



RICE UNIVERSITY
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

RICE BEYOND THE HEDGES



Working Group Report

Executive Summary

Students indicated in the Spring 2017 Survey of All Students that the top priority of the Student Association should be improving student engagement beyond the hedges. In response, we created the Rice Beyond the Hedges Working Group to investigate the current state of student engagement beyond the hedges, identify barriers that prevent student engagement, and determine how the Student Association can promote opportunities for engagement in the Houston community. We gathered data from the student body via the Fall 2017 Survey of All Students, held focus groups with student club leaders, met with various University departments that emphasize engagement with the community, and conducted research on programs offered by other universities.

In the Survey of All Students (SAS), responding students reported that they rarely engage in direct service to the Houston community or off-site advocacy for social causes. 49.85% of responding students reported that they have never engaged with the Houston community via research or internships. Students indicated that they were more actively engaged with the Houston community via exploration of Houston or tourism. The current levels of engagement with the Houston community reported by students seem to differ from the levels of engagement that are desired by students. In the SAS, 42.79% of responding students indicated that they are most interested in engaging with the Houston community via internships or research. Responding students (23.70%) reported that they are most interested in engaging with the community via exploration or tourism, and 20.50% of students indicated that they would most like to engage in direct service to the Houston community. Only 3.73% of students reported that they do not want to engage with the Houston community, which is a stark contrast to the current levels of engagement reported by students.

Responding students indicated that the most common barriers preventing them from engaging with the Houston community are lack of transportation, lack of time, and lack of awareness about opportunities and resources. When asked about how Rice can improve the opportunities and resources provided to students to engage beyond the hedges, common themes in student responses were providing a safe and cost-efficient method of transportation, addressing high workloads of students, creating a platform for centralized information, and increasing breadth of opportunities. Student club leaders reported that students want centralized communication about opportunities for engagement and want more platforms to learn about these opportunities. Additionally, clubs would like assistance with connecting with like-minded community partners. Students also seem to prefer one-time opportunities because of lack of time or lack of opportunities that align with their schedules. Club leaders also felt that the lack of engagement beyond the hedges is a result of a lack of culture of social engagement, and student participation may increase with more incentives for going off-campus.

We also met with various university departments to gain perspective on how to encourage students to engage with the Houston community. The Doerr Institute and the Association of Rice Alumni are interested in creating new programs to encourage student engagement beyond the hedges such as leadership excursions and a “community week.” The Center for Civic Leadership, Student Activities, and Center for Career Development already have existing programs to provide students with these opportunities, and are therefore more interested in how we can help advertise their programs to interested students.

Moving forward, we would like work with university stakeholders to implement our brainstormed ideas and adapt them for success at Rice. Our ideas include

1. Create a calendar for off-campus service events
2. A listserv or e-mail service for opportunities to engage beyond the hedges
3. Increase discussion about engagement beyond the hedges at Orientation Week
4. Create incentives for engaging beyond the hedges
5. Work with the Doerr Institute to create “Leadership Excursions”
6. Work with the Association of Rice Alumni to create a “Community Week”
7. Assist the Center for Career Development, Center for Civic Leadership, and Student Activities in advertising their existing events
8. Create a website for centralized research, internship, and volunteer opportunities
9. Establish partnerships with volunteer organizations for volunteer sign-up
10. Create a “passport” program to encourage students to explore Houston
11. Establish transportation via shuttles for city-wide social advocacy events
12. Create window stickers for Hedgehopper businesses
13. Create a Beyond the Hedges Student Association Standing Committee

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Introduction

Rice University students indicated in the 2017 Survey of All Students that improving student engagement outside of the hedges should be the top priority of the Student Association. Thus, the Rice Beyond the Hedges Working Group was created with the goal of investigating the current state of student engagement beyond the hedges, identifying barriers students face when becoming involved in the Houston community, and finding avenues through which the Student Association can work alongside University administrators to promote opportunities for student engagement beyond the hedges. We also brainstormed implementable ideas through which the Student Association can improve student engagement outside of Rice and actionable steps we can take as students to bring these ideas to fruition.

The working group engaged with different stakeholders on campus to gather input and brainstorm implementable ideas. We gathered data from the undergraduate student body via the Survey of All Students, receiving over 3,000 total student responses. From this data, we determined how students currently engage outside of Rice, identified barriers students face that prevent them from engaging with the Houston community, and asked students about the changes and improvements they would like to see at Rice in terms of promoting opportunities for student engagement beyond the hedges.

We also held focus groups of student club leaders with emphasis placed on clubs that engage beyond the hedges, such as PAIR (Partnership for the Advancement and Immersion of Refugees), Rice All-Stars, Navigators, Best Buddies, Environmental Club and more. We asked them about the barriers they face as clubs that are trying to engage with the Houston community and how Rice could better support them and their missions.

Additionally, we met with various University department stakeholders - Center for Civic Leadership, Student Activities, Center for Career Development, Doerr Institute, and Association of Rice Alumni. We asked these departments about the opportunities for student engagement beyond the hedges that their offices currently offer, efforts that they have made in the past that were not successful, and how we could better support these departments as the Student Association in terms of advertising events and programs to students.

Finally, we conducted extensive research on programs that are in place at other universities and institutions both in Houston and across the nation. From this research - in combination with the feedback we received from the general student body through the Survey of All Students, input from student club leaders, and information from University department stakeholders - we brainstormed a list of implementable ideas that could be successful at Rice to promote student engagement beyond the hedges and created a list of actionable steps we can take as students to bring these ideas to fruition.

