide, how students discover these services, what obstacles students encounter in accessing services, and what benefits students gain from participation. Partners were also asked to report on the kinds of data they collect about student participation and how they manage this data. Twenty individuals responded to the campus partner survey.

1.3. Data-Analysis Methods
Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 21 and Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, measures of central tendency, range, and percentages) were used to explore and document the current state of participation in co-curricular experiences. The phi coefficient was used to investigate bivariate correlations between binary variables. The results were evaluated across demographic variables (e.g., classification, gender, and department) to consider possible underlying biases in the data. Interview and focus-group data were coded and analyzed in Microsoft Excel. Sample representativeness was assessed against institutional data.

1.4. Findings
The first goal of this research was to document the current levels of participation in co-curricular activities at UW. A summary of these findings is shown in box 1.

Box 1. Participation in Co-Curricular Activities
- 70% of survey respondents reported participating in at least one co-curricular activity during their time as a student at UW Seattle.
- The number of activities in which students reported participating ranged from 0 to 12; the average was 4 activities. The largest number of students reported participating in 2 activities.
- The top 3 co-curricular activities for student participation were UW student clubs and organizations (41%); physical exercise, recreational sports, or physically active hobbies (37%); and working at a part-time job (36%; see figure 1).
- 82% reported participating in at least one campus event.
- Freshman advising and orientation was the event attended by the largest number of survey respondents (50%), followed by residence hall events (30%) and the campus career fair (28%).
- There was a strong positive correlation between participation in campus events and participation in co-curricular activities (p < 0.001); 90% of those who had participated in a co-curricular activity had attended a campus event.

Pathway to Involvement
Students’ paths to involvement in co-curricular activities are not well known. Although there is a strong positive correlation in the survey data between attendance at campus events and participation in co-curricular activities, we do not know whether the campus event or the co-curricular activity occurred first for students. Therefore, we cannot say with certainty that attending a campus event will lead to participation in co-curriculars. During our interviews, we asked students how they found out about the co-curricular activity that they had participated in. The most commonly mentioned information sources were
e-mail, websites, friends/roommates, and people they met while participating in other co-curriculars. Students also mentioned learning about opportunities from their professors/mentors/advisors, social media, and campus events.

When we asked campus partners how they typically reach out to students, they mentioned a variety of methods. Conventional methods included e-mail, newsletters, and engagement during campus or orientation events. One group mentioned e-mailing a list of students obtained from querying the student database. A number of units also made creative use of social media strategies including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest. Cross-promotion through other campus partners, including advisers, was mentioned on multiple occasions. Word of mouth via students was mentioned frequently and appeared to be effective, although partners cautioned that this evaluation was based on their experience rather than on quantitative data. Campus partners appear to be doing all they can with limited resources; a significant limitation is having to rely on experience and anecdotal evidence to evaluate which strategies are working rather than employing a more analytical method, which they would prefer.

Despite these efforts, students cited a lack of information as one of the top 3 obstacles they faced when trying to get involved in each of the 13 co-curricular activities included in the survey. Clearly, despite the efforts of our campus, there is an information disconnect that needs bridging.

Figure 1. Percentage of students who reported participating in each co-curricular activity (N = 774)
Participation in Co-Curricular Activities: Actual vs. Desired

Another goal of this research was to compare actual versus desired participation in co-curricular activities. These findings are summarized in box 2.

**Box 2. Actual vs. Desired Participation in Co-Curricular Activities**

- The top 3 co-curricular activities that students wanted to pursue were internships (42%), participation in a student club or organization (29%), and study abroad (27% see figure 2).
- Although 27% of survey respondents indicated they would like to pursue study abroad, only 14% reported that they had studied abroad (figures 1 and 2).
- For internships, there was a 25 percentage point difference between those who wanted this experience and those who have had it (figures 1 and 2).
- The three co-curricular activities that students had not participated in and indicated the least interest in pursuing were a learning community (5%), a religious or spiritual community (5%), and a fraternity or sorority (6%).

**Figure 2. Percentage of students who reported a desire to participate in each co-curricular activity (N = 335)**
For two activities in particular—internships and study abroad—the difference between the percentage of students who want to participate and those who have actually had these experiences is striking (see figures 1 and 2). This discrepancy was fairly consistent across disciplines, class standing, and other demographic factors. Not surprisingly, a relatively high percentage of students who want to participate in these two co-curricular activities also believed that these experiences would provide the greatest impact and a high number of benefits (see tables 1 and 2 below). Why does this discrepancy exist? Based on survey data, the top challenges for getting an internship were a lack of time, lack of information, and lack of social network connections. We learned during the interviews that internships can also be highly competitive; some, ironically, require the very skills that students hope to gain from these experiences. In fact, 28% of survey participants who wanted an internship cited “not accepted into activity” as a challenge. The top 3 challenges for studying abroad were the time commitment (63% cited this as a challenge), cost (54%), and difficultly finding information about opportunities (40%).

