

Effectiveness of Rally Cries at Appalachian State University

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09 July 2024

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We all love to have something that defines us and separates us from the crowd. Whether it's our eye color or the way we laugh, we love when we're complimented on it, when it's noticed. These unique characteristics give us a sense of identity and belonging. A rallying cry for a college should be no different. In fact, it's the whole purpose of a rallying cry. To unite, define, and instill admiration from others. A well-crafted rallying cry can foster a strong sense of community and pride among students, alumni, and supporters while also distinguishing the institution in the broader landscape of higher education. It serves as a symbol of the values, spirit, and traditions that the college upholds. In the context of Appalachian State University, the "Roll Neers" rally cry plays a crucial role in embodying the school's spirit and bringing together the university community. However, the effectiveness and reception of this rally cry can be multifaceted and complex. The current rallying cry, "Roll Neers," at Appalachian State University has been identified as lacking originality and passion through the analysis of historical documents, market insights, and audience research. This project aims to determine the characteristics of a powerful and unifying rallying cry that resonates with the Appalachian State University community. By addressing the deficiencies of "Roll Neers," we seek to develop a new rallying cry that embodies the spirit and unity of the university.

About Appalachian State University

I find it important first to note what makes Appalachian State University (ASU) unique and to define their core values. Appalachian State University was first founded as a teacher's college in 1899 before opening their doors to other programs in 1967. Appalachian State University rests in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina in the town of Boone, situated in

Watauga County. Appalachian State University is located in a place of great beauty, cultural heritage, and recreational opportunities. Appalachian State University currently enrolls a combined number of 21,253 students in various programs for various levels of study, including undergraduate and graduate programs. Appalachian State University currently defines their core values as having faculty excellence in teaching and scholarships, DEI, sustainability and resilience, public service, engagement with the community, and global perspective (Mission, Vision and Values, n.d.). Appalachian State University seeks to provide educational access and excellence through their teaching, research, and service to create future leaders. Appalachian State University puts their students, faculty, and alumni first, ensuring their success for the future as responsible members of society.

This brings us to our next focus regarding Appalachian State University's traditions, symbols, and rally cries. Appalachian State University's students, faculty, alumni, and fans have always been referred to as the Mountaineers for as long as anyone can remember. However, it wasn't until the 1940s that the Mountaineers would be introduced to their very first mascot, Yosef. Dressed in overalls and originally named Dan'l Boone Yoseff from Appalachian, Yosef was just an idea with no plans for longevity, but as soon as he was introduced, the students adored him. The students' admiration for Yosef is what allowed his legacy to carry through and become the beloved mascot ASU knows today. In fact, on February 22nd, 1983, the campus-wide Logo Committee officially made Yosef the mascot, their members the Mountaineers, and their colors black and gold (Starnes, 1983). Over the years, there have been multiple sayings Mountaineers have indulged in, including "Today I give my all to App State," which was crafted by a husband and wife duo that graduated from ASU in 2003 (Today I Give My All - About Us, n.d.). More recently, "Roll Neers" has started gaining traction after being

mentioned by Chancellor Everts in a conversation with student-athletes years ago (Garrett, 2024).

Media Reception of “Roll Neers”

Since the introduction of “Roll Neers” as a rally cry for Appalachian State University, the phrase has received some media attention, especially from High Country Press’s Sam Garrett. One article produced by Sam Garrett offered insight into how some of the faculty at Appalachian State University feel about the phrase “Roll Neers.” Garrett talked to coaches at ASU, who all expressed their distaste for the phrase and expressed appreciation for the phrase, “Today I give my all” (Garrett, 2024). Additionally, Garrett spoke with ASU alum Brad Farrington, who also expressed his disinterest in the phrase, calling it “at best, lazy, and, at worst, deeply envious of another university’s traditions.” in reference to how “Roll Neers” is a direct imitation of the University of Alabama’s “Roll Tide!” (Garrett, 2024). Garrett previously had written an article in 2022 expressing his own opinion against the phrase, stating that “Roll Neers” is “nothing more than a cheap, tired, lazy, imitation of “Roll Tide.”” (Garrett, 2022).

How Competitors Formed Rally Cries

With “Roll Neers” being a direct imitation of the University of Alabama’s “Roll Tide,” It's only fair to analyze how the University of Alabama crafted their rally cry in hopes it will help Appalachian State University craft theirs. “Roll Tide” is a memorable and signifying phrase that is instantly recognizable as being from the University of Alabama. The phrase embodies the spirit and tradition of Alabama's athletic programs, particularly its storied football team. The

origins of "Roll Tide!" can be traced back to the early 20th century, and it has since evolved into a powerful symbol of unity and pride for the university community.

