

RSP Events Report

Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association

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WATERLOO UNDERGRADUATE
WUZA
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

In the fall 2024 term, 1540 undergraduate students signed up to participate in the Representative Survey Platform (RSP). The Athletics and Events survey was live from November 18 to 29 and received a total of 992 responses to the survey. After removing incomplete and invalid responses, 977 remained for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 63.44%. The goals for the survey were as follows:

- Understand student use of and experience with on-campus vs. off-campus gyms
- Explore student engagement with Varsity Athletics on campus
- Understand why students attend WUSA events and the outcomes they expect from them
- Learn student preferences for different types of events hosted by WUSA
- Understand what students would like WUSA to prioritize moving forward for events

The following report only reflects the findings related to the Events portion of the survey. Please see Appendix A at the end of the report for the survey questions.

Methodology

For the analysis process, we analyzed the closed-ended questions by creating graphs and using descriptive analysis to identify patterns found in the data. No statistical tests were conducted and there were no demographic comparisons. For the open-ended questions and other text-box responses, we used NVivo software to thematically code the data and create themes. These themes are highlighted throughout the report.

At a Glance

Key Findings

- 71% of students report attending food-related WUSA events. 68% of students also report one of the reasons they attend WUSA events is to eat free food.
- The top reason why students attend WUSA events is to have something fun to do with their friends (75% of students), demonstrating that WUSA events are seen as a social activity for many students.
- The top reason why students do not attend WUSA events is because they are too busy (60% of students).
- 38% of students do not attend WUSA events because they are not interested. Many students (n=163) recommend WUSA ensures events are fun, meaningful, and beneficial for students.
- Most students tend to prefer drop-in events where they can come and go as they please, which aligns with student sentiment around being too busy to attend events.
- Many students report challenges attending WUSA events due to their class schedules. This may be why students prefer to attend events held in the evening.
- 32% of students do not attend WUSA events because they hear about events too late or were not aware that WUSA hosted events.
- The event that students want WUSA to host the most frequently are food related events with 53% of students wanting these events to be held 4-5 times per term.

Key Considerations

Based on the above key findings, the following considerations will be necessary when making enhancements to WUSA events:

1. A future events strategy at WUSA should include a strategy for consistent, ongoing feedback mechanisms, such as post-event surveys, to help ensure better process for improving events with the goal of catering to the target audience of Waterloo students.
2. Events should continue to be advertised across multiple avenues such as social media and posters across campus. However, since students indicate that lack of detail about the event was a barrier to participation, marketing efforts should also include more information about the event itself.

3. When scheduling events, it is important to continue to ensure that they are held during times where students are most likely to be available to attend. Times when students are the least busy include evenings during the week as well as periods outside of midterms and exams. However, it is also important to compare this with actual event attendance to better understand whether students actually attend events during those times.
4. It is important to continue offering food at most WUSA events. Food-related events draw the most interest from students so making sure events provide food, and that this component is clearly advertised, is important to encouraging event participation.
5. Cost is an important factor regarding event attendance. WUSA events should continue to be free for all students and if a fee is required, that fee should be as low as possible. WUSA should also inquire about introducing a subsidy to help students attend any high-cost events.

Student Event Engagement

Students were first asked to indicate whether they had attended any WUSA events, to which 74% answered yes and 26% answered no (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Have you attended any WUSA events?