Interestingly, two activities that garnered the lowest interest—participation in a fraternity or sorority and participation in a religious or spiritual community—yielded the highest number of reported benefits by those who had these experiences.

Co-Curriculars with Greatest Impact (Actual and Expected) and Related Benefits

The final subject of this research was to compare the reported greatest-impact experience (among those who have had the experience) with the expected greatest-impact experience (among those who desire but have not had the experience). These findings are summarized in box 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 3. Greatest Impact (Actual and Expected) and Related Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Among those who had participated in co-curricular activities, the greatest number of students selected living in a residence hall as their greatest-impact activity, followed by participating in a UW student club or organization and having a part-time job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ By dividing the number of people who selected an activity as their greatest-impact activity by the number of people who participated the activity, we normalized the comparison. In this calculation, participating in a fraternity or sorority, participating in a religious or spiritual community, and doing an internship emerged as the top 3 greatest-impact experiences (table 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Of those who had participated in a fraternity or sorority, 61% rated it as their greatest-impact experience. This activity also conferred the largest number of benefits, on average, as reported by participants (10.2 of 16 possible benefits; table 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Among students who indicated they would like to pursue co-curricular activities and had yet to participate, the highest percentage selected study abroad as the experience they expected to offer the greatest impact, followed by doing an internship and living in a residence hall (table 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ With a few exceptions, students who have not participated in a particular co-curricular activity have a good idea of the number and kind of benefits they would gain from it (tables 2 and 3).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1. Rankings of impact of co-curricular activities, by students who have had (shaded) and have not had but desire (unshaded) each activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Curricular Activity</th>
<th>Rank: Participators</th>
<th>Percentage selected as greatest experience</th>
<th>Rank: Non-participators</th>
<th>Percentage anticipated as greatest experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a UW fraternity or sorority</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a religious or spiritual community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing an internship (paid or unpaid)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a residence hall at UW</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>51.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying, conducting research, volunteering, or working in another country</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on research or creative projects without course credit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a UW creative/performing arts ensemble (exhibition, performance)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a part-time job (paid or unpaid)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in UW student clubs or organizations</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering/engaging in community service</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a UW campus sports club</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in physical exercise, recreational sports, or physically active hobbies</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a learning community</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Average number of benefits reported for each activity selected as the greatest-impact experience by participators and nonparticipators who desired the experience (* small sample sizes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Curricular Activity</th>
<th>Benefits: Participators</th>
<th>Anticipated Benefits: Nonparticipators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participating in a UW fraternity or sorority</td>
<td>10.2 (N = 49)</td>
<td>7.5 (N = 26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participating in a religious or spiritual community</td>
<td>8.8 (N = 54)</td>
<td>5.3 (N = 18)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Participating in a UW campus sports club</td>
<td>8.1 (N = 14)*</td>
<td>4.6 (N = 46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>8.0 (N = 45)</td>
<td>8.3 (N = 219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Studying, conducting research, volunteering, or working in another country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. (tie) Participating in UW student clubs or organizations</td>
<td>6.9 (N = 102)</td>
<td>6.4 (N = 64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. (tie) Working on research or creative projects without course credit</td>
<td>6.9 (N = 42)</td>
<td>5.9 (N = 81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Doing an internship (paid or unpaid)</td>
<td>6.8 (N = 67)</td>
<td>7.0 (N = 248)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Participating in a UW creative/performing arts ensemble (exhibition, performance)</td>
<td>6.7 (N = 20)</td>
<td>5.9 (N = 54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. (tie) Living in a residence hall at UW</td>
<td>6.6 (N = 127)</td>
<td>6.3 (N = 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. (tie) Volunteering/engaging in community service</td>
<td>6.6 (N = 69)</td>
<td>7.1 (N = 64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Having a part-time job (paid or unpaid)</td>
<td>6.5 (N = 97)</td>
<td>6.4 (N = 56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Participating in a learning community</td>
<td>5.1 (N = 19)*</td>
<td>6.6 (N = 14)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Participating in physical exercise, recreational sports, or physically active hobbies</td>
<td>4.4 (N = 44)</td>
<td>4.2 (N = 66)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Greatest Impact: Living in a Residence Hall**

Living in a residence hall was selected by more survey respondents (who had participated in the activity) than any other activity as the greatest-impact experience (Box 3). The four students we interviewed who had lived in a residence hall expressed the same strong positive feelings about their experience. One described the greatest benefits of living in a dorm as the opportunity to meet new people, be informed about what was going on around campus, and be in close proximity to campus resources. Other students voiced similar opinions, adding that they appreciated the helpfulness of resident advisers and the structured life and sense of community the residence halls offer. It’s important to note that students who desire the experience of living in a residence hall have an accurate view of the number and type of benefits they will gain (Tables 2 and 3).

