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Public Relations Research: Syracuse University Catholic Center

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Public Relations Research: SU Catholic Center

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
Spring 2017

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Abstract

The Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) is a Catholic organization, offering students, faculty and staff at Syracuse University with spiritual guidance and support. A primary concern of the organization is the limited presence, and lack of identity, the organization has on the Syracuse University campus. Although the organization serves many publics, this report focuses on increasing attendance and awareness among the students on the Syracuse University campus. I conducted a detailed research report to gain insight on where the SU Catholic Center can improve its communication tactics to help increase attendance, and therefore boost identity among students. I focused on better understanding the needs of the SU Catholic Center's target publics through qualitative and quantitative primary research. The methods used to complete this research included an online survey, a focus group and in-person interviews. The research methods provided insight into the attitudes and opinions of existing SU Catholic Center members and potential SU Catholic Center members, which enabled me to develop communication recommendations to best serve these publics.

Executive Summary

The Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) is a Catholic organization, offering students, faculty and staff at Syracuse University with spiritual guidance and support. A primary concern of the organization is the limited presence, and lack of identity, the organization has on the Syracuse University campus. The organization aims to build a stronger identity on the college campus to best achieve its mission of being a home for those who desire to learn and live out their Catholic faith. Although the SU Catholic Center serves faculty, staff and community members, the organization wants to focus on increasing the attendance of the students on the campus. I conducted a detailed research report to gain insight on where the SU Catholic Center can improve its communication tactics to help increase attendance, and therefore boost identity among students on the Syracuse University campus.

I focused on understanding the needs of the SU Catholic Center's publics through the use of qualitative and quantitative primary research. The key publics of the organization are self-identified Catholic students who are not part of the organization and existing SU Catholic Center members. The methods used to complete this research included an online survey, a focus group and in-person interviews. These methods provided insight into the attitudes and opinions of the SU Catholics Center's key publics.

The survey helped analyze the perception of the SU Catholic Center from Catholic students not involved with the organization. It was sent to students to determine their involvement with the SU Catholic Center and what this organization could do to become more appealing to students. In addition to the survey, I chose to conduct a focus group with existing SU Catholic Center members to analyze the attitudes and feelings of the SU Catholic Center

members. The information provided from the focus group, gave insight into the immediate needs of the SU Catholic Center's existing members. Lastly, the on-to-one interviews with the student leaders of Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) and Hillel were completed to gain insight into how these organizations have built their identity on the Syracuse University campus. The purpose behind these interviews was to explore communication strategies and methods that have proved effective and ineffective for these religious organizations. These research methods provided valuable information, enabling me to develop communication recommendations to best serve the SU Catholic Center's key publics.

The recommendation section of the report details the communication tactics to best reach and accommodate existing members and potential members of the SU Catholic Center. To increase awareness and attendance, it would be in the best interest of the SU Catholic Center to inform incoming students (potential members) of events a month before attending Syracuse University, and during the first month of the academic school year. To meet the needs of the SU Catholic Center's existing members and potential members, it is recommended that the SU Catholic Center provides the opportunity for students on the Syracuse University campus to participate in an alternative Spring Break. To meet the immediate needs of the SU Catholic Center members, it is recommended that the organization participates in events hosted by other organizations on the Syracuse University campus. And lastly, research reinforced the idea that all college students appreciate convenience and free things. As a result, to meet the needs of both key publics, the SU Catholic Center should ensure that all events are highly visible and accessible to students. Furthermore, offering free food and snacks during stressful times of the year helps to build brand awareness. The details of the research and recommendations are found within the report.

The Syracuse University Catholic Center

SPRING 2017

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Executive Summary:

A primary concern of the Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) is the limited presence, and lack of identity, the organization has on the Syracuse University campus. The organization aims to build a stronger identity on the college campus to best achieve its mission of being a home for those who desire to learn and live out their Catholic faith. Although the SU Catholic Center serves faculty, staff and community members, the organization wants to focus on increasing the attendance of the students on the campus. I conducted a detailed research report to gain insight on where the SU Catholic Center can improve its communication tactics to help increase attendance, and therefore boost identity among students on the Syracuse University campus.

I focused on better understanding the needs of the SU Catholic Center's key publics through the use of qualitative and quantitative primary research. The key publics of the organization are self-identified Catholic students who are not part of the organization, and existing SU Catholic Center members. The methods used to complete this research included an online survey, a focus group and in-person interviews.

The survey helped analyze the perception of the SU Catholic Center from Catholic students not involved with the organization. It was sent to students to determine their involvement with the SU Catholic Center and what this organization could do to become more appealing. I chose to conduct a focus group with existing SU Catholic Center members to determine attitudes and feelings of the SU Catholic Center. This information provided the SU Catholic Center with a better understanding of the immediate needs of existing members. Lastly, in-person interviews with the student leaders of Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) and Hillel were completed to gain insight into how these organizations have built their identity on the Syracuse University campus. The purpose behind these interviews was to explore communication strategies and methods that have proved effective and ineffective for these religious organizations. These research methods provided valuable information which enabled me to develop communication recommendations to best serve the SU Catholic Center's key publics. The recommendations are outlined in the report below.

Problem Statement:

The Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) is located in the Alibrandi Catholic Center on the Syracuse University campus. This organization provides students, faculty and staff at Syracuse University with spiritual guidance and support. The SU Catholic Center runs daily mass, spiritual groups, counseling and retreats. Despite the central location on campus, the organization is not well known among Syracuse University students.

Currently, the SU Catholic Center has limited presence at Syracuse University. The limited attendance at mass, as well as events held by the organization, may reflect the lack of awareness. Maggie Byrne, Campus Minister, understands that to those involved, the SU Catholic Center is a rich environment. However, she wants the organization to be perceived on campus as a vibrant and exciting community, specifically to students.

