

# Marketing and Communications Focus Group

February & April 2018

## Introduction:

Focus group facilitators met with nine separate groups of students ranging from first to final years to obtain feedback regarding their experience with marketing and communication at Thompson Rivers University (TRU).

The goal was to explore first, middle and final years domestic and international students' communications and marketing experiences and preferences at TRU.

The objectives of the focus groups were to:

1. assess the impact of marketing and communication practices
2. find ways to improve the delivery of information
3. have students share perceptions about the efficacy of marketing and communication practices.

## Method:

Focus groups were promoted through social media channels, print materials, CCTV slides and videos.

Nine different focus group sessions were scheduled:

First year students:

Tuesday, February 20, 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Tuesday, February 27, 10:00 am – 11:00 am

Wednesday, April 4, 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Middle year students:

Tuesday, February 20, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Tuesday, February 27, 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Thursday, April 5, 9:00 am – 10:30 am

Final year students:

Tuesday, February 20, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Wednesday, February 28, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Friday, April 6, 9:00 am – 10:30 am

The recruitment email was sent out two weeks prior to the focus group sessions. As well, subsequent recruitment emails were sent, and reminder emails were sent to students who signed up.

The focus groups each started with introductions and an overview of the study. After obtaining informed consent from the participants, student participants were asked eight questions. Probes were used as follow-up and for clarification. The audio recorder was turned on following the introductions. Pizza was served, participants received a one day parking pass, Starbucks gift card with a value of \$10.00 each. In total, twenty students participated in the focus groups- fourteen in the February sessions and six in April.

Following the face-to-face focus group sessions, the audio recorded comments were transcribed ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Comments and suggestions were thematically arranged. Students articulated that they like reminders, streamlined information, concise messaging, use of giveaways and appealing words or images, and prefer connection to the content. As far as social media preferences, students prefer Instagram followed by Facebook, then Snapchat using filters and lastly Twitter. Posters, flyers and TVs were not preferred while videos and emails were. Tabling needs to be planned with quick engagement activities, food, giveaways and engaging people. Students suggested a centralized events place either in the TRUGo App or MyTRU not the website.

## Summary of Participant Comments and Suggestions

### Provide Reminders

#### Comments of Participants:

Students commented that they would like reminders about events: Eventbrite, email, Facebook, calendar.

- *[For example] like tomorrow there is an event for Trades & Technology, I booked for it 3 months back on Eventbrite, I totally forgot about it, and today I got a call about it.... And I remember about it now.*
- *Maybe if I got an email and in that email there was something I could put in the calendar on my computer.*
- *Or if there were a follow up email with supplementary information.*
- *I like having a reminder.*
- *I know on my Facebook, if I like an event it will ask if I want to add it to my google calendars on my phone.*
- *So instead of having a poster or a flyer instead you need something you can put in your own calendar whether it's online or in your day planner.*
- *Sometimes I do go on the calendar, sometimes there's really cool events that you miss on there.*
- *I normally just get notified or emailed about it; the only time I go out and look myself is when I go on the TRU website and look, or at the important dates to remember.*
- *Advertising a few days before or people will forget about it.*
- *Reminders are the main thing that we need for any event.*
- *I only see the social media content if it's on my newsfeed, I don't look for it.*
- *It's all about our own convenience.*
- *I get notifications for events [on Facebook] with my friends going to them.*

- *I'm a big fan of events at the Gathering Place, so if I get notifications about events posted there, those are my first priority.*

## Streamline Information

### Comments of Participants:

Students commented that information is spread out and duplicated. The request was to put information links in a centralized place and have messaging targeted to specific audiences.

