

25 Under 25 Film Fest

A Senior Project

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ABSTRACT

This project is a roadmap on how to create a film festival with unprecedented origins. It shows the amount of work, the amount of resources, and the amount of contacts that a student must gain in order to achieve success in an event of this nature. It details my own journey as the founder and architect of the 25 Under 25 Film Fest, a two-day film festival highlighting 25 films by filmmakers around the state of California. The festival was a highly successful event with numerous facets, which will be outlined with this evaluation. This examination of the festival will show the accomplishments, the failures, and the changes that should be made to improve an experience of this magnitude. Dozens of students were involved with this project and each of their roles will be mentioned and explained as well, displaying the entirety of the endeavor. With this study, I hope to inspire others and provide ambitious students with an easy-to-follow guidebook on planning a large-scale festival, such as the 25 Under 25 Film Fest.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of the Event

The 25 Under 25 Film Fest is a two-day film festival focusing on filmmakers under the age of 25 who have made films that are less than 25 minutes. The festival highlights young artists making short films. It is the first film festival of its kind on the Central Coast and one of the only festivals in the country completely zeroing in on college-aged film projects. There are several other film festivals on the Central Coast of California, including the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival (SLOIFF) and the Backyard Shorts FilmFest in Santa Barbara, the only two other film festivals that show up if you type in the words “San Luis Obispo” in the search bar of FilmFreeway, one of the world’s largest databases for festivals. (FilmFreeway, 2018).

The SLOIFF is the most recognizable festival in San Luis Obispo county, yet over the course of its six day event, only about four hours are dedicated to young filmmakers, students in middle and high school (Eidson, 2018). This past year they received 80 submissions. As an university, Cal Poly is not film-prolific in the slightest. In the Cal Poly course catalog, there are only five classes available across all majors that mention the word “film” in their descriptions (Cal Poly, 2017). It does not have the film resources as schools with specific film departments or even specific film colleges. Cal Poly does not lack creatives or artists though. The 25 Under 25 Film Fest serves to inspire these creatives, while also giving them a larger platform to showcase their work. It is a showcase in which the main event is the work done by college students, not

industry professionals. With no event such as 25 Under 25 yet existing in this area, it seemed appropriate and necessary to create this outlet.

Background of the Event

To be clear, much of this background information is personal and relatable to my own experiences, as I was the founder of the event. Film has been a part of my life since I was a child. It started with the family tradition of going to the movies on every holiday. Movies were ingrained into my head as joyous, celebratory items. My older brother, Andrew, grew up in the theater community, becoming obsessed with plays, especially musicals. He showed me all of the old “classics”, in his words, in his spare time. I watched “Carousel”, “West Side Story”, “Singin’ in the Rain”, “Les Miserables”, and countless others. Movies became grand spectacles to me, evoking every emotion that a human can feel. Simply put, movies became important.

In my time at Cal Poly, I’ve been fortunate enough to take three out of those five film-related classes. Two of these classes, ISLA 340 and 341, “Media Arts and Technologies: Storytelling and Cinematic Process” gave me the opportunity to make short films. Several of my classmates and friends were also involved in these classes. One year ago, the students from ISLA 341 created short films and premiered them at the Palm Theater, an independent movie theater located in the heart of downtown San Luis Obispo. The theater is owned and operated by Cal Poly graduate Jim Dee, a firm supporter of Cal Poly artistic endeavors. One of my friends invited me to the showing and I was blown away, not necessarily by the work itself, but rather by the sheer joy that was felt within that theater. The experience of watching your film inside a theater on the biggest screen imaginable is a unique and unforgettable moment. I wanted to bring that

moment to other students around the state of California and more specifically, other students at Cal Poly.

Film festivals started in 1932 with the origination of the Venice Film Festival, so the idea is nothing new (Cavaliere, 2016). Venice just celebrated its 75th year in existence. Festivals such as Venice, Cannes, and Sundance paved the way for smaller festivals that operate in a niche market, such as the 25 Under 25 Film Fest. Huge film festivals will have much higher ticket prices, larger crowds, higher profile celebrities, and award-worthy films. With a smaller festival such as 25 Under 25, we can still have incredible films, but do not need any of the theatrics or expensive items paired with famous festivals.

Purpose of the Event

The main purpose of this event is to create a new platform for up-and-coming filmmakers. This is the most straightforward and obvious goal. No other film festival of this nature exists on the Central Coast and we are filling that gap. We are giving young artists new opportunities that previously didn't exist. There are several other objectives for this festival as well. First, we want to encourage youth film and youth arts by highlighting the accomplishments of young people. In my experience, young people inspire other young people. This event is a chance to show college students how much is possible. It's a reminder that you can make and create incredible projects, regardless of your age or experience. Second, we want to form a community of filmmakers that can share stories and ideas while making long-term connections. These young artists will be making up the film industry for the next 20 years and we want them

to learn and grow together. Lastly, we want to enhance the arts scene in San Luis Obispo county by including college aged students and focusing on the youth within the community.

Setting for the Event

This project is taking place as a part of a senior project at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. The festival itself is taking place at the Palm Theater in downtown San Luis Obispo. Several other Cal Poly students are involved with this project and have roles with varying levels of work and importance. The event includes filmmakers from around the world, with the majority of them studying film at a university in California. Additionally, different aspects of the festival take place outside of San Luis Obispo, as the filmmakers, and myself, stay at the KOA campsite in Avila Beach.

Evaluation Questions

In order to learn from this last year of planning and from the first 25 Under 25 Film Fest, which took place May 19-20, 2018, evaluation is necessary. The event was successful in many ways, but also could be improved. This review of the event will be based off the following questions, which are based off metrics designed by Kate Dodd of Expo Logic (2017):

- 1. How was our social media presence? Did it increase as the event grew closer?**
- 2. How did attendees behave during the event?**
- 3. How did the initial revenue goal compare with the final revenue report?**

Were we realistic?

- 4. How did sponsors, both potential and committed, react to the event? How was the recruitment process for raising money?**
- 5. How were our overall sales? Which sessions floundered and which sessions were popular?**
- 6. What is the overall time commitment for the executive director? Is this a doable project for a full-time student?**
- 7. How can we improve the submission process and outreach?**
- 8. How can we improve marketing efforts to reach more San Luis Obispo residents?**

Organization of the Evaluation

This evaluation will be organized into five separate chapters, making it an easy guide for any readers that want to learn more about the festival process. Chapter One will state the background and information surrounding the 25 Under 25 Film Fest. Chapter Two will be a short but comprehensive literature review on film festivals that have influenced 25 Under 25 and their missions and practices. Chapter Three is an essential chapter in terms of roadmap capabilities of this document. It will outline the methodology used in all facets of this event, from beginning planning stages to final outcomes and same-day logistics. Chapter Four will discuss the answers to all of the research questions, focusing on the evaluation aspect of this event. Chapter Five will summarize all of the results from the event and will highlight future changes that can be made to improve the festival.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This literature review will provide information on several other film festivals that have influenced 25 Under 25. It will discuss tactics, mission statements, and business practices from these other festivals. The literature on film as a topic is widespread, but this event was a passion project from a student. Much of the event and its related decisions were made by me, simply by putting my best foot forward. I constantly tried to make the best decision for the festival, as research on the actual founding of film festivals is much more narrow.

