

Gilbert Leadership Conference Participant Evaluation November 2017

Background

The Gilbert Leadership Conference (GLC) is a committee of the Student Government Association (SGA). According to its website (<http://www.glctamu.com/>), the Gilbert Leadership Conference is “a seven-week leadership development program based on three pillars: character, service, and involvement. The conference was founded in 2006 as a legacy of David Gilbert, the conference namesake, and strives for the freshmen delegates to create a ripple effect spreading the Texas A&M values and conference pillars.”

Freshmen delegates are selected in late September. Starting in early October and for the seven weeks leading up to the conference, delegates learn about character, service, and involvement and how to incorporate these values into their lives during the first semester on campus. The experience culminates with a four-day conference, which was held November 9-12, 2017. For ten years the conference was held in Houston, Texas; however, in 2016 the conference was moved to Dallas, Texas. While at the conference, delegates listen to various speakers, participate in a service project, and interact with the Gilbert family.

A pre-conference evaluation and conference evaluation were developed to understand the delegates’ experience in the weeks leading up to the conference as well as the actual conference. This is the second year the Gilbert Leadership Committee worked with Student Life Studies to assess the conference.

Method and Sample

Both paper surveys were developed in Teleform®, survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. Student Life Studies evaluated the results from both surveys using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Word® and Excel®.

The 10-question pre-conference evaluation contained nine quantitative questions and one qualitative question. This survey was administered with the 40 delegates on November 9 while on the bus ride to Dallas. Thirty-eight of the 40 students completed the survey for a 95% response rate.

The conference evaluation entailed 12 questions, eight were quantitative and four were qualitative. This survey was completed during the bus ride home from the conference on November 12th. Of the 40 students who received the survey, 38 completed it, also yielding a 95% response rate.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are listed in 2017 descending order. Not applicable or did not attend responses were removed prior to analysis. Results are compared to 2016, where applicable. For the qualitative questions, the summary themes are contained in this report, but the full listing is in a separate document. The report is broken into two sections: Pre-Conference Evaluation and Conference Evaluation.

Pre-Conference Evaluation

Using a select-all-that-apply format, students were asked how they heard about the Gilbert Leadership Conference. Table 1 indicates the delegates were most likely to find out about Gilbert Leadership Conference through former delegates or friends, similar to last year. However, more students heard about the Gilbert Leadership Conference (GLC) through the GLC website, and Facebook this year than last, and no one indicated hearing about the conference through the Student Activities Block Party or by some speaking in a class. Those that selected the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write a response. The three students who selected this option, wrote that they heard about GLC from AMC, Chi O and a family friend.

How did you hear about the Gilbert Leadership Conference? (select all that apply)	Frequency Percentage	Frequency Percentage
	2017 (n=38)	2016 (n=32)
A former delegate	82%	81%
A friend	34%	28%
GLC Website	11%	9%
Other	8%	9%
Facebook	5%	--
MSC Open House	3%	13%
Promo Video	3%	3%
Student Activities Block Party during Gig 'Em Week	--	3%
Someone spoke in a class	--	--

Table 1: Marketing

When asked about the number of pre-conference events, 66% of delegates felt there were just enough events, and 32% thought there were not enough events; slightly different than last year when 69% felt there were just enough events and 28% thought there were too few events. In both 2017 and 2016, 3% reported there were too many events.

