Final Report

NACADA Region 10 Conference

May 20-22, 2014

Summary

Our conference had a total of 183 participants, most of whom were from Region 10, but we also had representation from 12 states outside of the region. At registration we asked the people from outside the region why they had chosen to come to this conference, and some said it was the location, while others said it was the timing (late May) that was more convenient with their semester schedules.

We had two pre-conference workshops (other than the traditional First-Time Attendees); one was on Qualitative Assessment and the other was on Difficult Conversations with Students. Both sessions were full, with 20 and 30 attending each, respectively. Our First-Time Attendees session was extremely well-attended, with about 35 participants. At the welcome reception the first evening, we featured a cowboy poet who entertained the group with some stories about life in the West.

In terms of the concurrent sessions, we had 32 scheduled over the day and a half, covering a variety of topics (see enclosed conference program). We were able to feature five exhibitors, all of whom reported having great conversations with attendees and they said they thought it was a good use of their time.

Our featured keynote speaker, ice climber Jim Davidson, was well-received – the feedback we got was that his story kept people on the edges of their seats, and that he was also able to tie his message back into the work of advisors well. Patty did a lot of work to get him to come, and while he was quite expensive, we think (based on the feedback) that he was worth it. A couple people told us that they get tired of always hearing from people in academia who quote research and statistics, and that Mr. Davidson was a welcome change of scenery, so to speak.

It wasn't all work and no play, however; we arranged a trip to Enclosure, an indoor climbing wall gym, which was attended by 17 people. Most participants had never climbed before and they enjoyed putting into practice the lessons on resilience and persistence from the keynote speaker. They all said it was a fun and unique side-trip opportunity.

For the Best of Region vote, we provided each attendee with a ballot that listed all the presentations; they were asked to choose their 3 favorites. We tallied them up at the end and the winner (by one vote) was “It’s Not What You Say But How You Say It: Using Nonverbal Communication to Ascend to New Heights”, by Denée Janda, Kristi Barrowclough, Megan Perkins and Debbie O’Neill from the University of Colorado-Boulder. It was a very close race; they won by one vote, and two other presentations were only 2-3 votes behind.
What worked, what didn’t work

What worked extremely well were the location and the hotel resort. Jackson is a huge tourist draw and this paid off for both our region and the hosting resort. Again, our out-of-region guests said they just wanted to come to Jackson, but we heard this from several people within the region as well. The Snow King resort was also a success because it is a beautiful facility staffed by friendly and knowledgeable people. The resort recently underwent a complete renovation and attendees were impressed with the quality. Snow King had reserved 70 rooms for the conference block, but ended up doubling the block due to demand, which pleased everyone! We visited the Snow King site in October 2013 to meet with event staff and to look at conference rooms; this was an action we found to be invaluable, especially since we don’t live in Jackson. We took photos of the rooms for breakout sessions, which we referred back to later when planning the sessions, and we also took photos of local scenery and landmarks that we posted to the Region 10 facebook page to entice people to come. We thought the ballot process for Best of Region worked well, especially listing all the conference sessions along with days/times for people to check their favorites. We had a pretty good return rate for these; the number of votes was 82.

There aren’t many things that didn’t work, to be honest! The only two snags we had were with the event staff’s BEOs (Banquet Event Orders) not being looked at closely enough, and with AV needs of presenters. Chrissy had reviewed the BEOs two weeks before the conference but didn’t compare them closely enough with the conference schedule – she missed that the exhibitors weren’t able to set up until Wednesday (they were expecting Tuesday), and that AV had not been prearranged for the pre-conference workshops. We were able to work out both problems with Snow King staff. A pair of presenters was upset because they claimed they had ordered speakers for their presentation (to show a video clip), but we were able to get the Snow King IT tech to get them fixed up in time for their presentation. One other snag that could not be foreseen was the lunch buffet – it was a make-your-own-sandwich buffet and that, combined with the large number of people, caused a very long line of very hungry people. The breakfast that morning had been a continental breakfast, and so people were already hungry; the long wait for lunch didn’t help. But Snow King responded by giving us two buffet lines for the next morning’s breakfast.

Recommendations

- Though it is less expensive, we recommend that regions skip continental breakfasts and pay a little bit more money for a better breakfast. Continental breakfasts typically do not provide any protein and are all carbohydrates. Today’s diners are more health-conscious and want a more healthful and filling breakfast. We offered a continental breakfast the morning of the buffet lunch and the two together resulted in some grouchy, hungry people.
- We strongly recommend a pre-planning visit to the conference site, especially when co-chairs do not live in the same community as the conference site. This on-the-ground info was very useful.
- We recommend that in the future all conference chairs communicate to presenters that screens, LCD projectors and extension cords will be provided, but any other AV needs must be provided by presenters. We ended up paying $30 for an audio card for a three-minute video clip!
- Lists of materials to bring should include duct tape for taping down cords, manila envelopes to give presenters their copies of evaluations, and thank-you notes for keynote speakers and/or conference staff (perhaps NACADA logo notes?).
- Co-chairs should be encouraged to stay an extra day after the conference for clean-up and to complete the final report – once you go back to the office, there is no time!
- It’s helpful to have a laptop in the registration office for tabulating the evaluation results; providing co-chairs with the zip drive that had all forms/materials on it was also good to have on hand.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Chrissy Renfro, co-chair

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Patty Pedersen, co-chair

5/27/14