- *Some things that a lot of people don't know about is that counselling is free. There's a crisis spot everyday if you need something that day, and that there's case managers there to help, or if you need to anonymously do something with a class.*
- *[So many pages] is actually kind of confusing.*
- *I think there should be marketing on the special pages, and one common page with all events.*
- *Sometimes the same information is on three different pages, it's very boring.*
- *I don't like [follow] all of the pages so I didn't see all of the events coming through.*
- *Put all events in one place.*
- *People within the faculty don't even really know what's going on with other departments, so I think to streamline that.*
- *Having a page streamlined. I have this specific problem, here are the steps, here is the link.*
- *I think with the links, it's a great way to do it. A short summary of what it's about then have the link. It doesn't work really for posters and stuff.*
- *Put the important stuff at the beginning and the boring stuff at the end.*
- *It's about the time vs. reward.*
- *Having one page with links, keeping it simple saying which person to go to for what you need.*
- *One way of receiving everything though would be social media.*
- *There's too many pages [social media channels] and not one page for TRU focused events.*
- *There's so many different pages showing so many different things.*
- *If you create events or have one page for events – that would be helpful.*
- *TRU World is the main page people like to look at, so have all of the events there.*
- *Sometimes I go to the events page if I have time to attend something next week.*
- *When we have events... how about those events are marketed in the particular courses then that audience would be targeted.*

## Be Concise

### Comments of Participants:

Students suggested having messages that are brief, simple and concise. Students are skimming.

- *Yes but in those emails, seeing a few different events, not overwhelming amount of information cause sometimes you get it and you're like there's so much to read that I won't even [read it].*
- *To the point and for the purpose is best.*
- *If there were emails of events and descriptions that are concise with links that I can go look at for more information.*
- *More brief and concise emails.*
- *When it's super brief it's good.*
- *Short and sweet is ideal.*
- *With newsletters, I usually skim.*

- *I skim.*
- *I skim, sorry!*
- *Short and sweet information to be and still have supplementary information.*
- *Keeping information really simple and telling the students who they need to talk to.*
- *A cool picture, videos I probably wouldn't watch right away.*

## Use Giveaways and Catchy Appeal

### Comments of Participants:

Students will engage and be interested when there are giveaways, and appealing images and/or wording.

- *When there is giveaways.*
- *Contests are always nice*
- *The normal giveaways guess the butter chicken and tag a friend to win this.*
- *Everybody loves [winning] that TRU moose.*
- *Something beneficial.*
- *If there's a picture of something outdoors or of campus or landscape grabs my attention.*
- *If it has a video or picture attached to the top or a catchy headline [then I'll read it].*
- *An image is good too though.*
- *I just focus on the links.*
- *I just focus on the photos*
- *I just focus on the videos.*
- *I just focus on the titles.*
- *Something catchy [in the headline].*
- *If it's the job fair, something meaningful. If it's like the back to school BBQ then something catchy.*
- *Catchy and colourful.*
- *If the subject is bold and big that catches my attention.*
- *Text accompanied by image is essential.*
- *Instead of reading all text I like to look at the pictures.*
- *Just by reading text we can't see what we will be getting.*
- *Prefer photo, video, then text.*
- *Image, video, text.*
- *Text is for if you really want to devote yourself.*

## Develop Connection

### Comments of Participants:

Students commented that they paid attention or shared information when they had a connection with the material: a friend, one-to-one interaction, role or position, and/or personal humour or meaning. The look for videos and materials with their peers in them.

- *Usually the post I'll stop on is people that I know.*
- *Again, coming back to someone that I know. There were seriously TRU videos that came out and I look first at the ones that had people I knew in the videos.*
- *I would say the same [about watching because they know someone in the videos].*
- *I usually will always sign something when people come around, its just when I'm busy studying and you see people circling around and you just try to look focused I ignore them.*
- *I think the teachers themselves [could share information]; students have habit of listening to their teachers.*