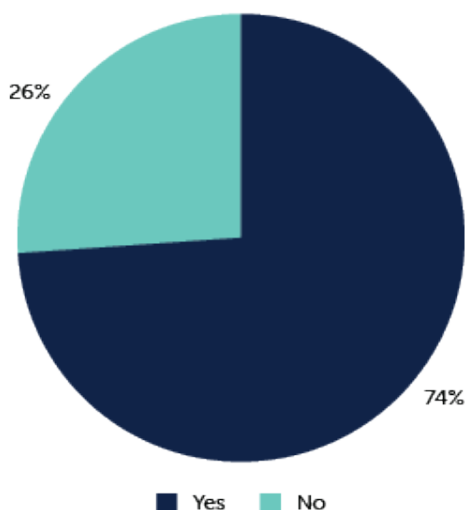
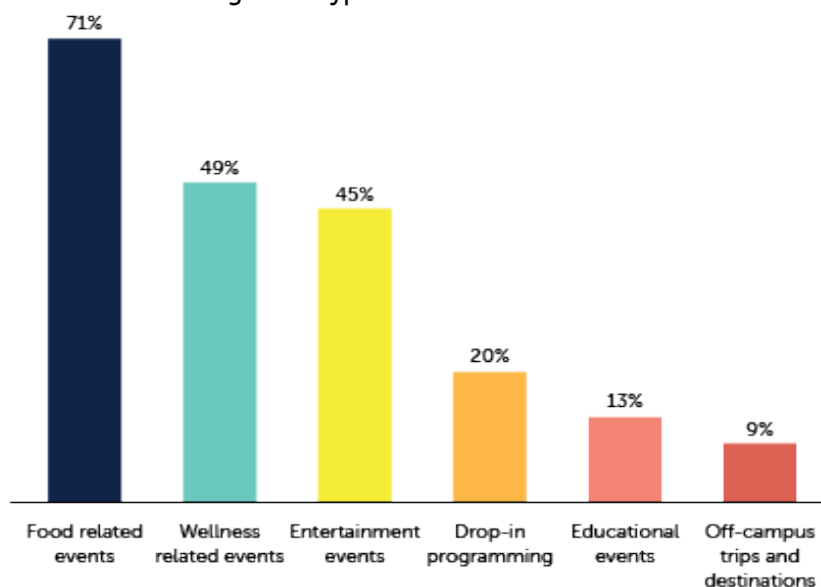


Figure 2: Types of events students attend



Of the students who attended WUSA events, the top three events attended were food-related events (71%), wellness-related events (49%), and entertainment-related events (45%). Only 9% of students attended off-campus trips and destinations (Figure 2). The responses to this survey question can also be compared to the actual student attendance collected at WUSA events. When looking at this data, we see food-related events such as the Welcome Brunch (1724 students attended in the fall term, 1144 in the winter term) and the Fall BBQ (1314 students attended) as having some of the highest event turnout. Moreover, entertainment events such as the Fall Carnival also had some of the highest attendance rates with over 3600 students attending each carnival day.

Student Event Experience & Interest

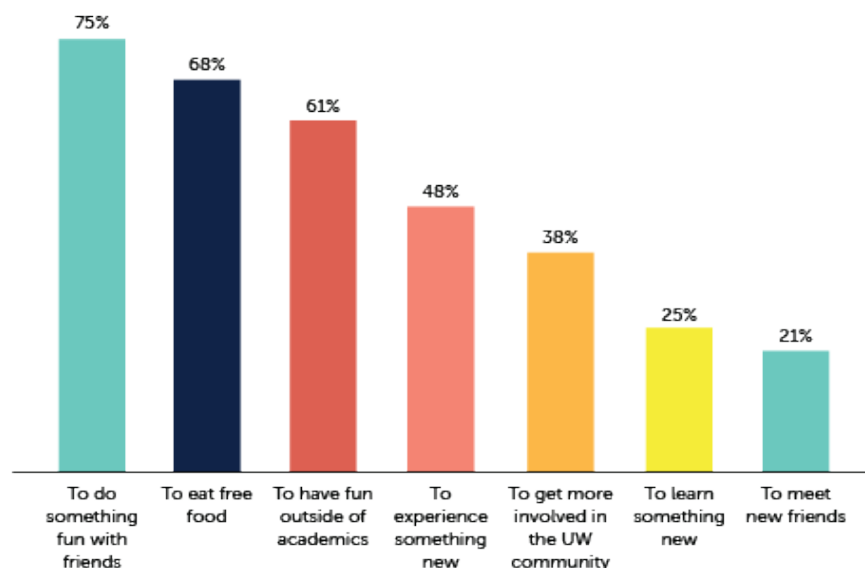
When students were asked to elaborate on their experience with WUSA events, the following main themes emerged:

- Events as a social activity
- Events as entertainment
- Event timing
- Event awareness and marketing
- Accessibility and inclusivity

These themes are highlighted in the following sections.