As a result of this issue, the SU Catholic Center may not be reaching the students who are interested in becoming involved in an organization like SU Catholic Center. These students may not realize that the SU Catholic Center exists on campus, or have limited information on the organization. Consequently, the organization may be missing opportunities to reach students and grow its community and identity on the Syracuse University campus. Both the students and the organization will benefit from increase awareness of the SU Catholic Center.

Opportunity Statement:

The research insights provided within this report may help the the SU Catholic Center build a stronger, more well-known, identity on the Syracuse University campus. The research conducted has helped to uncover some of the current strengths and areas of improvement within the SU Catholic Center. As a result, the SU Catholic Center has the information necessary to more effectively communicate and cater to the needs and expectations Syracuse University students. Consequently, more students will know about the SU Catholic organization, which will help to increase the numbers of attendance and involvement of the organization, retain existing members and maintain a recognized identity on the Syracuse University campus.

Situational Analysis:

A primary concern of the Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) is the limited presence, and lack of identity, the organization has on the Syracuse University campus. Although the SU Catholic Center serves faculty, staff and community members, the organization wishes to focus on increasing the attendance of the students on the campus. Despite the organization's central location on the Syracuse University campus, there are still many students unaware of the SU Catholic Center (*Maggie Byrne, personal communication, October 19, 2016*).

Analyzing the Situation

Background on the Issue

Currently, the Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) has limited presence on the Syracuse University campus. The organization aims to build a stronger identity on the college campus to best achieve its mission of being a home for those who desire to learn and live out their Catholic faith. Since the problem may impact the overall success of the SU Catholic Center, focusing on the most effective ways to communicate and cater to Catholic students (who are not currently part of the organization), should increase attendance and help build the SU Catholic Center identity.

Many of the activities and events hosted by the SU Catholic Center appear to be solely catered to existing members. This may be the result of advertising such events in the same places: Hendricks Chapel (Sunday Mass) and the Albrandi Center. Another possible contributing factor to limited attendance is that SU Catholic Center is recognized by different names: The Catholic Ministry, The Albrandi Center, The Newman Center, and The More House. Within the last three years the organization has been formally named the Syracuse University Catholic Center (*Maggie Byrne, personal communication, October 24, 2016*). As a result, students who are not already involved in the organization may have a more difficult time recognizing the SU Catholic Center name because there are many other titles associated with the organization.

To build a stronger SU Catholic identity, it may be in the best interest of the SU Catholic Center to find alternative advertising methods that reach students outside of the current community. Furthermore, the organization should ensure that there is continuity with their name while advertising across campus. Properly branding the organization should increase student awareness and allow for more effective communication to students outside the existing community.

Consequences of the Situation

It is important to expand visibility on campus to places other than Hendricks Chapel and the Albrandi Center. Furthermore, the name of an organization is the root of an organization's identity. If that does not exist, or if it is not branded well, then the identity of the organization may suffer. Because the SU Catholic Center has been recognized by many different titles, the organization has not been able to build a strong foundation or identity. Students unaware of the organization may be overlooking the SU Catholic Center as an opportunity for them to be involved in a Catholic organization on campus. Similarly, the SU Catholic Center may be missing an opportunity to grow its community and identity.

Solution

I will conduct secondary research to gather background of the SU Catholic Center and determine what information needs to be found to help the SU Catholic Center build a stronger identity on the Syracuse University campus. I will then conduct primary research to help address the situation. The primary research will give SU Catholic Center insight into the best ways to communicate to current members and students outside of the existing community. As a result of a focus group, interviews and surveys, I will be able to help the organization gain insight into the most effective ways to capture the attention of students not currently part of SU Catholic Center.

The organization's commitment to increasing campus awareness of SU Catholic Center is extremely high. Those that work at SU Catholic Center go above and beyond to reach out and to welcome students. Primary research will enable the organization to know more about what students expect from a Catholic organization. Instead of the organization directing its messages to all students, the SU Catholic Center will be able to take this research and create more focused and impactful messages to groups of students more likely to become part of the organization.

Analyzing the Organization

Organization Overview

The SU Catholic Center is located on the Syracuse University campus and was founded by several students in 1870. Over the years, the organization's name has changed, and is now formally named the Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center). The organization offers mass services, retreats, volunteer opportunities, prayer groups, weekly dinners, baptism, confession and much more. The SU Catholic center focuses on worshipping communion with the Roman Catholic Church, fostering fellowship, promoting and nurturing the spiritual life of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and members of the local community. Through these channels, the SU Catholic Center, "seeks to develop transformative Catholic leaders bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Syracuse University Catholic Center).

Competition

Among the many religious organizations on the Syracuse Campus, there are two organizations that are primary competitors of the SU Catholic Center: Campus Crusaders for Christ (Cru) and Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM).



A key competitor for the SU Catholic Center is Campus Crusaders for Christ (Cru), a non-denominational organization. The mission of Cru is to connect people to Jesus Christ. Cru holds weekly meetings, Bible studies, offers a variety of different retreats, social events (such as Super Bowl parties), and morning prayer sessions. Cru, unlike SU Catholic Center, is non-denominational. As a result, the organization may naturally attract more students. Cru staff primarily promotes their events through Facebook and at Hendricks Chapel (Syracuse Cru)



Another competitor for the SU Catholic Center is the Baptist Campus Ministry (BCM). The mission of BCM is to equip students for a lifelong relationship with God and the community. BCM offers Sunday Worship, Tuesday Bible studies, Lifegroups, and mission trips to New York City and Nepal. BCM staff promotes their organization and events through Facebook and at Hendricks Chapel (Syracuse BCM).