- *I think I want to share it because I feel like it's my responsibility as an ambassador to share what gets sent to us.*
- *I don't share much on Facebook, it really has to be something that resonates with me.*
- *I think about that half of my feed is not at TRU so it's not going to be relevant to them, maybe I shouldn't care because it's going to benefit people more than it won't.*
- *Even if I like something on a feed though, it will show on other people's pages.*
- *[I'll share] If it's something of interest to me.*
- *If it's something funny, I would share it with my friends.*
- *Bragging rights.*
- *It has to represent your own personal brand.*
- *When it's something funny, you want to share it.*
- *I like things but sharing things is another level.*
- *Another thing, something that I have is when [a friend] has done social media for [campus], I'm more likely to engage in that content because I see it in both places and make the personal connection. I engage in the content more because I know the person, it makes it more personal for me.*
- *There's been something like the day in the life of a student on one of the pages and they take you through what they're doing and I thought that was kind of cool.*
- *I think it's the social aspect for me, if I know a lot of other people are going or if it's a cool speaker, contests, food, etc.*
- *I'll attend if it has a student benefit.*
- *The thing that gets me to go to speakers or talks is really promoting the speaker well.*
- *I go to events when I think it would be useful.*
- *I think that FOMO [fear of missing out] will get people too.*
- *If I'm looking for a job and the Career Ed Department is organizing some event regarding how to plan for the future and the interviews, that's what I would be interested in.*
- *If it's a workshop you can't get much out of why would you read it?*
- *I find sometimes it doesn't matter if it's a wall of text, but I find that if it doesn't pertain to you as a student or you're not looking for something specific then why would you read it.*

## On Social Media

### Comments of Participants:

Students had different opinions when asked which social media they preferred to get messaging on but many suggested Instagram, followed by Facebook- especially for events, Snapchat with a filter and very few mentioned Twitter.

### General

- *I would say social media for me. I go to social media to forget about the real world. I don't want to be reminded about school.*
- *It should be public, more and more friends should promote [through social media].*
- *Social media is fine for anything.*
- *I get information from social media, but I don't have Instagram.*
- *Depends on time of time, like when you post content.*
- *Social media is pretty good.*

- *If there is posting about something associated with TRU, I'll be sure to take a look.*
- *The TRU website events page.*
- *Social media, in my program we're not on Twitter so I have zero idea of anything TRU has posted on Twitter ever.*
- *We could create a WhatsApp group as well, it's a nice option.*

### Instagram

- *Instagram stories.*
- *Now since Instagram isn't chronological, sometimes it can be confusing but stories are updated live.*
- *Instagram stories [can be frustrating] nobody ever sees them.*
- *I do think I seek information on Instagram pages, that's probably the social media I spend the most time on.*
- *Social media, like Instagram and I guess a little bit of Twitter.*
- *Instagram is a big one, Facebook, meh.*
- *[Combating] boredom for me is Instagram; if there is something interesting. It has sent me to other places and to attend events on campus.*
- *I definitely go to Instagram first. The only reason I go to Facebook is [for groups I'm apart of] Usually I choose not to go to [Facebook] because it's so full of ads and junk that I'll be 12 hours late to a poll or something.*
- *Instagram first, then Twitter.*
- *I would say Instagram.*
- *With Instagram, it's kind of a gamble if I'm going to see it or not.*
- *I think Instagram is better if you want more people to see it because Facebook has a lot of content and people might skip through it.*
- *I think as far as Instagram and Facebook pages are concerned, more people like the number of pages on Facebook compared to what they like on Instagram. People are following limited number of pages on Instagram compared to Facebook, so there's a more chance of seeing a post on Instagram. On Facebook, everybody has [so many friends] and pages, so Instagram is a better place to share [events], Facebook is getting more unpopular these days.*

### Facebook

- *I would say Facebook and Twitter would be okay, but don't get on my Instagram or Snapchat.*
- *Facebook is more business.*
- *I prefer Facebook.*
- *I definitely look at Facebook feeds and timelines, but I don't really seek it out, it kind of just pops up.*
- *For me, Facebook first then Snapchat.*
- *Facebook I have to mentally remind myself to check into.*
- *On Facebook, not a lot.*
- *I'm more likely to see stuff on Facebook especially if others are sharing it.*
- *I think I see more of the posts on Facebook because of the way it works. Instagram has been kind of dumb lately.*
- *Yeah if I'm really interested, I say maybe [to Facebook events] or that I'm going to the event so I can get the notifications.*
- *The first preference would be Facebook followed by Instagram.*