Events as a Social Activity

Figure 3: Reasons students attend WUSA events



When students were asked why they attended WUSA events, three of the most frequent options selected were related to the social aspect. This includes having something fun to do with friends (75% of students), to have fun outside of academics (61%) or to experience something new (48%). It is important to note that most students do not necessarily attend WUSA events to meet new friends (21%), but instead to have something fun to do with their existing friends (Figure 3).

In addition to social aspects, food was a top aspect with 68% of students selecting “to eat free food” as a reason why they attended WUSA events.

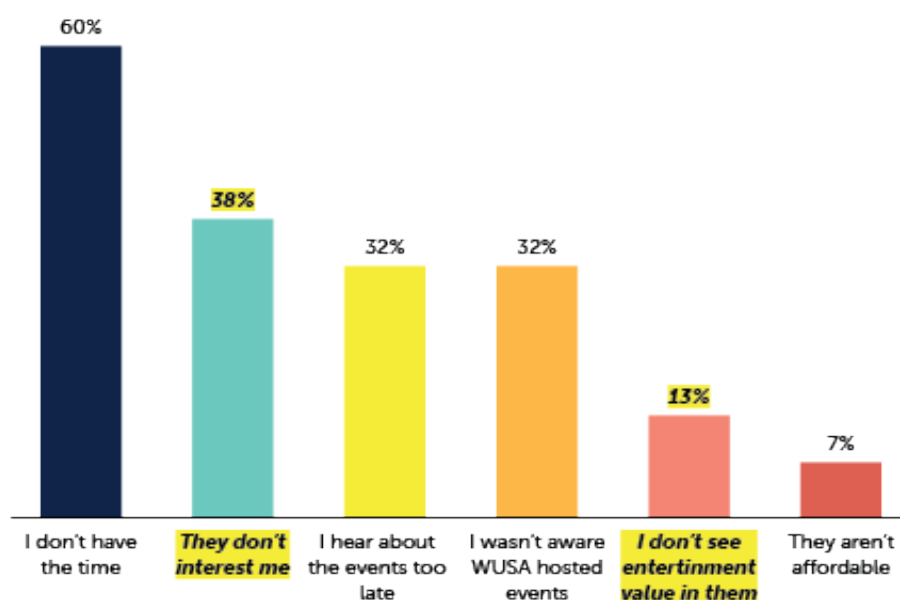
Furthermore, within the open-ended questions, most students (n=319) indicated that they attend WUSA events

for the incentives, fun, or the hype. Students reported that they enjoyed having the opportunity to do things they would not normally do, as well as receive free merchandise, eat free food, do something with friends, learn something new, or meet new people. For example, one student stated: "I like being able to de-stress and socialize with other students whilst doing activities I would otherwise not facilitate for myself, whether it's because of scale or cost."

Students also shared that they enjoyed the social aspects of WUSA events, with some students (n=133) stating that the social connections were what they enjoyed most. Additionally, a few students stated that they do not attend more WUSA events because their friends do not participate with them which again emphasizes the importance of social connections in encouraging students to attend events.

Events as Entertainment

Figure 4: Why students don't attend WUSA events



When students were asked why they do not attend WUSA events, 38% stated that it was because the events do not interest them, while 13% did not see entertainment value in them (Figure 4). This demonstrates the importance of ensuring that events are of interest to the undergraduate student population. This is further illustrated through the open-ended questions, where ensuring that WUSA events were fun, meaningful, or beneficial to students was included in many student (n=163) recommendations for WUSA when creating an events strategy. Students suggested that "thinking of the target audience" was important when planning events, however, there was a discrepancy in student responses, with some recommending events that appeal to a broader audience while others recommended not making events too general. Additionally, some students (n=43) recommended that WUSA continue to reach out to students to directly ask what types of events they would be interested in through surveys which demonstrates the importance of ongoing feedback mechanisms for gathering insights from students about WUSA events. This will help ensure that events stay in line with the wants of the current student body which changes from year to year.

