

Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference
SBSLC 2020: Igniting the Dream: I the Flame, We the Fire
January 16-18, 2020

Purpose of Assessment

On January 16 -18, 2020, the Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference (SBSLC) held its 32nd annual conference at Texas A&M University. A series of surveys were developed to assess the student participants' experience attending the conference overall, the organizations at the Career and Graduate School fair, 16 participants' experience at the Charles E. Williams II Advanced Leadership Institute (ALI), and the 72 attending advisors.

Key findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified key findings and actionable recommendations SBSLC may consider based on results from the surveys administered to participants of the conference. However, SBSLC staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the conference and its attendees. SBSLC staff is strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of participants' experience with the conference.

- Over three-quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the overall conference provided them opportunities to network with students from other colleges and universities, similar to previous years. However, they disagreed more than previous years that they made connections that they intended to maintain. The students also noted that they would like more opportunities to network and interact with one another through more social events or interactive workshops, which, if incorporated in future conferences, may increase their agreement to having made connections they intend to maintain in the future.
- Nearly half of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Career and Graduate School Fair helped them connect with employers, internships or graduate school programs, an increasing trend from previous years as well. They suggested there needed to be more diversity of industries and fields of study represented by the employers' and graduate schools. Future SBSLC conferences may be enhanced by increasing the employer and graduate school representation, both in total number and more diverse representation of industry and fields. SBSLC student leaders may also want to reach out to the Career Center for assistance in planning and executing this portion of the conference.
- When asked about conference improvements, about half of the responding participants indicated the quality of food was poor this year, and they preferred hot food to the cold boxed food. Many indicated that the quality of food at the closing banquet this year was lacking as was enough seating at that event. SBSLC staff should consider these suggestions and dietary needs as they plan, select and work with next year's venue and caterer.
- Participants indicated a desire for more activity-based workshop sessions, more opportunities to get to know students from other schools in attendance at the conference and workshop facilitators who addressed the theme of the conference in their workshops. SBSLC staff may want to convey to potential session facilitators the need to include more activities involving participants interacting with one another.
- The ALI participants were more positive about the institute than last year, and were especially favorable about the new facilitator. The advisors enjoyed the programming developed for advisors

and expressed the desire for opportunities to network with one another. SBSLC staff responsible for these portions of the conference should review the assessment results to help identify improvements that can be incorporated into next year's programming based on the respondents' feedback.

Method and Sample

Four surveys were developed using Teleform® and Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates scannable and web-based forms and databases. Due to the branching technology of the web-based surveys, not all respondents saw all questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. Table 1 describes each survey.

Survey	Quantitative Questions	Qualitative Questions	Type	2020 Response Rate	2019 Response Rate	2018 Response Rate
ALI	8	2	Web	59%	54%	*59%
Advisor	8	2	Web	47%	64%	62%
Career Fair	5	2	Paper	0%	0%	90%
Overall	8	2	Web- open link	†200 responses	††176 responses	*33%

Table 1—Description of Each Survey

*Paper Type Survey

† As the survey was available through an open link, QR code to those attending the banquet, a formal response rate cannot be determined.

†† The overall 2019 conference survey invitation included email invitations with unique links and an anonymous open link that was provided to participants.

Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages 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%. Qualitative summary themes are conveyed in this report; entire lists can be found in separate documents. Comparisons to previous years' responses will be included where appropriate.

This report is divided into three sections: The Charles E. Williams II Advanced Leadership Institute (ALI), Advisor, and Overall Conference. The Career and Graduate School Fair completed surveys were not returned to Student Life Studies for processing, thus results are not reported.

Charles E. Williams II Advanced Leadership Institute (ALI) Evaluation

SBSLC established several program outcomes for the institute. Table 2, on the next page, shows that participants reported agreement on all outcomes, and at slightly higher levels than 2019 participants. Participants were most in agreement about understanding leadership in a cultural context.

As a result of participating in the Advanced Leadership Institute, I...	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2020 Mean (sd) [6]	2019 Mean (sd) [13]	2018 Mean (sd) [13]
Understand leadership in a cultural context	100%	--	--	--	4.00 (.00)	3.54 (.52)	3.92 (.28)
Can apply what I learned to my involvement in organizations on my campus	83%	17%	--	--	3.83 (.41)	3.62 (.51)	3.92 (.28)
Feel part of a cohesive group	83%	17%	--	--	3.83 (.41)	3.54 (.52)	3.92 (.28)
Gained a more in-depth understanding of leadership	83%	17%	--	--	3.83 (.41)	3.46 (.88)	3.92 (.28)
Gained a more in-depth understanding of my personal leadership style	67%	33%	--	--	3.67 (.52)	3.23 (.83)	3.77 (.44)

Table 2—Advanced Leadership Institute Outcomes

Participants of ALI were asked whether they had an action plan for their organization and 100% of the six respondents said yes. They were also asked if they gained useful knowledge from the Graduate School session and of the six respondents, 67% said yes and 33% said no, which is nearly reverse of last year's respondents of which 62% said no and 39% said yes.