- *Most people go to Facebook and look through new posts, then spend most time on Instagram.*
- *Sometimes if I'm bored on the weekend I'll go look up on Facebook Events near me in Kamloops.*

### *Snapchat*

- *As far as Snapchat is concerned, it can be used as an additional marketing tool. There can be filters for the events; people can go through the filters for fun.*
- *If you were going to do Snapchat though, for Orientation or Last Class Bash, to do a filter or a geotag or something to add stuff into people's stories makes it look so fun and everybody will see it.*
- *Getting a personal platform with Snapchat is not a good idea.*
- *The good thing about Snapchat is you can put people's faces on filters and they're more likely to want to see what's happening in all the weeks.*
- *If you are at an event and you generate what's happening then people see how fun it looks and they'll want to go next time, or think they could be on snapchat and more people will want to go into the story themselves showing how fun it is.*
- *I definitely want to know about events [on Snapchat].*
- *I check out Snapchat, and all this stuff pops up of what other people are doing.*

### *On Tabling*

#### *Comments of Participants:*

Students suggested that they are busy and sometimes avoid the tables. Tables need to have something quick and attractive to pull students in: person that engages them, food, or an activity.

- *Immediately, I just think of a little candy or something obviously that pulls somebody in. Whatever the poster is though it has to be catchy.*
- *When you're tabling you have to kind of pounce on the people that make eye contact.*
- *Some people are just too busy and rushing to class and don't make eye contact or stop.*
- *Usually when they come up to the table to get free food they sometimes don't even realize it's free and ask if they can take one, then when you ask if they want to hear about the table they say no sorry I'm busy.*
- *It takes a certain type of person to even approach a table.*
- *If there's someone at a table and nobody there talking to them I feel bad and will go talk to them and ask what their table is about.*
- *When it's not just people standing at a table.*
- *When there's activity with the table that draws people in more than if there's just a flyer or free stuff.*
- *There was a card making station, but no one stopped to do that. But when you have things like Consent Tea, it's a big tabling thing and people do actually stop and do things at it.*
- *It's funny because I think people going around is a useful way of getting information out there and it's usually how I found out a lot, but still I don't like to be interrupted.*
- *The booths in Old Main, I'm not likely to stop and talk to them, maybe in my first years at TRU I would have when I was probing different opportunities and experiences.*
- *Quick activities that won't take a lot of time.*
- *If there's so many tables I just walk past but if they make an effort to grab you then I see what it is*

- *With [events], when my friends message me I want to go, but it was the conversation with my friend and the follow up that made me go.*
- *Tabling drives me mental, but I do like the opportunity to stop at a booth if something is happening. I see bake sales and people just sit there and nothing is going on, I do think that the ones that are successful are they ones that are doing things and having things going on and the students then want to know what's going on, they're more likely to stop. Even if it's nothing to do with what you're trying to tell them. It's making them stop.*
- *Bring a pet [to the tables] and you'll have a million people stopping.*
- *Tabling I find if I'm out in Old Main studying, I don't want to be disturbed.*
- *You feel obligated to stop and talk but I'm more likely to not pay attention to what they're telling me because I just want to be left alone.*
- *One thing about the bake sale side of things: I actively encourage [my group] not to have a bake sale. Every time I'm in Old Main, it might be an interesting group - but I don't have any change on me, so if I go up to that table I can't buy anything, and that's awkward for me. I avoid the table because I really want the cupcake, but I can't buy it, and there's an obligation to buy something, and I end up avoiding it at all costs. Instead, have something engaging, so there's no barrier for people to come up with it.*
- *If there are so many tables, I just walk past, but if they make an effort to stop you then I'll talk.*
- *I think tabling is great, it's better than just reading a flyer if the person is passionate about it, and they can explain it better.*
- *I don't really like the idea of someone trying to grab my attention and making me go to the table to listen to what they have to say, but if I'm interested and ask what its about, I think it's a good way to do it.*

## On Flyers and Posters

### Comments of Participants:

Students commented that flyers are forgotten or end up on the floor while there are too many posters that all blend and offer no follow up. Some stated that they do look at bulletin boards at certain times and places such as when waiting for a classroom, and there is a board right there. Several students commented about the waste produced through posters and flyers.