Student Assessment

Survey of All Students

Q178 - How often do you currently engage with the Houston community, and how often do you participate in any of these activities?

| Question | Never | | Once a semester | | Once a month | | 2-3 times a month | | Once a week | | More than once a week | | Total |
|--|--------|------|-----------------|------|--------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|-------|
| Direct service (Example: hands-on volunteering) | 24.43% | 756 | 43.10% | 1334 | 17.22% | 533 | 6.59% | 204 | 6.98% | 216 | 1.68% | 52 | 3095 |
| Off-site advocacy for social causes | 67.16% | 2045 | 19.93% | 607 | 7.62% | 232 | 2.99% | 91 | 1.67% | 51 | 0.62% | 19 | 3045 |
| Internships or research | 49.85% | 1513 | 19.08% | 579 | 4.45% | 135 | 3.59% | 109 | 6.19% | 188 | 16.84% | 511 | 3035 |
| Exploration of Houston (Example: tourism) | 12.60% | 386 | 15.34% | 470 | 29.77% | 912 | 24.75% | 758 | 12.60% | 386 | 4.93% | 151 | 3063 |
| Other (please specify) | 71.80% | 275 | 3.66% | 14 | 9.92% | 38 | 4.44% | 17 | 4.44% | 17 | 5.74% | 22 | 383 |

Question 178 of the 2017 Survey of All Students asked students about how often they engage in direct service (e.g., volunteering), off-site advocacy for social causes, off-campus internships or research, and exploration of Houston. Based on the results, for off-site advocacy for social causes and internships or research, “never” received the highest number of responses. For direct service, the results indicated that the greatest number of students, at 43.10%, only engage in direct service one a semester, with “never” receiving the second most responses at 24.43%. For off-site advocacy for social causes, 67.16% of students responded that they “never” engage in off-site advocacy and 19.08% of students responded that they engage in advocacy “once a semester”, accounting for about 87% of students. These results suggest that in general, student engagement off-campus has room for improvement.

Although 49.85% of students have never engaged with the Houston community through internships or research, 16.84% of students report that they are off-campus for internships or research “more than once a week”. The “more than once a week” option received very few responses for the other activities at less than 5% for each activity. The significantly higher

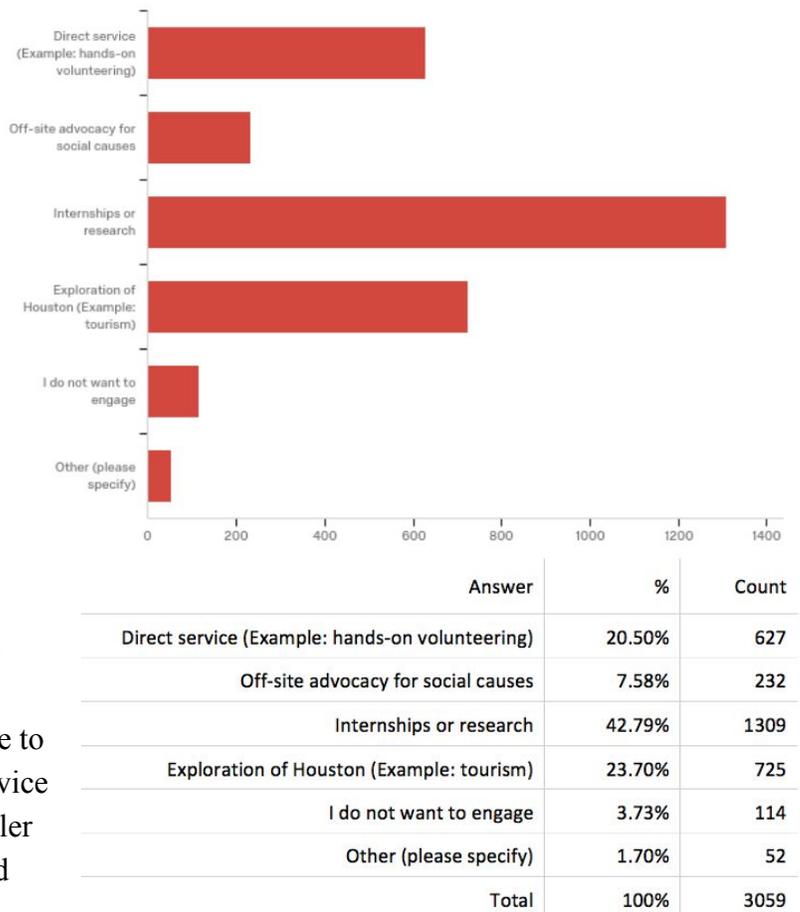
response to “more than once a week” for engagement with the Houston community through internships or research is likely due to Rice students’ drive to find internships and research related to their academic field. For example, with the Texas Medical Center located across the street, many students are able to find internships with the hospitals or research opportunities at institutions such as Baylor College of Medicine or UTHealth Science Center.

Responses for engagement with the Houston community through exploration of Houston were much more distributed. “Once a month” received the greatest amount of responses at 29.77%, with “2-3 times a month closely” following at 25.75%. The results indicate that over 70% explore Houston at least once a month.

“Other” was also listed as an option which allowed students to specify additional activities through which they engage with the Houston community. Although 71.80% of students did not indicate additional ways in which they engage with the Houston community, those who did responded with “once a month” most frequently. Common responses of such activities include attending church, working other off-campus jobs, and eating at restaurants.

Q179 - How would you like to engage with the Houston community?

