

Gilbert Leadership Conference

Participant Evaluation

November 2018

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. The conference was founded in 2006 as a legacy of David Gilbert, the conference namesake, and strives for the freshmen delegates to incorporate character, service, and involvement into their lives starting their first semester on campus.

Forty freshmen delegates are selected in late September. During the weekly meetings they attend for the seven weeks leading up to the conference, delegates learn about the three pillars of character, service, and involvement, and how to incorporate these pillars into their lives. The experience culminates with a four-day conference, which was held on November 15-18, 2018. 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 third year the Gilbert Leadership Committee worked with Student Life Studies to assess the conference.

Method and Sample

Both paper surveys were developed in Teleform®, a 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 15th while they were on the bus ride to Dallas. All 40 students completed the survey for a 100% response rate.

The conference evaluation entailed 25 questions, 19 were quantitative and six were qualitative. This survey was completed during the bus ride home from the conference on November 18th. Of the 40 students who received the survey, 40 completed it, also yielding a 100% 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 descending order for 2018 mean or frequency percentage. Not applicable or did not attend responses were removed prior to analysis. Results are compared to previous years, 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 divided 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. While former delegates were the most common method of learning about GLC, this was a large decrease compared to the previous two years. However, finding out about GLC through a friend, at MSC Open House, or someone speaking in a class all increased. Those that selected the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write a response. The students who selected this option wrote that they heard about the conference through a fraternity/sorority or email.

How did you hear about the Gilbert Leadership Conference? (select all that apply)	Frequency Percentage	Frequency Percentage	Frequency Percentage
	2018 (n=40)	2017 (n=38)	2016 (n=32)
A former delegate	58%	82%	81%
A friend	55%	34%	28%
GLC Website	13%	11%	9%
MSC Open House	13%	3%	13%
Other	10%	8%	9%
Someone spoke in a class	8%	--	--
Promo Video	5%	3%	3%
Facebook	3%	5%	--
Student Activities Block Party during Gig 'Em Week	3%	--	3%

Table 1: Marketing

The delegates were asked to rate questions regarding the pre-conference activities that took place during the seven weeks leading up to the conference. Table 2 demonstrates that students were positive about both statements. However, compared to the previous years, students indicated not feeling as welcome at the Reveal Night.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]
By attending the pre-conference events I felt more comfortable with the delegates prior to the conference.	66%	29%	5%	--	--	4.61 (.60) [38]	4.66 (.53) [38]	4.66 (.60) [32]
I felt welcomed at the Reveal Night.	44%	42%	11%	3%	--	4.28 (.78) [36]	4.62 (.64) [37]	4.66 (.48) [29]

Table 2: Pre-Conference Events

Delegates were given a list of the pre-conference speakers and asked to select the two that were most impactful for them. Table 3, on the following page, reveals that the former delegates and Tom and Laura Gilbert were identified as the most impactful for over three-fourths of the delegates. Delegates were given the opportunity to explain their response. Students appreciated learning about David, his impact on others, and having a stronger understanding of the purpose of the conference. Some learned about the three pillars and how to apply those ideas to their life. Students described the speakers as personal, inspirational, relatable, and moving.

Which TWO pre-conference speakers were the most impactful for you?	Frequency Percentage 2018 (n=40)
John Claybrook, Justin Cardenas, Cole Burdette: Former Delegates on Three Pillars	88%
Tom and Laura Gilbert: Telling David's Story	83%
Seth Sullivan: Pursuing Passions	15%
Jeanie Barrett: David's Accounting Professor	13%
Jennifer Ford: Taking Advantage of What You are Given on a Conference	2%

Table 3: Impact of Pre-Conference Events

Using a select-all-that-apply format, delegates were asked about which events best supported relationship building. Of the 39 responses, over three-fourths (77%) of the respondents selected the weekly delegate meetings and 41% said the Gilbert Adventure Groups. Additionally, 28% each indicated the Leadership Activity Night and the Halloween Social, while 15% said the Reveal Night.

When asked about the number of pre-conference events, most students felt there were just enough, as seen in Table 4. This was an increase from the past two years. Additionally, students did not report there being too few events.

The number of pre-conference events were:	Frequency Percentage 2018 (n=39)	Frequency Percentage 2017 (n=38)	Frequency Percentage 2016 (n=32)
Just enough events	95%	66%	69%
Too many events	5%	3%	3%
Not enough events	--	32%	28%

Table 4: Number of Events

The final question on the pre-conference evaluation asked delegates to rank each of the three pillars based on how emphasized it was during pre-conference activities. Being ranked number one indicates that pillar was emphasized the most and being ranked number three means that pillar was emphasized the least. Table 5 shows that Service and Character were equally ranked number one; however, Service was ranked number two by more students. Involvement was ranked number three the most and ranked number one the least.