Analyzing The Publics

Customers:

The SU Catholic Center's key publics are the 100 to 200 students, faculty, staff and community members that regularly attend weekly or Sunday mass. Of this group of people, there are roughly 70 individuals that frequently attend special events, retreats and Bible sessions in addition to mass. These 70 individuals are generally undergraduate and graduate students, between the ages of 18 and 24 (*Maggie Byrne, personal communication, October 19, 2016*).

Producers:

In addition to customers, the SU Catholic Center employees are critical to the success SU Catholic Center. Father Gerry Waterman and Maggie Byrne enable the SU Catholic Center to continue providing Catholic resources to students on campus. Father Gerry is a member of the Conventual Franciscan Order and has been a friar-priest for 31 years. He has just recently joined SU Catholic Center in 2016. Maggie Byrne, Campus Minister, has been a leader of the organization for 5 years. Ms. Byrne maintains and manages the organization facility, while overseeing special events, weekday and Sunday mass and retreats.

Influencers:

Many students, student families and alumni support the SU Catholic Center through volunteering at events and donating to the organization. Furthermore, Kent Syverud is a longtime friend of Father Gerry. The Chancellors campus influence and support has proven very valuable to SU Catholic Center (*Maggie Byrne, personal communication, October 19, 2016*). Student and alumni donations, and Chancellor Kent seem to be important contributing factors to the success of SU Catholic Center.

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- SU Catholic Center Location
 - The location of the SU Catholic Center, on the Syracuse University Campus, provides a great opportunity for high visibility among students.
- The SU Catholic Center Facility
 - The building that houses the SU Catholic Center is a welcoming environment. It provides study spaces, areas to pray and event space.
- Opportunities for Involvement
 - The organization provides different facets for students to become involved in the community. The SU Catholic Centers offers Bible groups, such as Power Hour and Re Fresh (a group specifically for Freshman), retreats and special events.
- The More Dinner
 - The SU Catholic Center hosts The More Dinner every Thursday evening at 7:30pm. These meals are free and catered by local businesses.
- Student Loyalty
 - The SU Catholic Center has strong student loyalty. There are roughly 70 students that attend special events, retreats and Bible groups in addition to weekly mass.

Weaknesses:

- Limited exposure of event advertisements
 - Other than social media, most of the advertising of events are communicated to the existing community through Sunday mass and the Alibrandi Catholic Center.
- Inconsistent branding
 - For example, it is not clear on the Syracuse OrgSync page that the events under “Catholic Association at SU” are all hosted by the SU Catholic Center.

Opportunities:

- OrgSync
 - If the SU Catholic Center is branded well on the OrgSync site, OrgSync is a great opportunity. OrgSync is an online community for campus organizations. OrgSync helps organizations connect and engage with members, improves information sharing, minimizes paper usage, tracks co-curricular involvement, and generates reports on all data collected for annual reports and accreditation. Furthermore, students looking for organizations will often use OrgSync as a resource to find information about opportunities on their campus (OrgSync).

- Visibility of Father Jerry
 - Father Jerry is a fun, welcoming, new priest. It may be beneficial for Father Jerry to be seen on campus for students to have the opportunity to meet him, drawing students to the SU Catholic Center.

- Volunteering time to other organizations
 - Encouraging existing members to participate in other organizations events, such as Greek events, is a productive way to become more involved within the campus community.

- Holidays
 - Roughly 800 more people attend mass during big holidays, such as Ash Wednesday and Easter. This period provides the SU Catholic Center a great opportunity to advertise other events (*Maggie Byrne, personal communication, October 25, 2016*).

Threats:

- Competition
 - Campus Crusaders for Christ (Cru) and Baptist Church Ministry (BCM) are the biggest religious organization competitors on campus.

- Niche Market
 - The catholic center may deter those who do not have a catholic background from visiting.

Key Publics:

Primary Key Public

[Syracuse University Catholic students not involved in the Syracuse University Catholic Center]



Samantha Jones is a sophomore at Syracuse University, studying political science. She grew up in Long Island, New York with her two siblings and parents. As a young girl, her family was very immersed in the Catholic religion. However, after she and her siblings were Confirmed, her family attended church events less often. She still considers herself Catholic, but not “super religious”.

As a sophomore in college, she does not attend church but does believe in God and prays occasionally. She knows that Catholic masses are available on campus at Hendricks’s Chapel but does not attend as she dedicates Sunday’s to do her school work. She has considered joining a Catholic organization, but has never followed through to research what is available to her. She likes the idea of surrounding herself with people who share the Catholic faith, but she is nervous that the students involved in any Catholic organizations are intense about their faith and would judge her for not being knowledgeable about the Catholic religion.

Samantha is frequently on Facebook to keep current with friends, family and the various clubs on campus that she finds important. She also checks her e-mail at least 15 times a day for any information regarding classes, and opportunities to get involved on campus (Online Survey).

Secondary Key Public

[Syracuse University students involved in the Syracuse University Catholic Center]



George Hennessy is a Junior at Syracuse University, studying biology. His goal is to become a pediatric doctor in a leading hospital within New York City. He was raised with three other siblings in the town of New Haven, Connecticut. Being an active member of the Catholic community was a crucial part of his childhood.

In his Freshman year of college, he questioned his faith and decided to step away from the Catholic religion. Towards the middle of his freshman year, he felt unhappy and somewhat lost. His first week back as a Sophomore he attended the involvement fair on the Syracuse quad and started a conversation with a student at the Syracuse University Catholic Center table. The student talked about the different programs that the SU Catholic Center offered, which included a Bible study group called Power Hour.

He decided to start a conversation with the student at the SU Catholic Center table because he was looking for a sense of community and missed practicing his religion. He felt that meeting other students who shared his faith would rebuild his relationship with the Catholic religion. By the second semester of his Sophomore year, he was leading the Power Hour discussions.