To understand student event interest in the survey itself, we explicitly asked students the frequency with which they would be interested in attending various event types. Table 1 highlights this below. The event that students would like WUSA to hold the most frequently is drop-in food-related events, with 53% of students wanting these events to be held 4-5 times per term. The events that students would like WUSA to hold the least frequently are advocacy events and concerts, with 20% of students wanting these events to only be held once per year.

Table 1: Event Frequency Interest.

Types of Events	Once per year	Once per term	2-3 times per term	4-5 times per term	I am not interested in this type of event
Drop-in Food Events	3%	10%	27%	53%	7%
Arts and Crafts	9%	23%	26%	17%	25%
Nightlife Events	9%	25%	24%	12%	30%
Wellness and Mental Health Focused Events	11%	25%	23%	11%	30%
Informational Fairs	11%	30%	24%	7%	28%
Concert	20%	34%	17%	7%	22%
Off-Campus Trips	16%	30%	18%	6%	30%
Informational Speakers/Talks	11%	28%	17%	6%	37%
Comedian Shows	12%	28%	15%	6%	39%
Tech, Video Games and/or Esports	11%	21%	16%	8%	43%
Advocacy Focused Events	20%	24%	16%	3%	43%

Figure 5: Event size interest

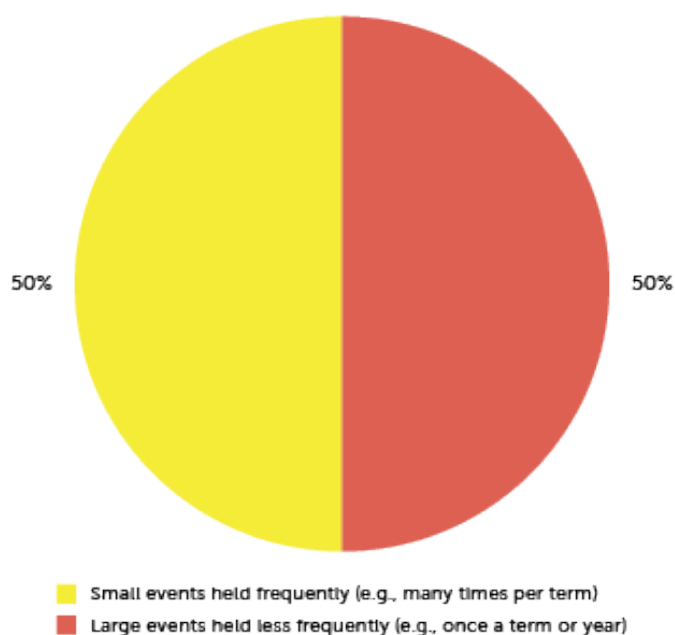


Figure 5 further shows that when students were asked about event size interest, students are evenly split on wanting small events that are held more frequently (e.g., many times per term) and wanting large events that are held less frequently (e.g., once a term or year). As such, WUSA should continue to host a good combination of both small and large events.

Table 2: Event Format Interest

Event Format Interest	Means
Events where I can relax and be distracted from school	3.23
Events where I am a passive participant	2.7
Events where I learn something that benefits me	2.66
Events where I am an active participant	2.62

Table 2 demonstrates student interest in various event formats, with means ranging from 1-4 where 1 is not interested at all and 4 is very interested. Students are most interested in events where they can relax and be distracted from school, with a mean of 3.23, compared to 2.66 for events where students learn something that benefits them. However, both means are still relatively high, suggesting that students are still interested in both educational and entertainment events. Students also have slightly more interest in events where they are a passive participant, with a mean of 2.7, compared to a mean of 2.62 for events where students are an active participant. However, the means for both events are still relatively high, showing student interest in both passive and active events. When discussing passive vs. active events, we refer to an active event as events where students are actively participating in activities such as playing a game while a passive event refers to events where students are passively participating such as watching a performance or listening to a speaker.