San Luis Obispo International Film Festival

The San Luis Obispo International Film Festival (SLOIFF) and their director, Wendy Eidson, were a huge influence on this festival, due to proximity and longevity. I met with Eidson in June of 2017. She told me that they used FilmFreeway for their submissions (personal communication, June 2017). Eidson explained the importance of making the festival as legit and professional as possible, which includes a judging panel, submission fees, winners, cash prizes, and creating a plausible business plan and budget (personal communication, June 2017).

The SLOIFF has continued to grow in both ticket sales and actual attendance (SLO Film Fest, 2018). In its 25 years of existence, the festival has developed and flourished, although the tickets themselves have also increased in price. This last year, tickets to most films hovered around 15-20 dollars (SLO Film Fest, 2018). That's the price for only one film. The SLOIFF has shown that a market for film festivals exists in San Luis Obispo county.

Here is SLOIFF's mission statement: To entertain, educate and inspire film-goers and filmmakers. Movies Matter!

Here is their vision statement: The SLOIFF will continue to grow in importance as a successful regional event, providing cultural and economic benefit to San Luis Obispo County by promoting the concept that "Movies Matter" and that the art of film is a cultural force with the capacity to transform lives of individuals and society at large, we will nurture new filmmakers, attract new audiences, and develop film-related youth outreach and education programs. We will expand collaboration with other community non-profits, and the local hospitality and wine industries with events that emphasize the uniqueness of our area (SLO Film Fest, 2018).

These statements are superb examples of general, blanket-like missions and values. They played an invaluable role in crafting the mission statement of 25 Under 25.

Mountainfilm

Mountainfilm is a film festival located in Telluride, Colorado. It's one of America's longest running film festivals, started in 1979. Mountainfilm has a very specific market and a niche cause, similarly to 25 Under 25.

Here is their mission statement: Mountainfilm uses the power of film, art and ideas to inspire audiences to create a better world (Mountainfilm, 2018).

Here is their vision statement: Mountainfilm is a dynamic organization and festival of films, people, stories, and ideas that celebrates indomitable spirit, educates and inspires audiences, and motivates individuals and communities to advance solutions for a livable world (Mountainfilm, 2018).

Due to their activist-inspired message, the staff even puts specific core values on the website. Here are some of the values they name: embracing adventure, preserving environments, connecting cultures, building community, inspiring activism, fostering storytellers, promoting integrity, gathering visionaries, celebrating courage, and enlightening audiences (Mountainfilm, 2018). This festival has a target audience and has a direct message for all of its film-goers. It doesn't shy away from its purpose.

Toronto International Film Festival

The Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) is one of the largest and most prestigious film festivals in the entire world. It is a crowning achievement of film each and every year, but it is a massive festival. Due to its pure largeness, it's mission seems to be more vague. It is less concerned with cornering a niche market and more concerned with reaching the masses.

They do not have one specific mission statement, vision statement, or core values section. They don't even write the year that the festival began. It has grown to a size in which smaller details become irrelevant.

Here is their about section: TIFF is a charitable cultural organization with a mission to transform the way people see the world through film. TIFF is dedicated to presenting the best of international and Canadian cinema and creating transformational experiences for film lovers and creators of all ages and backgrounds. As Canada's premiere home of cinema, TIFF offers screenings, lectures, discussions, festivals, workshops, events, professional development and opportunities to meet, hear and learn from filmmakers from Canada and around the world. We are committed to treating all individuals with respect, dignity and fairness by removing physical,

social and economic barriers to participation. We ensure that all who wish to enjoy TIFF's programming can do so. We offer mobility devices (which can be reserved by phoning our box office), and assistive listening devices. We also offer closed captioning, and descriptive sound—look for the CC and DS notations throughout our screening schedule. For more information, [click here](#) (TIFF, 2018).

The important takeaway lies in the way they speak in generalities. It is hard for any citizen, or hopefully moviegoer in their eyes, to find fault in their mission. They strive to respect and include all people, as shown through the last section of their about section, where they outline the different resources they will provide if a moviegoer has any impairment.

TIFF is consistently ranked in the top ten film festivals in the world. It has been called the most influential film festival in the entire world (Bradshaw, Barnes, Pulver, & Shoard, 2012). It has celebrities galore and high-profile movies consistently start their years at TIFF. It has the stature of other prestigious festivals such as Cannes and Sundance. Researching and learning from TIFF's missions and mottos was necessary when creating similar statements for my smaller festival, in order to give it more credibility and hopeful stature.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter will outline the methodology used to upstart the festival. Most of this section was carried out over the last 12 months, with steps being accomplished incrementally. As a roadmap, this chapter can be used by future students who have plans to create similar events. It will be a simple guideline and timeline of my processes and procedures in founding the 25 Under 25 Film Fest. It will be broken up by month to show exactly what I did and what is necessary in the preparation for the event.

June

The ideas was conceived in June of 2017. Shortly after finals, I woke up one morning with a big idea, to put on a film festival. I didn't have any details yet, only the inkling of an massive project. An undertaking of this magnitude always calls for advice from others who have done projects like this in the past. It's important to remember that you can't put on a film festival alone. I needed help. I needed advice.

I understood that San Luis Obispo had an established, successful film festival in the SLOIFF and I decided to talk to its festival director, Wendy Eidson. Eidson gave me advice more importantly, information on how the SLOIFF was run. As stated earlier, Eidson pointed me towards FilmFreeway, and pointed me towards other community members that I should talk with (personal communication, June 2017). Unfortunately, she was skeptical that I could pull off an event of this size. She suggested that I volunteer for her festival instead (personal communication, June 2017). Eidson wasn't the only person that expressed doubt about the

project. Many people in later months stated similar concerns and honestly, it can be disheartening to hear so much disbelief. I was dead set on completing this project, though. Immediately, less than one month into planning, I realized that perseverance would be my greatest skill in this whole endeavor.

Eidson's biggest contribution came when she told me I should find a niche, find something that makes my festival unique. She explained that there are thousands and thousands of festivals around the world. What is going to make mine any different? She suggested something like 30 under 30 (personal communication, June 2017). Eidson was the original person that inspired the name "25 Under 25 Film Fest". I crafted her original idea.