**Greatest Impact: Belonging to a Fraternity/Sorority**

Similarly strong sentiments were expressed by the three students we interviewed who had participated in a fraternity or sorority. Among these, one had lived in a fraternity house, one “lived out” of her sorority house, and one was a member of a sorority that did not have a house. All three echoed the survey findings that suggest this experience was high impact and conferred many benefits that can extend well beyond college years. Interviewees told us they had gained friendships, academic and personal guidance, and knowledge about campus events, as well as leadership, academic, communication, social, and business skills. They also spoke about scholarship, internships, and work opportunities that are available through alumni and professional connections via their affiliation. Although membership in a fraternity or sorority was ranked the greatest-impact experience among those who had had the experience, those who desired the experience had lower expectations of its impact and benefits; they were accurate, however, about the types of benefits this activity confers (Tables 1–3).
Table 3. Top 3 actual and anticipated benefits of participation in co-curricular activities (italicized text indicates mismatches between top 3 items on each list; data shown for the top 10 high impact experiences)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Co-Curricular Activity</th>
<th>Actual Benefits: Participators</th>
<th>Anticipated Benefits: Nonparticipators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing an internship (paid or unpaid)</td>
<td>1. social network</td>
<td>1. social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. soft skills</td>
<td>2. leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. job search skills, leadership skills (tie)</td>
<td>3. job search skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a part-time job (paid or unpaid)</td>
<td>1. soft skills</td>
<td>1. leadership skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. social network</td>
<td>2. soft skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. friendship</td>
<td>3. social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in a residence hall at UW</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. social network</td>
<td>2. social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. exposure to campus resources</td>
<td>3. exposure to campus resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a religious or spiritual community</td>
<td>1. social network</td>
<td>1. mental and spiritual health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. sense of community</td>
<td>2. friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. soft skills, leadership skills (tie)</td>
<td>3. social network, sense of community (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a UW creative/performing arts ensemble</td>
<td>1. sense of community</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. friendship</td>
<td>2. mental and spiritual health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. social network, soft skills (tie)</td>
<td>3. social network, sense of community, civic responsibility (tie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a UW fraternity or sorority</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
<td>1. social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. sense of community</td>
<td>2. friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. social network</td>
<td>3. sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in UW student clubs or organizations</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. social network</td>
<td>2. social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. sense of community</td>
<td>3. sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying, conducting research, volunteering, or working in another country</td>
<td>1. friendship</td>
<td>1. cultural understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. different perspective</td>
<td>2. different perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. cultural understanding</td>
<td>3. friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering/engaging in community service</td>
<td>1. sense of community</td>
<td>1. sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. soft skills</td>
<td>2. social network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. social network, civic responsibility (tie)</td>
<td>3. civic responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working on research or creative projects without course credit</td>
<td>1. research skills</td>
<td>1. research skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. social network</td>
<td>2. solve real-world problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. soft skills</td>
<td>3. social network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Greatest Impact: Study Abroad

For nonparticipants who wanted to study abroad, this experience was expected to have the greatest impact. However, for those who had studied abroad, these experiences only ranked fifth overall as students' highest-impact experience. The reason for this mismatch is unclear. The students we interviewed who had studied abroad strongly expressed the positive impact these experiences had on their educational, career, and life goals. One student who had studied in the Philippines and Tahiti felt strongly that everyone should have an experience studying abroad because of the exceptional learning environment it offers and the unique bonds formed with other students. In fact, a classmate she met encouraged her to join a sorority, which turned out to be another invaluable experience. Another interviewee spoke of trekking in Scotland looking out over the highlands, realizing how immense the world is and how insignificant she was in comparison. One engineering student commented in the survey, “I believe the UW should make it a priority to add more study abroad trips for this area as learning different kinds of engineering from around the world fosters intellectual growth and awareness.”

Greatest Impact: Internships

Similarly, all of our interviewees who had participated in an internship spoke very positively about their experience. One student who was taking an unpaid internship for credit spoke about gaining more than technical skills: for her, developing soft skills had the greatest impact—learning how to work with people, ask the right questions, take initiative, and work in an office environment. Other interview participants discussed the problem-solving, writing, presentation, and other generalizable skills they gained, skills they believed employers are looking for. Survey participants who desired an internship appeared to have a realistic understanding of the potential benefits to be gained.

