

# **SIFE AWARENESS FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Prepared for:

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**WINTHROP UNIVERSITY**

## **Abstract**

Winthrop University Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) is housed in the College of Business Administration, but it is open to students of all majors. However, because of its location on campus, most students assume that it is strictly for business majors. This study was conducted in order to measure potential campus-wide interest and discover the most effective way to reach students, both business majors and non-business majors. The process included 130 surveys, two interviews, meetings with other SIFE members, and Internet research. Results showed that much of the Winthrop community is unaware of SIFE and its work on campus; however, there was a fairly large amount of possible interest in the organization. It is recommended that Winthrop SIFE implement event advertising and publicity practices in order to diversify and strengthen itself as an effective organization on the Winthrop campus.

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## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to discover whether or not the Winthrop community is aware of SIFE and to decide the most effective way to reach non-business majors and increase membership. Since SIFE has many components and projects, it is important that potential members be informed about what SIFE is and does before they join. Attracting new members, especially non-business majors, will tremendously increase SIFE's diversity and its capabilities. With increased membership comes increased skill set and networking connections to the community; this has the potential to double or triple SIFE's current capacity.

## **Summary of Findings**

Upon conduction of surveys, interviews, meetings, and outside research, it is apparent that the Winthrop community is currently not adequately informed about Winthrop SIFE and its purpose. However, enough interest was shown from both business majors and non-business majors to conclude that awareness efforts would be effective. While interest was shown for all six SIFE project criteria, students were most interested in the areas of Success Skills, Entrepreneurship, and Financial Literacy. Those surveyed felt that social media outlets, flyers, and publicity tables were the most effective methods of awareness and recruitment. Other SIFE members felt strongly in favor of increasing publicity efforts, and all felt a more diverse group would bring many more opportunities for the organization.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

After evaluating the results of this study, it is recommended that both event awareness and publicity efforts be increased. If taken seriously, these additions have potential to be extremely effective. Marketing events may be good for brand awareness, but publicity is integral. Spreading the word around campus through various marketing methods will spark interest and could cause lots of diverse students to want to participate. This way, SIFE could accomplish more and, in turn, have numerous viewpoints, ideas, and outside connections.

While this popularity increase will not happen overnight, it should not take a very long time if conducted correctly. Information should be distributed at the start of a semester to advertise the SIFE kick-off meeting. However, this should not be the only method of reaching new members. After the meeting, publicity tables, flyers, social media, and other efforts should be carried out to continue this awareness. A large amount of diversity will take time to build up, but some noticeable changes should be made within about two semesters of publicity efforts. Once implemented initially, these efforts can be repeated in the future or revamped due to changing situations and needs.

## Background

Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) is a worldwide organization striving to improve today's society as a whole. Teams from schools all over the world plan and perform projects dealing with six following SIFE criteria:

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Success Skills   | 4. Market Economics   |
| 2. Entrepreneurship | 5. Financial Literacy |
| 3. Environmental    | 6. Business Ethics    |

These projects implement different age groups and demographics from the community, including (but not limited to) students from elementary, middle, and high school levels, local businesses or organizations, and members of the college community. Each year, there are regional competitions allowing schools to showcase the past year's work and success. The winners of these regional competitions move on to compete at the national level, and the national winner from each country goes on to compete at the international competition, World Cup. SIFE has hundreds of very well known corporate sponsors that love hiring dedicated SIFE members; these sponsors participate in job fairs at competitions.

Winthrop SIFE, established in 2004, has progressed to the national competition five times since its implementation. It has received numerous individual topic awards at the regional level and has been recognized by the University several times for work and involvement around campus. SIFE is very reputable and has tons of opportunities for those involved, but most of its members are business majors. Because SIFE is housed in Winthrop's College of Business Administration, many people assume that its membership is only offered to business students.

As a former Winthrop SIFE Project Manager and current SIFE Vice President, I have experienced first hand how having students from different backgrounds and disciplines would help us accomplish so much more. Many of our projects require design, planning, and other elements in which students from the College of Visual and Performing Arts could assist. There are several projects carried out in Rock Hill schools, and students from the Richard W. Riley College of Education would be perfect in these situations. These are only a few examples of the many ways we could work together to reach out through our projects. Students from across campus would have access to all sorts of connections and funding opportunities, and the networking experiences would be priceless.

