

**Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Women's Resource Center
International Women's Day Conference
Spring 2018**

Background

According to its website (<http://wrc.tamu.edu/>), the mission of the Women's Resource Center (WRC) "is to pursue equity and enhance the campus climate for women through visibility, advocacy, support, and programming." Beginning in 2012, the Women's Resource Center in conjunction with The American Association of University Women at Texas A&M University (AAUW-TAMU) started commemorating International Women's Day by hosting a series of events on campus with the goal of celebrating cultural diversity and raising awareness of global women's issues. In 2015, the partnership of several organizations hosted the first *International Women's Day: Implementing Change* Conference. Now the conference is hosted annually on campus during Women's History Month. Each year the theme is decided by the conference planning committee.

The 2018 International Women's Day Conference, *Press for Progress*, was held on the evening of Wednesday, March 7, 2018. The conference included performances, presentations, and small group discussions. The Women's Resource Center wanted to assess the effectiveness of the conference. This is the second time Student Life Studies has worked with the Women's Resource Center to assess this conference.

Method and Sample

A conference evaluation was created using Teleform®, a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. The evaluation contained 20 questions, a decrease of eight questions from the 2017 survey. There 14 quantitative and six qualitative questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. The evaluation was collected at the end of the conference that evening. Of the 100 participants who attended the International Women's Day Conference, 54 completed the survey, yielding a 54% response rate (a decrease of 29% from 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 for the qualitative questions are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. Comparisons will be made to the 2017 evaluation where applicable.

Using a check all that apply question, participants were asked how they heard about the International Women's Day Conference. Table 1, on the following page, demonstrates that similar to last year, most found out about the conference through email. Participants who selected the "other" option were given the opportunity to write a response. Participants shared that they learned about the conference from friends/colleagues, attended previously, went to the Women in Sciences and Engineering (WISE) Conference, or were associated with one of the organizations hosting the conference.

How did you hear about the International Women’s Day Conference?	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=47]	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=44]
Email	60%	77%
Other	28%	23%
Lawn Sign	13%	18%
Social Media	13%	18%
MSC Digital Sign	--	--
Bush School Digital Sign	--	--

Table 1—Marketing

Conference participants were asked a series of questions to evaluate their understanding of topics involving international women’s issues and international student culture. Participants were asked to share their understanding both before and after the conference. Table 2, in descending 2018 “after” mean order, shows an increase in all statements from before to after attending the conference. Participants’ willingness to help create a more inclusive environment at Texas A&M had the greatest increase from before to after attending the conference.

Please rate yourself on the following before and after your participation in the conference.	Very Good (5)	Good (4)	Fair (3)	Poor (2)	Very Poor (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]
My willingness to help create a more inclusive environment at Texas A&M. (before)	--	2%	4%	33%	61%	1.46 (.67) [54]	1.51 (.77) [49]
My willingness to help create a more inclusive environment at Texas A&M. (after)	77%	21%	2%	--	--	4.74 (.49) [47]	4.76 (.54) [38]
My understanding of international women’s issues. (before)	9%	43%	41%	6%	2%	3.52 (.82) [54]	3.41 (.79) [49]
My understanding of international women’s issues. (after)	27%	63%	10%	--	--	4.17 (.60) [48]	4.26 (.69) [38]
My understanding of intersectionality. (before)	19%	20%	32%	24%	6%	3.22 (1.18) [54]	3.43 (1.12) [49]
My understanding of intersectionality. (after)	33%	44%	21%	2%	--	4.08 (.79) [48]	4.16 (.79) [38]
My understanding of how Texas A&M University culture is viewed by international students. (before)	7%	28%	30%	28%	7%	3.00 (1.08) [54]	2.71 (1.10) [49]
My understanding of how Texas A&M University culture is viewed by international students. (after)	26%	51%	23%	--	--	4.02 (.71) [47]	4.03 (.94) [38]

Table 2: Learning Outcome Statement

Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements regarding some conference elements. Table 3 illustrates that participants were generally positive about all statements, especially regarding the speakers being knowledgeable. Alternatively, attendees were least positive about the facilitators assisting with discussions at the tables. In comparison to 2017, there was a slight decrease in all areas except the speakers.

Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]
The speakers were knowledgeable about the issues discussed.	55%	43%	--	2%	--	4.51 (.61) [53]	4.49 (.55) [47]
I would recommend this conference to another individual.	59%	30%	9%	2%	--	4.45 (.75) [53]	4.63 (0.53) [46]
Overall, I was satisfied with the conference.	48%	40%	8%	4%	--	4.33 (.79) [52]	4.63 (.57) [48]
I enjoyed the format of the conference.	36%	43%	15%	4%	2%	4.08 (.92) [53]	4.43 (.75) [46]
The facilitators helped assist with discussion at the table.	39%	24%	31%	6%	--	3.96 (.98) [51]	4.52 (.65) [48]

Table 3—Elements of the Conference

Participants were asked what they enjoyed the most about the conference and what could be improved, and 51 wrote a response. Aspects several participants mentioned for what they enjoyed included listening to the panels, hearing from A&M faculty, the diversity of opinions, allowing time for questions and answers, the variety of food, and participating in the table discussions. Recommendations for areas to improve included managing time more effectively, allowing for more interaction, changing the entertainment, coordinating with more organizations, and limiting the time for questions and answers. Because the question asked respondents to share both what they enjoyed and what could be improved, it was difficult to discern if the respondent was indicating something they enjoyed or needed to be improved for a few responses.

Respondents were asked to share what changes, if any, they would suggest to the conference format. There were 44 responses with a wide range of suggestions. Some common ideas included allowing more time for the discussions, skipping the break, having a facilitator at every table, and providing more structure.

As part of the conference, there is a catered meal, which offers food from a variety of cultures. Participants were asked for feedback on the dinner menu and recommendations for changes for future conferences. The majority of the 47 comments were very positive indicating the food was wonderful, good, and delicious. Additionally, participants enjoyed the variety of options, the ability to try new foods, and the diversity represented. Some suggested having more options for vegetarians, sharing more information about the food or the country, offering more selections beyond the eastern hemisphere, and offering coffee.

When asked what topics they would like to see discussed at future conferences, 39 participants shared a comment covering a variety of topics. Several suggested having men on the panel or hearing the male

perspective to some topics. Other topics suggested included education, literacy, women in a predominately male field, mental health, sexual assault/violence, technology, and maternity leave.

The final question asked about entertainment options participants would suggest for future conferences. Of the 29 who wrote a comment, many indicated they enjoyed the entertainment offered. Some suggestions for future conferences include poetry reading, a women’s chorus, or female-led entertainment. There were some specific entertainment groups also shared such as Fade2Black, Ballet Folklorico Celestial, Mariachi, and Bhangra.

Students were asked for their UIN, which was used to gather demographics of those who attended from the University student database. Table 4 shows these results. There is no comparison to 2017 because last year questions were included in the survey for demographics but had some slightly different response options. Most respondents were White, female, doctoral students, and domestic.

Demographic Category	2018 Respondents
Classification	[n=36]
Doctoral	39%
Senior	28%
Junior	17%
Sophomore	8%
Freshman	6%
Professional	3%
Sex	[n=36]
Female	94%
Male	6%
Ethnicity	[n=36]
White	36%
International	28%
Hispanic/Latino	17%
Asian	8%
African American/Black	6%
Unknown / Not Reported	3%
Multi-Racial, Excluding Black	3%
International	[n=54]
No	46%
Not Reported	35%
Yes	19%

Table 4—Demographics

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the participants enjoyed attending the International Women’s Day Conference. They reported more positive comments on their understanding of topics after the conference. Additionally, there was a strong increase in those willing to help create a more inclusive environment at Texas A&M University. The conference planning committee may want to contact those who attended and offer ways participants can take that willingness and turn it into action to help in creating a more inclusive environment.

Participants also provided a wide range of suggestions in terms of changes to the conference format, topics, food, and entertainment. The planning committee is strongly encouraged to read all the comments from participants and not just the themes included in this report. This may assist in planning for future years.

The conference planning committee may want to look at options for the timing of the event. Does it need to be longer to allow more discussion or could the time shift to better accommodate a greater number of attendees?

The Women's Resource Center is also encouraged to look at the conference evaluation. Specifically, the questions requesting comments from the respondent. These should be limited to one question per text box and not be compound questions. This will ensure that the response related to the question is clearer to those reviewing the responses.

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