The greatest number of students that responded (42.79%) indicated that they would most like to engage with the Houston community through internships or research. This indicates that one of the main desires of Rice students for engaging with Houston is through academic opportunities related to their field of interest. The second largest number (23.70%) indicated that they would most like to engage via exploration of Houston or tourism. Thus, students also want to engage culturally with what the local environment has to offer. A fifth of responding students (20.50%) indicated that they would like to engage with the city through direct service such as hands-on volunteering. A smaller 7.58% of responding students indicated



that they would like to engage through off-site advocacy for social causes. Of the 52 students that selected the “other” option (1.70%), most mentioned wanting to engage through all four methods: direct service, off-site advocacy for social causes, internships or research, and exploration or tourism. Others reiterated wanting to explore Houston for cultural activities such as arts and music, not necessarily tourism.

Only 3.73% of responding students indicated that they do not want to engage. This data demonstrates that a large majority of students at Rice want to engage with the Houston community, and so it is important to improve opportunities available to them for doing so by minimizing barriers, such as transportation, lack of awareness about existing opportunities, and time constraints with students’ schedules.

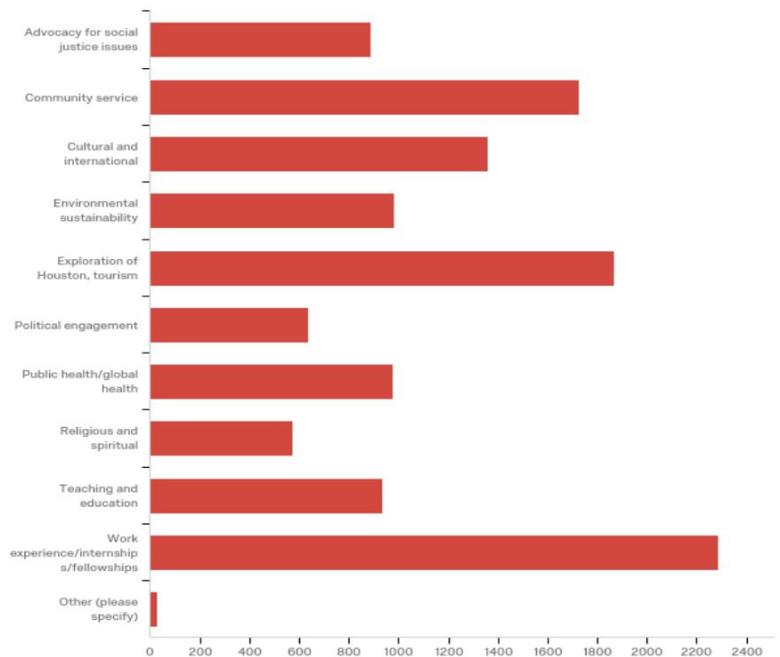
Q180 - Which of the following areas would you most likely participate in, if given the opportunity?

The largest number of responding students (18.64%) indicated that they are most likely to engage with the Houston community through work experience, internships, or fellowships.

The second largest number of responding students (15.24%) indicated that they are most likely to engage with the Houston community through exploration and tourism.

The third largest number of responding students (14.06%) indicated that they are most likely to engage with the Houston community through community service.

The fourth largest number of responding students (11.09%) indicated that they are most likely to engage with Houston through engaging in cultural and international events. This indicates the willingness of students to explore the local community and engage the



| Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------|-------|
| Advocacy for social justice issues | 7.23% | 887 |
| Community service | 14.06% | 1725 |
| Cultural and international | 11.09% | 1360 |
| Environmental sustainability | 8.00% | 981 |
| Exploration of Houston, tourism | 15.24% | 1870 |
| Political engagement | 5.21% | 639 |
| Public health/global health | 7.98% | 979 |
| Religious and spiritual | 4.70% | 576 |
| Teaching and education | 7.63% | 936 |
| Work experience/internships/fellowships | 18.64% | 2286 |
| Other (please specify) | 0.23% | 28 |
| Total | 100% | 12267 |

diversity of Houston and learn about the various cultures that constitute our community.

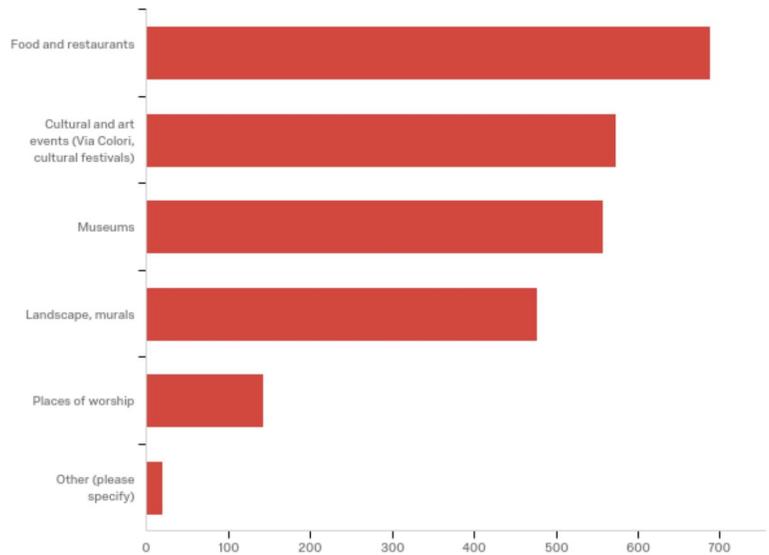
Smaller percentages of students indicated that they are most likely to engage with various social issues such as environmental sustainability (8.00%), public health or global health (7.98%), advocacy for social justice issues (7.23%), teaching and education (7.63%), and political engagement (5.21%). This highlights the fact that a significant portion of students find interest in opportunities that make an impact that extends beyond the local community as well.