Benefits: Anticipated vs. Actual

For many activities, the benefits students anticipated receiving matched well with the reported benefits of those who had participated in those activities, signifying that students have accurate expectations about the benefits they will gain from participation in co-curriculars. There were, however, a few notable mismatches. Acquiring “soft” skills (such as how to communicate and collaborate with others and workplace expectations) was one of the top 3 benefits reported by students who had completed an internship, participated in creative or performing arts, volunteered, or worked on a research or creative project, but it did not appear among the top 3 benefits anticipated by those who wanted to participate in these activities.

In light of the findings detailed above, several questions came to mind as we considered technology application to the co-curricular space. First, how can technology help increase participation in co-curricular activities and enrich these experiences? Second, how can technology help bridge the information disconnect between students and our campus partners? Third, how can technology help students connect with the opportunities that interest them the most so students can gain the benefits they seek? Finally, how can we document the benefits that different co-curricular experiences confer and leverage this knowledge to enrich the student experience?
**Recommendations**

The technology recommendations all address—to a greater or lesser degree—four main objectives:

1. Provide systems with richer information about students (a student profile)
2. Increase access to data about student participation in co-curricular activities for campus partners
3. Improve communication with students about co-curricular activities
4. Make information about co-curricular activities easier for students to access

Adopting new systems and/or building out new data infrastructure is critical to the success of the HEI and was strongly emphasized in our recommendations. Without the foundational underlying data infrastructure, few if any programmatic improvements are possible. We suggested that this underlying data infrastructure could be obtained by integrating existing structured data systems with central applications that students use in the course of their degree—including MyUW (mobile and desktop student portal) and MyPlan (academic planning tool)—or by implementing a new system (e.g., CRM).

1.5. Communication of Results

We provided a report to stakeholders that included recommendations, technological and otherwise, for improving students’ ability to discover and act on co-curricular opportunities. In addition to the report, there has been ongoing communication and collaboration between members of the HEI Committee and members of the Husky Experience Discovery Project team, as discussed further below.

1.6. Influence on Campus Practices

The findings and recommendations have the potential to make a strong impact on the strategic direction of the HEI. Below are a few suggestions that we made to the HEI Committee in the report, as well as ongoing and planned efforts that address recommendations 3 and 4.

**Implement Improvements in Communication and Evaluate Impact**

While campus units work hard to communicate to students about co-curricular opportunities, an information disconnect remains. To approach this problem, UW-IT is collaborating with other campus units by (1) piloting a notification system for first-year students via MyUW mobile and desktop portals, (2) designing a pilot of a hashtag communication strategy, (3) planning user research on students’ information consumption, and (4) conducting business analysis with our campus partners.

**#ThriveUW.** As a part of #ThriveUW, first-year students will receive weekly messages via MyUW that will include information about available resources and a wide range of activities (including co-curriculars) they can take part in. To evaluate the effectiveness of these messages, campus units serving first-year students will gather data on rates of attendance for targeted activities in 2015–16 (e.g., attendance at a career fair) to compare with 2014–15 data. They will also explore the potential relationships between the timing of Thrive messages and demand for services. MyUW log data will also be analyzed to get a sense of the number of students who read the messages and who clicked on a link to a recommended resource.

**Pilot of new “hashtag” communication strategy.** This study will examine ways to coordinate communication efforts through the simple use of a hashtag. Working with a small number of departments and campus service providers that already use a social media platform such as Twitter, the goal is to experiment with ways to pull tagged information into MyUW to see if this could be an effective and useful means of connecting students with information.
User research on student information consumption. This study will investigate how students find and consume information about co-curricular activities and events. While we know that campus groups disseminate this information, we know little about students’ perceptions of the communications they receive, what they read, and what they actually follow up on. Data gathered would further inform efforts to provide timely and relevant information about co-curricular opportunities to students, based on profile data and student preferences.

Business analysis with campus partners. To better understand what service providers currently do to communicate with students, UW will investigate service providers’ processes or workflow and the particular systems they use for disseminating information. Data gathered would be used to propose more efficient and perhaps coordinated solutions. The goal would be to simplify the work of campus partners and help ensure that their communication efforts are effective.

Increase Participation by Focusing on Groups with Limited Exposure

We are in the process of determining which demographic groups (e.g., transfer, commuter, international, etc.) are the least likely to participate in co-curricular activities and pinpoint their obstacles to participation in specific types of co-curricular activities. Insights gained from these analyses will enable UW-IT to recommend targeted communication strategies for reaching these groups and/or changes to programming that can enhance participation and enrich the co-curricular experiences for these groups.

