

MSC Abbott Family Leadership Conference

San Antonio and Houston

Spring 2021

Purpose

Memorial Student Center (MSC) Abbott Family Leadership Conference (AFLC) sponsored two separate conferences in spring 2021, which prior to the COVID 19 pandemic traveling restrictions would have been held in San Antonio and Houston. MSC AFLC also sponsored additional pre-conference events that included all delegates. Different students attended each conference. MSC AFLC addresses four “pillars” in their pre-conference events and at both conferences: ethics, the importance of family, service, and values. Survey evaluations included an assessment of the delegates’ experiences at each conference and surrounding pre-conference events. Although both conferences were held on the Texas A&M campus, each will be referenced by their traditional conference locations (San Antonio and Houston). The San Antonio conference was held on January 28-30, 2021 and the Houston conference on February 25-27, 2021.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the MSC AFLC committee may take based on the results. However, MSC AFLC staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. Staff members and student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of delegates’ experiences.

- Overall, the students who attended the conferences felt their perspective was valued during the conference, and more than 90% found the conferences further challenged them to develop their view of the four pillars. Both conference’s delegates noted that pre-conference delegate family time enabled them to feel more comfortable with other delegates during the conference, more so than delegates during the previous two conferences.
- Although not as prevalent as in previous years, some delegates disagreed that time for reflective activities was adequate throughout the conference. Houston delegates were more vocal about the lack of time for reflection than San Antonio delegates were; however, MSC AFLC staff may want to review the conference schedule to allow for more personal and group reflection time.
- More than three-quarters of all respondents felt that participating in the virtual conference helped them feel more connected to other students during the pandemic. Although many of the pre-conference activities were virtual and delegates had the option to attend the conference virtually, all delegates attended in person. Some of the conference speakers presented virtually (via Zoom), and 80 to 90 percent of respondents indicated Zoom delivery of speakers’ sessions was less impactful than in-person delivery. For future conferences, if planning to include virtual speaker sessions, MSC AFLC conference organizers may want to identify ways to enhance the engagement of delegates with those speakers.
- Similar to previous years, students noted that the speakers and families were not particularly diverse in beliefs. MSC AFLC staff may want to recruit families and speakers whose worldviews are not solely Christian-faith-based.

Method and Sample

Both conference evaluations were produced using Qualtrics®, a survey design software used for creating web-based forms and databases. Each survey contained the same 22 questions, of which 14 questions were quantitative and eight were qualitative; due to branching technologies, not all respondents saw all questions. The data from both surveys were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package and Microsoft Excel®.

Each survey was accessible to delegates through an open link provided near the end of their respective conferences (through GroupMe). Thirty-seven students completed at least one question of the survey of the San Antonio conference evaluation and 39 students completed at least one question of the Houston conference evaluation. The number of attendees at each conference was not reported to Student Life Studies so an estimated response rate cannot be determined.

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%. Comparisons to responses from previous conferences are provided as applicable. The scale used for most questions was 4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree. Not Applicable responses were removed from the analysis. All tables are listed in descending mean order for 2021. Summary themes are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. The report contains two sections: San Antonio Conference and Houston Conference.

SAN ANTONIO CONFERENCE

The delegates participating in the San Antonio conference were asked about the development of their views of the MSC AFLC pillars through the conference activities. Table 1 shows over three-quarters of the delegates reported strong agreement about developing their views on family and values through the activities, although slightly less than previous years. A follow-up question would have been displayed to those selecting disagree or strongly disagree with these four statements requesting an explanation for their choice; however, as no one selected those choices the question was not displayed nor answered.

Statements about Conference Activities and MSC Abbott Pillars– San Antonio	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on values throughout the activities.	78%	22%	--	--	3.78 (.42) [37]	3.85 (.40) [34]	3.85 (.36) [34]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on family throughout the activities.	76%	24%	--	--	3.76 (.44) [37]	3.94 (.24) [33]	3.94 (.24) [35]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on service throughout the activities.	70%	30%	--	--	3.70 (.46) [37]	3.59 (.50) [34]	3.69 (.53) [35]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on ethics throughout the activities.	60%	41%	--	--	3.59 (.50) [37]	3.65 (.54) [34]	3.57 (.61) [35]

Table 1 – MSC Abbott Conference Activities and Pillars – San Antonio Conference

Delegates were next asked about the pre-conference time spent with their delegate families helping them to be more comfortable with other delegates during the conference. As shown in Table 2, on the next page, all delegates agreed or strongly agreed that because of the pre-conference time spent with their delegate families they felt more comfortable with the other delegates on the conference and at slightly higher rates than respondents of the previous two years. Again, had any delegates selected disagree or strongly disagree with that

statement another question would have displayed asking for a reason for their choice. As no one selected those choices, there was no response to that question.