- *I'm not really a fan of that to be honest. Most of the time flyers just end up on the ground.*
- *I think if you're going to do a flyer, I know they get neglected or left laying around, so maybe if you taped it to a table it might be better.*
- *I don't know because sometimes I'll still just put flyers in a bag and forget about it, I just get busy.*
- *That's a tough one because I do like touching it but the reality is, does it just end up in a stack on my desk? Probably. And then to what you said about the posters, thinking about [past events], sometimes there's so much that I just keep seeing it and seeing it, and since you see it so far in advance, there's no urgency to take action because you're like it's a ways down the road.*
- *The posters are used too much.*
- *I don't really look at it and I even put posters up there, unless they're super colourful and eye catching (posters).*
- *Posters just blend, because there's so many. There's like 50 on there at one time, and they just overlap.*
- *There's nobody really following up so there's posters on top of posters and it's just a mess.*
- *They're [posters] all just blue and yellow.*



- *[Poster colours] It's kind of a sea of blue, sometimes I'll notice the Wolfpack because its black and orange.*
- *I would look at them if I was out side of the classroom waiting.*
- *I know there's a lot of students who do have to wait in the hall for class but are they the ones who are following up with what they're seeing? I don't know.*
- *The posters not so much, there's sooooo many.*
- *The posters honestly, I don't intentionally go out of my way to ignore them I just don't look at them.*
- *I do notice posters, I always feel like I'm a little weird though.*
- *Posters I do notice only because we make posters for Wellness.*
- *Usually in Old Main is where I get the most exposure to them.*
- *I'll read them while I'm waiting for class.*
- *I look at posters when I'm walking to and from class, mostly in Old Main and sometimes in IB.*
- *Posters with the tear off slips I find helpful.*
- *Big, bold and colourful.*
- *The more appealing headline, the more interesting it is.*
- *I do see posters quite a bit around, not probably all of them but I do stop and look at them sometimes.*
- *Yeah, bulletin board clutter can be intimidating sometimes.*
- *I feel like they [bulletin boards] need to be more readily maintained.*
- *Usually when I'm outside of a class waiting around I see the posters.*
- *I don't see all events on the poster board, I just happen to see about 25% of what's put out there.*
- *There's too much on the poster boards, it's just bogged down with things.*
- *Reading posters it's good to see general things, but if you're going to get direct like email or Twitter. My first instinct is well if I'm not interested and not going to go to that then I wouldn't even think to share it for somebody else.*
- *I just believe that when we have posters stuck to the wall, its better chance the posters come off the wall, people don't even see them. The slides stay in the TV, nothing can happen to them.*
- *Printing the posters, it's a cost.*
- *The posters, there are thousands of them going on, we cannot focus on the one particular thing you want us to, the posters aren't happening these days.*
- *The posters should be extraordinary to catch someone's eye.*
- *When you go through Old Main, there's walls with so many posters, and it's so hard to figure out sometimes. It would be so nice if there was just a slide going on.*
- *Posters are also a waste of paper.*
- *I like the LEAP program so when I look at a poster I look for the blue colour.*
- *For me it's more the words or the fonts.*
- *When I see any poster that's not blue, it's eye catching. There's too many blue posters.*
- *Instead of posters on the walls, having them in the middle of the corridors, between doors, etc.*
- *It's nice when you get to see or learn something new [in the halls].*
- *Having boring posters on purpose, then have an interesting poster in the middle would make you want to be interesting in the middle poster.*
- *In a group of posters, I only tend to focus on a few.*
- *If a poster is telling me I have to do something else, I might forget to do it by the time I get home.*
- *The most unappealing is the posters. It's unnecessary. People don't stand there and go through them, and there are thousands of posters.*

- *People are wasting their paper and time on making posters.*
- *Posters aren't updated as well; sometimes they're last week's posters.*
- *I don't look for posters; I just see them in passing.*
- *This poster thing, there should be minimum use of them. I think it's just a waste of paper. The small size posters don't work but the big ones like for IDays work.*
- *I think the TV and poster serve the same purpose so there should only be one of them.*

## On Emails

### Comments of Participants:

Students stated that email is necessary as it is perceived as being formal and professional.

