

Memorial Student Center (MSC) Fall Leadership Conference (FLC) August 2016

Background

The Memorial Student Center (MSC) Fall Leadership Conference (FLC) is an annual event that occurs the week before the fall semester begins; this year’s conference was held on August 23th through August 25th, 2016. The theme of the 64th Annual MSC Fall Leadership Conference was *Inclusive Leadership with a Global Perspective*. According to the organization’s website (<http://flc.tamu.edu>), MSC FLC “...unites student leaders and cultivates leadership skills through interactive programs and speakers. Students, staff and former students gather to focus on personal growth while learning from each other and having a great time.”

Program outcomes for the conference included giving new student leaders the opportunity to network with other leaders, staff, administrators and former students. MSC FLC also intended for delegates to increase their perspective of leadership, and understand how globalization affects everyone. Conference activities, such as focus group sessions, speakers, and group activities, are designed to accomplish all aspects of the program outcomes. This is the 14th year MSC FLC has worked with Student Life Studies to assess their conference.

Methodology

The evaluation was created using Teleform[®], a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. The conference evaluation contained 21 questions; 18 questions were quantitative, and three were qualitative. The data was analyzed using SPSS[®], a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel[®]. Ninety students attended the conference and 75 completed the survey, yielding an 83% response rate, which is equal to last year’s response rate.

Results

Results include frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (sd) for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Not applicable responses were removed from analysis. In addition, summary themes are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. All tables are listed in descending order for percentage or mean of the 2016 data. Comparisons will be made to previous years where applicable.

The first question, in a check-all-that-apply format, asked delegates how they heard about MSC FLC. Table 1 demonstrates that this year the most delegates found out about MSC FLC from their organization advisors, which is similar to previous years. There was an increase in students learning about MSC FLC through former delegates over 2015, but a decrease in those who heard about the conference from email, previously attending the conference, through a friend and through their organization’s advisor. Those who selected the “other” option were provided an opportunity to write-in additional sources; and the three who wrote in said their church leader, ELLC and EVP.

How did you hear about MSC FLC? (Check all that apply)	2016 Percent (n=75)	2015 Percent (n=81)	2014 Percent (n=70)
Student Organization Advisor	68%	57%	66%
E-mail	24%	27%	6%
Former Delegates	20%	12%	32%
MSC FLC Staff	16%	14%	17%
Previously attended MSC FLC	11%	12%	13%
Friend	10%	11%	20%
Other	7%	9%	6%

Table 1- MSC FLC Marketing

Delegates were asked their level of agreement with a series of statements about the focus of each of the six speakers' presentations. As noted in Table 2, delegates strongly agreed or agreed that Tyson Voelkel's presentation focused on the topic of service in leadership. The fewest delegates agreed that Regent Judy Morgan's presentation focused on the topic of empathy in leadership.

MSC Fall Leadership Conference Experiences: Speakers	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2016 Mean (sd) [n]
Day 1, speaker Tyson Voelkel focused his talk on the topic of service in leadership.	84%	16%	--	--	--	4.84 (.37) [74]
Day 3, speaker Tiana Sanford focused her talk on the topic of moral integrity in leadership.	84%	14%	3%	--	--	4.81 (.46) [74]
Day 2, speaker Dr. Marisa Suhm focused her talk on the FLC theme, Inclusive Leadership with a Global Perspective	51%	39%	11%	--	--	4.41 (.69) [37]
Day 1, speaker Dr. Daniel Pugh focused his talk on the FLC theme Inclusive Leadership with a Global Perspective.	43%	39%	14%	4%	--	4.21 (.84) [72]
Day 2, Speaker Claire Petree focused her talk on the topic of abstraction in leadership.	31%	47%	22%	--	--	4.09 (.73) [74]
Day 1, speaker Regent Judy Morgan focused her talk on the topic of empathy in leadership.	11%	28%	19%	24%	16%	2.95 (1.28) [74]

Table 2- Speakers' Topic Focus

The delegates were asked to write in comments they had regarding the speakers. Most indicated they enjoyed the speakers, although some spoke off topic and did not seem as prepared as others. Comments supported the higher rated speakers, as many found Tyson Voelkel effective and inspiring, and Tiana Sanford engaging and relatable to her audience. Some delegates provided recommendations that speaker biographies and topics be provided sooner, and perhaps shortening the presentation time for the speakers. Please note that it was indicated on the survey form by some delegates that Dr. Marisa Suhm did not speak and Dr. Craig Rotter replaced her on the schedule, and may be the reason for the reduced amount of raters for that presentation within the survey.

Respondents were asked their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience participating in the focus groups during the conference. As noted in Table 3, on the next page, delegates were most favorable about their focus groups' discussion being constructive and inclusive, and that response rating was higher than in 2015 and 2014. Although still positive and more positive than in previous years, delegates were least positive about there being adequate time for focus groups.

