

Memorial Student Center Fall Leadership Conference August 2021

Purpose of Assessment

The 69th Annual Memorial Student Center (MSC) Fall Leadership Conference (FLC), themed *Harnessing Happiness to Lead with Success*, was held August 24 through August 26, 2021. Student leaders (delegates) attending the conference were surveyed to assess their experiences at the conference, including listening to various speakers, participating in group discussions, and opportunities to network with other student leaders, former students, faculty, and staff. This is the 20th year MSC FLC has worked with Student Life Studies to assess their conference.

Method and Sample

The survey was created using PaperSurvey.io[®], a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. It contained 18 questions; 13 questions were quantitative, and five were qualitative. The data were analyzed using SPSS[®], a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel[®]. Fifty-three students received the survey at the end of the conference and 52 completed the survey, yielding a 98% response rate, which is a 4% higher response rate than last year.

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 FLC staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the delegates and conference. They are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- Delegates seemed to have a positive experience at the MSC Fall Leadership Conference. They seemed to appreciate the time and opportunity to network with other student leaders, faculty, and former students during the conference and gained information from the speakers and focus groups to take back to their organizations. However, it seems many would like to have a more diverse population and more Hispanic participants.
- The leadership may want to consider conducting the event at a date that does not coincide with Howdy Week. Delegates would prefer to participate in the event if it is held before Howdy Week or sometime about 2-3 weeks after the start of the semester. Some also suggested shortening the time over which the conference is held.

Results

Results include frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (sd) for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. 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. All tables are listed in descending order for frequency percentage or mean of the 2021 data. Comparisons will be made to previous years where applicable.

The first question, in a check-all-that-apply format, asked delegates how they heard about MSC FLC. Table 1 demonstrates that this year most of the delegates found out about MSC FLC from their organization advisors, similar to previous years. There was an increase in students learning about MSC FLC through former delegates and friends, but a decrease in those who heard about the conference through e-mail and MSC FLC staff.

How did you hear about MSC FLC? (Check all that apply)	2021 Percent (n=52)	2020 Percent (n=52)	2019 Percent (n=49)	2017 Percent (n=71)	2016 Percent (n=75)
Student Organization Advisor	77%	71%	74%	75%	68%
E-mail	23%	25%	20%	28%	24%
Former Delegates	17%	8%	25%	13%	20%
Friend	15%	10%	16%	14%	10%
MSC FLC Staff	14%	19%	22%	17%	16%
Previously attended MSC FLC	10%	10%	10%	10%	11%

Table 1- MSC FLC Marketing

Delegates were asked their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about their enhanced understanding of the focus of the speakers' presentations. As noted in Table 2, delegates strongly agreed that the speaker's presentations included the discussion of leadership. The fewest delegates agreed that they could identify with one or more speakers.

MSC Fall Leadership Conference Experiences: Speakers	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n=52]	2020 Mean (sd) [n=49]
The speakers discussed leadership themes well.	67%	33%	--	--	--	4.67 (.47)	4.37 (.65)
Participants were able to identify with one or more speakers.	56%	36%	6%	2%	--	4.46 (.71)	4.43 (.62)

Table 2- Speakers

Delegates were then asked to list their favorite speaker. Of the 48 respondents, a majority responded with 'Kayla Lyons'. Other speakers famous among respondents included Barry Hammond, Colonel Ruth, and Ross Bjork.

Respondents were asked their level of agreement or disagreement with statements regarding their experience participating in the focus groups during the conference. As noted in Table 3, on the next page, delegates were most favorable about their focus groups' inclusive nature and their constructive discussion. Although still positive, like in previous years the delegates were least positive about there being adequate time for focus groups.