George uses Facebook more than other social media platforms. He finds it the most convenient to stay up-to-date with his friends, family and the organizations that he is involved with on campus. He also checks his e-mail frequently during the day for classes and campus information (Online Survey).

Research Objectives:

- To understand the attitudes and opinions of Catholic students not involved in the Syracuse University Catholic Center.
- To determine the communication and outreach strategies of religious organizations; Campus Crusaders for Christ (Cru), Baptist Church Ministries (BCM) and Hillel.
- To gain insight into the experiences of existing SU Catholic Center members.

Research Methodology:

Methodology: Quantitative and qualitative research methods were utilized to gather insights of the Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center) target publics. These methods include an online survey, a focus group and in-person interviews. By collecting this data, the SU Catholic Center will gain a stronger understanding of the desires and expectations of Catholic students not involved in the SU Catholic Center. Furthermore, the research will uncover the communication strategies that Cru, BCM and Hillel use to build and maintain their strong identity on the Syracuse University campus, as well as uncover the experiences of students who are already involved in the SU Catholic Center. After the data is analyzed, it is hopeful that the information found will assist the SU Catholic Center to address to the most pressing needs of its target publics.

Although Hillel is not a Christian organization, and therefore is not a SU Catholic Center competitor, Hillel is very a well-known religious organization among Syracuse University students. Therefore, it is still beneficial for the SU Catholic Center to be aware of the communication strategies and tactics of this organization.

Research Method 1: Online Survey

Sampling Frame: Self-identified Catholic students on the Syracuse University campus.

Rationale: The survey will help to analyze the perception of the SU Catholic Center from Catholic students not involved with the organization. The survey was sent to self-identified Catholic students to determine their involvement with the SU Catholic Center, what the organization was lacking, and what this organization could do to become more appealing.

Execution

- Recruiting method: Email, social media
- Location: Online (Qualtrics)
- Length: 10 Questions
- Incentive: None
- Number of Participants: 45

Data Analysis Method: Qualtrics Survey Analysis

Research Method 2: Focus Group

Sampling frame: Existing Syracuse University Catholic Center members

Rationale: A focus group with existing SU Catholic Center members was completed to determine attitudes and feelings of the SU Catholic Center from those currently involved in the organization. This information should provide the SU Catholic Center with a better understanding of the immediate needs of its primary public.

Execution:

- Recruiting method: Facebook
- Location: SU Catholic Center Library
- Length: 1 hour
- Incentive: Pizza
- Number of Participants: 12 members

Data Analysis Method: Content Analysis

Research Method 3: Face-to-face Interviews

Sampling frame: Student leaders of Cru, BCM and Hillel the Syracuse University campus.

Rationale: In-person interviews with the student leaders of Campus Crusade for Christ (Cru), Baptist Campus Ministries (BCM) and Hillel were completed to gain insight into how these organizations have built their identity on the Syracuse University campus. The purpose behind these interviews was to explore communication strategies and methods that have proved effective and ineffective for these three well-known religious organizations on campus.

Execution:

- Recruiting method: E-mail
- Location: Syracuse University or Phone
- Length: 1 hour
- Incentive: none
- Number of Participants: 3 student leaders (Cru, BCM, and Hillel)

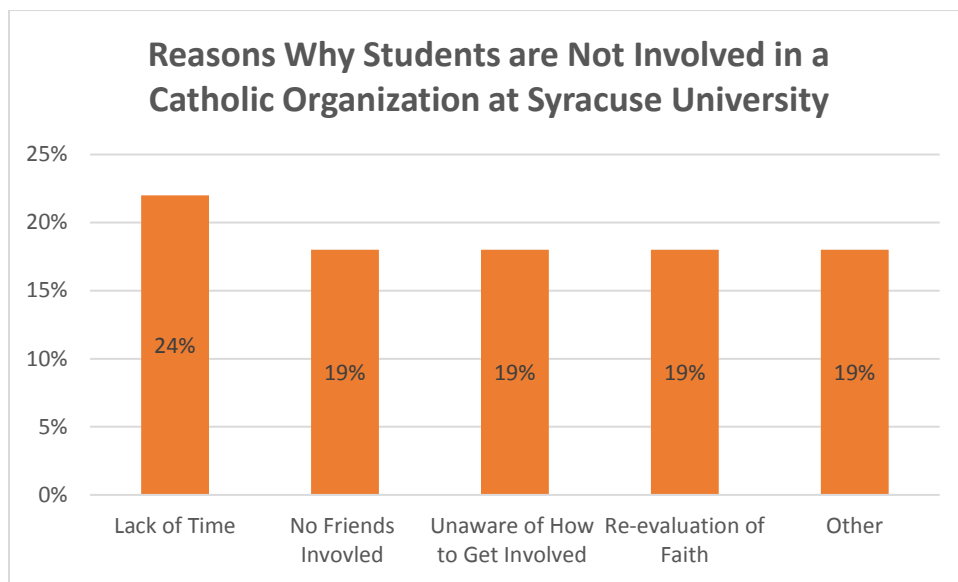
Data Analysis Method: Content Analysis

Research Results & Analysis:

Summary of Results: Online Survey

Analysis 1: The purpose of the survey, sent to self-identified Catholic students, was to understand the attitudes and opinions of Catholic students not involved in the Syracuse University Catholic Center. The survey found that 85% of students involved with a Catholic organization prior to attending college, experienced a decrease in Catholic involvement once they began their undergraduate career. The survey reveals the primary reasons for Catholic students discontinuing their involvement in a Catholic organization. Of the 85% of students who experience a decrease in Catholic involvement, 24% said that lack of time in college was a main reason for not attending Catholic events. In addition to lack of time, some students feel that the decrease is a result of not knowing how to get involved in a Catholic organization (19%), having no friends involved in a Catholic organization (19%) and re-evaluating their faith (19%).