The purpose of this study is to discover whether or not the Winthrop community is aware of SIFE and to decide the most effective way to reach non-business majors and increase membership. Since SIFE has many components and projects, it is important that potential members be informed about what SIFE is and does before they join. Attracting new members, especially non-business majors, will tremendously increase SIFE's diversity and its capabilities. With increased membership comes increased skill set and networking connections to the community; this has the potential to double or triple SIFE's current capacity.

## **Literature Search**

The following resources were used in the process of this feasibility study:

- Core Leadership Meeting, November 2010
- Kim Nguyen, SIFE President
- Professor Patrice Burleson, SIFE Advisor and Sam Walton Fellow
- SIFE Kick-Off Meeting, September 2010
- SIFE Web site
- Winthrop SIFE Web site

## **Approach**

### *Surveys*

Surveys were perhaps the most important type of research used during this study. Surveys were completed to measure demographic characteristics, prior knowledge of SIFE, and potential interest. 130 surveys were distributed throughout the Winthrop community. Surveys were split into two groups, business majors and non-business majors, and then results were tallied for each group.

### *Interviews*

E-mail interviews proved to be a great source of information. Interviews were conducted with Winthrop SIFE Advisor Patrice Burleson and President Kim Nguyen. They were asked about their thoughts of spreading awareness of SIFE across campus and ideas of implementation. Both interviewees are passionate about Winthrop SIFE and had very helpful input.

### *Field Studies*

Upon talking to other SIFE members and leaders, several ideas of implementation were discussed. The SIFE Presentation Team is a backbone to Winthrop SIFE and performs the initial development of the majority projects. This group, the SIFE "core," met to collaboratively discuss new projects and publicity efforts. While the team, with exception of one person, is made up of all business majors, each person is exposed to different situations around campus; therefore, everyone has unique viewpoints of how awareness should be spread.

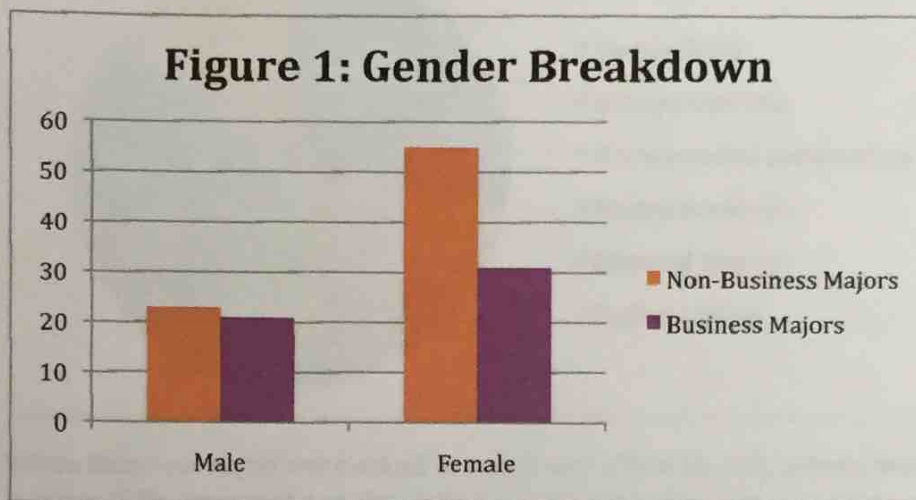
This information was drawn from the core group rather than SIFE teams from other schools because many teams are hesitant to disclose their strategies. Because SIFE has competitions each year, most teams keep information private for fear of losing competitive advantage.

Attendees of the SIFE kick-off meeting in September were asked to provide their majors on the meeting sign-in sheet; this shows the reach of our publicity efforts

## Results

### Surveys

Surveys were taken from a wide variety of students from all across the Winthrop community. Of the 130 surveyed, 52 were business majors, and 78 were not; more than 90% of those surveyed were between the ages of 17 and 24. Refer to Appendix A to see the full survey.