The phrase got its start from the 1907 football game of Alabama versus Auburn, which was played in a sea of red-clay mud. Reporter Hugh Roberts with the Birmingham Age-Herald decided to coin the phrase "Crimson Tide" to describe the match, which started something that would undoubtedly last forever (and be adapted by other colleges). However, it wasn't until 1925, when a student magazine from the University of Alabama held a song-writing contest, that the phrase "Roll Tide" started to develop. Winner Ethelred Lundy Sykes wrote a song titled "Yea Alabama!" to become the new fight song with lines such as "Roll to vic-try!" later adapted into chants by the University of Alabama's student body. These chants were "Roll Tide," merging the new fight song and the term used to describe their indomitable spirit. Although it wasn't included in the original score, they are now a part of the heart of the University of Alabama.

The phrase "Roll Tide!" has a powerful impact, thanks to the University of Alabama's enthusiastic promotion. You see the rally cry everywhere including on official merchandise, in promotional materials, and across social media. This isn't just clever marketing; it's a way to build a passionate and loyal fan base. The rallying cry has become a key element of Alabama's public image, symbolizing excellence and a commitment to success. The formation and evolution of "Roll Tide!" as the University of Alabama's rallying cry is a prime example of the power of language and tradition in shaping a community's identity. What began as a sportswriter's colorful description has grown into a beloved and enduring symbol of the university's spirit. "Roll Tide!" continues to unite and inspire generations of Alabama fans, exemplifying the enduring legacy of the university's athletic and cultural heritage.

Further Research

Appalachian State University undoubtedly has an extensive cultural heritage and a beautiful landscape, yet not a single rallying cry to reflect these aspects. Media reception of the phrase is poor, and it appears that the faculty isn't supportive of the phrase "Roll Neers." The phrase lacks the same passion that Alabama has for their "Roll Tide." Throughout my research, I have noticed that no one has asked the students of Appalachian State University directly for their opinions regarding the phrase "Roll Neers." In my study, I have done exactly that. I have asked the students of ASU their opinions regarding the "Roll Neers" rally cry and what they believe makes ASU different from other colleges. Appalachian State University could thrive off of a rallying cry that evokes admiration and inspires unity from the crowds, and I seek to find that rallying cry.

Method

Participants

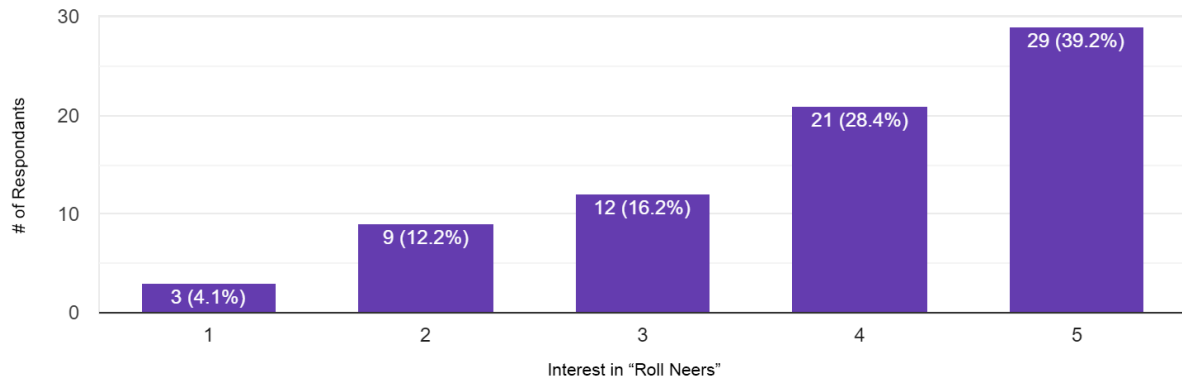
Participants for this study primarily included college-aged students enrolled at Appalachian State University. A total of 74 students responded to the survey conducted as part of a college research project for COM3015 Advertising Graphics. The sample included students from various academic disciplines and class standings, ranging from freshmen to seniors.

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, all responses were collected without any identifying information. Demographic information such as age was not collected to preserve participant anonymity. Participants were notified at the beginning of the survey that their participation was voluntary, that their identities would remain completely anonymous, and that the data collected would be used solely for the purposes of this research.

paper. The survey was administered online, and all data were securely stored in a password-protected database accessible only to the researcher.