This year the Advanced Leadership Institute had a new facilitator for the program. Participants were asked how effectively they felt ALI was facilitated. Of the seven respondents, all (100%) indicated they felt ALI was effectively facilitated (Mean=4.00, sd=.00). No one chose any of the other offered selections (somewhat effectively, somewhat ineffectively or ineffectively). Next, the ALI participants were asked to share any additional feedback regarding the facilitation of ALI. The six respondents indicated that the facilitator allowed student discussion, kept control of the session, related and inspired participants and enhanced their perspective on leadership.

Participants were asked what they found interesting about the current year's discussion topics. Respondents said they appreciated the focus on individual personality type and its influence on decision making in leadership. Others spoke about the benefit of considering different perspectives in leadership.

When asked for ideas for improvements, three participants responded. Recommendations included allowing students to make personal presentations and being able to attend alternative workshops. One respondent included comments regarding the food quality of the etiquette dinner.

Advisor Evaluation

The advisors who attended the SBSLC conference had their program track to attend in addition to the other conference events and sessions with the students. When asked if their institution would likely attend SBSLC next year, 91% of those advisors who responded (n = 31) said their institution would attend, slightly lower than the 96% who responded in the affirmative last year.

Table 3, on the next page, indicates responding advisors' agreement and disagreement with several statements regarding the conference. The advisors had positive responses overall. They appreciated how

professional and accommodating the staff was during the conference; but, were less positive than last year regarding SBSLC meeting their expectations for their students learning and the manageability of the registration process.

Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]
The SBSLC staff was professional during the conference	73%	27%	--	--	3.73 (.45) [30]	3.73 (.45) [30]	3.79 (.42) [29]
The SBSLC staff was accommodating during the conference	70%	27%	3%	--	3.67 (.56) [30]	3.73 (.45) [30]	3.76 (.43) [29]
Communication with SBSLC staff before the conference was professional	60%	40%	--	--	3.60 (.50) [30]	3.43 (.57) [28]	3.31 (.60) [29]
SBSLC met my expectations for my students' learning	45%	42%	13%	--	3.32 (.70) [31]	3.63 (.49) [30]	3.45 (.63) [29]
The registration process was manageable	45%	42%	10%	3%	3.29 (.78) [31]	3.52 (.57) [29]	2.79 (.99) [28]

Table 3—Advisor Experiences

Advisors provided feedback on how they prefer SBSLC to communicate updates and upcoming events in a select-all-that apply response. The Advisors' Digest emails were most popular, selected by 88% of the responders, followed by the website selected by 50% of the responders. The bi-weekly e-newsletter was chosen by 47% and social media by 29% of the responders. The advisors who selected the website and social media specified that they used Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter.

When asked about the most positive experiences at SBSLC, many of the 27 responders said they enjoyed the advisor track, which enabled networking and sharing experiences with the other advisors. Some spoke specifically about enjoying the mental health workshop. Others noted that they enjoyed watching their students interact with students from other institutions, and become inspired through the variety of workshops, especially those focusing on career and financial literacy. Advisors were then asked how the conference could be improved for them; 28 offered opinions. Most of the suggestions were in regards to the advisor sessions. Generally, the comments focused on building upon the sessions for advisors, having more options for the advisor sessions, appreciating the addition of the mental health session and enhancing the advisor sessions so the advisors can interact to get to know one another earlier on in the conference. There were also quite a few comments recommending improvements in food selection and delivery, as vegetarian options were lacking, students were eating cold food, and lacked utensils, napkins and water. Some lengthy, specific recommendations can be found in the attached qualitative documents.

Lastly, advisors were asked which hotel they used while attending SBSLC. The choice "other" was selected by 76% of the 33 respondents, followed by the Hilton (12%), and Hampton Inn (6%). Both Aloft and Hyatt Place were selected by 3% of respondents. Those who selected "other" could provide their response, and 24 chose to do so. Thirteen advisors who selected "other" specified the Texas A&M Conference Center Hotel. Additional responses included Four Points Sheraton, Hawthorne Suites and Airbnb.

Overall Evaluation

Table 4 details the participants' responses to questions regarding the SBSLC overall conference program outcomes that intend participants to connect informally and formally with participants from other colleges and universities. Over three-quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had the opportunity to network with other participants from other colleges and universities and made connections they intend to maintain. Comparisons to 2019 cannot be provided as the scale changed back from a five-point scale to a four-point scale this year; 2018 results are provided. In comparison to 2018, fewer students indicated agreement that they were able to make connections they intend to maintain.