The SU Catholic Center may have the opportunity to increase involvement among self-identified Catholics by focusing on the insights provided by the survey. For example, because some students are not involved as a result of having no friends in the organization, it may be in the best interest of the SU Catholic Center to reach out to freshman as soon as they are on campus. This way, these students may establish friendships within the organization and prioritize SU Catholic Center events.



Analysis 2: The survey sent to self-identified Catholic students provides quantitative and qualitative data valuable to the SU Catholic Center. The survey exposes the approximate number of students attending the SU Catholic events, how the SU Catholic Center can better meet students needs, and the most effective way to inform students of upcoming SU Catholic Center events.

To gather a foundational understanding of current student involvement in the SU Catholic Center, one of the first survey questions was, “Do you attend events at the SU Catholic Center at least once a month?”. Approximately 74% of respondents selected “No”. However, of these respondents, 94% have heard of the SU Catholic Center, primarily through Hendricks Chapel. This question within the survey reveals that students do know of the SU Catholic Center, but are choosing not to get involved.

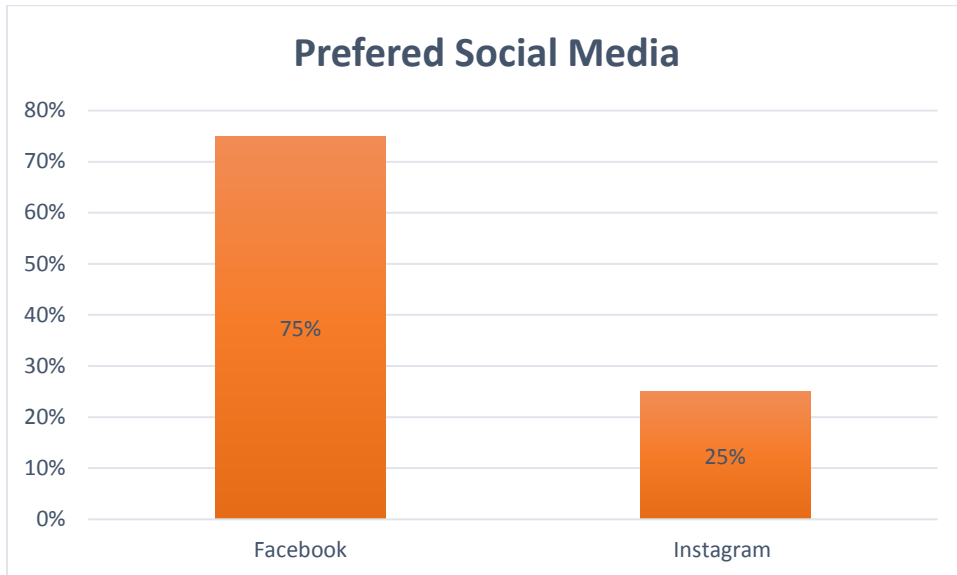
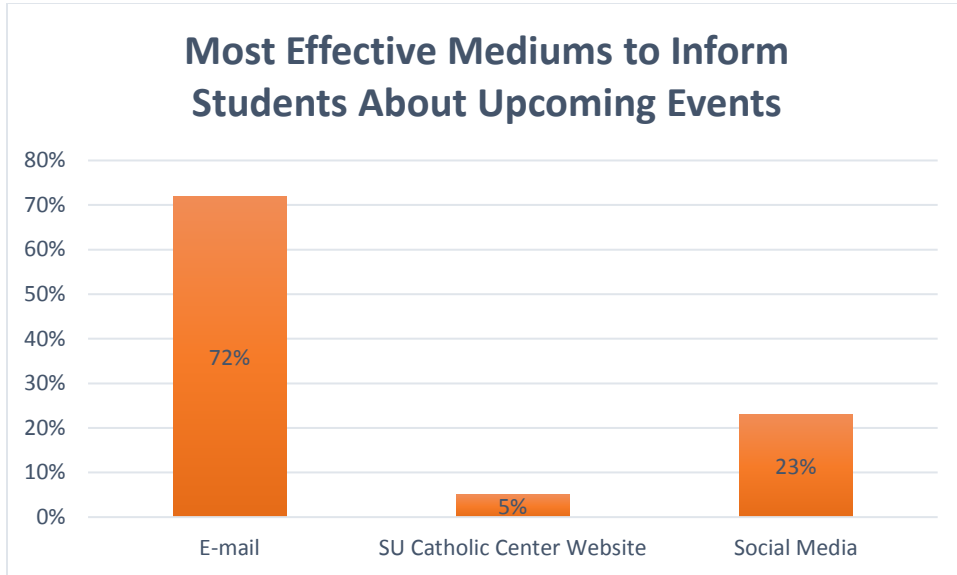
To gain insight into what student’s desire in a Catholic organization, the question, “What would you like to see offered in a Catholic organization on the Syracuse University campus” was proposed to students. Respondents indicated a desire for volunteering opportunities (such as tutoring), more masses held at Hendricks Chapel and “fun activities like Hillel”. Based on this question, we learned that if the SU Catholic Center works towards meeting these requests, students may be more inclined to participate in SU Catholic events.

Below are just some of the suggestions from the survey:

- “More active involvement--showcase on the quad once in a while, show their presence more on campus”**
- “More activities like Hillel”**
- “Opportunities to help the poor”**
- “Community service involvement/easy ways to do volunteer work”**
- “Open mindedness”**
- “Community building opportunities”**
- “Dinners and meet and greets”**
- “Quick programs for busy students”**
- “Modern services”**
- “More diversity in people who attend (international community)”**
- “More masses held at Hendricks”**
- “Have things at beginning of the year to welcome freshmen similar to Hillel”**
- “Community service opportunities”**

To encourage students even further in sharing their attitudes towards the SU Catholic Center, participants were asked, “How can the SU Catholic Center meet your needs?”. Many of the answers provided continued to stress the desire for events similar to Hillel and community service opportunities.