MSC Fall Leadership Conference Experiences: Focus Groups	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2016 Mean (sd) [n=75]	2015 Mean (sd) [n=84]	2014 Mean (sd) [n]
The discussion during my focus group was constructive and inclusive	80%	13%	7%	--	--	4.73 (.58)	4.54 (.63)	4.45 (.74) [69]
My focus group further explored the FLC them, Inclusive Leadership with a Global Perspective	71%	27%	3%	--	--	4.68 (.52)	4	4
There was adequate time for focus groups	67%	27%	5%	1%	--	4.59 (.66)	4.54 (.65)	4.41 (.63) [69]

Table 3- Focus Group Experience (4 not asked)

When asked to select which focus group session they found most valuable, the 71 delegates most often selected focus group session 6 (48%). Focus group session 5 secured 18% of the selections, focus group session 4 was selected by 14% of the delegates, and session 3 was selected by 13% of the delegates. Focus group sessions 1 and 2 garnered 4% and 3% of the most valuable selections, respectively. Delegates were then asked to share any additional comments about the focus groups; 56 responded and many complimented specific leaders, and others indicated that they found the discussion and reflection of the groups conducive to understanding the topics. Some would have preferred the leaders to be a bit more prepared, have guided questions and a more interactive format.

Students were also asked about their agreement with several statements regarding their overall conference experiences. Their responses are in Table 4 below. Delegates were generally positive about their conference experiences, although were slightly less positive about the networking opportunities with former students than those who responded in 2015 and 2014.

MSC Fall Leadership Conference Experiences	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2016 Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Mean (sd) [n]	2014 Mean (sd) [n]
I will take back what I learned to my organization	62%	37%	1%	--	--	4.61 (.52) [74]	4.66 (.55) [83]	4.51 (.61) [69]
I had ample opportunities to network with other student leaders	55%	41%	4%	--	--	4.51 (.58) [73]	4.45 (.81) [84]	4.62 (.64) [69]
The conference theme helped me grow as a leader	35%	54%	11%	--	--	4.24 (.64) [74]	4	4
I had ample opportunities to network with faculty and staff	42%	34%	20%	4%	--	4.14 (.88) [74]	4.30 (.78) [83]	4.44 (.76) [68]
I had ample opportunities to network with former students	35%	42%	14%	10%	--	4.03 (.94) [74]	4.29 (.84) [84]	4.44 (.76) [68]

Table 4- Conference Experiences (1 not asked)

Delegates were then asked for their opinion regarding which days would work best for next year's FLC. Sixty-two percent selected the option Monday through Wednesday, 36% selected the option same as this year (Tuesday through Thursday), and 3% selected the option of Wednesday through Friday. Those delegates who were unable to attend the whole conference were asked to please explain why in a check all that apply response. Four replied, 50% chose time conflict with my work schedule and 50% chose time conflict with family obligations and 25% chose the

“other” option. The other option allowed for a written response, which was one comment which read, “n/a, attended whole conference.”

Lastly, delegates were asked to share any additional comments about the overall conference. Many of the 60 comments were complimentary, saying that the experience was great, and the networking opportunities were very worthwhile. Some suggested a preference for not having the conference during Gig'em Week.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Again this year, delegates seemed to have a positive experience at the MSC Fall Leadership Conference. They seemed to appreciate the time and opportunity to network with other student leaders, faculty and former students during the conference and gained information from the speakers and focus groups to take back to their organizations. However, it seems many would prefer more time to interact and network with former students and faculty and staff.

As recommended in previous years, MSC FLC leadership may want to establish specific learning outcomes for the conference along with the program outcomes, which could both be measured from year to year. Providing this information to speakers and focus groups leaders may also provide them guidance in organization, preparation and delivery of presentations, helping the presenters and focus group facilitators maintain focus. Developing these learning outcomes could also inform more interactive discussion and activities for the delegates, as some found the degree of sitting and listening less engaging.

The MSC FLC leadership may also want to consider adding a follow-up assessment. Asking delegates to reflect on their experience several months after the conference can help determine the long-term impact of the conference. A follow-up assessment could address issues such as whether or not delegates have implemented anything they learned, ask what they used from MSC FLC in their organizations, as well as if they used the delegate binder as a resource.

The MSC FLC leadership is encouraged to share this information with their delegates, speakers, and focus group leaders so they know their input was valued. The MSC FLC leadership is also encouraged to share this report with the new MSC Fall Leadership Conference leadership, so they can incorporate any changes into the planning of the 2017 conference.

Report prepared for: Raye Leigh Stone and Kalyn Clark, MSC Fall Leadership Conference
Report prepared by: Susan Fox-Forrester, Student Life Studies
Report prepared on: December 21, 2016
Analysis prepared by: Dan Yin, Student Life Studies
Survey created by: Barbara Schumacher, Student Life Studies

***Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by Texas A&M University Advancement Fee.
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