Finally, 4.70% of students indicated that they are most likely to engage with religious and spiritual activities. It is possible that many students are currently involved in on-campus religious or spiritual groups and are not interested in exploring off-campus options.

28 responding students selected the “other” option. Most of these students indicated that they are interested in exploring art and music events. Other respondents mentioned exploring sporting events, volunteering at animal shelter, and engaging in entrepreneurship opportunities.

Q182 - Which aspects of Houston would you be interested in exploring?

The largest number of responding students indicated that they are most likely to engage with Houston via the city’s food and restaurants, with 28.1% of responding students indicating that they would be interested in doing so. The next most popular options were exploration of Houston’s cultural and art events and exploration of museums, with 23.33% and 22.68% of students indicating they would be interested in each option respectively. From these responses, we see that a sizable proportion of students would like to explore Houston’s cultural institutions.



| Answer | % | Count |
|--|--------|-------|
| Food and restaurants | 28.01% | 688 |
| Cultural and art events (Via Colori, cultural festivals) | 23.33% | 573 |
| Museums | 22.68% | 557 |
| Landscape, murals | 19.42% | 477 |
| Places of worship | 5.78% | 142 |
| Other (please specify) | 0.77% | 19 |
| Total | 100% | 2456 |

Comparably, 19.42% of responding students were interested in exploring landscape and murals. However, only 5.78% of responding students were interested in exploring places of worship.

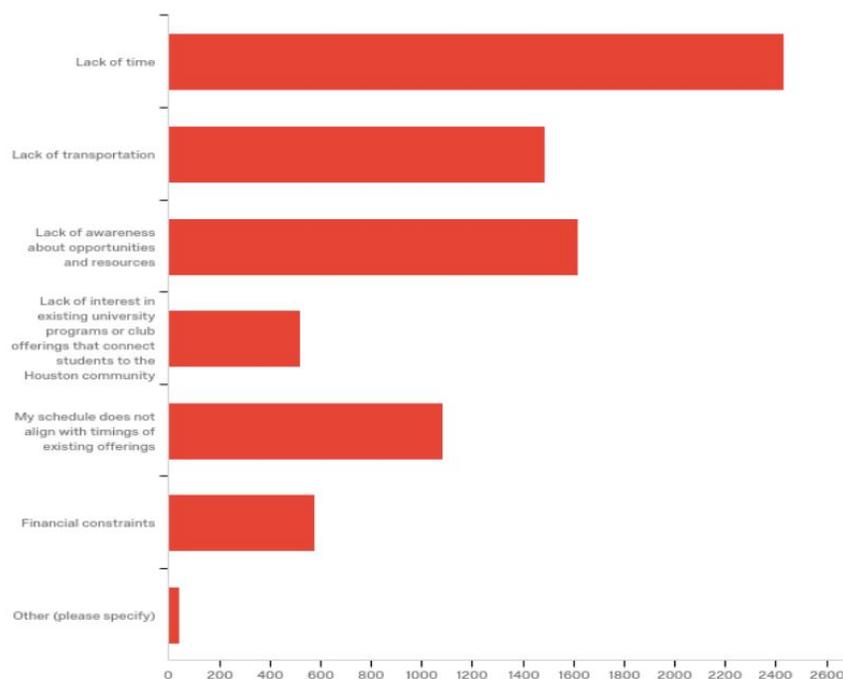
Less than one percent of students selected the other option. Many students who responded with “other” indicated that they are interested in exploring sporting events. Of course, Houston has a lot of other opportunities not listed in the survey (with nightlife being a notable example) that Rice students do currently engage with but may not have thought about when answering this survey.

Q183 - If you are interested in engaging with the Houston community but have not yet done so, what has stopped you?

Of all the responding students, 31.30% indicated that lack of time prevented them from engaging with the Houston community. 20.84% of responding students indicated that they lacked awareness about opportunities and resources. 19.19% of responding students indicated that lack of transportation has stopped them from engaging beyond the hedges.

Because 45.24% of responding students (31.3% indicating lack of time and 13.96% indicating that their schedule does not align with existing offerings) indicated that their busy schedules were not conducive to engagement outside the hedges, offering more one-time opportunities over a greater span of available times might increase student engagement outside of Rice.

In addition, 26.65% of responding students cited lack of transportation or financial constraints; thus, subsidies and financial assistance with transportation could also facilitate student engagement outside the hedges. 20.84% of responding



| Answer | % | Count |
|---|--------|-------|
| Lack of time | 31.30% | 2430 |
| Lack of transportation | 19.19% | 1490 |
| Lack of awareness about opportunities and resources | 20.84% | 1618 |
| Lack of interest in existing university programs or club offerings that connect students to the Houston community | 6.67% | 518 |
| My schedule does not align with timings of existing offerings | 13.96% | 1084 |
| Financial constraints | 7.46% | 579 |
| Other (please specify) | 0.57% | 44 |
| Total | 100% | 7763 |

students indicated that they lacked awareness about opportunities and resources, while only 6.67% of respondents cited lack of interest in existing programs. Thus, improving access to and general awareness of existing opportunities could improve student participation.

0.57% of students selected the “other” option. Less than a quarter of these students indicated that the respondents applied for positions in student clubs that would allow them to engage outside the hedges, but rejection from these positions prevented them from doing so. About a quarter of respondents selecting “other” indicated that engagement was of lower priority to them than other commitments and opportunities in their lives. Less than a quarter of respondents discussed the general culture of engagement outside the hedges and indicated that they do not know people who want to engage. Other respondents more specifically mentioned that there is not a supportive culture of engagement outside the hedges.