MSC Fall Leadership Conference Experiences: Focus Groups	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n=51]	2020 Mean (sd) [n=43]	2019 Mean (sd) [n=49]
The discussion during my focus group was constructive and inclusive.	73%	21%	6%	--	--	4.67 (.59)	4.58 (.59)	4.92 (.28)
My focus group further explored the FLC Theme this year.	59%	35%	4%	--	2%	4.49 (.76)	4.49 (.63)	4.94 (.24)
There was adequate time for focus groups.	49%	88%	8%	4%	--	4.33 (.79)	‡	4.67 (.59)

Table 3- Focus Group Experience
(‡ question not in the survey)

When asked about one thing that participants learned from their focus group that they would take with them, many responded with statements pointing towards team building, the 3 C's (calm, confident, and clear communication), escaping one's comfort zone, personal motivation, etc. Please refer to the attached file to read all responses.

When asked to select which focus group session they found most valuable, the 51 delegates most often selected focus group session 2 (24%). As for the remaining sessions, sessions 3, 4, and 5 were each chosen by 16% of the respondents, while sessions 7, 6, and 1 were selected by 14%, 10%, and 6% delegates respectively. Delegates were then asked to share any additional comments about the focus groups; 30 responded and many complimented specific leaders, and others indicated that they found the discussion and reflection of the groups helpful in getting to know one another and the focus group leaders.

Students were also asked about their agreement or disagreement with several statements regarding their overall conference experiences. Their responses are in Table 4 below. Delegates were less positive about their experiences than in previous years, although their ratings of those experiences were in the same order as previous years. MSC FLC was held virtually in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and several questions were not applicable that year.

MSC Fall Leadership Conference Experiences	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
I had ample opportunities to network with other student leaders.	62%	35%	4%	--	--	4.58 (.75) [52]	†	4.76 (.43) [49]
I will take back what I learned to my organization.	64%	27%	10%	--	--	4.54 (.67) [52]	†	4.82 (.70) [49]
The conference theme helped me grow as a leader.	54%	31%	15%	--	--	4.38 (.75) [52]	4.45 (.67) [42]	4.57 (.57) [49]
I had ample opportunities to network with former students.	50%	33%	15%	2%	--	4.31 (.81) [52]	†	4.45 (.70) [49]
I had ample opportunities to network with faculty and staff.	48%	44%	8%	--	--	4.40 (.63) [52]	†	4.41 (.67) [49]

Table 4- Conference Experiences
(† question not in the survey)

Delegates were asked if they had any suggestions regarding a better date and time for MSC FLC. Most respondents indicated that they would prefer to have MSC FLC in the week prior to Howdy Week or somewhere around those dates but not during Howdy Week.

Next, delegates were asked how much they would be willing to pay for an in-person conference providing food, overnight housing, transportation, and activities. One-third (33%) indicated that they would like to pay between \$76 and \$100, and 31% indicated they would like to pay between \$51 and \$75. Almost one-quarter (23%) responded between \$26 and \$50. Hardly any delegates (2%) indicated not paying anything for the in-person event. These results indicate that participants were willing to spend higher than they indicated in the last year's conference.

Lastly, delegates were asked to share any additional comments about the overall conference. Many of the 34 comments were complimentary, saying that the experience was great. Many indicated having an informative experience and liked engaging with the university administration. Some also responded with appreciation for the networking opportunities provided at the event. Others suggested having more diversity in the representation of the participations and having more a Hispanic population at the event.

Background

The Memorial Student Center (MSC) Fall Leadership Conference (FLC) is an annual event intended to foster the development of leadership and interpersonal skills in student leaders across campus. The conference occurs before the fall semester begins; this year's conference was held from August 24th through August 26th, 2021. According to the organization's website (<http://flc.tamu.edu>), MSC FLC "...unites student leaders and cultivates leadership skills through interactive programs and speakers. Students, staff and former students gather to focus on personal growth while learning from each other and having a great time." Program outcomes for the conference included giving new student leaders the opportunity to network with other leaders, staff, administrators, and former students and learn about mentorship.

Project Details

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources, and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, division staff and student leaders can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

To work with Student Life Studies for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

Report prepared for: Jenna Donnelly, MSC Fall Leadership Conference
Report prepared on: March 14, 2022
Report written by: Adit Sanghani and Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies
Analysis prepared by: Robert Tirso, Ph.D. and Judith Barrera, Student Life Studies
Survey created by: Barbara Schumacher, Student Life Studies