Materials

The materials for this study consisted of an online survey via Google Forms designed to gather students' opinions about the "Roll Neers!" rally cry at Appalachian State University. The survey included a total of four questions: two required linear scale questions and two optional short free-response questions. The first two questions utilized a linear scale ranging from one to five. Participants were required to answer these questions. Question number one asked, "How familiar are you with the "Roll Neers!" rally cry?" with one being not very familiar and five being very familiar. Question number two asked, "On a scale from one to five, how much do you like "Roll Neers!" as a rally cry for Appalachian State University?" with one being strongly dislike and five being strongly like. The next set of questions were short free-response, and participants were not required to answer. These questions were asked simply to collect qualitative feedback from the student body at Appalachian State University. Question number three asked, "How do you feel about "Roll Neers!" being very closely related to Alabama's "Roll Tide!"?" and question number four asked, "In your opinion, what do you think makes Appalachian State University unique?" The survey was distributed online through Snapchat, and participants were notified that their responses would remain anonymous. The data collected from this survey provided both quantitative and qualitative insights into students' familiarity with and opinions about the "Roll Neers!" rally cry and their views on what makes Appalachian State University unique.

Figure 1*ASU Student Interest in “Roll Neers”*

Note: This figure represents students' admiration of the “Roll Neers” rally cry. Students were asked to rate the rally cry on a scale of one to five, with one being strongly dislike and five being strongly like.

Results

Linear Result Questions

73% (n = 54) of participants rated their familiarity with "Roll Neers!" at the highest level, indicating that they are very familiar with the rally cry. A smaller proportion of participants rated their familiarity at lower levels. Specifically, 10.8% (n = 8) rated their familiarity at level four, while 2.7% of participants (n = 2) rated it at level three. Additionally, 5.4% of participants (n = 4) rated their familiarity at level two, and 8.1% (n = 6) rated their familiarity at the lowest level, indicating they were unfamiliar with the rally cry.

The results indicate that the majority of respondents favor the rally cry (See Fig. 1). Specifically, 39.2% (n = 29) of the participants rated their preference as a five, showing strong approval. Additionally, 28.4% (n = 21) rated it a four, indicating a favorable opinion. Conversely, only a small percentage of respondents expressed a strong dislike, with 4.1% (n = 3) rating it a

one. A total of 12.2% (n = 9) rated it a two, and 16.2% (n = 12) rated it a three, reflecting neutral or moderate opinions.

Free-Response Questions

The third question in the survey asked participants to provide their feelings about the "Roll Neers!" rally cry being very closely related to Alabama's "Roll Tide!" The responses varied widely, revealing a range of opinions and sentiments among the students. Several respondents expressed positive feelings about the similarity, suggesting that it adds a sense of solidarity and connection to a well-known and respected tradition. For instance, one participant noted, "It's a saying that works and flows well. The similarities are unavoidable but I feel they aren't a bad thing." Conversely, a number of students felt negatively about the association, expressing concerns about originality and identity. One participant stated, "We pretty much stole that saying from Alabama. I would much rather have a rally cry that is unique to us." Additionally, a portion of the respondents were neutral or indifferent, indicating that the similarity did not significantly impact their perception of the rally cry.

The fourth question aimed to identify elements that students believe contribute to the uniqueness of Appalachian State University. The analysis of the free-response data revealed several common themes. Many respondents highlighted the strong sense of community and the welcoming atmosphere as key aspects of the university's uniqueness. One student wrote, "No one loves their school and their town like App students." The university's location in the Appalachian Mountains was frequently mentioned as a distinctive feature, with comments referring to the beautiful landscape.

Discussion

The data collected from these survey questions provide valuable insights into students' familiarity with, perceptions of, and attitudes toward the "Roll Neers!" rally cry, as well as their views on what makes Appalachian State University unique. The high levels of familiarity and positive reception indicate that the rally cry is well-integrated into the student culture and generally well-received. The mixed feelings about the similarity to "Roll Tide!" reflect a balance between appreciation for tradition and a desire for originality. The themes identified in the responses about the university's uniqueness emphasize the importance of community, location, diverse opportunities, and school spirit in shaping the identity of Appalachian State University.

Throughout this research, we can discover that a rally cry should capture the heart and soul of the group it represents. A well-crafted rally cry inspires and energizes, fostering a collective identity and reinforcing a shared purpose. It should be something that sticks with you, is easy to remember and recognize, and resonates with everyone in the group while welcoming newcomers. At its best, a rally cry not only showcases what makes the group special but also drives everyone to reach common goals and celebrate their achievements together.

The survey did make one aspect clear: The students of Appalachian State University desire a rally cry that is unique and original to its heritage and location. Our current rally cry, "Roll Neers," lacks originality and is not a rally cry that Appalachian State University students strongly desire to use. I find that the lack of passion from students in our rally cry is the biggest problem because, without widespread support and admiration, the rally cry will never unite the students in the same way that "Roll Tide" does for the University of Alabama. When asking students about what makes Appalachian State University unique, an overwhelming amount of students answered the mountains and the community. I believe that the term "Mountaineers"

directly represents these aspects and works as a name that defines our students. However, our rally cry lacks that same connection. Appalachian State University deserves and desires a rally cry that is reflective of our values and culture.

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