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## Start the Ruckus: The Influence of Fan Organizations

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## OVERVIEW

The importance of a strong student presence at basketball games is well known, however URI's student section needed improvement. Throughout the years, there have been attempts towards making a formal student section for Rhode Island Athletics. In the Fall of 2013, the Rhode Island Athletics launched a campaign to rename the student section in the Ryan Center, formally known as "The Mob". "Rhody Ruckus" was the voted winner, but it was never a formal organization until June 2016.

The goal of the Rhody Ruckus is to create and establish a student supporter section for Rhode Island Athletics. For purposes of its launch, I focused on men's basketball. I utilized a paid membership program to incentivize students to attend more games and assist in creating the home court advantage the program seeks.

## MARKETING STRATEGY

I utilized 3 main marketing channels to promote the Rhody Ruckus. They were:

- **Social Media**
  - Updates and information communicated through social media handles (@RhodyRuckus)
- **In-venue**
  - PA announcements were read at all home games (football, volleyball, soccer, and men's and women's basketball)
  - Tables/promotional booths were present these games for purposes of picking up membership packages or registering to become a Ruckus member.
- **On-campus**
  - Tables/promotional booths will be held in popular places on campus, including Hope Commons, Butterfield Dining Hall, and the Memorial Union.

# START THE RUCKUS

## THE INFLUENCE OF FAN ORGANIZATIONS

by Taylor Kohler

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Total Members: 795

Overall Student Attendance: 12%

- Conference Games: 23%
- Non-Conference Games: 31%
- Break Games: 7%

Engagement

- **Social Media**
  - Over the course of the inaugural year (June 2016-March 2017), the Rhody Ruckus Twitter account, the main social media channel, received 455.5k impressions
  - Facebook Likes: 341
  - Twitter Followers: 2,363

Improvements to Student Section

- We had 2 students lead the section in chants.
- We purchased new costumes (squirrel, panda, crab, etc.) for students to wear.
- New big noggins were voted upon by Ruckus members and purchased.
- We created a new banner that read "Start The Ruckus" for prior to tip-off.