Q184 - How could Rice improve the opportunities and resources provided to students to engage with the community beyond the hedges?

Question 184 in the Survey of All Students was an open ended question asking students how Rice could improve the opportunities and resources provided to students to engage with the Houston community beyond the hedges.

The most prevalent theme found in student responses was lack of transportation. A particular comment was made by a student that summed up the issue with not having transportation:

“The most direct barrier for most Rice students would be transportation - in my opinion, it's not a question of the motivation to go out and volunteer, it's the question of whether or not you will be able to get there/back in a quick/safe/efficient manner”

While a few Rice students do have cars and are able to travel off-campus more easily, many students living both on-campus and off-campus do not have access to transportation outside of public transportation and rideshare services. While public transportation is efficient and quick (to certain areas), there is no guarantee of safety. While rideshare services are quick and often safe, they are pricey if used frequently and are thus not financially efficient. Therefore, when thinking of solutions to encourage students to engage beyond the hedges, we should consider providing transportation that ensures safety of students (such as ridesharing or public transport at not-odd hours) and is subsidized partially or fully by the university or student clubs such as RSVP.

The second most common theme in student responses was workload of students. Part of one student comment stood out:

“Many people are not involved beyond the hedges due to the sheer workload and if some distribution requirements or major-required classes can be given, it would boost engagement.”

Although it may not be feasible to change or reduce the workload of classes, we could facilitate the creation of classes or advertise existing classes that actively encourage students to explore Houston on their own or contain an exploration component, such as a field-trip. Implementation of this idea would involve conducting research on currently offered courses to better advertise them or meeting with stakeholder departments such as the CCL to encourage the creation of similar classes.

Other recurring issues that students wrote about are the lack of centralized information and a need for increased breadth of opportunities. Respondents indicated desire for a *“centralized online hub with postings about opportunities to connect with Houston organizations”* as well as a desire for more research opportunities *“in areas outside of STEM.”*

A centralized database with information about opportunities for students to engage with the Houston community would remedy the lack of awareness about existing programs that prevents students from engaging beyond the hedges. Additionally, a centralized database would allow Rice to advertise all known opportunities to all students, which may be more efficient than advertising opportunities through departmental listservs. A database that is well-maintained and organized provides students with an easier and more approachable way to find research and internship opportunities. Universities in the Houston area, including the University of Houston, have provided a similar tool for its students. Stanford University’s research and internship database can serve as a model as it is organized and well-updated. More about the centralized database can be found under Research.

Lastly, students have voiced interest in being able to use Tetra to purchase goods from outside vendors. Having this option would not be unique to Rice, as schools such as WashU St. Louis and Northwestern have similar programs for students. However, due to various logistical and administrative reasons, Rice Housing and Dining has made it clear that this is unlikely to be implemented at Rice. Despite this, a viable alternative could be instead looking to provide discounts to students at surrounding stores and restaurants, which may incentivize students to explore outside the hedges.. Currently, the Student Association has a list of outside vendors that provide Rice students with discounts through the Hedgehopper program. We could increase advertisement of this program within the Rice community for students and also in the Houston community for other vendors to join. To increase awareness of the program to vendors in the

community, we can provide participating locations with a window sticker that allows students to find which vendors provide discounts without having to check online. Furthermore, the window stickers can advertise our program to other vendors that would like to partner with us.

Student Focus Groups

We met with leaders representing a variety of Rice student organizations in a series of three focus groups to learn about student experiences with engagement beyond the hedges.

We would like to thank the following club leaders for participating in the focus groups: Kseniya Anischenko (Pancakes for Parkinson's), Michelle Zhao (PAIR), Tess Gabert (Rice All-Stars), Talia Liu (Best Buddies), Carly Frieders (Rice ACLU), Noor Osmani (Environmental Club), Michael McDowell (Rice Mock Trial, Wiess Cabinet), Alexis Williams (MedicOwl), Anna Seballos (Filipino Foundation at Rice University) and Meredith McCain (Civic Duty Rice).

The main takeaways from the focus groups were as follows:

1. **Students want and need clear, concise, and centralized communication.** We should have a campus-wide platform to discuss opportunities for engagement with the Houston community that are open to the entire student body. One idea is a campus-wide listserv or e-mail service that sends short, concise lists of opportunities and events for students to engage beyond the hedges.
2. **Connecting like-minded community partners to clubs and organizations would help them network with more experienced groups beyond the hedges.** Many religious organizations on campus are already affiliated with religious organizations off-campus. Other campus groups are chapters of national organizations. These groups benefit from the external opportunities created by this connection to a larger, more experienced organization off-campus. Where possible, Rice should facilitate collaboration between campus and off-campus groups.
3. **Students prefer one-time opportunities.** The club presidents in the focus group mentioned that it is difficult to encourage students to participate in many different activities or even one repeating event, even in on-campus activities, because they had other priorities. In their experiences, often times schoolwork, socialization with peers, employment, or other time commitments are prioritized over service or community engagement. Although regular student commitments to service off-campus is ideal, students would be more likely to participate in one-time opportunities.

