The NACADA Region 1 Conference was held at the Saratoga Hilton in Saratoga Springs, NY.

In a very challenging fiscal year, we met our budget goal of 275 conference attendees and had an actual attendance of 278. Given the travel bans and restrictions placed on many of Region One’s largest institutions, I consider this very good fortune. I believe the additional advance marketing and publicity via email and our region newsletter helped tremendously. Several of these reminders emphasized the professional development value of the conference, I believe that is a considerable strength in our organization and we should continue to promote it.

We met our room block with the hotel very early on. The block rate of $119 was extremely reasonable for the location and quality of the hotel. Room pick-ups are summarized in the following table.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contracted</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>305</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pick-up</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>387</td>
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Initial feedback on the quality and variety of sessions offered at the conference was good. However, unfortunately, pre-conference workshops had very low attendance this year. I believe this is due in some part to budget but is more affected by the timing of the workshops. In previous years, pre-cons were offered after lunch, allowing attendees travel time in the morning. With our recently expanded schedule, pre-conferences were moved to the morning, requiring people to spend an extra night at the hotel if they did not live near enough to drive in early. It is worth considering adjusting the schedule again when looking at the available number of break-out rooms at future conference sites. With more proposals coming into the conference, it may be necessary to have at least 7 or 8 possible breakout rooms for each session. The New to NACADA luncheon was quite successful but the presentation at the event should be altered to suit the size of the group. Breaking into smaller groups by state and responsibility turned out to be difficult. The program for the business luncheon on Thursday was not well attended. Most participants left immediately after finishing their meal which was a disappointment. It might be beneficial to consider spreading the raffle items over several meals and to advertise that to encourage people to hang in for the program.

The conference facility at the Saratoga Hilton was excellent. The banquet and event staff were very accommodating and the session rooms were maintained fastidiously throughout the conference. There was good variety in the menu options though the expense limited our choices based on our budget. We used an emailed meals survey for the first time this year to gauge the attendance at meals and give the hotel a more accurate number in advance. This was extremely successful and saved us a lot of money while still meeting our minimum order in the contract. The only event we under ordered for was the opening reception hors-d’oeuvres and the hotel was able to replenish. We opted for a cash bar at the reception this year, which is a change from years past when we gave out drink tickets, and I heard no
complaints from participants. The program schedule and at-a-glance provided clear description of what meals were included, described continental and buffet breakfasts, and noted the cash bar at the reception. This information was available very early on the conference website and I believe that helped prepare people for what to expect.

Given that the conference is early in March again next year, availability and updating of advance information on the web will be essential. I received dozens of emails from people requesting information about the conference months in advance of our finalizing the schedule, registration information and session information. I would recommend that a tentative conference at a glance be posted for 2010 soon after the summer planning meeting and updates made regularly. The Region 1 Facebook or Linked-in groups might be useful for this as well as the newsletter and other regional publications. All avenues of publicity should be taken advantage of.

Audio/visual services were contracted through the hotel and were very expensive. Once again, the conference committee pulled together LCD projectors from their campuses to share which saved us more than a thousand dollars. I expect this will have to be a continuing practice. We were able to negotiate some of the cost of equipment because one of our days ended at noon. The A/V services discounted the equipment costs for that day, but only because we asked.

We welcomed two vendors to the conference this year, Blue Eon Solutions and Student Tracker. Their products were a good fit with our population and they were happy with the traffic they saw from conference attendees being located next to the registration area.

Volunteer services were again coordinated with the help of a survey monkey allowing volunteers to indicate in advance when and for what they wanted to volunteer. As a result, sessions had liaisons, the registration and hospitality areas were well covered throughout the conference and were the hub of conference activity. To accommodate all the different activities and information available in this area, at least 6 skirted tables and probably 8 tables should be requested.

Considerations for future conferences should include a specific resources area for attendees, perhaps a separate table area for people to leave position openings, presenters to leave extra materials, sign boards for people to link up for meals, etc.

Mary Fraser