

Student Conference on Latino Affairs (SCOLA) MSC Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture Spring 2017

Background

According to its website (<http://scola.tamu.edu/>), the Student Conference on Latino Affairs (SCOLA) provides an opportunity for students to discuss issues that impact the Latino community and provides a stimulating educational environment through a variety of speakers. The dual faceted mission for SCOLA is “to provide a forum for students to discuss significant issues that impact the growing Latino population in our nation, and to foster exemplary leadership development among its members.” The conference is sponsored by the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture (CAMAC).

The conference occurred on March 3-5 2017, and this year’s theme was *¡Con Ganas!: Building a Legacy*. The goal of the conference was to explore how one can grow as an individual and a professional while maintaining and fostering one’s identity/culture. The conference theme aimed to present the delegates with various methods to effectively reflect an authentic image in order to be able to prosper during interviews, the work field, and when networking with professionals and peers while remaining truthful to their roots.

The mission of the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture (CAMAC) is to unite students from diverse backgrounds to establish an appreciation for various Hispanic cultures on the Texas A&M campus and Bryan/College Station community. To meet the organizational mission, MSC CAMAC has a variety of sub-committees designed to provide oversight and planning for activities and events. According to the website, MSC CAMAC “motivates the community to learn about these cultures through informative programs.”

This is the tenth year that the SCOLA team has worked with Student Life Studies to assess the conference.

Method and Sample

The survey was produced using Teleform[®], a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. The survey contained 22 questions; 14 were quantitative, four were qualitative, and four were demographic. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS[®], a statistical software package, and the qualitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel[®].

The paper survey was distributed to approximately 250 participants at the conclusion of the conference; 134 participants completed a survey, giving a response rate of 54%.

Results

Results include frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (sd) for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. In addition, summary themes are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. This report is divided into three sections – Demographics, General Information, and Conference Activities. Comparisons to previous years are made when appropriate.

Demographics

Delegates were asked to indicate gender, classification, status as a first generation college student, and ethnicity. This demographic information is summarized in Table 1. Most of the respondents were female, sophomores, first generation college students, and Hispanic/Latino. While most respondents were classified as freshman through seniors, a few were classified as “other”, which includes graduate students, faculty and staff.

Demographic Category	2017 Percentage	2016 Percentage
Gender	(n=125)	(n=97)
Female	58%	62%
Male	39%	38%
Prefer not to answer	2%	--
Transgender	1%	--
Other	--	--
Classification	(n=119)	(n=101)
Sophomore	38%	36%
Junior	20%	19%
Freshman	17%	22%
Senior	15%	16%
Other	10%	6%
First generation college student	(n=110)	(n=101)
Yes	74%	86%
No	26%	14%
Ethnicity	(n=126)	(n=101)
Hispanic/Latino	86%	92%
Multiracial/Biracial	5%	1%
Prefer not to answer	3%	1%
Asian American/Asian/ Pacific Islander	2%	1%
Other	2%	--
African American/Black	1%	3%
Caucasian/White	1%	2%
Native American/American Indian	--	--

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

General Information

Table 2, on the following page, shows how delegates heard about the conference. The most popular answer was through University or Community College Faculty/Staff, followed by MSC CAMAC. Fewer respondents reported hearing about the conference from lawn signs and posters compared to last year’s results. Of the 14% of respondents that selected “other” as an answer choice, the most numerous responses included friends, prior attendance to the conference, and professors.

How did you hear about the conference? (select all that apply)	2017 Percentage [n=134]	2016 Percentage [n=139]	2015 Percentage [n=83]
University or Community College Faculty/Staff	41%	42%	*
Email	18%	15%	6%
MSC CAMAC	14%	33%	41%
Other	14%	25%	28%
Facebook or other social media	6%	9%	7%
Lawn signs/posters	5%	5%	21%
SCOLA Website	1%	7%	4%
SCOLA Informational	1%	3%	*

Table 2: Conference Marketing (*Question not asked)

Conference Activities

Delegates were asked to indicate their satisfaction with four areas of the conference. Table 3, in descending 2017 mean order, illustrates that the responding delegates were generally satisfied with the speakers and roundtable facilitators, but less satisfied with the conference materials and much less satisfied with the resource fair. When compared to previous year's conferences, participants were less satisfied in all areas that were reported in previous years, especially concerning the resource fair.