As illustrated in Figure 1, most of those surveyed were female non-business majors. Males were evenly distributed between the two categories. This gender breakdown includes one freshman, 38 sophomores, 32 juniors, 52 seniors, and one faculty member.

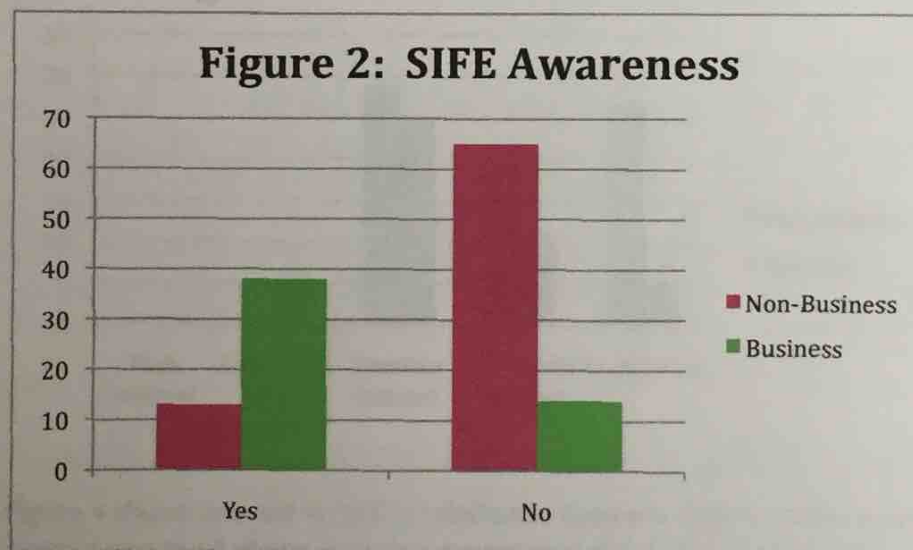
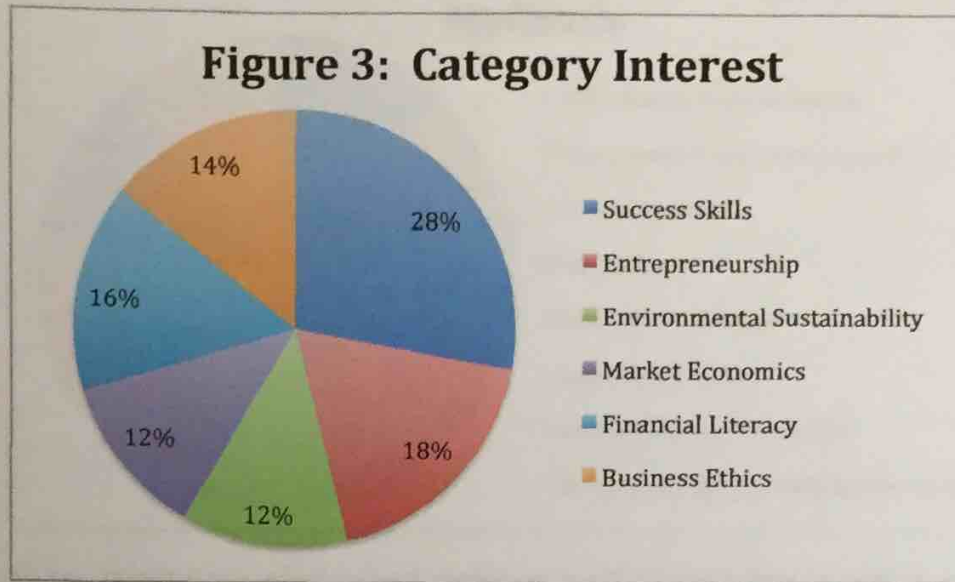


Figure 2 shows the response to the survey question, "Have you ever heard of SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise)?" Only 17% of non-business majors had heard of SIFE before, while 73% of business majors were aware. None of the non-business majors had ever been a SIFE member

or attended a SIFE-sponsored event. Three business majors were SIFE members, and five had attended a SIFE-sponsored event.