2. Reflection on Design, Methodology, and Effectiveness

2.1. Project Design, Data Collection, and Analysis

The project design was extremely effective, yielding the data needed to meet our research goals. As this was a “first dive” into the co-curricular space, the analyses were fairly descriptive in nature. Conducting interviews and analyzing the data required a considerable time commitment. However, this effort was crucial in informing survey design, contributing qualitative data to the analysis, and providing context in the report via direct quotations.

Despite the success of the study design, execution of the design, and data analysis, there were some aspects of the study that, upon reflection, were less than ideal. The time frame and timing of the project created challenges for the research team. Regarding the latter, the academic calendar required that we collect data in a particular order, starting with students because the end of the academic year was rapidly approaching at project commencement. Due to finite team resources we could not collect data simultaneously, and consequently the campus partner interviews were placed at the end of the data-collection effort. Using insights from the campus partner interviews, we may have worded survey items differently, included additional survey items, or excluded others. In addition, if not for the time constraints of the project, we would have interviewed more students. Although we were careful to cover a wide range of demographics, some groups were not represented.

2.2. Effectiveness and Influence on Campus Practices

It is hard to argue against findings from a well-designed study, and the culture of data-driven decision making is strong at UW, as it is at most universities. But the project should not end with the handing off of recommendations by the research team. It is important that project members stay involved, reminding stakeholders to pursue technology solutions that are informed by user research.
Notes


Appendix A: Student Interview Protocol

Introduction
Thank you very much for your willingness to participate in an interview today. My name is [.....], and I will be interviewing. Here’s [.....], s/he will be taking notes. The purpose of today’s interview is to understand your experiences in co-curricular activities [provide example of a co-curricular activity]. In the next hour, we will ask you questions about how you got involved in co-curricular activities, and the benefits and challenges (if any) of participating in these activities.

Your answers will remain confidential - there is no link between your name and your responses in our notes, and no one other than the people here today and the people who will process your compensation will know that you participated. Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any question if you feel uncomfortable. You may leave at any time and still be compensated. Here’s a form for you to fill out for compensation. Any questions before we begin?

Warm-up questions
1. Please tell us a little bit about yourself.
2. Can you walk us through your typical week?

Interview questions
Now we would like to ask about your experience participating in co-curricular activities. From the screening survey, we noticed you have [experience 1, 2, 3, …]. Which one would you like to start with?

Housing experience:
1. Fraternity or sorority life
   a. When did you live in a [fraternity or sorority] house?
   b. Tell us about your experience being part of the [fraternity or sorority] (what fraternity/sorority, your involvement, etc.)
   c. What motivated you to participate in [fraternity/sorority]?
   d. How did you find out about them?
   e. How did you come to participate in [fraternity/sorority]?
   f. Did you experience any challenges along the way? If so, please explain.
   g. What do you feel you gained from this experience? What did you walk away with?

2. Residential hall life
   a. When did you live in a residential hall?
   b. Tell us about your experience living in a residential hall (which dorm, what activities you did, your involvement, etc.)
   c. What motivated you to live in a dorm?
   d. Can you walk us through the process of what you did in order to live in a dorm?
   e. Did you experience any challenges along the way? If so, please explain.
   f. What do you feel you gained from this experience? What did you walk away with?

Cultural experience:
3. Study in a different culture
   a. When did you study in a different culture?
   b. Tell us about your experience studying in a different culture (where you went, what you did, etc.)
   c. What motivated you to study in a different culture?
   d. How did you find out about this opportunity, and come to participate?
   e. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.
   f. What do you feel you gained from this experience? What did you walk away with?
   g. Supposed that you didn’t have this experience that you just described, what other co-curricular activities might have given you similar [skills/experiences/benefits]?
4. **Travel**
   a. Tell us about your travel experiences (where, when, with whom).
   b. What motivated you to travel?
   c. What do you feel you gained from this experience? What did you walk away with?
   d. How did you find out about this opportunity, and come to participate?
   e. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.

5. **Music/dance/cultural performances**
   a. Tell us about your performance experiences (what, where, when, etc).
   b. What motivated you to participate in such performance(s)?
   c. How did you find out about this opportunity, and come to participate?
   d. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.
   e. What do you feel you gained from this experience? What did you walk away with?

**Career-related experience:**

6. **Internships**
   a. How many internships have you had?
   b. When did you have an internship(s)?
   c. What motivated you to seek an internship opportunity?
   d. Tells us about the process of seeking and applying for this particular internship opportunity.
   e. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.
   f. What do you feel you gained from doing an internship? What do you feel you walked away with?
   g. Suppose that you didn’t get an internship, what other co-curricular activities might have given you similar [skills/experiences/benefits]?