4. **There should be more platforms for students to learn about opportunities.** Early and effective communication about off-campus opportunities would set incoming Rice students up for success in engagement beyond the hedges. One idea is that campus-wide Orientation Week directors could have each advisor team at each residential college encourage incoming students to join clubs and organizations that they are interested in.
5. **Lack of motivation to engage outside the hedges is a result of the lack of a culture of social engagement.** For many students, the issues of the wider Houston community seem very distant. Many students do not feel educated about critical issues, and as a result, do not feel the call to make change. Additionally, Rice students feel that they have few opportunities to collaborate with other college students, such as students at the University of Houston. Finally, club leaders feel that both students and clubs stick to their routines. Many clubs organize the same programming each year instead of adapting to the needs of the community and community partners.
6. **More incentives for going off-campus should increase participation.** The biggest draws off-campus are often subsidized events such as annual ice skating events or subsidized tickets to Houston Rockets basketball games. Students often find these events enjoyable, and offering students a cheaper option via subsidized tickets is a clear incentive. As a result, it is possible that students will also respond to incentives for community service. One possibility is offering subsidized meals after service events. Furthermore, to combat the cultural aspect of low participation in off-campus service, the university should recognize outstanding examples of student engagement beyond the hedges. This could be done in a variety of platforms. For example, student clubs focused on service could recognize students for their dedication to engagement beyond the hedges, whereas the university could recognize students in Dateline Rice. Another option is a service certificate or award for students that meet a minimum service requirement in the Houston community.
7. **Rice should emphasize community service for all students.** Since lack of transportation is a factor that prevents students from engaging off-campus, transportation subsidies may increase engagement and lower financial constraints for students. Additionally, the university could consider integrating community service or engagement with the larger community into curriculum.
8. **Rice should increase its presence in the Houston community.** Because Rice is a small, elite, private university, it may be difficult to see the connection between students and the wider community. In many ways, Rice students are not very representative of their immediate neighbors in downtown Houston. A large part of the Rice student body is not

native to Houston, so many students may not have had the opportunity to connect with their fellow Houstonians or integrate into the city's culture. Improving student engagement beyond the hedges would be an important step towards further integrating Rice in the Houston community.

9. **We should take the task of improving engagement outside the hedges more seriously.** The club genre council system has been very effective in allowing clubs with similar interests to communicate and thus plan larger-scale events for members, often making it easier to coordinate trips off-campus to engage with the larger community. One idea mentioned in the focus group is to create a separate genre council for clubs focused on advocacy and service specifically in the local community. The existing genre council for service-oriented clubs includes all student organizations focused on service, but many members organizations are focused on their impact on a national or international scale. Offering genre council for clubs focused on local impact could perhaps connect student clubs that prioritize local community service and advocacy. Other efforts to recognize student achievements and impact on the local community are important should be prioritized as well.

University Assessment

University Department Meetings

We met with five Rice University departments to gain perspective on how to encourage students to engage with the community beyond the hedges. The departments we met with were the Doerr Institute, Association of Rice Alumni, Center for Civic Leadership, Student Activities, and the Center for Career Development.

Doerr Institute

Point of Contact: Director Tom Kolditz of the Doerr Institute.

1. **The Doerr Institute is interested in implementing the idea of “leadership excursions.”** What this entails is a group of students leaving Rice campus for an afternoon and going to a local Houston business or nonprofit to talk with a senior leader about that particular organization's logistics, operational tendencies, and leadership philosophies. During this discussion, the senior leader might give students a tour of the business or organization itself. Afterwards, a leadership advisor from the Doerr Institute could discuss take-away points to consider from the excursion.
 - a. The Doerr Institute would be willing to provide transportation for this program, and could potentially fund transportation.

- b. Logistics would include hiring students to organize the leadership excursions for the Doerr Institute by calling local organizations and vetting them. Expansion of the program to a larger scale could possibly require hiring more students or staff.

Association of Rice Alumni

Points of Contact: Assistant Directors Mimi Edwards and Javier Garcia of Alumni Programs.

1. **The Association of Rice Alumni (ARA) works with the Center for Career Development (CCD) to organize OwlEdge Externships, which are job shadowing experiences for Rice undergraduates.**
2. The ARA is looking to implement further programming outside of career building.
 - a. **A potential idea was the creation of a “community week.”** This would involve working with Rice alumni to create “job sites” around the Houston community in organizations such as food banks, shelters, community centers, and local public high schools. Throughout the week, students could potentially volunteer at these job sites. The main goals of the initiative could be to allow students to gain an appreciation for the diversity that makes Houston important, increase visibility of programs and events in Houston to encourage further student engagement, and pave the path for creating large scale events that connect Rice students with the Houston community.
 - b. **The ARA would like to further their relationships with the residential colleges.** Some residential colleges have existing college-specific alumni committees while others do not; thus, it was suggested that the ARA reaches out to each college individually to forge these relationships to prevent unnecessary overlap.

Student Activities and Center for Civic Leadership

Points of Contact: Kristen Ernst from Student Activities and Morgan Kinney from the Center for Civic Leadership (CCL).

1. **CCL and Student Activities prefer to hold smaller scale events for students.**
 - a. The CCL currently has encourages student engagement beyond the hedges through the Urban Immersion Lab for incoming students and Alternative Spring Break (ASB).
 - b. Student Activities holds Lunch and Lead sessions designed to develop leadership philosophies in individual students or members of a student organization.
 - c. Student Activities also created a system of Club Genre Councils in which student clubs with similar interests meet collectively to allow for coordinated events.
2. **The CCL and Student Activities recognize that a lack of knowledge regarding public transportation available in Houston is a key issue, tremendously hindering students from engaging beyond the hedges.**

- a. One suggestion is having a run-down of public transportation during Orientation Week at each residential college. Another potential idea is a “ride the rail” activity in which students go to different places on public transportation and get stamps at different locations, which could be redeemed for prizes or rewards.
3. **The CCL and Student Activities have many current programs to encourage student engagement beyond the hedges.** Some of these programs include, but are not limited to, Owl Edge Externships, Beyond the Sallyport, and Alternative Spring Break which already cater to developing leadership, career opportunities, and service. We should focus on helping to advertise or enhance their currently existing programs.