- *Probably, I'm one of the few that check my emails. So emails, Facebook updates and Instagram posts are the ones I check the most.*
- *I would say emails as well.*
- *I feel like the only time I get TRU email is if it's President's lunch or something.*
- *I definitely look at email because I think they're important.*
- *I would prefer to get any kind of communications via email. It shows professionalism.*
- *Some students are busy and couldn't attend to a phone call; they might be busy with something.*
- *On social media people might not be taking it very seriously, compared to email.*
- *Advertising is good for a particular event, but email is the best way to provide all the information.*
- *Everybody checks their emails these days, and everybody also checks their Facebook and Instagram.*
- *Which ever we get marketing strategies through, Facebook, Instagram or email is totally fine.*
- *My preference [for reminders] would be through email not a call.*
- *I know it's kind of old school, but I am on my email every single day for assignments and projects and school so that is a good way to get in touch in terms of outreach.*

## On MyTRU, Moodle and TRU GO App

### Comments of Participants:

Students asked for a centralize event page either in the app or in myTRU.

- *Almost every TRU student logs into mytru, so creating another segment in mytru that shows events. They can click on it and know about the events coming.*
- *It would be better if there was another section on MyTRU.*
- *A small popup in that section [MyTRU] would be good.*
- *Everyone has a MyTRU.*
- *Nobody likes the new MyTRU; it's really hard to navigate.*
- *I would just like to see more on MyTRU and Moodle.*
- *I think the TRU Go app is a nice thing. There should be an events column on that app that would really help.*
- *The TRU Go app is really a nice thing, but it should have an event page.*

## On TV's

### Comments of Participants:

Students commented that the TVs are not attracting them nor are students seeking out information through this medium.

- *I notice the TVs in the TRUSU building sometimes.*
- *Oh, up there? Oh yes, yeah. I looked up there. It's not something I seek out but if I'm standing around it will catch my eye, again with bright colours.*
- *I'm more likely to catch something that's not blue, because there's so much blue.*
- *As well, I happen to have a lot of class in Old Main, and I wonder if there aren't students in Old Main that often, would they see those if they're always in AE or something.*
- *The TV slides aren't impactful.*
- *If I'm sitting in Old Main with my friends, there's a possibility I'm looking at the TV slides and what's going on over there, but I'm probably looking at my phone instead, that's the place I get my information.*
- *The TV slides normally people just pass by.*
- *A good thing you could try with the TV slides is the important information; you could come up with important messages or put out sounds to get the focus of the people.*

## On Videos

### Comments of Participants:

Students stated that videos are preferred as they can be short, informative, entertaining and an easy way to learn.

- *I usually watch them right to the end.*
- *I usually will, if it's a topic I already know a bit about I'll probably scroll through it.*
- *The visual of the videos [TRU Student Life] is nice because you can see where you're going especially in the first few years when you're just focused on your normal route.*
- *It depends what it's on, but I like shorter. It's better usually when it comes to gaining information.*
- *I think the general length (2.5 min) of the TRU Student Life videos has been good. I watch them fully through to the end, but if you really wanted to hammer out events. It could be shorter and to the point, like 30sec-1min.*
- *I watch the Alicia [TRU Student Life] videos, because they're hilarious.*
- *I've actively looked up the videos [TRU Student Life] has done because they often provide good tips.*
- *If [videos] were cut up into different videos like the Writing Centre and Math Centre then I might only watch and see one of them.*
- *I've seen all [TRU Student Life] videos.*
- *It depends what it is, when you're going around seeing the services provided I prefer the longer ones because I found out what was where, you're taking us on a journey through the school so if you shortened that up it would be way too short and I would be [confused] about where you went.*
- *If you're doing [events] that can be broken up a bit, but it depends what you're pushing.*
- *Videos are nice, because reading articles sometimes gets boring.*
- *I like video; I think its just fun to watch videos.*