While the above tables and figures are a good starting point for asking students about events that interest them, many students (n=43) recommend having more frequent surveys on this topic as well. They also recommend implementing event exit surveys where students can provide feedback which WUSA can use to identify the success of events.

Event Timing

In addition to planning events that are engaging and interesting for students, it is also important that these events occur at convenient times for students.

Figure 6: Why students don't attend WUSA events

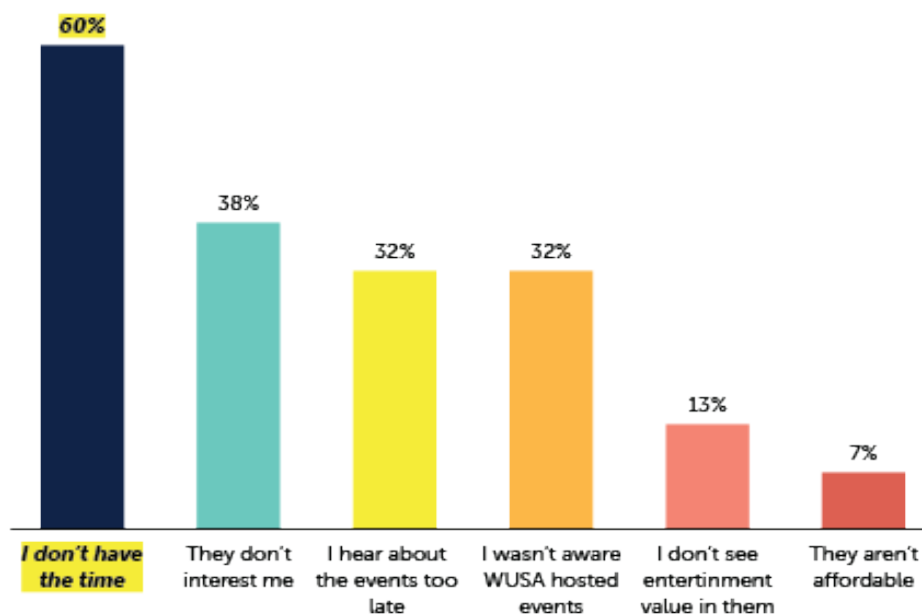


Figure 6 shows that when students were asked why they do not attend WUSA events, the most common response was that they do not have the time (60% of students). This is further shown in the open-ended questions where the second most common recommendation for WUSA's event strategy was to consider times and hours when planning events (n=142). Students recommend considering the point in the term when the event would occur and avoiding busier weeks for students (e.g., exams). As one student explained,

"Being aware of different activities that students may already be involved in that will limit them from being able to attend WUSA events. This includes being in class, fitness activities, extracurricular/clubs, work/co-op. Having events that span the day, or from the morning into the afternoon would allow more students to be able to attend."

This student emphasizes how hosting the same event over multiple time slots could allow more students to attend despite their course commitments and other obligations. As such, it is important for WUSA to continue to hold events over multiple time slots.

Moreover, students were asked about their interest in drop-in events or events requiring them to stay. Below is a table highlighting this with means ranging from 1-4, where 1 is not interested at all and 4 is very interested. Students are more interested in drop-in events, with a mean of 3.37, compared to events that require students to stay, with a mean of 1.9. This likely reflects that with their busy schedules, students often cannot stay for long periods of time during an event (Table 3).

Table 3: Event Format Interest

Event Format Interest	Means
Drop-in Events	3.37
Events that require me to stay	1.9

Furthermore, when students were asked what dates and times they would prefer events to be held, students were most likely to pick times that they do not have classes (Table 4).