The delegates were asked to rate a series of questions regarding the different pre-conference events and activities that took place during the seven weeks leading up to the conference. Table 2, on the following page, demonstrates that students were positive about all statements, although least positive that the Gilbert Family Hangouts were effective for delegates to get to know one another.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]	Mean (sd) [n]
By attending the pre-conference events I felt more comfortable with the delegates prior to the conference.	68%	29%	3%	--	--	4.66 (.53) [38]	4.66 (.60) [32]
The Lunch Buddies were effective for delegates to get to know one another.	69%	26%	5%	--	--	4.63 (.59) [38]	4.38 (.79) [32]
I felt welcomed at the Reveal Night.	70%	22%	8%	--	--	4.62 (.64) [37]	4.66 (.48) [29]
The All Delegate Hangouts were effective for delegates to get to know one another.	55%	29%	16%	--	--	4.39 (.76) [38]	4.43 (.63) [28]
The Gilbert Family Hangouts were effective for delegates to get to know one another.	61%	19%	17%	--	3%	4.36 (.96) [36]	4.31 (.60) [29]

Table 2: Pre-Conference Events

Delegates were given a list of all the pre-conference events and asked which event was the most impactful for them. Table 3 reveals that the pre-conference event with speaker Nathan Harness was most impactful for nearly half of the delegates. Generally, the speakers were the most impactful for delegates. Alternatively, neither the service project nor Reveal Night was considered most impactful for the delegates. Delegates were given the opportunity to explain their response. Those who spoke about Nathan Harness found his stories surrounding his experience with 9/11 impactful, inspirational, and found that his vulnerability helped delegates to connect to his message. Others chose Ford Taylor because of his humble approach to leadership, and provide lessons about leadership that delegates could learn from. Those who selected John Claybrook and Justin Cardenas thought they could relate to these speakers as they were close to the delegates' age and exemplified the values learned at GLC. The guys/girls night was mentioned as an opportunity to meet and bond with the other delegates.

Which pre-conference event was most impactful for you?	Frequency Percentage
Speaker Nathan Harness	47%
Speaker Ford Taylor	24%
Speakers John Claybrook, and Justin Cardenas	13%
Guys/girls night	11%
Speaker Professor Barrett	5%
Reveal Night	--
Service project with BUILD	--

Table 3: Impact of Pre-Conference Events (n=38)

The final question on the pre-conference evaluation asked delegates to select the one pillar that was emphasized the most during pre-conference activities. Character was selected by 54% of the 37 respondents. Next most frequently selected was "all were emphasized equally", with 35% selecting that choice. Involvement and Service each were selected by 5% of the delegates.

Conference Evaluation

Delegates were asked to rate a series of statements about their experience on the conference. Table 4 shows that delegates were generally positive about all statements. Delegates reported that the conference challenged them further to develop their own view of character and who they want to be. Delegates were least positive about there being adequate time scheduled for reflective activities throughout the conference.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]	Mean (sd) [n=31]
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on character and who I want to be.	92%	8%	--	--	--	4.92 (.27) [38]	4.97 (.18)
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on involvement.	82%	18%	--	--	--	4.82 (.39) [38]	4.87 (.34)
The service project was effective in demonstrating the pillar of service.	73%	19%	8%	--	--	4.65 (.63) [37]	†
The conference challenged me to further develop my own view on service.	63%	37%	--	--	--	4.63 (.49) [38]	4.87 (.43)
I had a meaningful impact during the conference service project.	55%	34%	8%	3%	--	4.42 (.76) [38]	4.35 (.71)
There was adequate time allocated for reflective activities throughout the conference.	49%	30%	19%	3%	--	4.24 (.86) [37]	4.13 (.96)

Table 4: Conference Events

† Question not asked

Delegates were provided a list of all the speakers and activities during the conference in two separate questions and asked to select the ones that were most impactful and then the ones that were least impactful to them. On the next page Table 5, in descending order of most impactful, displays the results of both questions. Delegates felt that Dr. Ben Welch and the Gilberts' telling their story at the Friday night banquet were selected by the highest percentage of delegates the most impactful of all the scheduled events. Jeff Schiefelbein's presentation was selected by the fewest percentage of delegates as most and least impactful.

