

# **Memorial Student Center (MSC) Spencer Leadership Conference Evaluation Spring 2019**

## **Purpose of Assessment**

The MSC Spencer Leadership Conference focuses on leadership development through the exploration of three pillars: Self-Aware Leadership, Innovative Leadership, and Selfless Leadership. Held in Dallas, approximately 44 student delegates attend programs and small group discussions featuring leaders in business, industry, education and public service. A paper survey was provided to delegates to assess their experiences and learning during the conference as well as during preconference events.

## **Method and Sample**

The survey was developed using Teleform<sup>®</sup>, a survey development software that creates scannable paper-based surveys and databases. Data was analyzed using SPSS<sup>®</sup>, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup>.

The 18-question survey contained 11 quantitative and seven qualitative questions. The survey was distributed to delegates on the final day of the conference. Of the 44 students who received the survey, 32 completed it, yielding a 73% response rate.

## **Key Findings with Recommendations**

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, MSC Spencer staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the conference and delegates. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- The delegates were positive about their overall Spencer Leadership Conference experience, more so than the 2018 conference delegates. All agreed or strongly agreed the conference taught them how to apply their leadership skills to their college experience. Over 90% of the delegates indicated the conference provided valuable pre-conference events and adequate communication about the conference prior to the trip.
- Delegates indicated that they would have liked more opportunities to get to know the other delegates both during preconference events and during the conference itself. MSC Spencer staff may want to add some social, casual pre-conference events for the delegates to get to know one another, and perhaps add in some less structured time during the conference for delegates to interact, if feasible.
- The small groups and the small group leaders were rated as effective or very effective in helping the delegates prepare for the conference. Delegates expressed that the small group leaders facilitated the small groups well, prompting reflection and discussion among the group. Again, however, the delegates also felt that the small group discussions would be more comfortable if they knew their fellow delegates better.
- Other improvements that MSC Spencer staff may want to review include more reflection time during the conference and more diversity of speakers i.e. those that represent other professional fields like the arts and engineering.

## 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, percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are listed in descending mean order for 2019 results unless otherwise noted. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to last year's results are included where applicable.

The survey began by asking delegates about their understanding of MSC Spencer's leadership perspectives after attending the conference. Table 1 reveals that delegates' agreed or strongly agreed they understood the meaning of innovative leadership more clearly and learned about selfless service because of attending the conference.

<b>As a result of MSC LEAD Spencer Leadership Conference...</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2019 Mean (sd)</b>
<b>I understand more clearly the meaning of innovative leadership</b>	81%	19%	--	--	3.81 (.40)
<b>I learned more about selfless service</b>	72%	28%	--	--	3.72 (.46)
<b>I have a greater understanding of self-authorship</b>	56%	38%	6%	--	3.50 (.62)

Table 1: Understanding of Leadership Styles (n=32)

Students were asked to choose one of the three leadership perspectives (self-aware leadership, selfless leadership, or innovative leadership) and tell what that leadership perspective means to them. Of the 32 who responded, 49% chose selfless leadership, 31% chose self-aware leadership and 22% chose innovative leadership. Those who chose self-aware leadership commented that it means knowing your strengths and weaknesses; being aware of how your actions impact others, taking responsibility for your actions, and continuing to grow. Delegates who selected selfless leadership defined it as putting others before yourself, working for others and not yourself, seeing a need, and filling it by using your skills to benefit others in need. Innovative leadership was defined by delegates as using their own unique experience to lead and develop new solutions. It was also described as not being tied to the tried and true methods but adapt and be receptive to the needs of those you intend to influence.

Delegates were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements regarding conference activities and opportunities. Table 2, on the next page, shows they all agreed or strongly agreed that the conference taught them how to apply leadership skills to their college experience. Delegates were least agreeable that they were provided opportunities to get to know other delegates. Additionally, students could elaborate on any of their ratings and 28 wrote a comment. Many of the comments were positive, as delegates found conference lessons about leadership applicable to the rest of their college experience. Over one-third shared that they would have liked more opportunities to get to know the other delegates pre conference, especially in a social, casual format. Some indicated they would have liked a more detailed conference itinerary earlier to better plan for the conference events.