Pillars	Ranked #1	Ranked #2	Ranked #3
Service	39%	36%	26%
Character	39%	28%	33%
Involvement	23%	36%	41%

Table 5: Pillar Emphasized (n=39)

Conference Evaluation

Delegates were asked how they planned to implement what they learned about their character from the conference into their lives. There were several response options from the 38 who wrote a comment. Many talked about getting to know or investing in people or being more intentional. Others talked about understanding their "why," reflecting or reviewing their notes, serving others, and getting outside their comfort zone.

When asked how they saw service impacting them and understanding the way they can impact their community, several of the 38 responses were about relationships or being connected with others. Others talked about service being a lifestyle or including small, simple acts of service. A few discussed finding their passion, making an impact on their community, and making a difference to others.

Students were asked why it is important for them to be involved during their time at Texas A&M. From the 37 written responses, many talked about meeting others, being connected, or developing relationships. Others shared that they want to give back, either to the university or others, develop skills or grow, and others talked about being able to serve others.

Delegates were asked to rate a series of statements about their experience at the conference. Table 6 shows that delegates were most positive about there being adequate time for reflective activities. Alternatively, delegates were least positive that the service project had an impact on them.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n=40]	2017 Mean (sd) [n=37]	2016 Mean (sd) [n=31]
There was adequate time allocated for reflective activities throughout the conference.	55%	40%	3%	3%	--	4.48 (.68)	4.24 (.86)	4.13 (.96)
I felt that I made a meaningful impact during the conference service project.	23%	63%	15%	--	--	4.08 (.62)	‡	‡
I felt the conference service project had an impact on me.	23%	45%	25%	8%	--	3.83 (.87)	‡	‡

Table 6: Conference Events
‡ Question not asked

Delegates were provided a list of all the speakers and activities during the conference and asked if the speaker's comments were impactful for them. On the next page Table 7 displays the results. Delegates reported that comments from Bobby Tucker and Cliff Dugosh were most impactful to them. Alternatively, delegates indicated that the comments by Dr. Karl Rathjen were least impactful to them.

This speaker's comments were impactful for me.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) / [n]
Bobby Tucker	88%	13%	--	--	--	4.88 (.34) / [40]
Cliff Dugosh	85%	15%	--	--	--	4.85 (.36) / [40]
Nick Kennedy: Executive Panel	80%	15%	3%	3%	--	4.73 (.64) / [40]
Former Delegate Panel	75%	23%	3%	--	--	4.73 (.51) / [40]
Jeff Shiefelbein	64%	33%	3%	--	--	4.62 (.54) / [39]
Larry Miller: Executive Panel	60%	33%	5%	3%	--	4.50 (.72) / [40]
Susan Riffe: Executive Panel	53%	38%	8%	3%	--	4.40 (.74) / [40]
Rafael Cruz	60%	23%	13%	3%	3%	4.35 (.98) / [40]
Dr. Brian Williams	36%	56%	5%	3%	--	4.26 (.68) / [39]
Bryn Sappington: Executive Panel	45%	35%	18%	3%	--	4.23 (.83) / [40]
Tara Storch	40%	48%	8%	3%	3%	4.20 (.88) / [40]
Tony Carimi	35%	50%	13%	3%	--	4.18 (.75) / [40]
Trudy Harper	33%	44%	21%	3%	--	4.08 (.81) / [39]
Tim Weber: Executive Panel	36%	44%	13%	5%	3%	4.05 (.97) / [39]
Anne Higginbottom & Clayton Kershaw	30%	40%	25%	5%	--	3.95 (.88) / [40]
Dr. Karl Rathjen	13%	35%	35%	18%	--	3.43 (.93) / [40]

Table 7: Impact of Conference Speakers

Delegates were provided the opportunity to explain their ranking for any of the different speakers and 34 shared a comment. Several talked about all the speakers being impactful to them. Some shared that certain speakers were more impactful than others because they could relate to the speaker, the comments resonated with them more, or that the speaker challenged their thinking. Students described several of the speakers as being personal and inspirational.

Delegates were asked to share at least one goal they had created as a result of attending the Gilbert Leadership Conference. A wide range of goals were provided by the 36 delegates who wrote in a comment. Several talked about being intentional with their relationships with others, finding ways to serve others, and creating a personal mission statement. Some talked about spending more time reflecting and applying for leadership roles in student organizations.

Students were asked to share suggestions they had to improve the overall Gilbert Leadership Conference. There were various ideas shared from the 36 who responded to the question. Many wanted more time at the service project, more speakers, more time or opportunities to get to know the delegates, more diversity of the speakers and the delegates selected to attend, fewer cliques between delegates, and no adventure groups.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Delegates were generally positive about their experience, the speakers, and the activities related to the pre-conference and conference. Many talked about the three pillars of character, service, and involvement and identified a goal they set based on these pillars.

Some suggestions were shared by the delegates. The conference planning staff may want to continue to look at ways to build in intentional time for delegates to bond and connect both during the conference and prior to it. The GLC executives might also explore the speaker list to see if more speakers can be added to the schedule while still allowing time for reflection. Additionally, executives are encouraged to continue to look for more diversity in the speakers.

Gilbert Leadership Conference staff is 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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***Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee.
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