Appendix A: Rutgers University-New Brunswick #iSPEAK Outreach Activities

This appendix presents the Outreach Plan used to promote the October 2014 #iSPEAK Campus Climate Survey at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick Campus. This document is offered as an example of one university’s outreach strategy for its campus climate survey. These activities were designed to fit the Rutgers University-New Brunswick campus and may or may not be suited to other settings.

It is important to note that while the Outreach Plan was constructed prior to the survey’s administration, some updates and adaptations were expected. In particular, as implementation progressed, team members noted which activities reached and resonated with the most students and adapted their efforts to maximize results.

Outreach Items: A Multi-Layered Approach

Below are brief summaries of the components of the #iSPEAK Outreach Plan. Many of these efforts occurred simultaneously in the time leading up to the launch of the survey.

Advisory Board Meetings

The research team’s activities and decisions throughout the survey’s administration were guided an Advisory Board. To maintain close communication, the research team met with the Advisory Board several times throughout the outreach planning process.

At these meetings, the Advisory Board members offered their guidance regarding outreach activities. They also offered their support by sending out emails and connecting the research team to stakeholders who were instrumental in carrying out certain outreach activities. The Advisory Board also promoted the #iSPEAK survey by announcing the its availability whenever they met with students.

Branding

Survey Name: #iSPEAK

The Rutgers University Campus Climate survey name was created by the research team. Researchers wanted to choose a name that emphasized students’ voices and opinions on the topic of campus sexual assault. It was also important that the name be short and easy to spell. After several days of deliberation, the research team decided on the name “iSPEAK.”

Survey Logo

Once the survey’s name was selected, the research team created a logo to establish a consistent visual identity for the survey. The logo was intended to be simple, clear, and legible, depicted in
the school’s black and garnet colors. Writing the name in the form of a hashtag (#) emphasized the role that social media played in the promotion of the survey.

#iSPEAK

Photo Campaign

Grassroots Photo Campaign

The centerpiece of the #iSPEAK Outreach Plan was a photo campaign, which was based on a similar campaign at Emory University promoting its National College Health Assessment survey (M. Cordon, personal communication, July 7, 2014). The photo campaign was based on the idea that students have many different reasons for participating in a campus climate survey, all of which are important. Students were invited to photograph themselves holding up a piece of paper with the prompt, “#iSPEAK because…,” followed by their reason for taking the campus climate survey.

To jumpstart the grassroots campaign, members of the research team recruited student leaders to take “#iSPEAK because…” photos before the campaign launched. The photos were then posted to the #iSPEAK Facebook page in the days leading up to the survey and throughout the survey period. The team hoped that other university students would see the photos and join the campaign, posting on the official #iSPEAK Facebook page and their personal social media accounts using the designated hashtag. Although relatively few students participated in this way, the survey’s social media pages were still well populated with the photos gathered earlier from student leaders.

Social Media

Facebook Account

As the #iSPEAK outreach centered on individual students’ reasons for participation, it was essential to create a strong social media presence to amplify those messages. The research team created a Facebook group for the #iSPEAK survey and a Twitter account.

Two research team members made a daily schedule that queued the Facebook posts. Posts included “#iSPEAK because” photo campaign pictures, social media contest submission pictures, topical articles, information about pop-up survey stations, and news about raffle prizes.

Research team members also posted photos of raffle winners picking up their cash prizes (after obtaining their written consent). Several of these photos were posted to the #iSPEAK Facebook page throughout the survey in the hopes of increasing student participation in the survey.
Social Media Contest

A social media contest furthered the success of the photo campaign and increased the overall social media presence of the survey. The contest was created by the research team in collaboration with an Advisory Board member who had a prominent role in campus residence life.

The social media contest was open to all Rutgers University-New Brunswick students who lived in a residence hall, as these students make up a large proportion of the campus population. The contest guidelines were very broad to encourage student creativity. Participants were invited to take a picture with other students from their residence hall, promoting the #iSPEAK survey however they chose, provided that they did not violate the student code of conduct.

Students then emailed their photo submission, along with the name of their residence hall and contact information, to the research team, who posted the photos to the #iSPEAK Facebook page. Winners were determined by the number of “likes” each photo received on the #iSPEAK Facebook page until the contest deadline. The photos receiving the most likes on the #iSPEAK Facebook page received a cash deposit into their residence hall building account.

In total, the Social Media Contest had a nearly 50 percent participation rate based on the total number of residence halls on the New Brunswick campus, with 14 total photo submissions. Each photo submission exhibited creativity and included many students. The winning photos each had over 100 “likes” on the #iSPEAK Facebook page, making this contest a success in not only increasing the #iSPEAK social media presence, but in also helping students “own” the survey.