Statements about Pre- Conference Activities – San Antonio	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
Because of the pre-conference time spent with my delegate family, I felt more comfortable with other delegates during the conference.	78%	22%	--	--	3.78 (.42) [36]	3.61 (.50) [33]	3.77 (.49) [35]

Table 2- Pre-conference Activities – San Antonio

Delegates were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements regarding their MSC Abbott experience during the conference. The responses displayed in Table 3 show that similar to previous years, delegates most agreed that their perspective on the conference was valued. Although delegates least agreed to the statements about the conference providing adequate reflection time, and its speakers representing a diversity of thought, they were in greater agreement with those statements than respondents of the previous two years.

Statements about Conference Activities – San Antonio	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
My perspective was valued on conference.	67%	33%	--	--	3.67 (.48) [36]	3.79 (.41) [34]	3.86 (.36) [35]
The director staff made a genuine effort to engage with delegates.	67%	28%	6%	--	3.61 (.60) [36]	3.71 (.46) [34]	†
There was adequate time for reflective activities throughout the conference.	56%	33%	11%	--	3.44 (.70) [36]	2.59 (.66) [34]	2.80 (.76) [35]
*The conference speakers represented diversity of thought.	44%	47%	6%	3%	3.33 (.72) [36]	3.15 (.66) [34]	*2.74 (.74) [35]

Table 3 – MSC Abbott Experiences – San Antonio Conference

† Question not asked.

*2019 question worded as “comprehensive diversity of thought”

Delegates were asked to expand on their “disagree” or “strongly disagree” responses to the statements shown above in Table 3. Of the four comments, three noted that there was no diversity of race or religion, and indicated they would like to have heard different perspectives that were not shared as a result. Another indicated they would like more time to reflect after the speakers, perhaps through more family time.

Delegates were asked to share which speaker(s) impacted them the most and why, as well as which speaker(s) impacted them the least and why. Thirty-four delegates responded. A wide variety of speakers was chosen as the most impactful, although Dr. Sukin, Dr. Camille Alleyne, Shannon Davis, Tobin Redwine, the Harness and Hughes family were mentioned multiple times. The reasons speakers were found as most impactful also varied; some talked about the impact of Dr. Sukin, Shannon Davis and Dr. Alleyne as strong women committed to their

purpose, careers and family. Delegates spoke about the humility, honesty and authenticity of speakers such as the Harnesses, Tobin Redwine and the Hughes family from whom delegates found inspiration surrounding their commitment to simplicity.

The 30 delegates who listed speakers they found the least impactful, most commonly indicated the Zachary group presentation, Dirk Elmendorf and Mayerland Harris. They noted these speakers presented less personal stories, seemed more corporate in tone, or were different from the delegate, thus these speakers were less impactful.

Because of the COVID 19 gathering and travel restrictions, many of the speakers participating in MSC AFLC did so virtually, via Zoom. MSC AFLC staff wanted delegates' opinions regarding the impact of the Zoom delivery compared to the in-person delivery of speaker sessions. As noted in Table 4, more than three-quarters of the respondents found Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions less impactful than in-person delivery.

MSC AFLC would like to know your opinion regarding the impact of the Zoom delivery compared to the in-person delivery of our speaker sessions. Please choose from the below which best fits your experience.	2021 Frequency Percent
Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions was less impactful than the in-person delivered speaker sessions	80%
Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions was equal in impact to the in-person delivered speaker sessions	20%
Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions was more impactful than in-person delivered speaker sessions	--

Table 4- San Antonio Delegates Speaker Session Delivery Preference (n=35)

Delegates were also asked to list their local family and described their experiences with their family during family night. Thirty-four delegates listed their specific families and the delegates' specific experiences can be found on the attached documents. All the delegates were positive about their families and this experience, sharing that they appreciated the openness, genuineness and vulnerability that the families showed them and noted it was their favorite part of the conference.

Delegates were asked to explain what components of the pre-conference events, service events, and conference events were of most value to them and why. Of the 34 who commented, about three-quarters mentioned the pre-conference family night and local family events, where the delegates opened up to get to know one another and shared stories. Many also mentioned that ethics night as having an impact because it encouraged open discussion on controversial topics.

Delegates were provided a three-choice scale to rate whether they felt connected to other students through their involvement with MSC Abbott during this COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 35 who responded, 77% indicated "Yes, sure did," 17% chose "Kind of" and 7% indicated "No, not really." As delegates were provided the choice to attend MSC AFLC in person or virtually, through Zoom, the respondents were asked how they attended the conference. All the 35 who responded to the question indicated they attended in person.

Delegates who attended the conference in person were requested to share their level of comfort in attending MSC AFLC considering the COVID 19 safety precautions MSC AFLC staff implemented on the conference. Table 5, on the next page, shows that over 90% were very comfortable attending MSC AFLC in person.