7. **Part-time job**
   a. What part-time job(s) have you had?
   b. When did you start your first part-time job?
   c. What is your most recent part-time job? and when?
   d. What motivated you to seek a part-time job?
   e. Tell us about the process of seeking and applying for a part-time job opportunity.
   f. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.
   g. What do you feel you gained from having a part-time job? What did you learn from your part-time job(s)?
   h. Suppose that you didn’t have a part-time job, what other activities might have given you similar [skills/experiences/benefits]?

8. **Full-time job**
   a. What full-time job(s) have you had? and when?
   b. What do you feel you gained from having a full-time job? What did you learn from your part-time job(s)?
   c. [If a full-time job is during the time at UW]
   d. What motivated you to seek a full-time job?
   e. Tell us about the process of seeking and applying for a full-time job opportunity.
   f. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.

9. **Professional associations**
   a. What professional associations have you been involved with?
   b. What motivated you to get involved with those professional associations?
   c. How did you come to be involved?
   d. Did you experience any challenges along the way? If so, please explain.
   e. What do you feel you gained from being involved with professional associations?

10. **Research projects**
    a. Tell us about the research projects you’ve been involved in during your time at UW.
    b. [If not already discussed in the first question] When did you get involved in this research project?
c. What motivated you to seek an opportunity to participate in this research project?
d. How did you come to participate in this project?
e. Did you experience any challenges during the process? If so, please explain.
f. What do you feel you gained from participating in the research project(s)? What did you walk away with?
g. Supposed that you didn’t have an opportunity to participate in a research project that you described, what other co-curricular activities might have given you similar [skills/experiences/benefits]?

Other experiences
11. Student clubs or organizations
   a. What student clubs or organizations have you been involved with?
   b. What motivated you to get involved with student clubs or organizations?
   c. How did you come to be involved?
   d. Did you experience any challenges along the way? If so, please explain.
   e. What do you feel you gained from being involved with student clubs or organizations?

12. Sports or athletic activities
   a. What sports or athletic activities have you been involved with?
   b. What motivated you to get involved? [try to determine is the motivation is social, health-promotion, or both]
   c. How did you come to be involved?
   d. Did you experience any challenges along the way? If so, please explain.
   e. What do you feel you gained from being involved with sports or athletic activities?

13. Volunteering or community services
   a. What kinds of volunteering or community service have you been involved with?
   b. What motivated you to get involved with volunteering or community service?
   c. How did you come to be involved?
   d. Did you experience any challenges along the way? If so, please explain.
   e. What do you feel you gained from being involved with volunteering or community service?

Closing questions
14. Out of all the experiences we’ve talked about, which do you think had the most impact?
15. Health and well-being
   a. For those who have many experiences: It seems like you are doing a lot, how do you stay healthy?
   b. For those who have fewer experiences: How do you stay healthy, physically and mentally?
16. Are any of these experiences typical or required in your major?
17. Are there any other co-curricular experiences you’re interested in or would like to have while you’re a student here that you haven’t had yet? One experience we’ve heard from others is _______. Has that ever appealed to you?
   a. What’s prevented you from getting involved in this activity?
   b. What could be done to help you get this experience?
   c. When do you hope to get this experience?
   d. What do you hope to get out of this experience?

Questions for those who don’t have many experiences and/or there is time to kill:
• What do you do for fun? Or, how do you spend your free time?
• When did you first get involved in [this experience]?
• How did you get involved?

Wrap up
Thank you very much for your time and participation. The information we gather today will help UW-IT to better meet your needs, and to address challenges you have faced. You can expect to receive $15 credit on your Husky Card Account within two-three weeks.
Appendix B: Student Survey Instrument

Student Life and Learning Outside the Classroom

Welcome!

The UW wants to know more about students’ life and learning experiences outside the classroom, in what we call "co-curricular activities." "Co-curricular activities" describes a range of experiences that support and enrich the education that students gain through their classes -- taking part in student clubs, for example, or in a summer internship. We want to know what helps and what hinders your involvement in these activities.

Please take our brief (5-minute) survey and tell us about your experiences. Fifteen survey participants will be randomly selected to win a $20 credit on their Husky Card. (Husky Cards can be used on campus as well as at the UW Bookstore at any time and at many places on the Ave.).

We’re interested in hearing from students who haven’t participated in many co-curricular activities as well as those who have. Undergraduate and graduate students from all three UW campuses are invited to take the survey.

Results of the survey will be used to ensure more students enjoy the benefits of these activities. Click "Next" to begin.