<b>The MSC Spencer Leadership Conference...</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2019 Mean (sd) (n=32)</b>	<b>2018 Mean (sd) (n=34)</b>
<b>Taught me how to apply my leadership skills to my college experience</b>	63%	38%	--	--	3.63 (.70)	3.47 (.62)
<b>Provided valuable pre-conference events</b>	44%	53%	3%	--	3.41 (.56)	*
<b>Provided adequate communication about conference activities and requirements prior to the trip</b>	47%	44%	9%	--	3.38 (.66)	3.21 (.88)
<b>Provided ample time to reflect on pre- conference events.</b>	47%	41%	13%	--	3.34 (.70)	3.12 (.84)
<b>Provided opportunities to get to know other delegates</b>	41%	44%	16%	--	3.25 (.72)	*

Table 2: Overall Conference Experience  
\*not asked

When asked about the effectiveness of the small group leaders and small groups in helping to prepare for the conference, 48% of the 31 delegates who responded found them very effective, 34% reported them as effective, 16% said they were somewhat effective, and no one reported that they were ineffective (Mean=3.32/4.0, sd=.75). This rating was higher than last years' rating (Mean=2.61/4.0, sd=.86, n=33). Furthermore, delegates could write in an explanation of their response, and 32 wrote a comment. Many comments were complementary of their small group leaders, who they thought effectively, facilitated their group, asked questions to prompt reflection and help break the ice between delegates. The delegates also said the small group discussion topics were meaningful, and helped them understand the MSC Spencer pillars, but thought the discussions would be more comfortable if they knew their fellow delegates better, and met longer or more often.

Respondents were asked to identify which speaker's discussion of leadership resonated with them the most and the least. Of the 31 who commented nearly half of the delegates indicated Jeff Schiefelbein discussion of leadership resonated the most. Other speakers mentioned included Dr. Chris Dowdy, Dr. Weir, Nick Miller and the TFA speaker. Alternatively, there were 30 comments provided for the speaker who resonated the least with the delegates, including Dr. Rodney Hill, The Big Event creator, the first speaker from UT Southwestern, workers at Texas A&M, Alvarez and Marsal.

When asked to rate their overall experience during the MSC Spencer Leadership Conference, 84% of the delegates rated their experience as excellent and 16% selected the above average rating (Mean= 4.84/5.0, sd=.37, n=31). Last year 59% of the delegates reported their experience as excellent and 41% said their experience was above average (Mean=4.59/5.0, sd=.50, n=34). Like last year, none of the delegates rated their overall experience as average, below average, or poor. Anyone who rated the conference below average or poor were provided space to explain their ratings. None selected these response options, but some wrote comments such as N/A and one stated that some speakers did not resonate, since he or she was more business.

Delegates were asked to provide any suggestions to improve the conference and 31 respondents shared their ideas. Delegates suggested that they would like more time (both structured and casual) to get to know other delegates prior to the conference and during more small group interactions on conference. During the conference, delegates suggested including more speakers with different professional backgrounds, like the arts or engineering. A few recommended recruiting more diverse delegates, and include more reflection time at conference.

## **Background**

According to the organization's website, (<http://spencer.tamu.edu/>) MSC Spencer is a conference "that seeks to provide a unique opportunity to sophomores to enhance personal leadership skills in the pursuit of life long excellence in diverse environments." The MSC Spencer Leadership Conference was held in Dallas, TX on February 15 - 17, 2019, and during the conference, delegates attended programs and discussions featuring leaders in business, industry, education, and public service. They also participate in small group discussions prior to the conference. This is the 10th year that Student Life Studies has worked with MSC Spencer to assess this conference; the last time was in 2018.

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