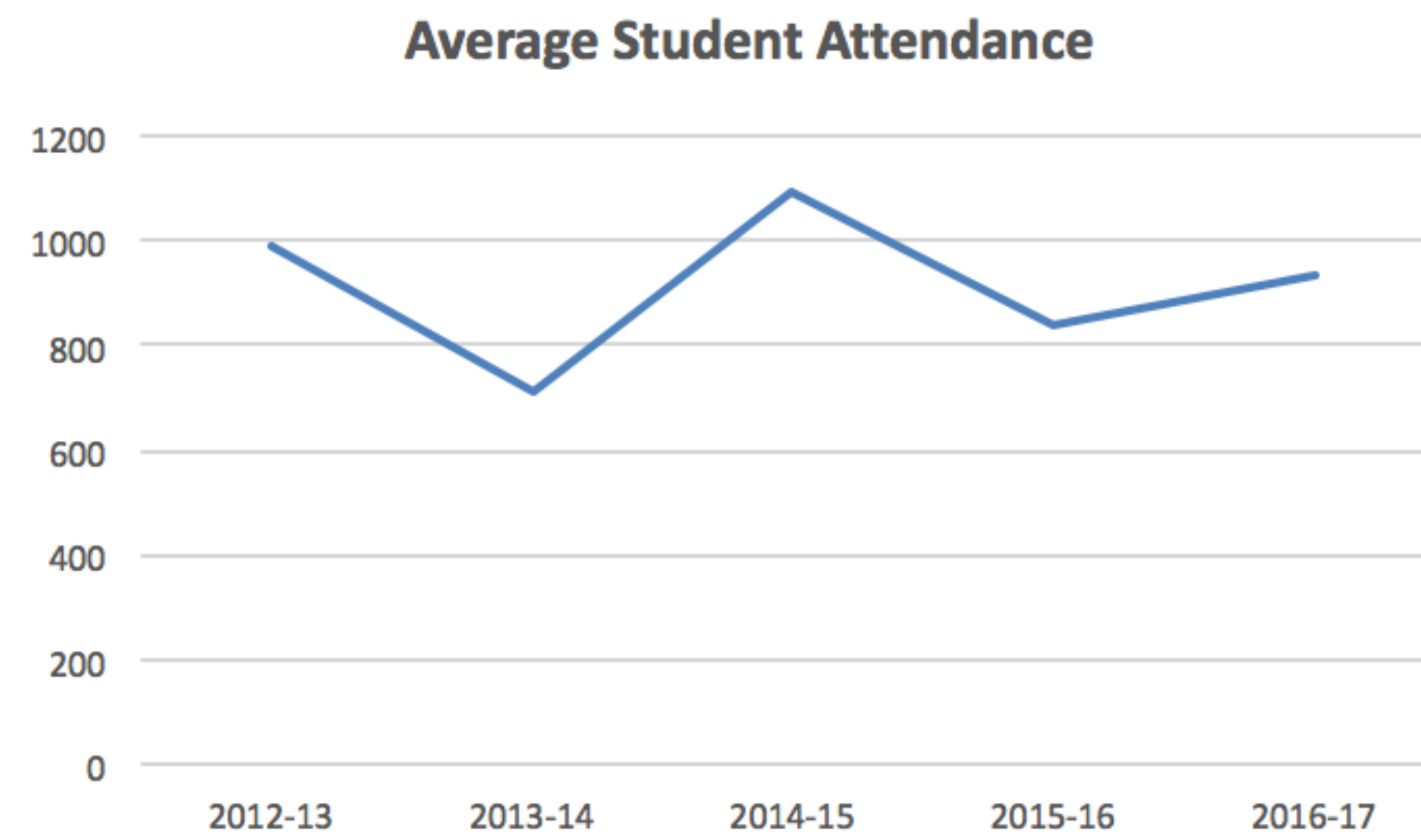


Fig. 1 Student Attendance

This chart highlights the trend of student attendance from Coach Dan Hurley's first season at URI to now