Students also identified the desire for more e-mail and social media updates. Of the respondents, 72%, indicated that e-mail is the best way to be informed on upcoming events. Of the students who prefer social media, 75% indicated that Facebook is the best way to be informed.



Summary of Results: In-Person Interviews

Theme 1: Religious organizational leaders have found success in increasing membership by targeting events to new students at beginning of the academic year.

Student leaders stressed the importance of promoting their organization in the beginning of the academic year to gain the attention of new students looking to become involved on campus. They also suggested having events scheduled and planned in September when new students are more likely to attend. A student leader of Baptist Church Ministries (BCM) even suggests starting the advertising and event planning process at the end of summer, “Planning events and advertising as soon as possible ensures that we are ready for when new students are looking for organizations to join.” Leaders have found that new students, specifically freshman, are eager to get involved in organizations. Being proactive in the beginning of the year by attending all involvement fairs, setting up posters in freshman residence halls, and hosting visible events on campus (like a BBQ in Walnut Park), increases membership. Hillel goes one step further by hosting a freshman only orientation called “Re-Fresh”. Re-Fresh allows freshman to arrive to school one week early to meet students of similar faith backgrounds and to participate in events scheduled and hosted by Hillel, “We help them move in, go shopping, show them their class locations and take them off campus to places like Destiny”. Student leaders of Hillel feel that Re-Fresh is the primary event for increasing and retaining membership. All leaders find that taking the time to advertise and plan events for the beginning of the academic year helps to build their community.

Theme 2: Religious organizational leaders find that offering alternative community service Spring Break trips increase their brand awareness on Syracuse University campus.

During each interview, participants were asked to give an example of a successful promotion for their organizations. The leaders from BCM, Cru, and Hillel all felt strongly that alternative Spring Break trips help promote their organization and attract more members. A student leader from Cru described that, “By offering a Spring Break trip to the entire campus, students who may not otherwise seek to participate in religiously associated events, are connected with students who are involved in the organization.” Therefore, the trips not only help increase brand awareness, but also help build a strong identity on the Syracuse university campus.

Theme 3: Leaders interviewed feel that connecting to students through convenient and frequent events helps maintain student involvement.

Leaders find success in advertising and building their organizations identity through participating and hosting events on the Syracuse University campus. Hillel leaderships has found that, "...hosting events throughout the year helps to maintain the momentum built from the programs planned for freshman at the end of summer." The continuation of Hillel hosted events throughout the year helps retain new members from freshman specific programs, while catering to current members.

Cru and BCM leaders also find importance in continuously planning and executing events to build their community and engage their current members. These organizations use the Syracuse University quad and Walnut Park to relax with one another in a group setting, play games and raise money. These locations provide a great opportunity to be seen by other students. Cru, in an effort to connect to the Greek community on the Syracuse University campus, offers "Sorority Bible Studies". To build relationships with students who do not desire to leave the convenience of their dorms, Cru also offers Bible studies in freshman and sophomore housing. Lastly, BCM connects to the campus through its "Rack Attacks" (Random acts of Kindness). Each month, they choose something to do for the Syracuse University student community. They recently handed out free coffee vouchers from People's Place with its name and logo on the back of the card.

Student leaders recommend hosting events during the year to engage new, existing and potential members. They have found success in connecting with students through convenient events, such as events at Walnut park and offering Bible studies to students at various dorm and sorority. In addition to hosting events, student leaders believe that participating in other organization events are just as important. Cru and Hillel specifically find that participating in events outside its organization has helped build their identity across Syracuse University.

Summary of Results: Focus Group

Theme 1: Student participants feel that they would like to see the Syracuse University Catholic Center become a more comfortable and relaxed space.

Students find that the physical building and space that the Syracuse University Catholic Center offers is a great asset to the organization. However, participants feel that some of the rooms are not welcoming or comfortable. One participant said that, “The Moore Room is just so big and empty, and because of this I rarely go there.” Participants suggested that the addition of furniture, games and decorations could make the area a more welcoming environment to relax and study. Participants also discussed the chapel space in the SU Catholic Center, suggesting that an upgrade could make the chapel seem more authentic.

Theme 2: Students involved in the Syracuse University Catholic Center feel that the leadership is one of the greatest strengths of the organization.

The SU Catholic Center’s strong leadership was discussed most when students were asked to explore the strengths of the organization. Students feel that the SU Catholic Center has “charismatic leadership” which fosters a welcoming and fun environment. This leadership is one of the main reasons why some members are so involved and invested in the organization. An active member feels that, “The people who keep this place running are so approachable. They are the reason that I decided to come back after my first visit”. Participants continuously agreed with one another while sharing experiences about how the leadership has positively shaped their experience with the organization.

Theme 3: Students expressed a strong interest in the Syracuse University Catholic Center hosting more recreational activities, community service events and opportunities to engage with other organizations on the Syracuse University campus.

Student participants eagerly discussed the opportunity to get involved with other organizations. These students feel that it would be fun to partake in the activities offered on campus, and suggested signing up for Greek events open to all students, and creating an intramural SU Catholic Center basketball team. These students are also interested in volunteering, and would like to see the SU Catholic Center offer more volunteering opportunities. Lastly, they collectively agreed that holding as many events outside the physical building, when weather permits, would be a nice change. Suggestions included, hosting more “fire pit and game nights” and possibly holding mass outside.

