

FOCUS GROUP: CAMP KESEM

Co-Moderators: Isabella Gonzalez and Lara Koontz, **Coordinator:** Blaine Moss, **Analyst:** Emily Pirozzolo, **Writer:** Ashlea Milligan and Emily Pirozzolo

Background:

As mentioned in our secondary research, we are interested in researching ways that Camp Kesem can increase college students' involvement throughout the country, specifically at the UNC-Chapel Hill chapter, which has struggled with recruitment and retention of members in the past. For the purpose of this focus group, we formulated questions to explore issues concerning volunteerism. Specifically, we wanted to know how to effectively recruit volunteers who are willing and able to spend the time and raise the money that Camp Kesem requires of its volunteers. Through the discussion questions, moderators explored the roadblocks many students experience that prevent them from volunteering. Questions also explored what methods of recruitment are most effective, as well as participants' previous fundraising experiences.

Method:

The focus group was conducted from 1:20 p.m. to 1:40 p.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2019 in the Freedom Forum Conference Center in Carroll Hall on UNC-Chapel Hill's campus. There were twelve participants. The participants were all college students, which is the key demographic of Camp Kesem because it only recruits college-aged volunteers. The participants were also all undergraduates in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media. The focus group was led by two moderators who asked open-ended questions with the intent of discovering qualms surrounding volunteering as well as ways that participants had heard of organizations. The flow of discussion generally followed the guide attached below but we allowed participants to expand on ideas and areas that may not have been anticipated by our moderator guide.

Results:

The participants talked a lot about not having enough time to volunteer. Many focus group participants were vocal about how they would volunteer more often if they had time. Focus group participants also noted that the most ideal form of volunteering is sporadic, with a lower time commitment. One participant said: "I just want to give back if I can, in my free time or if it's easy and accessible, like a blood drive real quick." Another participant said that in a student volunteer organization, she would prefer "a more relaxed atmosphere [with] less requirements" where participants could "come and have a good time and help if you can." Another participant mentioned how having a weekly commitment at a specific time is a deterrent for her. Many participants also mentioned that knowing they would be required to fundraise would dissuade them from volunteering. When one participant said that they really hated asking people for money, almost everyone nodded in agreement.

Moderators asked participants to list the first charities and nonprofits that they were familiar with and aware of, and many listed large nonprofit organizations that have a large media presence, such as The Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and the Ronald McDonald House. Also listed were organizations on the opposite end of the spectrum, which were those that were more local, including Carolina For The Kids and WakeMed. Many participants said that they look for a personal connection to an organization's cause when choosing to volunteer. When asked what motivated them to stick with an organization, one participant noted: "I think it's something that you are personally passionate about, [that's] going to leverage you in like also [a] career or

something ... can actually help you while you are doing something important that you care about.” Many participants also mentioned their interest in volunteering for organizations that support and serve children.

When volunteering for an organization requires an all or nothing commitment from a participant, the twelve respondents generally chose to forfeit all participation rather than investing their time in an organization. In fact, this reaction was so common, that of the twelve only one is still actively involved as a volunteer with a specific organization. Beyond that, only half of the respondents have ever been actively involved in some sort of volunteer work during their college career. Even with this, some mentioned that their volunteering experience was “forced” through a job or internship. One participant noted her volunteer work was during an unpaid internship, and said that the experience “was labeled as an internship and that’s what I thought I needed to do,” essentially suggesting that the main appeal to the volunteering was holding a position with the title “internship.” The most common reason that people stopped volunteering, as mentioned above, was time constraints. One participant summed it up nicely, with many participants nodding and laughing in agreement: “So by senior year [of high school] you were all extracurricular and barely any school, and, you know, senior year of college it’s like ‘what is the minimal amount of outside of activity that I can do and still look like I care about something?’”

Discussion:

In general, the information gathered was similar to our secondary research. For example, secondary research indicates that family and friends are a major influence in terms of which organizations to invest in. Our focus group participants mentioned this and generally agreed with the secondary research findings. Focus group data also suggests that primary hindrances and instigating factors to volunteerism are very similar to what secondary research suggested. Hindrances include time, inflexibility, and fundraising requirements. Instigating factors include passion, emotional attachment, and relational influence. There were other things that we discovered that our secondary research did not predict, however, such as which specific organizations college students in Chapel Hill are invested in, as well as how participating in student organizations changes throughout an undergraduate’s time in school.

The focus group’s dynamics were extraordinarily beneficial to the flow of the conversation between participants. When one participant said something that others agreed with, they were quick to jump into the conversation. These instances helped moderators to understand which specific opinions were widely agreed upon. For example, there was a very energized response to the question about major inhibitors to volunteering. One participant said time, and almost all the others agreed immediately. However, as with all focus groups, the limitation of the set-up is that moderators may have missed out on opinions that represent the minority due to groupthink or other factors. In general, however, the focus group set-up was beneficial to our primary research because it provided us with some UNC students’ first-hand opinions about and experiences with volunteering. If we were to do the process differently in the future, we would hold multiple focus groups to represent a more diverse population. Only conducting one focus group is not a representative sample of the UNC student population. The moderator’s guide would also be expanded to encompass more specific questions concerning advertisements on campus, and which advertisements are most effective to motivate and recruit students. We would also include more direct questions concerning how to mitigate student fears of individual fundraising.

Focus Group Questions:

- 1. Introduction and Warm-Up (Ice Breaker) – Lara**
 - a. What was your favorite summer childhood experience?
- 2. Introduction Questions – Isabella**
 - a. How do you spend your free time?
 - b. What organizations are you part of on campus?
 - c. What portion of those are volunteer-based?
- 3. Transition Questions – Lara**
 - a. What are some nonprofits and/or charities you are familiar with?
 - i. How did you discover those organizations?
 - b. Have you volunteered within the last year?
 - i. If yes, where?
- 4. Key Questions**
 - a. What do you know about Camp Kesem?
 - i. If familiar, how did you hear about it? – **Isabella**
 - ii. If you heard about it through an advertisement, where was this advertisement?
 - b. What motivates you to volunteer/get involved in an organization, and what motivates you to stick with it? – **Lara**
 - c. Have you ever been responsible for your own on-campus fundraising? Who did you fundraise for, and why? What was your fundraising process? – **Isabella**
 - d. What are some personal and professional benefits to volunteerism? – **Lara**
 - i. Which motivates you more?
 - e. What barriers prevent you from volunteering and getting involved? – **Isabella**
 - f. How have student organizations recruited you in the past? – **Lara**
 - i. What tactics have been effective?
 - ii. What tactics have been ineffective?
- 5. Ending Questions/Summary**
 - a. Have we missed anything? Is there anything else concerning volunteerism and commitment to humanitarian organizations that you would like to say? – **Isabella**