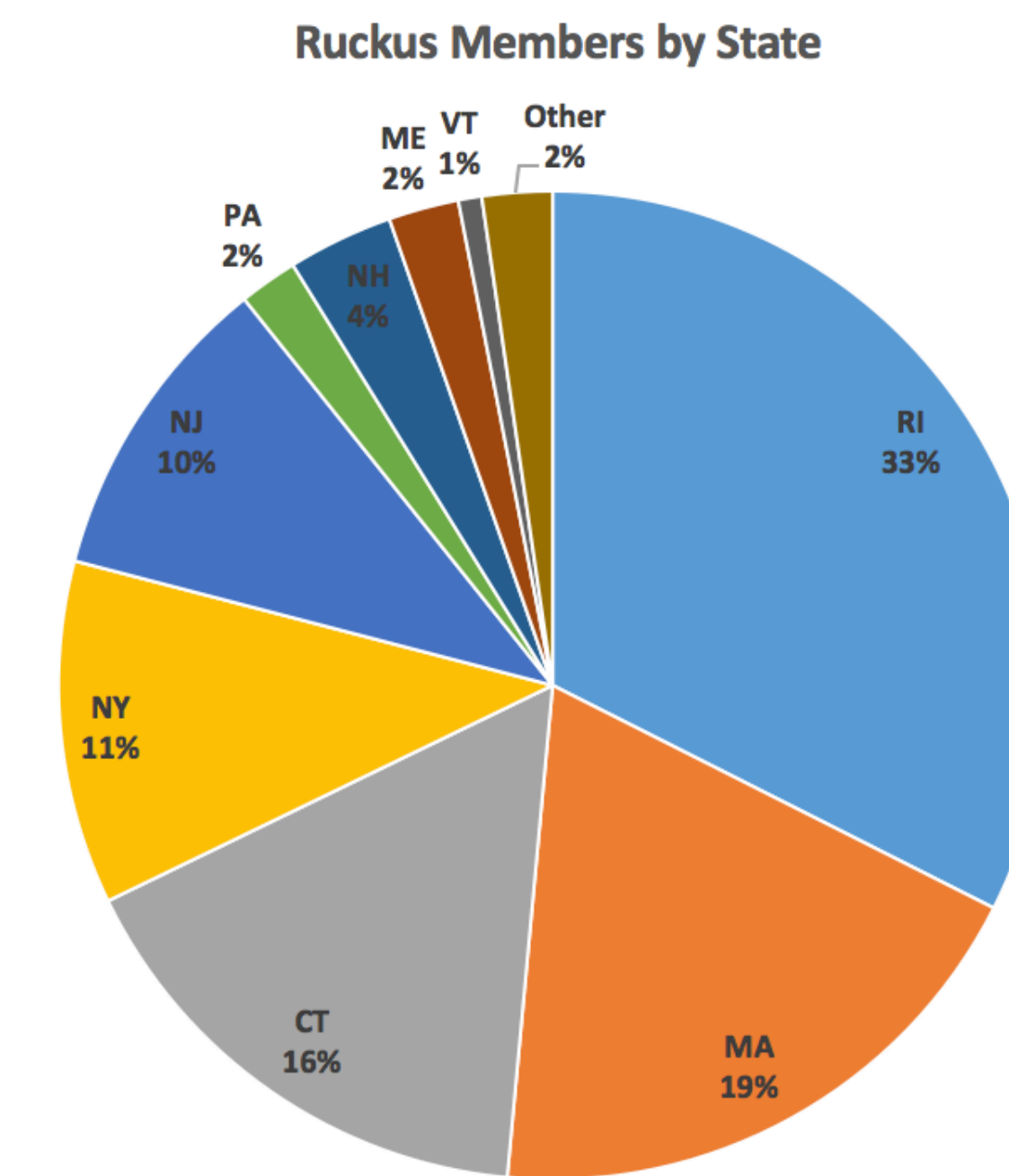


Fig. 2 Members by State

This chart shows the by-state breakdown of the 795 Ruckus members.



Fig. 3 Advertisement

This is the original advertisement used in print and social media campaigns.

\*The registration link changed when changes to gorhody.com occurred

Date	Opponent	Time	Promotion	Attendance
Nov. 11, 2016	Dartmouth	7:00PM	Home Opener	1,512
Nov. 14, 2016	Marist	7:00PM		1,028
Nov. 16, 2016	Brown	7:00PM	Purple-Out for the Matty Fund	2,011
Nov. 25, 2016	Belmont	7:00PM		316
Dec. 6, 2016	Old Dominion	7:00PM	RI Santa Hat Giveaway	1,046
Dec. 18, 2016	Holy Cross	12:30PM		210
Dec. 22, 2016	William & Mary	7:00PM		151
Jan. 3, 2017	St. Joseph's	7:00PM		260
Jan. 12, 2017	La Salle	7:00PM		327
Jan. 15, 2017	Massachusetts	2:30PM		262
Jan. 28, 2017	St. Bonaventure	2:00PM	Coaches vs Cancer	998
Jan. 31, 2017	George Washington	7:00PM	3-Point Hand Foam Finger Giveaway	1,893
Feb. 10, 2017	Dayton	7:00PM	URI 125 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Rally Towels	2,126
Feb. 15, 2017	Fordham	7:00PM	Way Back Wednesday	553
Feb. 25, 2017	VCU	2:00PM	Blue Out - T-shirt & Glow Stick Giveaway	1,155
Mar. 5, 2017	Davidson	6:00PM	RI Rally Towels	1,155

Fig. 4 Home Schedule

This table outlines all men's basketball home games, including attendance, promotions, and opponent.

Membership Package Items	Costs
T-Shirts	\$4.15
Membership Cards	\$0.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4.52</b>
Gross Profit	\$7,950
Costs	\$3,593.40
<b>Profit</b>	<b>\$4,356.60</b>

Fig. 5 Cost Breakdown

This table shows the cost breakdowns for the 2016-17 season. Note: Profit was spent on improvements to the student section (listed above), giveaways, bus trips, and more.

## MOVING FORWARD

The Rhody Ruckus thrived in its inaugural year. For its launch, it increased student attendance and brought back the excitement of being at a basketball game. Next year, the Rhody Ruckus will focus its efforts on retaining the members it has gained, as well as recruiting new members, and enhancing the game atmosphere with new chants, more props, and more costumes.

### Acknowledgements

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