	Very Comfortable (4)	Comfortable (3)	Uncomfortable (2)	Very Uncomfortable (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]
Please share their level of comfort in attended MSC AFLC considering the COVID 19 safety precautions MSC AFLCE staff implemented on conference.	91%	6%	--	3%	3.86 (.55) [35]

Table 5- Comfort Level Attending Conference In-Person – San Antonio

Delegates who indicated that they attended the conference virtually through Zoom would have been asked to tell MSC AFLC organizers how included they felt during the conference. However, none of the respondents indicated participating in the conference virtually through Zoom, so that question was not displayed nor answered by delegates.

The final question asked delegates for suggestions to improve the overall MSC Abbott experience. Nine of the 28 respondents either complimented the conference or did not suggest any improvements. A few recommend more diversity in belief and religion of the speakers, as well as recruiting more diverse delegates so that all could hear more diverse worldviews. Others would like to see more one-on-one time with fellow delegates, more cross family interaction and more breaks throughout the day.

HOUSTON CONFERENCE

The delegates participating in the Houston conference were asked about the development of their views of the MSC AFLC pillars through the conference activities. Table 6 shows delegates primarily reported agreement about developing their views on family, values, ethics and service on the conference.

Statements about Conference Activities – Houston	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on family throughout the activities.	87%	13%	--	--	3.87 (.34) [39]	3.68 (.58) [25]	3.87 (.34) [34]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on values throughout the activities.	82%	15%	3%	--	3.79 (.47) [39]	3.64 (.57) [25]	3.85 (.36) [40]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on ethics throughout the activities.	67%	31%	3%-	--	3.64 (.54) [39]	3.48 (.59) [25]	3.55 (.50) [40]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on service throughout the activities.	64%	28%	8%	--	3.56 (.64) [39]	3.48 (.51) [25]	3.53 (.64) [40]

Table 6 – MSC Abbott Conference Activities and Pillars – Houston Conference

Delegates who selected the “disagree” or “strongly disagree” responses from the previous questions were asked to share why they chose those responses. Two responded; one indicated the conference did not challenge them but reiterated their views and the other indicated there was little focus on the pillar of service throughout the conference.

Delegates were next asked about the pre-conference time spent with their delegate families helping them to be more comfortable with other delegates during the conference. As shown in Table 7, all delegates agreed or strongly agreed that because of the pre-conference time spent with their delegate families they felt more comfortable with the other delegates on the conference and at higher rates than respondents of the previous two years. Also, had any delegates selected disagree or strongly disagree with that statement another question would have displayed asking for a reason for their choice. As no one selected those choices, there was no response to that question.

Statements about Pre- Conference Activities – Houston	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
Because of the pre-conference time spent with my delegate family, I felt more comfortable with other delegates during the conference.	92%	8%	--	--	3.92 (.27) [38]	3.43 (.79) [23]	3.68 (.53) [40]

Table 7: Pre-conference Activities - Houston

Delegates were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements regarding their MSC Abbott experience before and during the conference. Shown in Table 8, as in the previous two years, delegates most agreed that their perspectives were valued on the conference, and least agreed that the speakers represented a diversity of thought. This year's respondents were more agreeable to all statements than respondents of the previous two years, except slightly lower than 2020 respondents regarding speakers representing diversity of thought.

Statements about Conference Activities – Houston	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
My perspective was valued on conference.	85%	15%	--	--	3.85 (.37) [39]	3.65 (.49) [23]	3.68 (.53) [40]
The director staff made a genuine effort to engage with delegates.	80%	21%	--	--	3.79 (.41) [39]	3.57 (.59) [23]	†
There was adequate time for reflective activities throughout the conference.	41%	51%	8%	--	3.33 (.62) [39]	3.18 (.73) [22]	2.98 (.80) [40]
*The conference speakers represented diversity of thought.	41%	28%	31%	--	3.10 (.85) [39]	3.13 (.76) [23]	*3.08 (.80) [40]

Table 8 – MSC Abbott Experiences – Houston Conference

† Question not asked.

*2019 question worded as “comprehensive diversity of thought”

Those who selected “disagree” or “strongly disagree” responses from the above four questions highlighted in Table 8 were provided an opportunity to share why they chose those responses. Twelve of the 13 respondents shared that they felt the conference speakers lacked diversity, specifically in their religious, Christian-faith-based

worldviews and all had similar socio-economic backgrounds. The other respondent indicated they wanted more group reflection time.