PART I: Academic Profile

1. Which of the following best describes your position at the University of Washington?
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior
   - Masters Student
   - Doctoral Student
   - Other (please specify): _______________________

2. At which UW campus are you enrolled?
   - Bothell
   - Seattle
   - Tacoma
   - No campus affiliation

3. What is your primary college, school, or division (broad category)?
   - Arts & Sciences – Arts
   - Arts & Sciences – Humanities
   - Arts & Sciences – Natural Sciences
   - Arts & Sciences – Social Sciences
   - Built Environments
   - Business
   - Dentistry
   - Education
   - Engineering
   - Environment
   - Information
   - Law
   - Medicine
4. During what quarter and year did you begin at the UW in your current degree program?
Select quarter: (drop down menu)
Select year: (drop down menu)

PART II: Your Experience with Co-Curricular Activities

5. Which of the following events have you attended at the UW? Select all that apply.
- Freshman Advising and Orientation
- Transfer Advising and Orientation
- Graduate TA/RA Orientation
- Field trip/outing for new students
- Husky Leadership Initiative events
- Residence hall events
- Student Activities Fair
- Technology Fair
- Campus Career Fair
- I have not attended any of these events

6a. Have you participated in any co-curricular activities at the UW? (see Question 6b for examples)
- Yes
- No (skips to Question 10)

6b Select the activities you have participated in as a student at the UW.
- Living in a residence hall at UW
- Participating in a learning community (e.g., Early entrance program, First-year Interest Groups, Interdisciplinary Writing Program, UW Collegium Seminar for Freshmen)
- Participating in UW student clubs or organizations
- Participating in a UW fraternity or sorority
- Participating in physical exercise, recreational sports, or physically active hobbies
- Participating in a UW campus sports club
- Participating in a UW creative/performing arts ensemble (exhibition, performance)
- Working on research or creative projects without course credit
- Doing an internship (paid or unpaid)
- Having a part-time job (paid or unpaid)
- Studying, conducting research, volunteering, or working in another country
- Volunteering/engaging in community service
- Participating in a religious or spiritual community
- Other ___________________

7. Of the activities in which you’ve participated so far, which would you say has had the greatest impact on you? Please select one activity.
(piped list containing answers from Question 6b)

8. What did you gain from the experience of [piped answer from Question 7]? Select all that apply.
- Friendships
- Social network (connections to people who can provide information and assistance)
- Exposure to/information about campus events and resources
- Study skills (how to take notes, study for exams, manage time)
- Research skills (define research question, analyze data/information, present findings)
- Ability to apply lessons from class to solve real life problems
- "Soft" skills (how to communicate and collaborate with others; workplace expectations, work ethic)
- Job search/application/interviewing skills
- Leadership or organizational skills
- Greater understanding of other cultures within the U.S. and/or world
- Greater understanding of people with experiences and perspectives different from my own
- Physical health & well-being
- Mental/spiritual health & well-being
- Greater understanding of self (interests, habits, beliefs, values)
- Sense of community (within and beyond UW)
- Sense of civic responsibility, desire to improve societal problems
- Other

9. In your opinion, what is the single most important thing the UW could do to ensure more students are able to participate in [piped answer from Question 7]?

10. Of the activities you have NOT participated in, which activities would you most like to pursue? Please select up to three activities.
   (piped list—items NOT selected in Question 6)

11. What has kept you from participating in these activities so far? Select all that apply.
   (Matrix: list of obstacles down side; piped answers from Question 10 across top)
   - Lack of money
   - Time (lack of time, difficulty managing time)
   - Commuting distance is too great
   - Not accepted into selected activity
   - Lack of information/knowledge
   - Lack of motivation/interest
   - Lack of departmental support/guidance
   - Lack of social networks (I didn’t have a connection…)
   - Ignorance/lack of exposure (I don’t know anyone who…)
   - Lack of adequate/quality facilities
   - Competing job responsibilities
   - Competing family responsibilities
   - Other competing responsibilities (e.g. athletics, clubs, internships)
   - Other

12. Of the activities you selected in Question 10, which do you think would have the greatest impact on you if you were able to participate? Select one activity.
   (piped list from Question 10)

13. What do you think you would gain from the experience of [piped answer from Question 12]? Select all that apply.
   - Friendships
   - Social network (connections to people who can provide information and assistance)
   - Exposure to/information about campus events and resources
   - Study skills (how to take notes, study for exams, manage time, study with others)
   - Research skills (how to generate critical questions, analyze information, design an experiment, write a grant)
   - Knowledge of how to apply class lessons to my discipline/chosen career
   - "Soft" skills (communication, how to collaborate with others, workplace expectations, work ethic)
   - Leadership or organizational skills
   - Job search/application/interviewing skills
14. In your opinion, what is the single most important thing the UW could do to ensure more students are able to participate in [piped answer to Question 12]?

