

MSC SCOLA

30th Annual Student Conference on Latino Affairs (SCOLA)

Spring 2018

Background

According to its website (<http://scola.tamu.edu/>), the Student Conference on Latino Affairs (SCOLA) “develops programs for students across Texas and the nation that highlight national and international issues impacting the Latinx community.” The student organization was founded in 2017; MSC SCOLA conferences held prior to 2017 were sponsored by the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture (CAMAC).

The conference occurred on April 5-7 2018, and this year’s theme was *Influential Voices: Shaping Perspective through Representation*. The conference featured five keynote speakers and 15 workshops. 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. Per the website, <http://scola.tamu.edu/about/>, this year’s conference theme aimed to “guide delegates in using their voice to bring about progressive change in their lives and in their communities.”

MSC SCOLA has worked with Student Life Studies to assess the conference since 2002.

Method and Sample

The survey was produced using Teleform[®], a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. The survey contained 22 questions; 15 were quantitative, four were qualitative, and three were demographic. One question was specifically for non-Texas A&M students, while four were only for Texas A&M students. 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 185 of the 210 participants at the conclusion of the conference; 80 participants completed a survey, giving a response rate of 43%, down from 54% in 2017.

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, status as a first generation college student, and ethnicity. This demographic information is summarized in Table 1, on the following page. Most of the respondents were female, first generation college students, and Hispanic/Latino. Students who included an ethnicity not listed wrote Afro-Dominicano, Brazilian/white, Chicana, Chicana/Mexican American, Mex-Am, and Mexicalto. Students who included a gender not listed wrote Dinosaur, Fish, Wolbat, and Woman.

Demographic Category	2018 Percent	2017 Percent	2016 Percent
Gender	(n=78)	(n=125)	(n=97)
Female	64%	58%	62%
Male	33%	39%	38%
Other	3%	--	--
Prefer not to answer	--	2%	--
Transgender	--	1%	--
First generation college student	(n=62)	(n=110)	(n=101)
Yes	79%	74%	86%
No	21%	26%	14%
Ethnicity	(n=77)	(n=126)	(n=101)
Hispanic/Latino	81%	86%	92%
Other	6%	2%	--
Multiracial/Biracial	5%	5%	1%
Caucasian/White	5%	1%	2%
African American/Black	3%	1%	3%
Prefer not to answer	--	3%	1%
Asian American/Asian/ Pacific Islander	--	2%	1%
Native American/American Indian	--	--	--

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

General Information

Table 2 shows how delegates heard about the conference with the most common answer still being University or Community College Faculty/Staff. Fewer respondents reported hearing about the conference from email compared to last year’s results. Of the 16% of respondents that selected “other” as an answer choice, the most numerous responses included friends, prior attendance, and other universities’ programs.

How did you hear about the conference? (select all that apply)	2018 Percent [n=87]	2017 Percent [n=134]	2016 Percent [n=139]
University or Community College Faculty/Staff	55%	41%	42%
Other	16%	14%	25%
MSC CAMAC	15%	14%	33%
Email	10%	18%	15%
Facebook or other social media	2%	6%	9%
Lawn signs/posters	1%	5%	5%
SCOLA Website	--	1%	7%
SCOLA Informational	--	1%	3%

Table 2: Conference Marketing

Conference Activities

Delegates were asked to indicate their agreement with statements about different aspects of the conference. Table 3, on the next page presented in descending mean order, demonstrates that the delegates were

generally positive about all statements, although slightly less positive about the conference being well organized and the ability to network with professionals on the local, state, and national levels.

Conference Statement	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]
Conference staff were helpful and courteous.	70%	29%	1%	--	3.68 (.50) [79]	3.78 (.42) [134]
SCOLA provided me the opportunity to connect with other participants.	68%	29%	3%	--	3.66 (.53) [79]	3.67 (.53) [132]
Because of my experience at SCOLA, I feel I am more informed about the issues affecting the Latinx population.	62%	32%	5%	1%	3.54 (.66) [79]	*
The roundtable discussions assisted me in processing information from the workshops.	62%	30%	5%	3%	3.52 (.71) [79]	3.47 (.64) [130]
The conference was well organized.	33%	58%	8%	1%	3.23 (.64) [79]	3.51 (.62) [134]
During SCOLA I was able to successfully network with local, state, and national professionals.	39%	45%	17%	--	3.22 (.71) [78]	3.26 (.77) [132]

Table 3: Conference Statements (*Question not asked)

Delegates were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with four areas of the conference. Table 4, in descending 2018 mean order, illustrates that the responding delegates were generally satisfied with the roundtable facilitators and conference materials, but slightly less satisfied with the speakers and resource fair. The satisfaction with the speakers was the largest difference between last year and this year.

