

Family History

Fall 2024

Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FamilySearch, a non-profit organization dedicated to connecting families through genealogy, partnered with a student research team at Brigham Young University (BYU) during the Fall 2024 semester (September–December) to explore strategies for increasing student engagement and awareness. With BYU offering the only Family History major in North America, FamilySearch aimed to better promote the major, associated minors, and career opportunities within the organization.

The research team, consisting of four students, conducted two surveys, multiple focus groups, and in-depth interviews targeting BYU students and potential future employees of FamilySearch. The goal was to better understand student interests in academic programs and related career paths.

The insights gathered were synthesized into a comprehensive final report and presentation. The report includes detailed analysis and a set of actionable recommendations to help FamilySearch effectively engage students and promote Family History as a valuable academic and career path.

COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM

FamilySearch faced a significant communication challenge in effectively reaching and engaging BYU students with information about the Family History major, minor, and related career opportunities. Despite offering unique and meaningful work, the organization struggled to raise awareness among students about the academic and professional paths available through FamilySearch. There was a lack of clear, consistent messaging across campus, and many students were unfamiliar with what FamilySearch does or how it aligns with their interests and goals. This gap limited the organization's ability to attract student interest and connect with potential future employees who might be passionate about genealogy and preserving family history.

INTELLIGENCE

Secondary Research



The team conducted a thorough assessment of FamilySearch's current content and demographic reach. They reviewed existing pamphlets and materials to understand the current messaging and how it aligns with the target audience.



Focus Groups

The team conducted focus groups on BYU's campus to gather insights on current perceptions of FamilySearch and family history work. These groups included students both within the major and minor, as well as those outside of it. Additionally, focus groups were held with career and academic advisors to gain further understanding of how FamilySearch is viewed from an academic and career development perspective.



Survey

The team administered two surveys on BYU's campus to gain a deeper understanding of students' preferences regarding minors, majors, internships, and career opportunities.



Indepth Interviews

The team conducted interviews with career advisors and faculty members, as well as professionals working in the field of family history, to gain insights into what makes the Family History program unique.

FINDINGS

The research uncovered that while many students were aware that BYU's Family History major is unique, they struggled to see how it could apply to their personal or professional goals. Students often viewed the major as niche or overly specialized, and many were unclear on how it could lead to viable career opportunities outside of academic or religious contexts. Despite this, there was a strong interest in purpose-driven work, suggesting a missed opportunity for FamilySearch to connect its mission with students' values.