- *I think the videos most recently, but I do think its cause [of who] I'm friends with on Facebook that I see them and not necessarily because I follow TRU Student Life.*
- *I often do think I see videos on Instagram.*
- *Videos on social media, especially on Facebook cause it just goes into the news feed, and I'm more likely to click on it so I can see what's going on.*
- *A two minute video shown at the beginning of class would be okay.*
- *Seeing parts of campus through the videos makes the students more comfortable in going to the places themselves than if they had never seen them before.*

## Recommendations:

Students prefer communications in which there are reminders, streamlined information, concise messaging, use of giveaways and appealing images or words, and a personal connection. As for what type of medium works best, students commented that social media is useful with preferences for Instagram, Facebook (especially for events), Snapchat (use filters), and very little was said about Twitter. On marketing, tabling was noted as something many students avoid as they are in a hurry, but may pay attention if there is food, a quick activity or an engaging person. Flyers were noted as being something they forget or leave behind while posters are overwhelming and ignored unless the bulletin board is in a convenient space where students are waiting. Emails are used all the time and necessary especially for formal and professional correspondence. The TVs are largely not noticed while students appreciate the videos as these are a quick, entertaining way to learn and stay up-to-date. When asked about myTRU and the TRUGo App, students asked for one centralized place for events on either of these.

Specific recommendations on communication messaging:

- Provide reminders.
- Streamline information so not to duplicate and inform about where to find the information.
- Create short and concise messages.
- Use giveaways and appealing images/ words.
- Develop connection through personalization.

Regarding mediums:

1. Use Instagram for short videos, pictures and stories.
2. Facebook is great for events. Inspire others to share, invite and attend. Use peers to develop connection through takeovers, tags and such.
3. Use Snapchat for filter feature, specialized live events: graduation use a gap and gown filter.
4. Tables need to be well-planned: have a quick activity, food and people trained in engagement.
5. Use flyers less. Use posters less.
6. Strategically place bulletin boards and tvs to where students are waiting: above elevators, line-ups, outside classrooms. Limit the amount of these or they are deemed overwhelming and pointless.
7. Use email for formal and professional communications.
8. Use videos: keep them short, entertaining and with important information. Involve students in videos to create connection.

9. There is potential to use the app or MyTRU for a centralized place for events.

The focus groups were differentiated based on year of study: first, middle and final. This did not provide any additional information, but did ensure we had a broader spectrum of voices. For future focus groups, consider not differentiating by years as it was difficult to promote and manage these groupings, and did not impact the data in a significant manner. As well, the timing of year being the end of February and April, the end of the semester, proved difficult to recruit participants. Future focus groups need to think strategically about the timing.

## Conclusion

The Communications and Marketing Focus Groups provided insight into the present marketing and communications practices at Thompson Rivers University. The student's perceptions and suggestions revealed that there is room for improvement.

Students want information that is streamlined, concise, and personalized with appeal, giveaways and reminders. They like social media particularly Instagram and Facebook especially for events. Students are checking email for formal and professional information. Reaching students using TVs, posters and flyers was perceived as less desirable. The students would like a place outside of the website to find events as the website is daunting. Finally, the students like short, entertaining and useful videos in which they find their peers.

TRU can strategically use this information to inform students where to find different types of information. For example, all formal communication could be emailed. Events could be centralized on the app or in myTRU with pages set up on Facebook and promotions on Instagram. Instagram and Snapchat can be used for livestreaming during events. The placement of bulletin boards and TVs needs to be strategically planned: Where are students waiting? Where might they be looking- up or around? Training should be provided for people doing tabling with planning regarding purpose, quick appealing activity and training in icebreaking skills. Use less posters and flyers and more videos in marketing. The videos should include students as students share and connect with peers.