Which conference speaker/activities were {most/least} impactful for you? (select all that apply)	Most Impactful Frequency Percentage [n=31]	Least Impactful Frequency Percentage [n=28]
Dr. Ben Welch at Saville	84%	4%
Gilberts' Telling their Story at Friday Night Banquet	82%	4%
Bobby Tucker at the Hotel	76%	4%
Fireside Chats with the Gilberts	68%	4%
Dinner Saturday Night and the Leftwich couple	66%	3%
Executive Panel at Jackson Walker Law Firm	66%	7%
Mark Gold at the hotel	47%	3%
Brooke Rollins at Jackson Walker Law Firm	45%	3%
Service Project at Dallas Life Foundation	40%	7%
Reflection Time	40%	13%
Gilbert Group Discussion Time	34%	3%
Dinner and activities at Klyde Warren Park	29%	23%
Student Panel at Blue Mesa	29%	23%
Speakers at JP Morgan	26%	36%
Amy Rosellini at JP Morgan	24%	19%
Brian Williams at JP Morgan	21%	13%
Chris Fields at Rudder	21%	23%
Former Delegate panel in Rudder	21%	16%
April Anthony at the Hotel	13%	26%
Jeff Schiefelbein at the Hotel	3%	3%

Table 5: Impact of Conference Events

Delegates were provided the opportunity to explain their responses for why different speakers and activities were most and least impactful. Many delegates indicated all the different speakers and activities were positive but that they selected the ones that were most impactful or they connected with the most. Some went on to talk about speakers being motivating and informative. Some delegates stated that they selected some speakers or activities as least impactful because even though the speaker or activity had impact, the delegate did not connect personally, or found the presentation too business or career specific so it was difficult for them to relate to it. A few mentioned the service project as not making that much of an impact, because the delegates did not think they made much of an impact with their service.

Delegates were asked to share at least one goal they had created as a result of attending the Gilbert Leadership Conference. Responses varied, but some common themes included becoming more intentional in their service and pursuits, being more present with others, finding what they are passionate about and reading more. When asked to give one action they planned to take related to one of the three pillars from the Gilbert Leadership Conference, about one-third spoke specifically on plans to develop their character, by clarifying their values, making themselves more available to others and making decisions based on values even with seemingly insignificant things. Approximately another third spoke about the pillar of service specifically, increasing their service to others and being more intentional in choosing how and who they serve. Many also talked about being more present and intentional in their involvement with friends and family, and mentioned their goal was to find a mentor and become a mentor.

Students were asked to share suggestions they had to improve the overall Gilbert Leadership Conference. There were various ideas shared; however, many wanted more opportunities pre-conference as well as at the conference

to get know other delegates. Some noted that the conference seemed to be judgmental about certain groups and would like to see that eliminated. A few commented that they would have liked speakers who knew David personally, to get even a clearer perspective on his life and the three pillars.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Delegates were positive about their experience, the speakers, and the activities related to the pre-conference and conference. Most talked about the three pillars of character, service, and involvement and could identify one action they would associated with these pillars. However, the service project for the pre-conference events was not reported as being impactful, and the project during the conference was also not considered as impactful as other activities. Since this is one of the three pillars, if not done previously, GLC staff may want to add a discussion or debrief to the service project to help make the significance of service more clear for the delegates.

Some suggestions were shared by the delegates. The conference planning staff may want to look at ways to build in intentional time for delegates to bond and connect both during the conference and prior to it. Like last year, delegates also continue to indicate the need for more reflective time. The staff could consider giving reflective prompts at different points throughout the seven-week experience. Lunch buddies or during hangout, delegates could be given a topic to talk about that is related to that week's pre-conference speaker or activity. While at the conference, delegates could be given reflective prompts to discuss with other delegates or write about while on the bus between different venues.

Gilbert Leadership Conference staff is strongly encouraged to read through the qualitative responses to gain a better understanding of the themes represented in this report. These may also help in making changes or implementing any suggestions delegates shared. Staff is also encouraged to share results with their stakeholders. This could be sharing information with the various speakers, potential donors, and incoming delegates to market why freshmen should apply.

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