How Each Research Objective Was Achieved:

Research Objective One: **To understand the attitudes and opinions of Catholic students not involved in the SU Catholic Center.**

The survey sent to self-identifying Catholic students on the Syracuse University campus helped identify the reasons behind why these Catholic students are not involved in the Syracuse University Catholic Center. Reasons included: lack of time, re-evaluation of faith, no friends involved and lack of awareness. Furthermore, the survey also revealed that students seek more volunteering opportunities, more masses held at Hendricks Chapel and more events similar to Hillel. This information enables the SU Catholic Center to have a deeper understanding of why students are not participating in the organization and what those students seek in a Catholic organization. Based on these insights, the SU Catholic Center will be able to cater its programs and events to meet the needs of Catholic students who are not currently involved with the organization.

Research Objective Two: **To determine the communication and outreach strategies of other religious organizations: Campus Crusaders for Christ (Cru), Baptist Church Ministries (BCM) and Hillel.**

The one-to-one interviews with student leaders in Cru, BCM and Hillel, revealed three key strategies to building and maintaining an identity on the Syracuse University campus. These strategies included: targeting events to new students in the beginning of the academic year, offering alternative spring break tips and participating in other organizations events. Based on this information, the SU Catholic Center can apply similar strategies to build and maintain its own identity on the Syracuse University campus.

Research Objective Three: **To gain insight into the experiences of existing Syracuse University Catholic Center members.**

The focus group evaluated the experiences of existing SU Catholic Center members. During the focus groups, these 12 students identified the SU Catholic Center's facility as a great asset to the organization. However, they would like to see modifications within the building. Students also expressed that the "Charismatic Leadership" is a key driving force to their investment with the organization. Lastly, the student participants discussed the members of organization should engage more with other organizations on the Syracuse University campus. This research gives the SU Catholic Center insight into the suggestions and attitudes of existing members. The organization has the opportunity to act on these suggestions to meet the immediate needs of this primary public.

Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Timeliness of Communication

The survey and interviews revealed that students are more likely to become involved and stay involved in an organization when they join their freshman year. As a result, the Syracuse University Catholic Center should specifically target new students to help increase student involvement within the organization.

Interviews also revealed that the best time to connect to new students is at the beginning of the academic school year. It would be in the best interest of the SU Catholic Center to inform incoming students of events a month before attending Syracuse University, and during the first month of the academic school year.

While promoting events to new students, the SU Catholic Center should use platforms such as e-mail, Facebook and Instagram. Furthermore, interviews revealed that new students are more eager to join organizations in an effort to find a community and friendships. Because friendship seems to be a crucial aspect of joining and staying in an organization, while targeting new students, it is suggested to use messages focusing on “friendship” and “community”.

Example of e-mail Advertising Freshman Orientation Program:



The Syracuse University Catholic Center invites you to attend



Dear Samantha,

Congratulations on your acceptance to Syracuse University! Although it is only May, the summer will go by quickly and you will find yourself on the Syracuse Campus very shortly. We at the SU Catholic Center want to ensure that you have a great experience as soon as you arrive!

The SU Catholic Center is a home for students who wish to learn and live out their Catholic faith. As a new student, we invite you to attend EarlyOrange, a freshman orientation organized by the SU Catholic Center. This program is a great way to meet other incoming freshman and upperclassman before the academic year begins. As an incoming student, you have the opportunity to get better acquainted with the Syracuse University campus and college life, become involved in community service projects, and grow in faith alongside your peers. As an added bonus, participating in EarlyOrange allows for you to move into the residence halls early! If you are interested, please sign up by clicking the button below.

Event :
EarlyOrange
Date: August 20-

[Register](#)

We hope to see you in August!

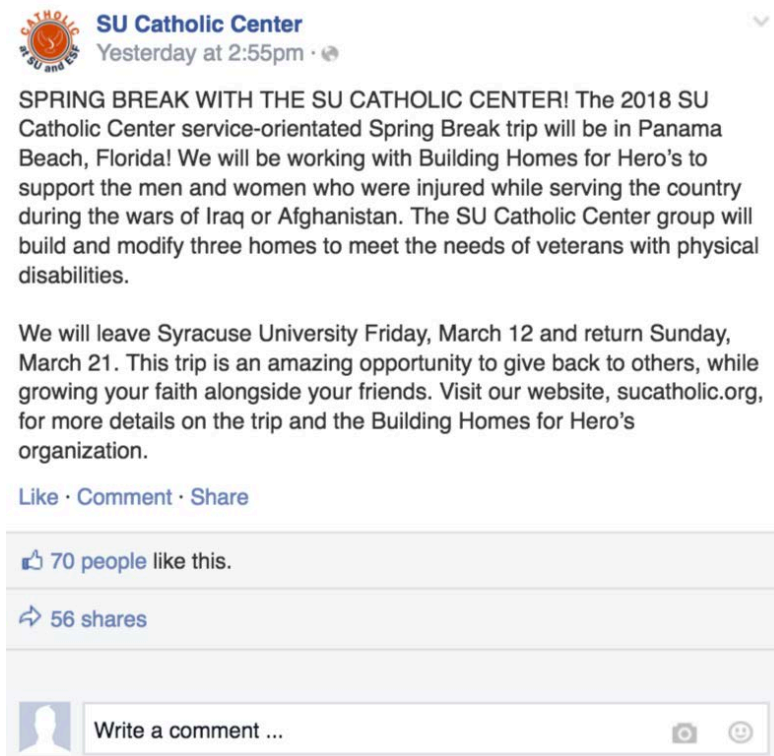
Sincerely,
Maggie Byrne

Recommendation 2: Alternative Spring Break

To meet the needs of existing members and potential members, it is recommended that the SU Catholic Center provides the opportunity for students on the Syracuse University campus to participate in an alternative Spring Break. Through the survey, focus group and interviews, it was found that students are looking for unique and service-driven Spring Break trips. Organizing an alternative Spring Break will meet the needs of existing members and potential members, while boosting reputation and visibility among students on the Syracuse University campus.