**Figure 3: Category Interest**



When those surveyed were asked to select any of the six SIFE criteria they were interested in, Success Skills was most popular, followed by Entrepreneurship and Financial Literacy, as shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 4: Interest Distribution**

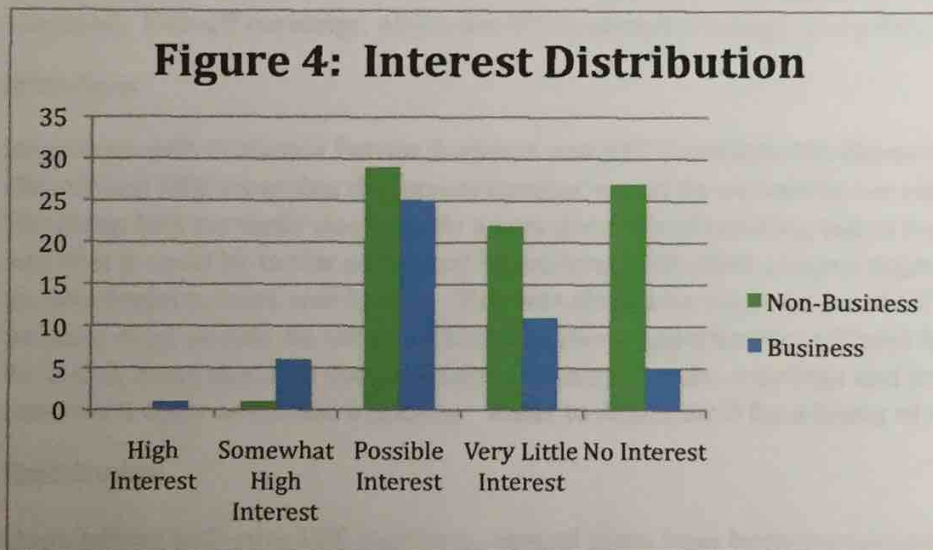
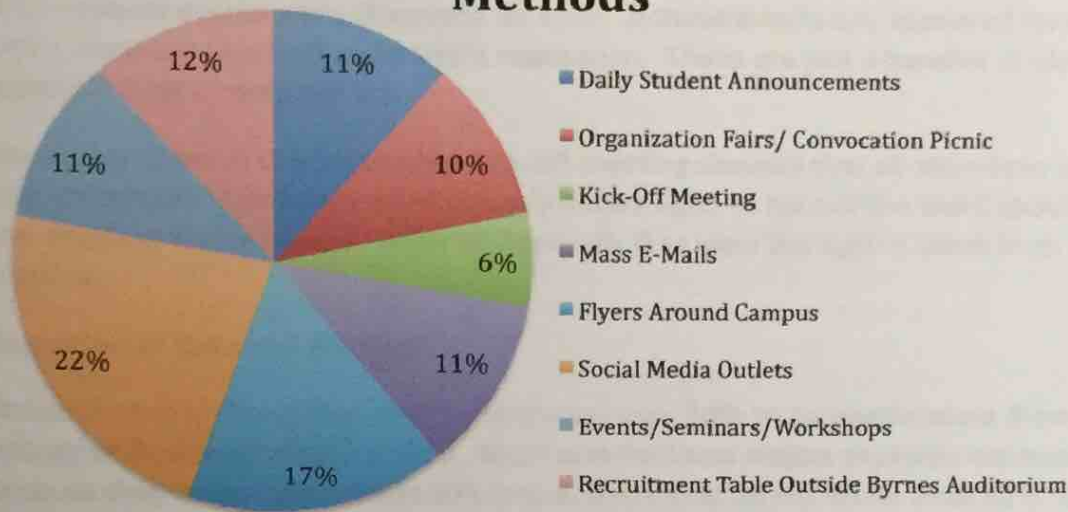


Figure 4 shows interest in SIFE in relation to business majors versus non-business majors. Around one-third of non-business majors expressed possible interest in joining SIFE, and almost one-half of business majors expressed possible interest.