As a result of participating in SBSLC, I was able to...	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]
Network with other participants from other colleges and universities	47%	38%	12%	4%	3.28 (.81) [190]	3.39 (.73) [186]
I was able to make connections I intend to maintain	32%	44%	18%	5%	2.66 (1.50) [184]	3.30 (.78) [187]

Table 4—SBSLC Outcomes

The next set of questions asked the participants about their experience attending the Career and Graduate School Fair. Of the 184 respondents, 45% indicated they attended the Career and Graduate School Fair. Those who indicated attending the Fair were asked about their experience. As shown in Table 5, respondents were most in agreement that they thought the headshot portion of the Career Fair was a beneficial addition to the conference. Again, comparisons to 2019 cannot be provided as the scale changed back from a five-point scale to a four-point scale this year; 2018 results are provided where applicable.

As a result of participating in SBSLC, I was able to...	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]
I thought the headshot portion of the Career Fair a beneficial addition to the 2020 conference	54%	32%	9%	5%	3.36 (.84) [81]	*
Connect with future graduate programs at the Career Fair	31%	24%	22%	23%	2.62 (1.15) [82]	2.72 (1.11) [152]
Connect with future employers or internship opportunities at the Career Fair	29%	24%	22%	24%	2.59 (1.15) [82]	2.67 (1.13) [154]

Table 5- Participants Career Fair Experiences

*question not asked

Students were asked if they enjoyed the Showcase. Of the 180 respondents, 87% said yes, 2% said no and 11% indicated they did not attend the Showcase.

Students were asked how effectively they felt the keynote speaker's message corresponded with the conference theme "Igniting the Dream: I the Flame, We the Fire." Of the 182 who responded, 53% selected effectively, 29% selected somewhat effectively, 10% selected somewhat ineffectively and 8% selected ineffectively (Mean=3.28/4.00, sd=.93)

Students were also requested to provide feedback regarding any changes or new programs they plan to implement on their campus as a result of attending SBSLC. About half of the 95 who commented talked about what they took away from the conference and planned on implementing once back at their campuses, such as coordinating events with other organizations on campus and specifically connecting Black student groups on campus. . Because of attending SBSLC, students also indicated planning specific programs such as Black culture programs, mental health topic programs and campus alliance programs for Black women. Some of the respondents shared suggestions for improvements for future SBSLC, primarily focusing on the food.

Respondents were asked for ideas to improve future conferences. Nearly half of the 106 comments were about the need to improve the food throughout the conference, requesting more warm food (not cold boxed food) and better food for the closing banquet. Some talked about the lack of seating at the closing banquet as well. Similar to previous years, some respondents also indicated the Career Fair was lacking diversity and should offer a broader spectrum of employer and graduate school recruiting options (beyond engineering and Texas A&M University). Respondents said that they would like to see workshops with more experienced speakers, topics related to the theme and keynote speakers more respectful and motivating for student leaders. Quite a few suggested having activities that promote the networking and co-mingling of students from different schools and generally, more workshops that incorporate activities for participants instead of lecture-type presentations.

Background

The SBSLC website (<https://sbslc.tamu.edu/about/>) describes its history as:

In 1989, innovative collegians at Texas A&M University produced a forum by which African American students in the southwest could assemble to address the problems and concerns that affected the Black community. The Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference (SBSLC) is held each January, uniting hundreds of students and advisors, nationally renowned speakers, and a variety of corporations from throughout the entire country.

Per the letter from the 2020 SBSLC Executive Chair Keara Lynn '20, (<https://sbslc.tamu.edu/letter-from-the-chair>) the vision of this year's conference is, "to cultivate a progressive body of Black leaders who strive to uplift and unify the Black race with a passion to ignite the flame for a brighter tomorrow." She indicates that this years' theme *Igniting the Dream: I the Flame, We the Fire*, signifies that "a single flame possesses heat and light, but a fire has regenerative power. As a community, we can accomplish great feats as individuals, and together, we have the power to change the world". SBSLC 2020 intends its participants to feel empowered and aware that they have a civic duty to be the "parts that advance the whole."

Past and continuing SBSLC outcomes include:

- SBSLC participants will have the opportunity to participate in workshops that will educate them on issues of leadership, community, health, relationships, culture, race and ethnicity.
- SBSLC participants will be challenged, inspired and recharged from the keynote addresses made during the conference.
- SBSLC participants will have the opportunity to make formal and informal connections with their peers at various institutions across the world.

- SBSLC participants will be connected with corporations and graduate schools in efforts to gain admissions into graduate programs or obtain internship and employment opportunities.

Project Details

The format for the overall conference survey changed from 2019, from an electronic survey emailed to individual registrants last year, to an electronic survey available through a QR code presented to SBSLC student participants during the 2020 closing banquet. Whereas this may have increased availability of the survey to the students since many do not individually register for the conference but do so through their advisors, as the number of attendees of the banquet was not known to Student Life Studies, an estimated percentage of banquet attendees who responded to the survey could not be reported. However, 200 responded to at least one question of the overall conference survey in 2020, 176 responded to the 2019 overall conference survey and 191 responded to the paper overall conference survey in 2018.

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, division staff and students can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

To work with Student Life Studies for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

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