Center for Career Development

Point of Contact: Director Nicole Van Den Heuvel of the Center for Career Development (CCD).

1. **The main program of the CCD that encourages students to engage beyond the hedges is OwlEdge Externships, previously mentioned as job shadowing experiences for students.**
2. **Another program that the CCD has held is “Career Crawls.”** In this program, a group of students visited various companies in the Houston community and had first-hand experience looking at how different companies operate. The main objective was to keep the range of companies broad such that students felt invested and were able to find relevance to their field of interest.
3. **We should focus on helping to advertise or enhance their currently existing programs.**

Research on Peer Institutions

From the student survey, it is evident that students are looking to engage with Houston through 1) direct service 2) internships or research and 3) exploration. Not only are the things that students *want* to participate in, these are areas in which students have indicated they would most likely participate in. Within the direct service and internships/research domains, students have voiced interest in the following subdomains: advocacy, cultural and international programs, political engagement, public/global health, religious and spiritual, teaching and education.

To begin formulating ideas to improve university-wide involvement with Houston, our subcommittee looked into programs previously or currently implemented at similar universities. Our subcommittee looked at twenty (20) schools¹ including surrounding Houston schools and other Top 20 Schools from the U.S. News.

Among all schools, there were several overlaps in existing programs to Rice, such as Northwestern’s Day of Service (similar to our Outreach Day) and the “WildCards” from

Northwestern (similar to Rice's discounts for those with Rice IDs). However, there were also many programs that were commonly implemented among other schools that do not yet exist at Rice, such as subsidized transportation for student engagement (WashU, Pennsylvania State University). There are also programs, such as HomePlate (WashU), that connect students with families around the area for those who may be missing home-cooked meals, and a grocery program that makes healthy meals accessible to busy college students through a student-run program (Cornell). Furthermore, a commonly asked for incentive at Rice University that has been enacted at several other universities, such as Northwestern, WashU, and Cornell, is the ability to use Tetra at outside vendors. However, for a number of reasons (admin and logistical) Rice Housing & Dining has made it clear that such a program is unlikely to be implemented at Rice.

Moving Forward

With consideration to student interests and feasibility, our working group compiled a list of ideas that have the potential to be implemented successfully at Rice.

1. A calendar for off-campus service events

- a. What
 - i. Students may benefit from a campus-wide service events calendar with many filter options. Events could be tagged based on club genre, type of event, location, and level of subsidization. With this level of customization, a standalone website similar would be a convenient platform. One possibility is integrating this service calendar into the "Beyond the Hedges" website (offcampus.rice.edu). Another option is to integrate off-campus events with specific tags into the new Student Activities campus-wide events calendar. If this platform is successful, it could pave the way for a rewards system based on awarding points for community service. This could be similar to the rewards system that awards points for attending Rice sporting events, and it could be coordinated in conjunction with the service events calendar.
- b. Concerns this addresses
 - i. Lack of centralized information
- c. Examples
 - i. New campus-wide event calendar (<https://studentcenter.rice.edu/events>)
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with IT or other stakeholder department to create website

2. A Listserv or email service for opportunities for engagement beyond the hedges

- a. What
 - i. Students have expressed a desire for a clear and concise system of communication to advertise university-wide opportunities. While an off-campus service events calendar would organize individual club events, a listserv or e-mail service could increase student awareness of outreach events and combat the lack of a culture of community engagement. These emails should present many attractive opportunities for students in a concise manner that encourages students to keep reading. A potential option is to expand a currently existing listserv comprised of two offers from each service club on campus (ServiceClubCouncil@mailman.rice.edu) to include students interested in finding off-campus service opportunities. Another option is to create an entirely new listserv.
- b. Concerns this addresses
 - i. Lack of centralized information
- c. Examples
 - i. Campus-wide listserv
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with IT or other stakeholder department to create listserv

3. Make engagement beyond the hedges a topic of conversation at Orientation Week

- a. What
 - i. We would like to collaborate with the campus-wide Orientation Week (O-Week) directors to discuss possibilities for emphasizing engagement beyond the hedges at O-Week. Possibilities include panels specific to each residential college or holding a campus-wide club fair with some focus placed on community engagement.
- b. Concerns this addresses
 - i. Lack of awareness of existing offerings; culture of engagement
- c. Examples
 - i. None
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with campus-wide Orientation Week directors

4. Create incentives for engaging beyond the hedges

- a. What
 - i. We could create a nomination system to recognize students who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to engagement beyond the hedges

in the SA newsletter. Another possibility is reaching out to Rice Student Volunteer Program (RSVP) to do so. We are also interested in meeting with administrators to discuss the possibility of awarding grants to students who are spearheading service projects in the local community.

- b. Concerns this addresses
 - i. Lack of interest in existing offerings; culture of engagement
- c. Examples
 - i. None
- d. Resources
 - i. Collaboration with Student Association Communications Team or Rice Student Volunteer Program (RSVP)

5. Work with the Doerr Institute to create “Leadership Excursions”

- a. What
 - i. A program created by the Doerr Institute in collaboration with Rice students that would organize transportation-provided and subsidized trips for small groups of students to visit various Houston companies and organizations. Students would meet with senior leadership of Houston organizations on-site and discuss the operational logistics and leadership philosophies that drive these organizations. Doerr Institute advisors could wrap up the excursion with a discussion that summarizes the leadership philosophies observed.
- b. Concerns Addressed
 - i. Familiarizes students with existing resources (Doerr Institute)
 - ii. Provides transportation
 - iii. Provides networking opportunity for potential internships.
 - iv. Promotes awareness of organizations to engage with in the Houston community.
 - v. Encourages general student engagement with the Houston community.
- c. Examples
 - i. None
- d. Resources required
 - i. Staff or student volunteers to organize the programs and vet numerous Houston organizations
 - ii. Collaboration with related stakeholders such as the CCD

6. Work with the Association of Rice Alumni to Create a “Community Week”

- a. What
 - i. An event formed in collaboration with the Association of Rice Alumni Rice to create various “job sites” in the community at which students can volunteer.