Additionally, I started working on my business plan and my budget. After hearing from Eidson about how she ran her logistics and the work that went into the festival, I decided to be safe with my budget. I would much rather overestimate than underestimate. The total cost of the festival came out to be about \$12,000, much higher than I imagined. All of these were rough estimates though, as I hadn't talked to the Palm Theater or anybody else about the possibility of the festival.

June was all about conception. It was about crafting the original idea into something that was plausible. It was refining the original idea. Nothing major was accomplished, but the belief that I could actually pull this off was already alive.

July

The next steps were finishing my budget and my business plan. I called several places around SLO and got estimates for different facets of the festival. I visited the Palm Theater and

learned that one full day using one theater costs \$1,000. I wanted to have a two-day festival, so the total cost of the theater was going to be \$2,000.

Additionally, I had the idea of housing all of the filmmakers at a nearby campsite. I learned that the campsite had to be wheelchair accessible and had to include all the amenities necessary for living somewhere for a weekend. Renting 15 tents and dealing with the setup, takedown, food, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, rain cover, and campfire necessities would be unneeded stress too close to the weekend. I checked out local campsites and realized that this would be an expensive part of the festival. I found the KOA campsite in Avila Beach and learned that it could be booked several months in advance. They would charge me about \$150 per cabin per night, but all amenities were included and the cabins were quite nice, as I saw by taking a tour of the site. The cabins costed about \$4,500.

For the business plan, I created our executive summary, our mission statement and our core values.

Here is our executive summary: The “25 Under 25 Film Fest” is a two-day film festival in San Luis Obispo that is dedicated to giving young California filmmakers a platform to show their work. The festival will highlight filmmakers under the age of 25 that are making films less than 25 minutes long. It’s an opportunity to only grow the already established film culture within San Luis Obispo county. It will be open to all young people within the state of California, which is the center of American film. With over 30 film schools in the state, filmmakers are in abundance and this festival would be a new way for them to showcase their abilities. It will be a new type of film festival that is focused on youth, independence, and beginnings.

Here is our mission statement: The 25 Under 25 Film Fest serves to create a larger platform for up-and-coming filmmakers by highlighting films by these young people that will be making up the film industry for decades to come. We aim to produce an environment that encourages youth art, innovative ideas, and lasting connections between young filmmakers.

Here are our core values and objectives:

- To create a larger platform for young filmmakers to show their works to the surrounding California communities.
- To encourage youth film and youth arts by highlighting the accomplishments of young people.
- To form a community of filmmakers that can share stories and ideas while making long-term connections.
- To enhance the arts scene in San Luis Obispo county by including college aged students and focusing on the youth within the community.

In the business statement, there are also sections related to our company description, the current market analysis, the awards and prizes of the festival, our marketing and sales, our organization's management including a small advisory board, and finally our tiers of sponsorship.

Here is our company description: We are a new type of film festival. Most film festivals that currently exist in California and in the United States are for more established artists that are making full-length films. We want to highlight young people, starting out with short films. As high school and college students experiment with film, they usually will start with a project of this length and this festival gives them a chance to showcase their skills and talents in front of a

real audience. Film has been a passion of mine since I was a kid. I've always loved that film can make people laugh, cry, and experience every human emotion. It is incredible what people can create, especially at a younger age. I've written a full-length screenplay and it was more than difficult, and it gave me a huge respect for all filmmakers and screenwriters. Every job I've ever had has involved communication with other people, and I've realized that connecting to other people is important to me. This film festival is the culmination of my love for film and my love for connecting to other people. Most events surrounding the arts seem to attract an older, wealthier subset of the community, and this festival hopes to reach the younger generation of SLO's residents. SLO's International Film Festival has established this area as an art-loving community and this film festival will only help what SLOIFF has started. The SLOIFF has done an incredible job building the film community in the area and we hope to add to their work. Our film fest will give a chance for older community members to see the future of filmmaking in California. Finally, it will give businesses in SLO a chance to advertise to college students in the area. The quirk that comes with this festival is that all of the filmmakers whose films are chosen will receive 2 all-access passes per person (up to 2 filmmakers) and will be housed at a local campsite. Young people care less about comfort, and more about the experience of an event. This will give these filmmakers incentive to apply and will help create an individual, special experience for each filmmaker that is chosen. It will create an environment that focuses on sharing ideas, stories, and making connections with one another.

Here is our market analysis: Hollywood is the largest film industry in the entire world and luckily for us, is in the state of California. California has been the center of American film for the last 120 years and this hasn't changed in recent years. In the past ten years, Hollywood

has grossed over 10 billion years annually, and there is no reason for this number to decrease. With rapidly expanding and improving film technology, cameras are available to everyone, especially the younger filmmaking generation. College students can now make feature length films using a camera that they bought for as little as \$100. Due to its steady popularity and growing accessibility to younger generations, the market consumers and participants are abundant. For example, there are 30 colleges with film degrees in the state of California. As stated earlier though, many colleges, such as Cal Poly, have film minors or media arts minors that involve up-and-coming artists. These institutions' film departments result in a plethora of young filmmakers that have no platform to show their finished products. This festival would solve that problem. An interesting aspect of film though is that it engages all ages. Young filmmakers can easily engage older audience members, due to those audience members interest in the community and in different types of film as a whole. Everyone can relate to film, as we see ourselves in the characters in the movies. A "25 Under 25" concept looks to engage all people and allow them to connect to the movies that we are showing. Although the SLOIFF could be seen as possible competition, both festivals can and will be successful, due to the fact that people love film. Both festivals are giving a platform to filmmakers, and we can work together to create a larger film community within SLO County. We hope to broaden the arts community within the area. Young artists can make astonishing works of art and the SLO community will feel inclined to support youth art and help foster a growing young artists community. With discounted prices and small-scale festival, SLO residents will have accessibility to our filmmakers and our festival.