Conference Activities	Very Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very Dissatisfied (1)	2017 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Mean (sd) [n]
Roundtable Facilitators	64%	33%	2%	1%	3.61 (.58) [132]	*	*
Speakers/Presenters	62%	36%	2%	--	3.60 (.54) [134]	3.74 (.46) [101]	3.84 (.37) [83]
Conference Materials	49%	48%	2%	--	3.47 (.45) [132]	3.71 (.46) [101]	3.77 (.45) [83]
Resource Fair	25%	40%	26%	8%	2.82 (.91) [130]	3.32 (.72) [99]	*

Table 3: Conference Activities (*Question not asked)

Delegates were asked to indicate their agreement with statements about different aspects of the conference. Table 4, on the next page presented in descending mean order, demonstrates that the delegates were generally positive about all statements, although slightly less positive when asked if they were able to network with professionals from the local, state, and national levels.

Conference Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
Conference staff were helpful and courteous.	78%	22%	--	--	3.78 (.42) [134]
SCOLA provided me the opportunity to connect with other participants.	70%	29%	1%	1%	3.67 (.53) [132]
Because of my experience at SCOLA I am motivated to stay in college through graduation.	67%	25%	6%	2%	3.58 (.68) [128]
The conference was well organized.	58%	35%	7%	--	3.51 (.62) [134]
The Professional Institute further developed my understanding of social entrepreneurship.	58%	34%	8%	1%	3.48 (.67) [130]
The roundtable discussions assisted me in processing information from the workshops.	55%	38%	8%	--	3.47 (.64) [130]
During SCOLA I was able to successfully network with local, state, and national professionals.	42%	44%	11%	3%	3.26 (.77) [132]

Table 4: Conference Statements

Respondents were then asked to describe their overall experience at the resource fair. Of the 98 comments that were given, many praised the resource fair and expressed how much they liked it and what they learned from it. However, 17 of the responses mentioned that there was not a booth that was related to their major or field of study. Several respondents also mentioned that they felt the resource fair catered to Texas A&M students, and since they were not students at Texas A&M they did not get as much out of it.

When asked to provide suggestions for future conference themes and topics, delegates had an assortment of ideas including having more social integration and more interactive topics and discussions within the group settings, have topics over Latino health, and include more topics that cover internships, jobs, and entrepreneurship. Some less frequently mentioned topics included feminism, politics, and social awareness.

Delegates were asked in what ways the conference could be improved. Their suggestions included having a more reliable bus/shuttle system, having better speakers, and shortening/changing the conference times. Others included letting participants know about parking, food, and other important information earlier before the conference, having more interactive workshops, providing more time for interaction between delegates, and expanding the variety in the types of sessions available to attend.

Participants that were not current Texas A&M students were able to indicate if this was their first visit to the Texas A&M campus. Of the 84 delegates that responded; 51% said no, while 49% said it was their first visit to the campus.

A final question asked only Texas A&M University students to indicate their agreement with the statement "Attending this MSC program enhanced my experience at or with Texas A&M University." A majority (60%) said they "strongly agree" and 34% said they "agree," 6% said they "disagree," and nobody selected

the “strongly disagree” or “neutral” options (mean=3.53/4.00, sd=.62, n=79). Delegates were provided space to explain how attending the program did or did not enhance their experience at or with Texas A&M University. Delegates felt that the experience helped them interact and network with Latino professionals and students, and provided them a gateway to learn about resources available to them and learn what their options are after graduation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The delegates who received and completed an evaluation seemed to have a good experience at the conference. SCOLA may want to consider placing the demographic questions on the registration form, to gain a more accurate and inclusive view on the demographics of those participating in the conference than the responses on the survey are able to obtain.

Many of the participants who responded to the survey reported being dissatisfied with the resource fair in some way. Several comments were given when asked about the overall experience at the conference about not having a booth at the resource fair that was related to their major or field of study. Many other comments also mentioned that they felt that the resource fair was catered mostly to Texas A&M students and not to students from other schools. To combat this SCOLA could determine the fields of study of the participants prior to the conference, perhaps by asking some demographic questions during the registration process, and create booths that fit all majors and fields of study of the participants that registered. SCOLA is encouraged to diversify the resource fair to be more inclusive to students not from Texas A&M University, and to expand the number and types of booths at the fair.

When students were asked if during the conference they were able to successfully network with local, state, and national professionals, the level of agreement was lower than other questions and a few students disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. SCOLA could consider adding more opportunities and time for networking during the conference which could give the students a greater chance of successfully networking with professionals.

SCOLA leadership is encouraged to read through all of the comments in response to qualitative questions. General themes were provided in this report, but reading through each comment would provide a more comprehensive picture of delegates’ experience. Also, sharing the results of this survey with SCOLA leadership in charge of planning the 2018 conference would provide valuable information about which components worked during the conference, and which need alterations. Both strategies would help SCOLA leadership understand the program’s strengths and areas for improvement, as well as better meet their objectives next year.

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