Ideally, multiple sites would be available such that students could engage with different areas of Houston throughout of the week.

- b. Concerns Addressed
 - i. Shows Rice students the value of the different people, places, and groups in Houston.
 - ii. Increases visibility of Rice to Houstonians and demonstrates that our students actively look to engage with the community.
- c. Examples
 - i. None
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Subsidization of transportation

7. Assist the CCD, CCL, and Student Activities in advertising existing events to promote student engagement beyond the hedges.

- a. What
 - i. Meet with the CCD, CCL, and Student Activities to discuss how the SA could help advertise currently existing events and programs to students.
- b. Concerns Addressed
 - i. Lack of student awareness about existing programs that connect them to the Houston community
- c. Examples
 - i. Urban Immersion Labs - CCL
 - ii. OwlEdge Externships and Career Crawl - CCD
 - iii. Lunch and Leads - Student Activities
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with stakeholder organizations and Student Association Communications Team

8. Create a website for centralized research/internship/volunteer opportunities

- a. What
 - i. This is primarily a website that combines all available student opportunities, including research, internship, and volunteer opportunities. There would be an option to check domains students are interested in viewing. The website would be designed to be easily accessible to different departments and the CCL to edit and add opportunities; ideally, all opportunities being sent out through department Listservs would be collected here. In the first few months of the website's launch, we should be looking to advertise it heavily. To build the website, we should look into evaluating existing current websites that have been generated from

Rice University with similar goals in mind and create a website from scratch. This initiative will help to centralize information for Rice students, which from the Student Survey seems to be a great need.

- b. Concerns addressed
 - i. Lack of centralization of information
 - ii. Lack of awareness about existing programs
- c. Examples
 - i. Stanford [1] currently has a well-functioning, updated model
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with IT and other stakeholder departments such as CCL

9. Establish partnerships with volunteer organizations for volunteer sign-up

- a. What
 - i. A joint sign-up medium that connects Rice students and Houston volunteer organizations by allowing students to sign up to volunteer prior to the date of volunteering. The website/medium would have a carpool option that lists drivers and students.
- b. Concerns addressed
 - i. Lack of time
 - 1. This tackles the time availability concern. This way, if students find they *do* have time, they can easily sign up for a volunteer opportunity.
 - ii. Transportation
- c. Examples
 - i. Hurricane Harvey volunteering (R-HAT)
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with IT or other stakeholder department to create website or sign-up platform

10. Create a “passport” program to encourage students to explore Houston

- a. What
 - i. Students are given a blank “passport” and by going to specified locations (museums, restaurants, points of interest), students receive a sticker/stamp that they can collect. A completed passport can receive a prize such as a free t-shirt. This would ideally occur during syllabus week when students have more free time than they would during the school year.

- b. Concerns addressed
 - i. Motivates students, including Houstonians, to further explore Houston
 - ii. Gives students more opportunities to get involved with cultural and art events of Houston
- c. Examples
 - i. American Cheese Society Passport Program [[1](#)]
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Printing costs
 - ii. Collaboration with Rice Program Council

11. Establish transportation via shuttles for city-wide service or social advocacy events

- a. What
 - i. Providing a shuttle for students who want to participate in city-wide service or advocacy events, such as the March for Science earlier this year.
- b. Concerns Addressed
 - i. Student interest in social advocacy
 - ii. Transportation
- c. Examples
 - i. None
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Funds for subsidization of transportation

12. Create window stickers for Hedgehopper businesses

- a. What
 - i. Stickers provided to outside vendors that provide discounts for Rice students in order to raise awareness of participating vendors. Stickers may also promote additional partnerships.
- b. Concerns Addressed
 - i. Awareness
 - ii. Incentive to explore new places
- c. Examples
 - i. Northwestern's Wildcard Advantage stickers
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Printing costs
 - ii. Collaboration with Student Association Treasurer

13. Create Beyond the Hedges Student Association Standing Committee

- a. What
 - i. A committee, overseen by the Student Association Internal Vice President, composed of two committee chairs, new student representatives and committee members focused on improving student opportunities for engagement beyond the hedges. The creation of this committee would ensure that the ideas we brainstormed and other ideas are brought to the attention of relevant university stakeholders and potentially implemented.
- b. Concerns Addressed
 - i. The strong desire of students for the Student Association to work on improving opportunities for students to engage beyond the hedges, as indicated by the Spring 2017 Survey of All Students
 - ii. Ensures that the potential solutions included in this report will continue to be discussed following the completion of the Rice Beyond the Hedges Working Group
- c. Examples
 - i. Current Student Association Standing Committees
- d. Resources Required
 - i. Collaboration with Student Association Internal Vice President

¹University of Houston, Houston Baptist University, Texas Southern University, University of Texas Austin, University of Oklahoma, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, University of Virginia, Emory, Notre Dame, University of Michigan, Columbia, Stanford, University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern, Brown, Cornell, Vanderbilt, University of California Los Angeles, University of Southern California