Here is our marketing and sales plan: There are three components to the marketing and sales strategy of this festival: find young filmmakers to submit their films, find local businesses

and nonprofits to sponsor the festival, and find community members to attend the festival. Each is a necessary step to having a successful event. First, finding filmmakers. We will need to contact all film departments throughout the state, telling them of the opportunity our festival gives their students. There will be a fee for submitting one's film, but the benefits will outweigh the fee. The campground and free food/passes will be enough to sway students to pay a small fee to submit films. We will shoot for about 25 films throughout the weekend, since it will only be a two-day event. Each film will include a question-and-answer session as well. Second, finding local businesses to sponsor the festival. This will be the most difficult task. We will need money to put on the festival, and although sponsors will receive marketing opportunities to cater to students in the area, it will still be tenuous work. This is where volunteers will come in. Students at Cal Poly that are interested in film will receive one free one-day pass to the festival if they volunteer and help bring in sponsorships. It is a simple incentive but Cal Poly is a collaborative community that involves helping students grow together. The best way to market to these businesses is face-to-face conversations. Businesses will want to support this project because it shows that they are committed to the local art scene, and committed to helping Cal Poly students. It will also be a chance for businesses to market to Cal Poly students, who are half of the population of San Luis Obispo. Third, finding attendees. Thousands of SLO residents are interested in film and dedicated to arts within SLO County, as demonstrated by the SLOIFF. When young people see other young people do something great, it gives them belief that they can do the same. This will foster a larger youth art collective within San Luis Obispo, which directly helps all art events and organizations within the community. Fliers and booths are two ways to reach the public, and if we could get a possible booth for one or two nights at Thursday's

farmers market, it would be enough. Additionally, we will reach out to the SLOIFF and see if they can help us with outreach with their extensive fan base that they've established. They are an incredible resource that gives our film fest a chance to be something great. We will also be using social media as a way to reach out to the youth community. We will have a social media coordinator who is running our Facebook and Instagram to contact as many high school and college students in the San Luis Obispo areas as possible. Social media is a new way to market to the youth, and as young people, we are more capable of being effective in the social media sphere.

Tickets will not be a main source of revenue, as I will not count on them to fully fund the festival. Ticket sales will be used to create money to give to the winners of the film festival. Tickets will be sold online at our website and will be sold face-to-face. Students: \$7 for one session. Community members: \$12 for one session.

Finally, here are our tiers of sponsorship:

- Director — \$2,500+
 - Premium sponsorship and constant marketing throughout the festival. You will be a principal sponsor of the event. If you choose, you will receive a one-minute plug about you and/or your company before one of the films in the festival. Your company logo will also be on the screen as patrons walk into the theater before the film. Your company logo will be featured on our website, will be featured on all of our merchandise, and in the festival guide. You will receive 4 two-day passes to the festival, as

well as 3 all-access passes to the Saturday VIP event. Can also give anonymous donation.

- Screenwriters — \$1,000+
 - You will receive a one-minute plug about you and/or your company before one of the films in the festival. If you choose, you will be main sponsor of one of the 24 films. Your company logo will also be on the screen as patrons walk into the theater before the film. Your company logo will be featured on our website, will be featured largely on all of our merchandise, and in the festival guide. You will receive 3 two-day passes to the festival, as well as 2 all-access passes to the Saturday VIP event. Can also give anonymous donation.
- Producers — \$500+
 - Your company logo will be featured on our website, will be featured on all of our merchandise, and in the festival guide. You will receive 2 two-day passes to the festival and one all-access pass to the Saturday VIP event. Can also give anonymous donation.
- Actors and Actresses — \$100+
 - Your company logo will be featured on our website, will be featured on all of our merchandise, and in the festival guide. You will receive 1 two-day pass to the festival. Can also give anonymous donation.

All of this was created in July. I tried to write with a professional tone and be honest with all of my statistics and opinions.

August

In August, I focused on achieving nonprofit status for the event. In order to accept donations and to receive tax-free donations, we needed to be under the umbrella of a local nonprofit. I reached out to a couple of nonprofits but only got a response from ARTS Obispo. It is one of the most active arts-oriented nonprofits in the county and puts on events such as the Open Studios Art Tour and Art After Dark.

Here is their mission statement: ARTS Obispo, the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council and the local partner of the California Arts Council, advances the visual, literary and performing arts through programs that promote public access to the arts, arts in educational settings, local arts planning and collaboration, and opportunities for artists and arts organizations (ARTS Obispo, 2018). I made contact with their ex-executive director, Angela Tahti, and we set up a meeting.

I explained to her the idea in detail. I also sent her my budget and my business plan. She asked me dozens of questions, and told me that it would have to be sent to the board of directors for more approval (personal communication, August 2017). While I waited, I cleaned up my budget and my business plan, adding expenses for marketing and advertising, \$2,500 of cash prizes, and a stipend for myself as the executive director. She also gave me the idea for a VIP Awards Ceremony, which I could cater with food, beer, and wine. This upped the cost of the event to about \$16,500. ARTS Obispo would give the event nonprofit status and they would

handle all of my finances. At the end of August, they offered me the fiscal sponsorship and I took it. This partnership with ARTS Obispo was my main focus throughout the month of August.

Madi Salvati, a fellow Journalism student, also created our website on Wordpress. This was a huge step to legitimizing the festival and our mission.

September & October

During September, I started outreach to both sponsors and possible submitters of the festival. These tasks and responsibilities extended into October, so I've decided to combine these months. I set up our account on FilmFreeway and gathered a couple of other Journalism students to contact colleges in California. We made our submission fee very low, \$5, in order to increase interest. Roya Forooghi, Mikaela Duhs, and I emailed and called each college in the state that had a film department.

Here is a list of colleges that we contacted: UC Berkeley, UC Santa Cruz, UCLA, USC, CSU Sacramento, CSU Long Beach, CSU Monterey, St. Mary's, Santa Clara, Cal Poly, CSU Fullerton, Santa Monica City College, Santa Barbara City College, ArtCenter College, Columbia College of Hollywood, Florida State, NYU, Columbia, Syracuse, Biola, Loyola Marymount, Emerson, American Film Institute, Wesleyan, Ringling College, Boston University, Laguna College, San Francisco State, Mount St. Mary's, Stanford, UC Riverside, UC Davis, UC Irvine, UC Santa Barbara, San Jose State, San Diego State, CSU Northridge, and UC San Diego.

We started to receive submissions and it was an incredible feeling. By the time the submission deadline ended, which was January 31, we received 166 total submissions. Most of the above college responded in one way or another. I made contacts at many of the colleges that

can be contacted in the case that this festival continues into successive years. If the college didn't reply, we continued to call and/or email them at least three more times.

In terms of sponsors, I started to contact companies that have given to similar causes in the past. I also contacted any and all companies that have been involved in the arts in San Luis Obispo County.

Here are some of the companies and organizations that I contacted, mostly unsuccessfully received funding from: Really Right Stuff, GoPro, Adobe, Apple, Woodstock's, Bill Gaines Audio, Patagonia, City of SLO, Highway 1 Discovery, SLO Chamber of Commerce, PMG Film, Community Foundation of SLO, SLO Safe Ride, Spokes, Sundance Institute, California Film Commission, MindBody, CSU Entertainment Alliance, Meathead Movers, Ribline, Avila Beach Golf Resort, SLO Opera, Enterprise, Rabobank, BlackHorse, Central Coast Distributing, SLOMA, and even Cal Poly's President's Office.

Most of these consisted of meetings with people from each of the above organizations and colleges. It was all about networking and reaching out to others about the event, essentially spreading the word.