Delegates were asked to share which speaker(s) impacted them the most and why, as well as which speaker(s) impacted them the least and why. Thirty-five delegates shared a variety of speakers who impacted them the most. Several mentioned Chris Fields, Dr. Henry Musoma and Tyson Voelkel as they inspired the delegates, challenged their perspectives and showed grace in dealing with hardships of life. Conversely, Dr. Mirsa, Dr. Placencia and Kelsey Kemp were mentioned most frequently by the 33 respondents as the speakers that impacted delegates least. Reasons given included that the two doctors focused their presentations on their professions, which delegates did not relate to as much, and overall the delegates found the Zoom deliveries tougher to maintain focus the speakers' messages.

Because of the COVID 19 gathering and travel restrictions, many of the speakers participating in MSC AFLC did so virtually, via Zoom. MSC AFLC staff wanted delegates' opinions regarding the impact of the Zoom delivery compared to the in-person delivery of speaker sessions. As noted in Table 9, most of the respondents found Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions less impactful than in-person delivery.

MSC AFLC would like to know your opinion regarding the impact of the Zoom delivery compared to the in-person delivery of our speaker sessions. Please choose from the below which best fits your experience.	2021 Frequency Percent
Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions was less impactful than the in-person delivered speaker sessions	88%
Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions was equal in impact to the in-person delivered speaker sessions	12%
Zoom delivery of the speaker sessions was more impactful than in-person delivered speaker sessions	--

Table 9: Houston Delegates Speaker Session Delivery Preference (n=34)

Delegates were asked to list their local family and described their experiences with their family during the local family night. The 34 respondents mentioned the Morrison, Allen, Dalton and Fredrick families. Nearly all respondents had positive experiences to share, indicating the families inspired them and that the delegates appreciated the camaraderie and interest in the delegates that the families shared. Specifically, some shared that they found the multi-career Morrison family aspirational, as they spoke about balancing professions and family, and delegates related this to how they see their own futures unrolling. One delegate, however, had a less favorable response regarding their experience, finding it tough to relate to the couple who had been together such a long time.

Delegates were asked to explain what components of the pre-conference events, service events, and conference events were of most value to them and why. Many of the 33 comments included local family nights and family stories as it really enables delegates to build rapport and get to know people. Others mentioned the ethics nights and the dyadic encounters of most value, because of the challenges they provided.

Delegates were provided a three-choice scale to rate whether they felt connected to other students through their involvement with MSC Abbott during this COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 34 who responded, 85% indicated "Yes, sure did," 15% chose "Kind of" and no one indicated "No, not really." The same question was asked after last year's conference and of the 15 who responded, 67% indicated "yes, they sure did!," 20% said "kind of" and 14% said "no, not really."

As delegates were provided the choice to attend MSC AFLC in person or virtually, through Zoom, the respondents were asked how they attended the conference. All the 34 who responded to the question indicated they attended in person. Delegates who attended the conference in person were requested to share their level

of comfort in attending MSC AFLC considering the COVID 19 safety precautions MSC AFLC staff implemented on the conference. Table 10, on the next page, shows that most were very comfortable attending MSC AFLC in person.

	Very Comfortable (4)	Comfortable (3)	Uncomfortable (2)	Very Uncomfortable (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]
Please share their level of comfort in attended MSC AFLC considering the COVID 19 safety precautions MSC AFLCE staff implemented on conference.	91%	9%	--	--	3.91 (.29) [34]

Table 10: Comfort Level Attending Conference In-Person - Houston

Delegates who indicated that they attended the conference virtually through Zoom would have been asked to tell MSC AFLC organizers how included they felt during the conference. However, none of the respondents indicated participating in the conference virtually through Zoom, so that question was not displayed nor answered by delegates.

The last question requested delegates to share suggestions to improve the overall MSC Abbott experience. Some of the 28 respondents suggested more time to reflect, either in groups or alone. Some would like a greater diversity of speakers (religion and worldview) so the delegates would be challenged and learn lessons from other faiths.

Organization Background

According to the website (<http://abbott.tamu.edu/>), students attending the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Abbott Family Leadership Conference (AFLC) are encouraged “to study and reflect on their individual ethics, morals and values, establishing a personal value system and apply it to their lives as student leaders at Texas A&M and in future business, community and family relationships.” In 2021, the three-day event introduced sophomore and junior student delegates to former students of Texas A&M University and industry leaders who share experiences of incorporating values and ethics into their professional and personal lives. The AFLC staff selects an equal number of males and females. Student Life Studies has worked with MSC AFLC to assess the conferences since 2002.

Project Details

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/>.

Report Prepared for: Raye Leigh Stone, MSC Abbott Family Leadership Conference
 Report Prepared by: Susan Fox-Forrester and Barbara Schumacher, Student Life Studies
 Analysis Prepared by: Dr. Ligia Perez, Student Life Studies
 Surveys Created by: Susan Fox-Forrester, Student Life Studies
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