PART III. Demographics

15. Which of the following best describe you as a UW student? Select all that apply.
   - Live on campus
   - Live off campus
   - International student
   - Transfer student
   - Part-time student
   - Online student

15a. About how long does it take you to get to campus using your usual mode of travel (walk, bus, bike, etc.)?
   - Less than 10 minutes
   - 10-30 minutes
   - 30-60 minutes
   - More than 60 minutes
   - Does not apply

16. What is your age?
   - Under 18
   - 18-21
   - 22-30
   - 31-50
   - 51 or over

17. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

18. Please specify your ethnicity. Check all that apply:
   - African American
   - American Indian
   - Asian
   - Caucasian
   - Hawaiian/Pacific Islands
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - I choose not to respond

Thank you! If you would like to be entered to win a $20 credit on your Husky Card, please include your name and contact information below. Fifteen winners will be randomly selected. Your identifying information will be separated from your survey results.
   - First name:
   - Last name:
We may wish to talk to students about their experiences with co-curricular activities in more detail. Would you be willing to have us follow up with you (in person, or via phone or Skype) before the end of June?

- Yes
- No
Appendix C: Campus Partner Discussions

Group Discussion Protocol

I. Introductions (5-10 minutes)
Hi, I’m ____________ with UW-IT Academic Services.
Thank you for coming here today. I’ll be leading today’s discussion along with __________. ________
will be taking notes.

We would like to record today’s discussion as back up for our notes. Does anyone object?

As you may know from the email from Karin Roberts, UW-IT Academic Services is undertaking a project
in support of the Husky Experience Initiative. This is a research project to better understand
1. the range of co-curricular experiences that contribute to the Husky Experience
2. how students describe the benefits from participating in co-curricular activities, and how these
   map to the six areas of focus for the Husky Experience Initiative,
3. and what challenges students report in finding and participating in these co-curricular activities.

Findings from this research will be used to make recommendations for developing or enhancing online
tools to support student engagement in co-curricular activities. Essentially, our goal is to help you help
students—make reaching and engaging students easier.

Our goals for the group discussion today:
1. better understand how you currently work with students
2. learn more from you about what obstacles students may encounter in engaging with the services
   you offer, and share what we’ve learned from our student survey
3. brainstorm solutions

Before we begin, we’d like to learn more about you--please tell us:
Who you are, your unit, what services you provide to students

II. Current programming/outreach (20 mins)
• How do you currently reach and serve students?
• From your perspective, do you reach students “in time”?
• When, ideally, would a student know about your program or services and begin engagement with
you?

III. Known obstacles from SMEs & survey (20-25 mins)
• What obstacles do students encounter in either connecting with you or taking advantage of what
  you have to offer?

IV. Student Survey & Potential solutions (25 mins)
A. We share what we’ve learned from survey (prelim results)
   • what activities students reported had the benefits we’re talking about today--
   • what obstacles students reported to participating in those activities
B. Given our understanding of obstacles, what solutions might make sense?
Appendix D: Campus Partner Survey

The Husky Experience Campus Partner Survey

Please answer the 6 questions below to help us prepare for our group discussions.

1. What services/programs do you currently provide students?

2. How do students typically find out about or access your services/programs? (friend, website, etc.)
   - What obstacles do students encounter in either connecting with your services/programs or taking advantage of what you have to offer?
     - Lack of money
     - Time (lack of time, difficulty managing time)
     - Commuting distance is too great
     - Not accepted into program or selected activity
     - Lack of information/knowledge
     - Lack of motivation/interest
     - Lack of departmental support/guidance
     - Lack of social network (Don’t have a connection in program/activity)
     - Lack of exposure (Don’t know anyone who has participated in program/activity)
     - Program lacks adequate/quality facilities
     - Competing job responsibilities
     - Competing family responsibilities
     - Other competing responsibilities (e.g. athletics, clubs, internships)
     - Other ____________

4. What benefits do you believe students gain from participating in your programs/services?
   - Friendships
   - Social network (connections to people who can provide information and assistance)
   - Exposure to/information about campus events and resources
   - Study skills (how to take notes, study for exams, manage time)
   - Research skills (define research question, analyze data/information, present findings)
   - Ability to apply lessons from class to solve real life problems
   - “Soft” skills (how to communicate and collaborate with others; workplace expectations, work ethic)
   - Job search/application/interviewing skills
   - Leadership or organizational skills
   - Greater understanding of other cultures within the U.S. and/or world
   - Greater understanding of people with experiences and perspectives different from their own
   - Physical health & well-being
   - Mental/spiritual health & well-being
   - Greater understanding of self (interests, habits, beliefs, values)
   - Sense of community (within and beyond UW)
   - Sense of civic responsibility, desire to improve societal problems
   - Other ____________

5. What data do you gather from students who participate in your programs/services?

6. How do you manage those data? (Describe any systems or processes.)