November & December

The months of November and December allowed me to create meaningful connections that led to sponsorships. Our film submissions continued to increase but now I needed to raise money. The first step was applying for grants. I applied to a grant with the CSU Entertainment Alliance, which unfortunately I did not receive. In future years, the CSUEA is a great organization that has the ability to fund much of this project. I also applied for the Baker-Koob

Endowment Grant through Cal Poly. This grant focuses on Learn By Doing projects that are spearheaded by students. I received \$2,500 from this grant and it also helped me gain credibility throughout the university. With this grant, I needed a teacher advisor, who was Dr. Jane Lehr, the chair for the Women's & Gender Studies Department. She became an invaluable resource and we met once a week to talk finances and sponsorships.

I also received my sponsorships from the Journalism Department, Communication Studies Department, the Center for Expressive Technologies, the Cal Poly Science, Technology, and Society Minors program, the Graphic Communications Department, the Art & Design Department, the Liberal Arts & Engineering Department, the English Department, and the College of Liberal Arts. All of these sponsorships were essential to funding the event. Every penny was used in a conscientious effort to create the best film festival possible.

All of these sponsorships also allowed me to put down payments at the Palm Theater and the KOA campsite in Avila Beach, securing these locations. Additionally, I secured the Alumni Welcome Center in downtown San Luis Obispo as the venue for the VIP Awards Ceremony.

January

January was the month of our last submission deadline. Due to this, I needed to find judges and create a rubric. The rubric we used was derived from FilmFreeway, who has an established rubric that most of its film festivals use. It's generic, but it includes categories such as originality, direction/pacing, writing/plot, cinematography, performances, production value/animation, sound, and music. Each of these categories was out of 10 and then averaged to get an overall score for each film.

I recruited students from other film classes, other majors, and even other colleges to be judges. I wanted a cross-section of students that all had different background and different beliefs, so that they would watch the movies with a different lens. Additionally, I had a couple of teachers and local film buffs in the community judge films. I found 30 judges, and assigned each of them an average of 12 films. Each film was then watched a minimum of five times, so that we could get an average of all the judges' scores.

The judging process is incredibly important to any film festival. It needs to be unbiased and needed to be expansive. It needs to be seen through a broad lens. It cannot be singular in any way. This adds credibility to your festival as well.

In January, we received sponsorships from Topa Topa Brewing Company, who became our official beer sponsor for the VIP Awards Ceremony, as well as the Cal Poly Political Science Department. We continued to grow closer to our expected goal of raising \$16,500 for the event.

February

In February, I coordinated all of the judging. Judges started watching films and had to be done by the end of the month. I watched all 166 films in order to be thorough. I'm not sure this was a necessary gesture but I do think it was important. The 25 Under 25 Film Fest is only in its first year and the founder/executive director needed to have a solid grasp on the films as a whole. I felt it necessary to watch each and every film. Countless hours were spent in front of my laptop screen but it was well worth it.

The films were absolutely awe-inspiring and had a strong impact on our judges. Our judges were shocked at the high quality of these films. I made sure that all of the judging was

done by the end of February. Additionally, a couple of filmmakers contacted me and asked if they could submit in the middle of February. It was past the deadline, but I still considered their submissions. Due to our nature as a small festival, I seemed it fit that we do not deny anyone's films. We give every film a chance. As a festival grows, you cannot afford this luxury but we could accommodate people in our inaugural year. I stand firmly by this decision.

By the end of the month, we had our top 25 films. It was important to me that we have at least one representative from each film at the overwhelming majority of our screenings. It was an exciting feeling to finally watch the best of the best. This festival was a platform for so many talented young filmmakers.

Additionally, we received sponsorships from Cal Poly Associated Students Inc., Shabang, the Office of University Diversity & Inclusion, and the Center for Service in Action. Again, these donations were very appreciated and essential to festival success.

March

In the first few days of March, I sent out a welcome letter to all of the filmmakers whose submissions were selected for the festival. It was so exciting to hear their responses. They were so appreciated and just stoked to be a part of the 25 Under 25 Film Fest.

Here is the welcome letter I sent out:

Hi! Thank you so much for submitting a film to the 25 Under 25 Film Fest and supporting our mission. Congratulations on being an OFFICIAL SELECTION of the inaugural 25 UNDER 25 FILM FEST. **PLEASE READ BELOW:** All the info you need regarding attending, lodging,, festival passes, etc is listed below.

This year's festival will take place in San Luis Obispo, CA from May 18-20, 2018. We will kick off the festival the evening of Friday, May 18th with our Filmmaker/Actor Welcome Reception at our log cabins. Films will run all day on May 19th & Sunday May 20th on the big screen of the historic Palm Theater. The full film schedule and award nominations will be released in the next few weeks. **ATTENDING:** We would love to have you in attendance to represent your project in person. It is actually required that you attend the festival as we will be having Q and A sessions after each film. We want local community members to learn more about your projects, processes and creative ideas. If you cannot attend, please let us know immediately. Our goal is to connect you with other filmmakers, and provide an avenue to help you get your movie out into the public. **LODGING:** We are providing lodging for 2 filmmakers per film, in the form of log cabins at a local campsite in Avila Beach, CA. Please bring sleeping bags and pillows just in case. All of us will be living at the cabins throughout the weekend. We are providing lodging on the nights of Friday May 18th and Sunday May 19th, as the festival ends on Sunday in the afternoon. You will be living with fellow young filmmakers and we hope you will create lasting connections that will continue into your future film endeavors. There is tons of parking at the campsite as well. **FESTIVAL PASSES:** Each film will receive 2 complimentary VIP Filmmakers passes to the festival which grant entry into 2 out of 4 sessions of screenings and the VIP event on Saturday May 19th. Please provide us with a list of the two people from your project who will be attending. and we'll get you

hooked up with passes. **SOCIAL MEDIA:** We strongly encourage you to follow us via our social media links, and we will do the same for you. We will be promoting your film often leading up to the festival, and will gladly share any posts about the festival you tag us in. We'd also love if you sent us a 15 second trailer about your film in the next couple of weeks. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/25under25fest/> Instagram: @25under25fest. We're so excited to have your film included in this year's 25 Under 25 Film Fest. Please send us your festival pass info as soon as possible. I look forward to meeting you in person, and spending a fun weekend watching movies with you. Let us know if you have any questions and we're so excited for May! Cheers, Michael.

If filmmakers didn't respond to my welcome letter, I sent them a reminder email about two weeks later. Additionally, if they said that they could not be present at the festival, I asked them to send a representative, or at the very least, send me something to say about their film, including any inspiration for it. Every film had at least a small spiel written by the filmmaker for the audience. 18 out of 25 films had representation by some cast or crew member at the festival. Throughout this month, I was coordinating with filmmakers and ensuring that they could make it to SLO in May. I wanted as much filmmaker participation as possible.