Table 4: Event Time Preferences

	Morning (8am - 11:59am)	Afternoon (Noon - 3:59pm)	Evening (4:00pm - 7:59pm)	Night (8pm - Midnight)
Monday	4%	19%	58%	18%
Tuesday	4%	19%	58%	19%
Wednesday	4%	19%	58%	19%
Thursday	4%	18%	58%	20%
Friday	5%	16%	46%	33%
Saturday	7%	32%	30%	31%
Sunday	7%	37%	38%	19%

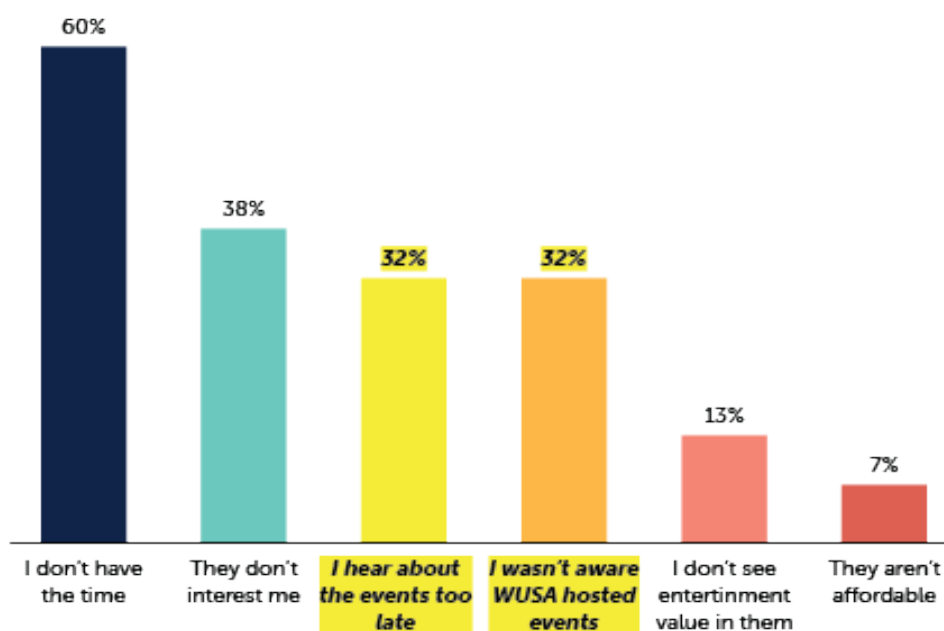
Students tend to prefer for events to be held on evenings during the week (46-58% of students, depending on the day), at night on Friday and Saturday (33% and 31%, respectively), and during the afternoon on Saturday and Sunday (32% and 37%, respectively). The times that students prefer the least is during the morning which is consistent for each day of the week. While the data shows that students prefer events to be held in the afternoon/evening on weekends, WUSA event attendance data shows low weekend attendance rates. As such, it is recommended to hold most events during the week to increase attendance rates.

Overall, it is important to reflect that students are always busy with their schedules and that student availability varies from student to student. However, by ensuring events are held during the evening (when most students prefer to attend events), holding events over multiple time slots, and ensuring events do not have a large commitment to stay (i.e. students can drop in and out) can help to accommodate for the majority of students' busy schedules.

Event Awareness and Marketing

Issues related to awareness and marketing were also evident throughout student responses.

Figure 7: Why students don't attend WUSA events



When asked why they do not attend WUSA events, 32% of students both hear about them too late or were not aware that WUSA hosted events (Figure 7). When comparing further with demographics, first year students are more likely to be unaware WUSA hosts events with 45% of first year students selecting this. Moreover, international students are more likely to hear about events too late with 62% selecting this. When comparing by faculty, there were no statistical differences showing that issues with event marketing is consistent amongst all faculties.

Issues with event marketing were also reflected within the open-ended questions where some students (n=59) recommended increasing marketing efforts when creating an events strategy. Students also recommended promoting events at least a week in advance, while others recommended that WUSA use diverse methods (i.e. social media and posters) to reach more students. For example, when asked what is important for WUSA to consider in an events one student explained:

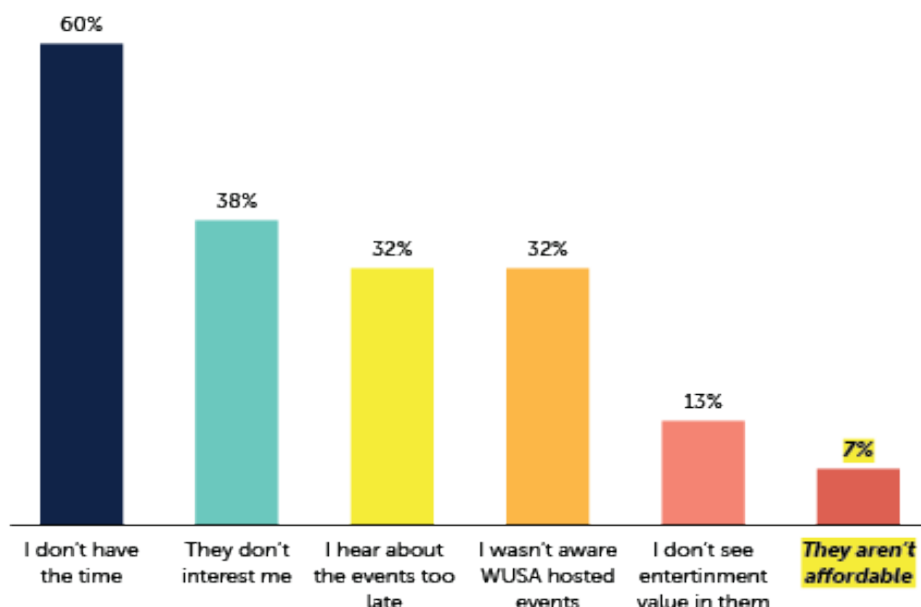
“Better advertising. I often do not know what is going on until a day before the events occur, making it hard to fit it in my busy schedule or I wouldn't want to go since I don't understand the event.”

This student expresses that not only is better advertisement needed for WUSA events to ensure that more students are aware of when events are happening, but they also emphasize the need for more information on the details of the events within this marketing.

Event Accessibility and Inclusivity

Within the analysis, there were also a few smaller themes surrounding accessibility and inclusivity of events.

Figure 8: Why students don't attend WUSA events



Only 7% of students do not attend WUSA events because they are not affordable (Figure 8). The cost of WUSA events was emphasized by students in the open-ended questions as well, with some students (n=25) recommending that keeping events costs low was an important component in a future events strategy. Similarly, students (n=33) also stated that they enjoyed that most WUSA events were free or low-cost.

While some students (n=43) stated they liked how organized, accessible, and well-prepared WUSA events were, approximately 28 students recommended ensuring that events are accessible, inclusive, and properly organized. Clearly, there are some students with unique experiences that do not feel like WUSA events are inclusive for them. For example, when students were asked what WUSA should consider when designing an events strategy, one student indicates,

“Accessibility; making sure everyone can participate. For example, make sure there is vegan food if there is a food event.”

Other accessibility concerns include making sure events are physically accessible, inclusive, properly organized and have structure. This also includes ensuring there are enough supplies throughout the whole duration of the event so that students arriving late are still able to participate in the event. Furthermore, including accessibility related questions in post-event surveys will help to better gauge accessibility concerns students may have.

Moreover, approximately 62 students recommended that WUSA host diverse events that recognized differences among students. This may include differences in culture, in levels of outgoingness (i.e. some students like more outgoing events with lots of people while others prefer quiet events), as well as in student interests over events. Moreover, when designing post-event surveys, it is important to inquire about any accessibility issues/needs students have so that these concerns can be addressed with future WUSA events.

Lastly, 17 students recommended WUSA to consider the distance or commute of students who live off-campus and to choose locations for events that are accessible to everyone on campus.

These findings demonstrate that while only a small number of students mentioned specific accessibility and inclusivity concerns, they are important to highlight to ensure that WUSA including and representing the diverse student population in their events.

Conclusion

This report provides an overview of students' experiences with WUSA events and their preferences for various event types and formats moving forward. Overall, it was clear from student responses that many see WUSA events as a social activity that allows them to have something fun to do with their friends, distract them from academics, and participate in activities that they normally would not be able to due to cost or other factors. As such, students report that events need to interest them and that WUSA can do a better job making events more fun, meaningful, or beneficial to students. To address this, they recommend consulting with students more frequently through feedback surveys and check-ins to better gauge what students are interested in.