Dedicated Survey Website

A dedicated survey webpage provided up-to-date information leading up to and throughout the survey period. The website provided information about where students could find pop-up survey stations, raffle prizes, survey dates, a downloadable “#iSPEAK because” sign to use for the photo campaign, sample photo campaign pictures of students leaders, and brief information about campus resources regarding sexual assault. Once the survey was open to students, the webpage also linked directly to it.
The survey webpage was essential during outreach efforts as it allowed research team members to introduce the survey to students and direct them to the survey webpage for additional information via a short link or the QR code on all print materials.

Newsletters / University Media Outlets and Emails

Electronic Newsletters and University Media Outlets

To further reach students, survey announcements were placed in numerous University electronic newsletters. The research team also placed an ad in the student newspaper. These announcements were scheduled to be sent out no sooner than the day that the survey launched to prevent students from attempting to access the survey before it was live. These messages were repeated throughout the survey period.

An “alert” message was also sent out to all New Brunswick students via their university web portals, pages that students must log into to access their schedules, email accounts, grades, and online class sites. Students who had not already completed the survey had to acknowledge the alert to stop reminder messages from appearing on their web portals.

Emails from Administrators

Multiple emails were sent by administrative officials, including the Chancellor of the University and the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, to encourage students to take the #iSPEAK survey. Email reminders are an inexpensive and effective method for increasing survey participation.

Emails from Student Leaders

Research team members requested that several prominent student organization leaders draft an email that the research team could send out to the student body encouraging students to participate in the survey. This method gave student leaders the opportunity to fulfill their role as campus leaders and may have increased students’ investment in the issue of campus sexual assault, an unintended but positive result of the survey.

Similar language was used in all forms of electronic communication to maintain a consistent message. All communications were brief and included the link to the survey webpage so students could access further information.

Promotional Materials

Design

Several #iSPEAK print and promotional materials were drafted by the research team and printed by outside vendors. Print items included posters, banners, table tents, fliers, photo campaign signs, and door hangers.
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The #iSPEAK posters and fliers were simple in design and included only necessary information: the survey name, the dates the survey was live, the URL and QR code to access the survey webpage, the survey’s social media accounts, and the mention of “cash prizes.” The print materials did not include extensive details because the student webpage (see below) provided more detailed information about the survey.

It is important to note that while drafting these items, the same logo and language was used on all materials to ensure the use of consistent messaging.

Print Materials

Posters and fliers were hung up around campus and at off campus locations commonly frequented by Rutgers University students. Posters and fliers were distributed around campus two days prior to the survey going live.

The research team also asked Resident Assistants to display door hangers on each dorm room door in the residence halls. Residence hall staff were also asked to dedicate one bulletin board in each hall for #iSPEAK print materials. Bulletin board packages were dropped off at residence hall association offices and included posters, fliers, photo campaign signs, and a paper that listed the dates that the survey was live. The research team was able to collaborate so closely with residence hall staff because of the support and cooperation of two of our Advisory Board members who oversee residence hall activities.

Promotional Items

#iSPEAK promotional items included “#iSPOKE” stickers and “#iSPEAK” silicone bracelets, which were distributed at pop-up survey stations (see below for more details) and student group meetings.

Meetings with Student Organizations

Increasing Student Investment

A primary objective throughout the outreach planning process was to achieve a high participation rate, but the research team also hoped to increase students’ investment in the issue of sexual assault on campus. One of the main ways researchers tried to foster such student investment by enlisting student organizations and student leaders in efforts to publicize the survey.

Researchers accomplished this by reaching out to leaders of student organizations and requesting the opportunity to speak at one of their member meetings. Research team members spoke at several meetings about the survey and offered ways for students to get involved, from staffing pop-up survey stations to joining the photo campaign.
Pop-up Survey Stations

Pop-up survey stations were arranged to publicize the survey and allow students to participate on-the-spot if they desired. Members of the research team and student volunteers distributed print and promotional items and spoke with students about the survey. These face-to-face interactions with students increased students’ investment in and recognition of the importance of the issue of campus sexual assault and, it is believed, increased the response rate.

Scheduling and Tabling Survey Stations

Pop-up survey stations were scheduled throughout the two-week survey period at several locations around campus. Two research team members staffed each survey station, which was typically set up for two hours. Students from interested campus groups were also invited to sit at survey station tables. There were eight total pop-up survey station events during the survey period, with most scheduled in the survey’s first week and the final days.

Events were held at locations that receive the most student traffic, such student centers, libraries, and the dining halls. Although locations for the survey stations were determined in advance, some spots were changed to areas that had more success earlier in the survey period, once again demonstrating researcher’s flexibility in adapting the outreach protocol to achieve the best results.