Because survey results indicate that e-mail and Facebook are the preferred methods of receiving information among students, advertising the Spring Break trip through Facebook and e-mail will be the most effective way to advertise the trip. Survey results also indicate that 19% of existing Catholic students choose not to participate in SU Catholic Center events because they have no friends in the organization. While advertising the event, content should focus on the opportunity to build friendships.

Example Facebook post informing students of Spring Break trip:



Recommendation 3: Participating in Campus Events

To meet the immediate needs of the SU Catholic Center members, it is recommended that the organization participates in events hosted by other organizations on the Syracuse University campus. For example, the Greek community hosts many different philanthropies, some of which are offered to the entire campus. The SU Catholic Center could form teams to participate in these philanthropic events. It was also recommended in the focus group that the SU Catholic Center form an intramural basketball or soccer team to compete with other students and organizations.

It may be in the best interest of the SU Catholic Center to delegate a member of the organization with the responsibility of connecting the SU Catholic Center to the Syracuse University community through participating in various events. This member would be responsible for informing members of opportunities to get involved, organizing the teams to participate in events and communicating with other organizations across campus.

In addition to e-mail, it is also suggested that the SU Catholic Center use the current SU Catholic Center Facebook page to inform members of opportunities to get involved with other organizations on campus.

Recommendation 4: Convenience and Free Events for Students

The research conducted reinforced the idea that college students appreciate convenience and free things. For convenience, it may be beneficial for the SU Catholic Center to host events in Walnut Park, a location that is visible and accessible to all students. In the future, it may also be helpful to offer bible studies in various locations on campus, such as in freshman dorms or fraternities and sororities houses. This way, students who do not want to leave the comfort of their home can still participate in Bible studies. Furthermore, giving out free snacks and coffee to students during stressful times of the semester may increase awareness of the organization, while also associating the brand of the organization to helpful and kind actions.

Appendices:

A. Qualtrics Online Survey

Do you attend events at the SU Catholic Center at least once a month?

Yes

No

[if 'Yes' is selected, then survey ends]

Have you heard of the Syracuse University Catholic Center (SU Catholic Center)?

Yes

No

Unsure

How did you hear about the SU Catholic Center? [If 'Have you heard of the SU Catholic Center' Yes is selected]

Social Media (please specify)

Involvement Fair

Hendricks Chapel

SU Catholic Center Website

Friend

Other (please specify)

[Display If 'Have you heard of the SU Catholic Center' Yes is selected]

Would you be interested in attending activities hosted by the SU Catholic Center?

Yes

No

Maybe

[Display If 'Have you heard of the SU Catholic Center' No is selected]

What is the best way to inform you about upcoming events?

Social Media (please specify)

E-mail

SU Catholic Center Website

Other (please specify)

Were you involved in any Catholic organization prior to attending Syracuse University?

Yes

No

What is your opinion on joining a Catholic organization?

[Display if 'Were you involved in any Catholic organization prior to attending Syracuse University?' No is selected]

What did your previous Catholic organization offer that you found most enjoyable/beneficial?

[Display if 'Were you involved in any Catholic organization prior to attending Syracuse University?' Yes is selected]

Did your involvement with Catholic organizations increase or decrease once attending Syracuse University?

Increase

Decrease

Unsure

[Display if 'Were you involved in any Catholic organization prior to attending Syracuse University?' Yes is selected]

Why did your involvement decrease?

[Display if 'Did your involvement with Catholic organizations increase or decrease once attending Syracuse University?' Decrease is selected]

What would you like to see offered in a Catholic organization on the Syracuse University campus?

How can the SU Catholic Center meet your needs?

B. In-Person Interview Questions

[To determine the communication strategies of highly successful religious organizations; Campus Crusaders for Christ (Cru), Baptist Church Ministries (BCM) and Hillel.]

- How long have you been part of your organization?
- How many members are involved in your organization?
- Who would you say your target public is?
- How do you advertise to this public?
- What have you found to be the most successful way to advertise to this group?
- What type of events/services does your organization hold for its members?
- What are some of your most successful events/promotions you host? And why?
- What are some challenges you face when trying to recruit / communicate to potential new members?
 - How do you combat this?

C. Focus Group Questionnaire

[To determine the immediate needs of existing SU Catholic Ministry Members]

Introduction (2 minutes): I want to start by saying thank you for taking the time to participate in this focus group. I would like to ask you some questions in hopes to gain greater insight on your experience as an active member of the SU Catholic Center. I encourage you to respond to one another and have a conversation. As I wish to give each comment our full attention, I ask that you please speak one at a time. I will be asking a series of questions, and while my assistant will be taking notes on the discussion. I will also be recording the conversation, and ask that you please state your first name before you begin speaking to ensure that your individual comments are documented properly. Does anyone have any questions before we start?

Ice Breaker (1 minute): I would like for us to go around the room and have you all state your name and where you are from.

1. How long have you been part of SU Catholic Center?
2. Talk about the atmosphere within SU Catholic Center.
3. Describe some challenges that you have observed that SU Catholic Center faces.
4. What are SU Catholic Ministry strengths? Weaknesses? *Probe:* Why do you say that?
5. Is there anything that you would like to see SU Catholic Ministry change? Or add?
6. Do you have any suggestions as to how SU Catholic Ministry could increase its visibility on campus?
7. Do you have anything to add?

Conclusion: Thank you so much for taking the time to participate in my focus group.

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