Conference Activities	Very Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very Dissatisfied (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]
Roundtable Facilitators	62%	32%	5%	1%	3.54 (.66) [79]	3.61 (.58) [132]	*
Conference Materials	53%	43%	4%	1%	3.46 (.64) [80]	3.47 (.45) [132]	3.71 (.46) [101]
Speakers	39%	51%	9%	1%	3.28 (.68) [79]	3.60 (.54) [134]	3.74 (.46) [101]
Resource Fair	19%	58%	22%	--	2.97 (.65) [72]	2.82 (.91) [130]	3.32 (.72) [99]

Table 4: Conference Activities (*Question not asked)

Respondents were then asked to describe their overall experience at the resource fair. The students who indicated dissatisfaction wrote about the lack of booths and information. The satisfied students indicated they enjoyed it, gathered information, and networked, but several also mentioned the lack of schools/programs present. The people who were very satisfied appreciated the variety and relevant information.

When asked to provide suggestions for future conference themes and topics, 65 delegates had an assortment of ideas including having more discussion of identity and intersectionality (e.g., colorism, gender, LGBTQ+, masculinity, religion, etc.), DACA, and history and culture. Some less frequently mentioned topics included politics (voting, policy influence), careers, motivational speakers, and mental health.

Delegates were asked in what ways the conference could be improved. Their suggestions (n=65) included managing the time better (including end and transition times), offering more workshops, allowing time for Q&A, selecting better speakers, checking sound equipment, sending correct information ahead of the conference, having more institutions attend, and providing more opportunities for networking.

For non-Texas A&M students, 65% had been to the campus before this conference; 36% had not (n=62). In 2017, 51% had visited campus before attending SCOLA.

Texas A&M University students were asked several questions. Table 5 indicates agreement that students could explore different perspectives, Latinx visibility increased, and SCOLA enhanced their experiences. As a follow up, Texas A&M students were asked to explain how attending SCOLA did or did not enhance their experience at Texas A&M. Of the 32 students who responded, many talked about learning from others and expressing themselves, meeting other Latinx students, and understanding Latinx issues and culture. One person described it as “elitist.” There were a couple of comments that may have been from non-Texas A&M students.

	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]
Attending SCOLA provided an environment that freely explores ideas/perspectives that are different from my own	68%	28%	4%	--	3.64 (.56) [50]	*
Attending SCOLA increased the visibility of Latinx people at Texas A&M University	55%	41%	4%	--	3.51 (.58) [51]	*
Attending this MSC program enhanced my experience at or with Texas A&M University	50%	44%	6%	--	3.44 (.61) [50]	3.53 (.62) [79]

Table 5: Texas A&M Student Perceptions (*Question not asked)

Conclusions and Recommendations

The delegates who received and completed an evaluation seemed to have a good experience at the conference. Students learned about themselves and different perspectives, had the opportunity to learn from keynote speakers and workshop presenters, and discussed issues in their small groups.

As with last year, some of the participants 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, MSC 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. MSC 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. On the other hand, if the resource fair does not contribute to the mission and goals of the conference, the event could be replaced with another event that might be relevant to the participants.

When students were asked if during the conference they were able to successfully network with local, state, and national professionals, 17% of students disagreed. MSC 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. In addition, MSC SCOLA leadership may want to reinforce with speakers to leave time for audience questions, while still ending on time.

MSC SCOLA leadership is encouraged to read through all of the responses 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 2019 MSC SCOLA leadership would provide valuable information about which components worked during the conference and which need alterations. Both strategies would help MSC SCOLA leadership understand the program's strengths and areas for improvement, as well as better meet their objectives next year.

In terms of how students hear about the conference, MSC SCOLA does really well in working with faculty/staff, so that effort should be continued. On the other hand, have informational sessions may not be worth the time if no one attends the conference because of that event.

It appears that workshop evaluations were created using Google forms. Student Life Studies can assist MSC SCOLA in creating paper or web-based evaluations.

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