During March, I picked a smaller judging panel who would be responsible to picking the festival winners. We had decided on first, second, and third place winners with each receiving cash prizes. The smaller judging panel had five members. The first judge was Michael Frank (me). The second judge was Randi Barros, a film professor at Cal Poly and a professional film editor. The third judge was Sky Bergman, an Art & Design professor who is a filmmaker and

created the film *Lives Well Lived* which has been touring around the country. The fourth judge is Dr. Emily Ryalls, a Communications Studies professor who focuses in film critiques from a social lens. The final judge was Jillian Tullis, a University of San Diego professor focusing on contemporary issues in film. This judging panel could be expanded in the future but its small nature provided solid communication in picking these winners. Each person had film experience as well which is a huge plus.

Additionally, we received funding from the Cal Poly Cross Cultural Centers, the Shirt Peddler, and the Alumni Association.

April

April was the busiest month of the year. I completely planned the VIP Awards Ceremony and the logistics of the actual festival. I created four sessions, with about 6-7 films in each one. I set the festival schedule, creating sessions with animated shorts, documentary shorts, and dramatic shorts. Curating the festival was all about compatibility, as well as spreading out the animations and documentaries.

The VIP Awards Ceremony needed an ABC license, needed catered food, and alcohol. I also rented out tables and chairs from Central Coast Tent & Party. I bought trash cans, trash bags, tablecloths, candles, and extension cords as well. I rented a projector, a projector screen, and lights as well. All of these were necessary for the event. The event was catered by Upper Crust, an upscale Italian restaurant that is on the approved list of caterers for Cal Poly, which is a necessary part of the event. Upper Crust had an ABC license to pour alcohol as well, which was

essential. The beer was provided by Topa Topa Brewing Company. The wine was provided by Twin Coyotes Winery, Cayucos Cellars, Moonstone Cellars, and Cutruzzola Vineyards.

I individually invited about 50 people to the VIP event and allowed others to buy tickets. Sponsors and filmmakers received free tickets to the event as well. The event was on the fancier side and included live music by a local guitarist. It also featured lists of our sponsors on all of the cocktail tables.

May

May was naturally stressful because the event was actually happening. Several filmmakers cancelled at the last minute and I was forced to make accommodations. I had to coordinate with new members of each film, as well as include some late Cal Poly films. We wanted to showcase Cal Poly with at least three student films from San Luis Obispo.

Additionally, I had to convert each of the films into Blu-Ray format so that the Palm Theater would be able to play them on the big screen. Unfortunately, I do not know how to do this, so I passed this task to a fellow Cal Poly student named Jackson Goyette. He was able to convert the films and put them on separate blu-ray disks, one for each session. This made the entire process much easier and it is necessary that you have someone with these technical skills on your team. He was instrumental and his actions allowed the film festival to look cinematic and professional. I'm very grateful for him.

The actual event was on May 19-20 but filmmakers showed up on the evening of May 18th. I sent all of them directions to the KOA campsite and they arrived one by one. One of the filmmakers didn't have a ride so I booked him a ticket on an Amtrak train, departing from Los

Angeles and arriving in San Luis Obispo. I checked into the campsite early and got all of the keys for all the cabins. As each filmmakers arrived, I assigned them a cabin and gave them a key. At around 7:30 PM, I ordered Petra mediterranean food for dinner. I drove out to Petra, picked up the food, picked up the filmmaker at the train station, and drove back to the campsite. We ate around 8:15 PM, huddled around one of the larger picnic tables outside the cabins. It was incredible. We used the plates and silverware from the cabins. Everyone talked about their different experiences, shared stories, and got to know each other.

Afterwards, I cleaned up all of the plates and silverware. I also slept at the cabins, and I waited until about midnight because that's when the last filmmaker arrived.

The day of May 19th was absolutely hectic. I woke up around 7 AM and went to the campsite general store. They were having a pancake breakfast so all of the filmmakers shuffled over and we ate breakfast together. At around 9 AM, I went over to the Palm Theater to begin setting up. People started lining up around 9:45 AM. I checked each person's ticket and pointed them in the direction of the screen in which the movies would be shown. I checked people in until about 10:15 AM. The first session last until about 12:00 PM. I gave comments before and after each film, introducing the film and then the filmmaker in attendance. After the film, the filmmaker in attendance went to the front of the theater, talked about their film, and answered any questions from the audience.

Then I gave a little walking tour to all of the filmmakers. I showed them the mission, the bubblegum alley, and gave them restaurant options for lunch. We ate lunch and then the second session was from 2 PM to 4 PM.

After a successful second session, I went to the VIP Awards Ceremony venue. I finished setting up the tables and tablecloths, the projector and projector screen, and the kegs from the brewery. I swept the outdoor patio and made sure that it looked professional. The caterer showed up around 6:30 PM and I helped lay out all of the food. Our musician dropped out at 6:30 PM as well and so I scrambled and found a new musician to start playing guitar at 7 PM, when the event started.

During the event, I mingled with everyone I possibly could. I tried to make sure everyone felt included and excited to be at the event. At about 8:15 PM, due to the cold weather, we started screening the top three films. The projector worked perfectly as all 40 of us huddled around it to watch the films. After each film, the filmmaker talked about their inspiration, their passion, and about the film itself. They also answered many questions from the audience. After the screenings, people stayed and mingled until about 10:00 PM, when the event space was supposed to close. Everyone left the venue and I, along with my team and my parents, cleaned up the entire venue. We emptied the trash cans, took down the tables, and reconfigured the space as we found it. This was an exhausting task but I'm so glad it was done on the same night, instead of the next morning. The VIP Awards Ceremony went incredibly well, but even more planning could have helped. I waited too long to figure out the details of the night and it created more stress than was necessary.

On Sunday, the sessions lasted from 10-12 PM and then 2-4 PM again. They went smoothly and I relaxed quite a bit. I was exhausted to be quite frank. I let the events unfold as I planned them. After the last sessions, the filmmakers left, I collected all of their cabin keys, drove them back to the campsite, and went home.

The next week was filled with paperwork. I filled out numerous forms about reimbursements and about final reports regarding the project. It is essential that I kept all of my receipts and all of the proof about any purchases I made. I sent out an email recapping the event to all of the filmmakers and all of the sponsors, keeping them involved and encouraging them to tell their friends and family about the experience.