When it comes to the timing of events, many students report not being able to attend WUSA events due to their course schedules. Due to this, many students recommended WUSA consider the time and busyness of student schedules when planning events. Many students prefer for events to be held during times when they do not have classes (i.e. during the evening).

Regarding event marketing, some students report being unaware WUSA hosted events or end up hearing about events too late. Many students recommend WUSA increase both the overall advertisement of events as well as the amount of detail within marketing efforts.

Finally, some students report concerns regarding accessibility and inclusion, including issues of event cost, accessibility, and the need for more diverse events (e.g., cultural-focused). As such, students recommend keeping the cost of events low and ensuring that events are fully accessible for all students.

Appendix A

***Note: This appendix only includes the Events section of the survey. To see the Athletics and Varsity sections of the survey please see the F24 RSP Athletics and Varsity Report.**

Events

20. Have you ever attended an event hosted by WUSA? [MC – Select one]

- a. Yes
- b. No [Skip to Q24]

21. Which type of event hosted by WUSA have you attended? [MC – Select all that apply]

- a. Off campus trips and destinations (e.g., Jays game)
- b. Drop in programming (e.g., Esports lounge)
- c. Entertainment (e.g., dance parties, DJs, movie nights)
- d. Food related events (e.g., Welcome Brunch)
- e. Wellness related events (e.g., therapy dogs, Art Hive, Wellness Week)
- f. Educational (e.g., speakers, legal sessions)

22. In general, why do you attend events hosted by WUSA? [MC – Select all that apply]

- a. To learn something new
- b. To experience something new
- c. To do something fun with friends
- d. To get more involved in the UW community
- e. To have fun outside of academics
- f. To meet new friends
- g. To eat free food
- h. Other [Text box]

23. In general, what do you enjoy most about attending events hosted by WUSA? [Text box]

24. Why have you never attended an event hosted by WUSA? [MC – Select all that apply – display only if 20b is selected]

- a. I wasn't aware WUSA hosted events
- b. I hear about the events too late
- c. I do not have the time
- d. They do not interest me
- e. I don't see any entertainment value in them
- f. They are not affordable
- g. Other [Text box]

25. How often would you be interested in attending the following types of events? [Matrix with options for once per year, once per term, 2-3 times per term, 4-5 times per term, I am not interested in this type of event]

- a. Concert
- b. Nightlife events
- c. Arts and crafts
- d. Advocacy focused events
- e. Events related to tech, video games and/or esports
- f. Wellness and mental health focused
- g. Off-campus trips
- h. Comedian shows
- i. Informational speakers/talks
- j. Informational fairs
- k. Drop-in food events

26. How would you prefer WUSA allocate resources when it comes to hosting events? [MC – Select One]

- a. More elaborate, larger events that are less frequent (e.g., only once a term or year)
- b. Less elaborate, smaller events that are more frequent (e.g., many per term)

27. Please indicate your interest in the following: [Matrix with options for very interested, interested, somewhat interested, not interested at all]

- a. Events where I am an active participant (e.g., doing an activity or task, playing a game)
- b. Events where I am a passive participant (e.g., watching a performance or speaker)
- c. Events that are drop in, where I can come and go as I please
- d. Events that require me to stay for a specified amount of time
- e. Events where I learn something that benefits me as a student
- f. Events where I can relax and be distracted from school
- g. For each day of the week, please indicate which time of day

28. For each day of the week, please indicate which time of day you would prefer to attend events. [Matrix with options for Morning (8:00am to 11:59am); Afternoon (12:00pm to 3:59pm); Evening (4:00pm to 7:59pm); Night (8:00pm to midnight)]

- a. Monday
- b. Tuesday
- c. Wednesday
- d. Thursday
- e. Friday
- f. Saturday
- g. Sunday

29. What do you think is most important for WUSA to consider when developing a comprehensive events strategy? [Text box]