**Figure 5: Effectiveness of Recruiting Methods**



Survey takers were asked to rank recruiting methods from one to eight in order of effectiveness, as depicted in Figure 5. During survey tabulation, the top three choices for each survey were considered. The first choice received three tally marks, the second choice received two tally marks, and the third choice received one tally mark. Social media, flyer distribution, and recruitment tables proved to be the most effective methods according to the audience surveyed. Kick-off meetings, which are SIFE's current strategy, proved to be least effective.

### *Interviews*

Interviews with Professor Patrice Burleson and SIFE President Kim Nguyen proved that diversifying SIFE's membership across campus would be extremely beneficial. Both agreed that Winthrop SIFE currently does not do a very good job of reaching out to non-business students and that it could be better publicized by working with other campus organizations and making its own projects more well known. Students should be made aware of SIFE's opportunities because most people do not understand its many opportunities without further explanation. Retaining these students should be done through regular meetings and project updates, making consistent communication a priority. Refer to Appendix B for a listing of interview questions.

### *Field Studies*

Upon talking with core SIFE members, several plans have been introduced, and implementation is underway; publicity efforts are on the rise as well. Publicity tables will be located outside Byrnes Auditorium and inside the DiGorgio Campus Center several times per semester, and some sort of incentive- like a logoed pencil or candy with information attached- will be distributed to attract visitors. T-shirts will also be made available for all SIFE members and will hopefully be conversation starters when worn around campus. A bake sale would attract many people, and a campus-wide yard sale would be original and also meet requirements for the Environmental Sustainability category. Providing incoming freshman with a reusable grocery

bag displaying SIFE's logo would be a great way to create brand awareness, peak curiosity of new students as they find their place on campus, and again boost the Environmental Sustainability category. SIFE is raising money for two non-profit organizations, and informational events were discussed for each. If these events are approved for cultural event status, they will also help build SIFE's reputation. These are just a handful of ideas; see Appendix C for a complete list.

The sign-in sheet at the September kick-off meeting showed that all attendees were, in fact, business majors. Attendees were strongly encouraged to spread the word about SIFE to their non-business major friends. Refer to Appendix D to view the sign-in sheet from the kick-off meeting.

### **Discussion of Data and Findings**

Research clearly shows that SIFE currently has very little to no involvement from outside the College of Business Administration. Most non-business majors probably expressed no interest because they do not know what SIFE is and, therefore, do not know what all it has to offer. However, this may change once the opportunities are presented and information is given; there seems to be a potential for possible interest upon awareness. Social media is the most effective way to reach these outside students, as well as events and seminars on campus.

However, research could be skewed because a large majority of those surveyed were female students; it would have been more effective to add enough male students to make the two genders equally represented. Those surveyed were mostly sophomores, juniors, and seniors; surveys should have been distributed to more freshmen, graduate students, and faculty members. A more equal breakdown between business majors and non-business majors would have made the data more effective as well.

#### *Option #1*

Winthrop SIFE now faces three options when pursuing this need. The first option is to leave enrollment and awareness methods as they are. College of Business students are most knowledgeable in the six SIFE criteria, and SIFE has done excellent work in the past, receiving many awards, without that many non-business students. This way requires the least amount of work and has usually led to decent results in the past.

#### *Option #2*

The second option is to boost awareness through events. Most of those surveyed were interested in the Success Skills and Entrepreneurship categories, so events that meet those requirements should be heavily announced and marketed. This could increase awareness and event success, and it may add a few diverse students to the roster in the long run.

#### *Option #3*

The third option requires the most work but has extreme potential. It includes event advertising like mentioned above, along with campus-wide publicity attempts. The recruitment

methods above should be taken into consideration, especially social media outlets and flyers around campus. Meeting times and available positions with upcoming projects should be included in this in order to spark interest and to let others know what SIFE is doing on a normal basis. This should most likely increase diverse membership, allowing so much more to be accomplished.

### **Conclusion**

While there are several options of spreading SIFE awareness, some are much more effective than others. I would not recommend leaving things as they are because it defeats the purpose of trying to spread SIFE awareness. Obviously efforts need to be stepped up from where they are now, so leaving them as they are will only put SIFE further behind.