Limitations

There were several limitations surrounding this project, most of which were out of my control. I could not control which grants I received. I also could not control which filmmakers attended the festival. Several of the possible sponsors I approached had already given out their annual donation budget. This limitation is due to the fact that I only started planning this event a year in advance. Additionally, this festival was created while I was taking a full course load with other college classes, working a part-time job at the university, being on the Journalism Department advisory board, organizing volunteers for Camp Kesem, a club at Cal Poly, and also being a part of Poly Reps, the official university ambassador group on campus. I could not devote all of my time to this project and this caused more stress, more drawbacks, and more lack of organization throughout the weekend.

Chapter 4

Analysis

This chapter will focus on my research questions and the data surrounding them. It will focus on data uncovered towards the end of the project. It will include all of the statistics available to me now that the festival is complete. I will analyze the answer to each research question using the various points of data I have collected in the last 12 months.

Research Questions

These are my previously established research questions and the answers to each of them. These questions help measure overall success of the event.

1. How was our social media presence? Did it increase as the event grew closer?

- a. Our social media presence was run by a business student named Alex Paulsen. He took all of the photos and created all of the videos, which were posted on both Facebook and Instagram. As the festival grew closer, our reach increased as well. In fact, the nearer we were to May 19th, our page began to grow major traction. On Facebook, our official trailer reached 9,742 people, all organically, without us paying for any boosts or advertisements. It was clicked on 884 times and liked, commented, shared 211 times. It was by far our highest reaching post of the year. By comparison, our next highest reaching post was our actual event posting about tickets being on sale, reaching 4,174 people and being clicked on 151 times. We

boosted that post, spending \$40 in the process. In the month from April 25th — May 25th, our total page reach was 38,924, just on Facebook.

- i. On Instagram, our most reached post was our trailer with 2,409 views and 471 likes. It was shared by several other organizations such as Shabang, Enjoy SLO, and Respect the Funk. If you include shared posts, total video views are 3,767. We currently have 519 followers and are following 1,128 accounts. Our last four posts have at least 100 likes and we have posted 43 times.
- b. Overall, our social media skyrocketed once we started posting higher quality videos in correlation with growing closer to the actual event. It helps to receive support from local organizations as well. We could partner with more organizations so that our content is shared across more accounts across more platforms. We need to be more active. We need to be posting at least three times a week, which is tough when only person is running all related accounts. To remedy this, we could have a larger team of people creating social media content. If we had three students all working on social media, that would increase of productivity, our posting rate, and likely, our followers and our overall reach.

2. How did attendees behave during the event?

- a. This is one of the more subjective parts of the event to analyze. Most of the sessions, including the VIP Awards Ceremony, were fairly packed. Several students at each session left early, likely because they were receiving extra credit

and didn't want to spare the time. At the screenings in which the actual filmmakers were present, at least three questions were asked after each film, which is a great sign of engagement. At the VIP Awards Ceremony, at least five questions were asked after each film. Additionally, there were several patrons that went to the first session and ended up buying tickets to later sessions in the weekend. I received about 30 text messages from different people after sessions explaining how inspired they were after seeing the films. The audience was very receptive, especially after seeing the high quality of all of the student films.

- b. In the future, we could have a short survey that people pick up on the way in and fill out before leaving. The survey would test satisfaction, favorite films, and any suggestions they might have for the festival. This would be a much easier way to track audience enjoyment and audience reactions. The "eye test" isn't always reliable and this would be more professional and more accurate.

3. How did the initial revenue goal compare with the final revenue report? Were we realistic?

- a. The initial budget goal was \$16,500. I raised \$7,600 from Cal Poly organizations, departments, and grants. I raised \$6,561 from ticket sales and outside sponsors. This puts our final revenue at \$14,161. The budget was cut down throughout the process of the event though. The final budget was \$12,750, due to a change in the price of the campsite, the price of catering on Friday night (Petra), and the price

of catering at the VIP Awards Ceremony (Upper Crust). Each of those expenses ended up being cheaper than expected. We ended up making a profit of \$1,411.

- b. Overall, we were realistic with our projections. It's better to shoot high than to shoot low and not raise enough money. Due to the fact that our goal was so high, we continued to fundraise even after we had hit \$12,000. We continued to fundraise just in case we would need the extra cash. It's essential to have an idea of your budget a year in advance though. Now that we have done the festival once, we would have a much clearer expectation of costs and overall budget if the festival were to continue.

4. How did sponsors, both potential and committed, react to the event? How was the recruitment process for raising money?

- a. Sponsors reacted positively to the entire event. Many of them asked about next year and about sponsoring again. Several of them said they would continue to support the 25 Under 25 Film Fest if it continued into the future. Unfortunately, it was difficult to get sponsors to commit in the first place. The process of fundraising was tiresome and cumbersome. It was highlighted my tons of rejection. Much of this will change because the event has now shown it can be successful and that it can stand on its own. It has become a more realistic sponsorship options now that we have had our first year and had such solid attendance throughout the weekend.

- b. The process of raising money was difficult. In fact, it was the most stressful aspect of the entire festival. You cannot create any event without money. The key to creating sponsorships and partnerships was relating to all of the businesses on a basic level. I had to realize how I could help them. It's a dialogue and an exchange, not a one-sided debate and a gift. Finding common ground was paramount with any and every meeting I had with a potential sponsor. In the future, the festival director should apply for more grants and approach sponsors earlier. The director should approach the City of SLO and other large entities in the county at least one year in advance. If this festival happens again, most of the sponsors will return though. That's a huge positive. I have created positive relationships with many influential leaders within the community that supported the festival and had a great time during the weekend. They would be easy to convince to give once again. Also, the credibility of the festival has been raised by a significant margin, creating more opportunities for other sponsors to donate.

5. How were our overall sales? Which sessions floundered and which sessions were popular?

- a. We raised \$2,339.82 in ticket sales alone. We sold about 350 total tickets. This is an average of 87 people per session. Session 1 was the most successful session with a sold out crowd of 120 people. Session 3 was the least successful session with only about 60 people in attendance. Session 3 was scheduled for Sunday

morning from 10 AM - 12 PM, which is the toughest time to make for most people.

- b. The session times could change in the future. A Sunday morning session should be changed. It is too difficult to get people to give up their Sunday morning for a student film festival in its early origins. We should either target Cal Poly students for the Sunday morning session, or move the session to the afternoon. Ticket sales should be easier as well. We should be able to sell tickets directly from the Palm Theater in the two weeks leading up to the event. Also, ticket buyers should receive printable tickets. People want something they can carry that is definitively their ticket, not just an email confirmation or PayPal confirmation. Ticket sales can be swifter, easier to maneuver, and broader in general.

6. What is the overall time commitment for the executive director? Is this a doable project for a full-time student?

- a. The executive director needs to pour at least 15-20 hours per week into this project. In the month of the actual event, the executive director will be working about 8 hours a day, working a 50 hour week. It is absolute insanity. It is incredibly tough to think about anything besides the festival. I had major trouble balancing my schoolwork with the festival. For a full-time student to run this event, he/she needs to be organized and meticulous with their time. They cannot waste time on frivolous endeavors. It is much more reasonable for a part-time student to complete the festival. In an ideal world, the student would be a senior

who finished their classes in winter quarter, allowing them to focus on the film festival during spring quarter.

- b. It is too tough to be a full-time student and put on this festival, without a team behind you. It would be incredible if this festival was picked up by somebody in this next year as their senior project. It's a real-world experience that you cannot get in any class at Cal Poly. It's a huge endeavor though. The new festival director will need to be prepared for the challenge and exhibit enough perseverance to not give up at the first sight of adversity. The festival has support, but it needs a strong leader, a strong leader with time and energy to devote to the project.

7. How can we improve the submission process and outreach?

- a. As stated previously, we received 166 submissions. Unfortunately, we accepted over 10 USC films into the festival. USC is one of the best films schools in the country, but this always shows a lack of submissions from other universities. UC Santa Cruz, UC Davis, UC San Diego, and UC Riverside didn't have a single total submission. Cal Poly only had eight submissions, even though the festival was being hosted in its town. Additionally, we only received three submissions from high school students. San Luis Obispo County high schools only had one submissions, even though there are dozens of talented students around the Central Coast. SLO High has a student attending NYU for film, yet he did not submit a

film. We need more local participation and more participation from the UC system as a whole.

- b. We need to reach out to schools earlier in the year. Our team should continue to find contacts at universities around California and around the country. We should target local high schools as well, giving presentations about the opportunities that the festival can present to up-and-coming filmmakers. The festival is an great chance for all filmmakers, not just ones from USC or Chapman or Berkeley, our largest three submission bases. The festival needs to be broadcast more broadly, which will help marketing efforts as well. Our outreach was solid this year, but as with anything, can be improved.

8. How can we improve marketing efforts to reach more San Luis Obispo residents?

- a. Our marketing efforts were mostly digital and word of mouth. We didn't use flyers around the city at all. We didn't approach local coffee shops or the Downtown Association to have a booth at the popular Farmers Market. Our marketing efforts were focused on college students, so most of our efforts were through social media. We poured money into boosting posts and boosting advertisements that would show up on the feeds of college-aged residents of San Luis Obispo county. We also had a booth on campus in the University Union plaza. We had a booth from 10 AM - 2 PM on two consecutive days on the week leading up the festival. We sold t-shirts and tickets, and the booth was free, so we were only making money in the transaction. We also passed out about 100 flyers

each day to students that were passing by during those times. Our marketing efforts were heavily directed towards Cal Poly as a university, instead of San Luis Obispo as a city.

- b. We need to have a booth at Farmers Market. It's the hub of the entire San Luis Obispo community, students and residents alike. It would be a large step towards selling more tickets and raising more awareness about the festival. Another booth at Cal Poly is a must as well. We should have used a booth for weeks before the festival. Simply raising exposure is completely underrated and something we didn't even take in mind. A flyer campaign would be helpful as well, so that SLO residents see 25 Under 25 Fest flyers in their coffee shops, grocery stores, record shops, bookstores, and even restaurants. This would allow for more SLO residents to organically come across the festival. With more sponsors, the festival can have a larger community base as well. If at least three of these suggestions are taken, the marketing efforts will be taken to a new level, creating a buzz around the event that was not nearly as present this year.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter will focus on a summary of the 25 Under 25 Film Fest and the measures I took to create this event. It will include recommendations on how to increase attendance, how to garner more support from the surrounding communities, and how to put on a more successful event. This is the final chapter of the guidebook and will encapsulate the entire examination of the film festival. The festival concluded on May 20, 2018 and ran for two days. We sold over 350 tickets and raised of \$14,000 for this event. There was a team of other Cal Poly students that aided me in this process, but I was the founder and sole festival director, making all of the final decisions. It was a yearlong endeavor.

Summary

The 25 Under 25 Film Fest was a student-run film festival, highlighting films under 25 minutes from filmmakers under the age of 25. It was completed on May 19-20 at the Palm Theater in downtown San Luis Obispo. It was in association with ARTS Obispo, a local arts-focused nonprofit. It was put on by a team of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo students, and featured filmmakers from Cal Poly, Berkeley, USC, Chapman, and several CSU schools around the state. The festival included animation films, dramas, comedies, documentaries, and horror shorts. It was a celebration of youth art, future generations of filmmakers, and talented college students. It's mission was to start a larger platform for up-and-coming filmmakers to share their works, as well as a way for other community members, both young and old, to see the immense talent and art that is capable by a person under the age of 25. It's a passion project that is meant

to create lasting connections between the young artists that will be making up the film industry for decades to come. Finally, it is a new chance to cultivate the already thriving art community along the Central Coast, highlighting a long forgotten population of filmmakers that are often overlooked.

Recommendation for Future Events

The 25 Under 25 Film Fest should be continued well into the future. With this guidebook, a new festival director can take over this event without skipping a beat. This document outlines all of the necessary steps to completing this project successfully. There are many aspects of the festival that I would alter though. I would move the Sunday morning session into the afternoon. I would book a caterer months in advance, instead of 10 days in advance. Marketing efforts should be more focused on San Luis Obispo County residents, not just Cal Poly students. This festival is too big of a task for one person, and the team needs to grow. Adding members that can specialize in social media, marketing, and outreach would help with those individual efforts, but also lighten the load for the festival director, who should focus on fundraising and logistics. Additionally, the team should reach out to more local high schools to participate in the event. High school students have the ability to make awe-inspiring short films but they have to be told about the opportunity. The entire festival can be planned more in advance. A year of planning was great, but with a team around me, I could have focused on more pressing issues as they came up, instead of juggling several tasks at once. Handling venues and foods for the entire weekend should be situated within the first month. Many of these suggestions might seem haphazard and might seem random, but these are the ones that come to mind. These are the problems that

tripped me up. The last suggestions is use this last year's event to your advantage. Use the integrity, trust, and credibility we have built. Use it to fundraise. Use it to market. Use it to reach out. Use it, learn from it, reform it, and then grow it.

Study Conclusion

This festival was life-changing, not just for me, but for hundred of college students. Several of the filmmakers told me that this was the best weekend of their lives, and definitely the most enjoyable film festival they've ever attended. Those words are humbling, but they signal that we are doing something important. Throughout the weekend, it felt special. There was something magical about the youth, the talent, and the excitement of the festival. This is a unique opportunity for young filmmakers and young organizers who want to make a difference and have an impact of other young people's lives. It cannot end after one year. It has the potential to grow and mold into an event that is known for creating lasting impressions. The 25 Under 25 Film Fest was incredible in its inaugural year and with a little bit of work, it can continue to be the platform that young artists need.

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