Focusing on events is more effective than leaving things as they are, but it will still not get the job done successfully. Marketing events is a great way to attract attention, but it does not retain that attention. Most people simply come to an event and forget about it after they leave. There is usually some ulterior motive for attendance (i.e., cultural event credit), and attendees most likely do not want to be attached to an event once it is over.

### **Recommendation**

After evaluating the results of this study, it is recommended that both event awareness and publicity efforts be increased. If taken seriously, these additions have potential to be extremely effective. Marketing events may be good for brand awareness, but publicity is integral. Spreading the word around campus through various marketing methods will spark interest and could cause lots of diverse students to want to participate. This way, SIFE could accomplish more and, in turn, have numerous viewpoints, ideas, and outside connections.

While this popularity increase will not happen overnight, it should not take a very long time if conducted correctly. Information should be distributed at the start of a semester to advertise the SIFE kick-off meeting. However, this should not be the only method of reaching new members. After the meeting, publicity tables, flyers, social media, and other efforts should be carried out to continue this awareness. A large amount of diversity will take time to build up, but some noticeable changes should be made within about two semesters of publicity efforts. Once implemented initially, these efforts can be repeated in the future or revamped due to changing situations and needs.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A: SURVEY

### WRIT 465 Feasibility Study Survey

*This following survey is a part of my WRIT 465 feasibility study for the Fall 2010 semester. Your participation is completely voluntary, and your results will be used in order to conduct this study and make improvements to Winthrop SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise).*

*Please circle or fill in the appropriate responses.*

1. Gender:           MALE           FEMALE
2. Age:   17-20           21-24           25-28           29-31           32-35           36-39           40+
3. Classification:   Freshman           Sophomore           Junior           Senior           Grad Student   Faculty/Staff
4. Major: \_\_\_\_\_
5. College of:   Business           Education           VPA   Arts & Sciences
6. Do you live on campus?           YES   NO
7. Have you ever heard of SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise)?           YES   NO
8. Are you currently (or have you ever been) a member of SIFE?           YES   NO
9. Have you ever attended a SIFE-sponsored event?           YES   NO
10. Which, if any, of the following project categories interests you? **Check all that apply.**
  - ☐ Success Skills
  - ☐ Entrepreneurship
  - ☐ Environmental Sustainability
  - ☐ Market Economics
  - ☐ Financial Literacy
  - ☐ Business Ethics
11. How interested are you in helping SIFE carry out projects in the categories mentioned above to Winthrop and local communities? **Please circle the appropriate response.**  
High Interest   Somewhat High Interest   Possible Interest   Very Little Interest   No Interest
12. Please rate the following recruiting methods from 1 to 8 in order of effectiveness, with 1 being most effective.

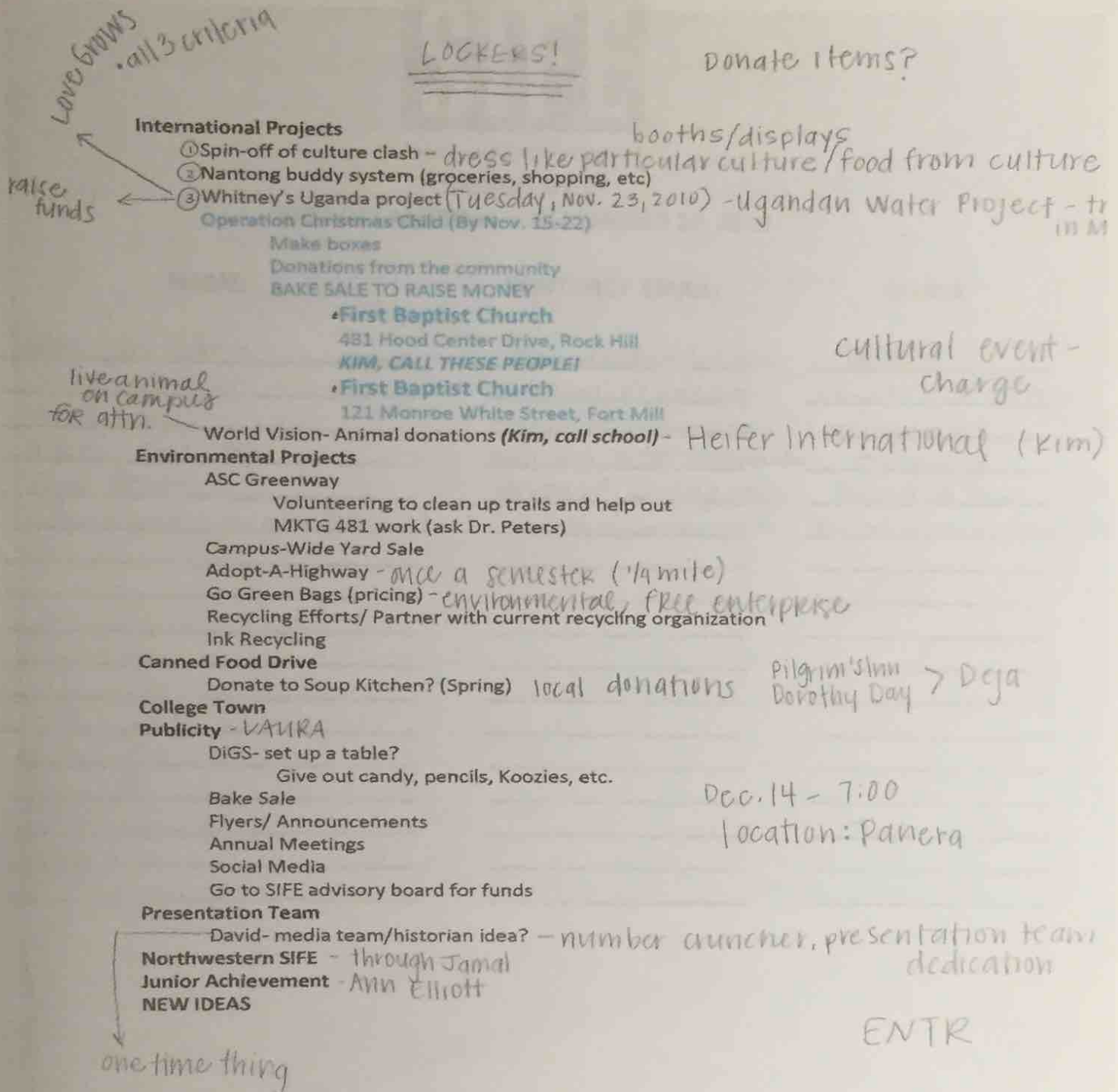
|                                            |                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| ___ Daily Student Announcements            | ___ Flyers Around Campus                            |
| ___ Organization Fairs/ Convocation Picnic | ___ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)          |
| ___ Kick-Off Meeting                       | ___ Events/Seminars On Campus                       |
| ___ Mass E-Mails                           | ___ Recruitment Table in Front of Byrnes Auditorium |
13. Please list any clubs, organizations, or activities you are involved in at Winthrop. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your participation.*

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Do you feel there will be advantages to having more non-business majors in SIFE?  
Please explain.
2. How do you think we should reach out or “market” ourselves to these students?
3. What do you think should be done to keep these students involved?
4. Do you think our SIFE team currently does a good job reaching out to non-business students?
5. Do you know of any other SIFE teams that do a good job of incorporating a diverse mix of students?
6. Do you have any other additional thoughts, comments, concerns, or ideas regarding spreading the word of SIFE across campus?

## APPENDIX C: CORE LEADERSHIP MEETING NOTES



\*connect international project w/ Uganda project (charge & entry)

@BADM180

X-T-Shirts: Deja over break / long sleeve, short sleeve

**SIFE**

**KICK-OFF MEETING • SEPTEMBER 20, 2010**

**MAJOR:**

Marketing

## Computer Info. Systems

## Management

## Economics

## Finance & Econ

Ex 2.11:  $\frac{1}{2} \times 100 = 50$  vs 0

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