Engineering-Wide Tailgate

2019 Event Assessment

Prepared by Bryce Holladay, Cedric Bernier, and Vinay Shah
Directed by Abhinav Raghunathan and Jimmy Du
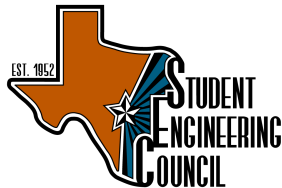*Marketing and Analytics Committee*

Table of Contents

Foreword

The Marketing and Analytics Committee (MAC) was created to centralize and standardize data collection of SEC events in order to ensure the fulfillment of SEC's mission. By compiling both quantitative and qualitative information about specific events and comparing this with past iterations of the event, we seek to provide useful context and advice to improve events in the future. Additionally, these reports can be used as a means to more effectively target future attendees of our events and ensure we are maximizing our impact on the Cockrell student body.

MAC's process is designed to be intimately connected with the planning and implementation of the event in order to ensure our analytics has proper context. We supervise planning meetings and task completion through our Airtable database and attend the event to collect feedback and field notes from all parties involved. A post-event audit meeting is conducted with the primary MALs to identify areas for improvement.

Summary of Data Sources for this Event

This report was compiled from several data streams. A sign-in form, distributed by QR code to those waiting in line for food, collected demographic information of attendees and the channel through which they heard about the event. Audits for Engineering Activities and Publicity MALs were used to gather qualitative feedback on operations. Quantitative information from our surveys was analyzed through our database for processing and identifying trends among the data. Our advice is also informed through feedback compiled from past and current event audits and day-of field notes and attendee interviews.

<u>Overview</u>

Summary

The Engineering-Wide Tailgate is an event hosted by the Engineering Activities Committee of SEC in the fall semester. This year, the event took place on the CPE lawn, a change from the 2018 iteration which took place in the EERC Atrium. The purpose of Engineering-Wide Tailgate is to encourage relationship building between engineering student organizations by facilitating a relaxing, social, and fun event in the context of UT football.

Logistics

Supplies for the event were purchased the morning of the event. The supply list and budget can be found here. During the event, attendees were able to visit a food and beverage station which included freshly cooked burgers and Amy's Ice Cream. Attendees could also participate in lawn games or enjoy their food and chat under tents away from the sun. EA MALs and partner members operated food, beverage, and entertainment stations.

Partnerships

This year's Engineering-Wide Tailgate was held in partnership with AICHE, ASCE, ASME, IEEE RAS, TxTPEG, and SGT, all of which provided supplies, worked at a station during the event, or did both. BMES and TBP were also partners but dropped out of partnership at the last second.

Key Contacts

Name	Position	Phone Number
Scott Brinen	Engineering Activities Director	713-820-0122
Sam LeBus	Engineering Activities Director	713-775-6262
Jacob Stokes	Engineering Activities MAL	832-361-0724
Padmashree Pandy	Engineering Activities MAL	469-544-2581
Sanjana Srinath	Engineering Activities MAL	512-775-9703
Tyler Kapadia	Engineering Activities MAL	762-524-2836
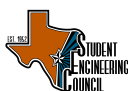
Key Findings

MAC has identified the following areas for growth:

1. **Planning**
   a. Begin event planning earlier and determine which tasks should receive priority and be completed first to ensure event success
   b. Reach out to corporate sponsors earlier, preferably before the start of the semester
   c. Better estimate attendance to prevent food from running out early

2. **Operations**
   a. Purchase food that can be prepared more quickly so that attendees are not kept waiting, which was the most common source of dissatisfaction
   b. Equipment needs to be accounted for and suitable for the scale of the event, potentially create a database within MAC to be distributed to committees chronicling common equipment used at events and how to acquire them
   c. Allow for more time to coordinate partner org volunteers, as well as designate roles to MALs in communicating with volunteers and attendees

3. **Financials**
   a. In light of a roughly 25% budget surplus, recommend being more generous in estimating attendance and purchasing food accordingly
   b. If budget concerns are a concern due to lack of corporate sponsorship, hot dogs could be purchased as a meal option that is cheaper per person and can be prepared faster than burgers
   c. More generously reimburse partner organizations (currently only reimbursed for propane usage), in the name of depreciation or grill cleaning, as an incentive to participate in future tailgates, as their cooperation fuels event success

4. **Marketing**
   a. Motivate partner orgs to be more invested in the event's success to increase the likelihood of high energy advertisement within their communication channels
   b. Increase social media presence, Facebook page was inactive, possibility of targeted Facebook advertising as a cheap option in light of the budget surplus

5. **Impact**
   a. Find ways for attendees to interact with each other rather than just people they already new
   b. Games were often underused, possibly due to their position near the ledge of the CPE lawn, consider moving these activities to a more appropriate location

	Planning	Operations	Financials	Marketing	Impact
Rating	2	2	3	2	2

Analysis

Planning Outcomes

Internal Logistics

The planning process began 2 weeks before the event. The planning process involved a big picture discussion with the team, followed by individual meetups between the MALs in charge. They then processed what was discussed into a master plan template, communicated the information to the other MALs via Slack, and then updated the task list in Airtable. Airtable was the means used for task and project management.

From the audit and MAL feedback, it seems the planning process itself was useful and productive. However, it seems that not all of the members were familiar with how to use Airtable. This ended up slowing down some tasks. In the future, MAC should offer better hands on training to MALs to use this software.

According to feedback from the MALs, there were a few places that the internal planning of this event could have been made better. One very important piece of feedback was to determine what tasks will be necessary to complete the event successfully. From these tasks, create a flowchart with tasks that can be parallelized and those that must be done sequentially, including lead times for each task. Ideally, such a flowchart would offer more insight into which tasks are most important to finish first in order to be ready before the beginning of the event. Some tasks, such as determining what equipment partner orgs would bring, and what their responsibilities were, were not determined until later in the process (9/19/19), giving them only 2 days until the event began. Having a plan ready beforehand will give a better idea as to which tasks need to be prioritized.

A corporate sponsor was not found in time, given only 2 weeks to do so. The lack of a corporate sponsor meant that there was a smaller budget, which meant that some "attractive" foods and activities could not be funded. In the future, we recommend looking for a sponsor much earlier in the process. It could be done at the beginning of the year, or during the summer. However, the lack of funds did not hurt the spirit of the event. The Spring Cookout style of the event was a lot of fun, and many students and partner orgs felt that it created a better sense of community. In the

future, more funds could help expand upon this model to provide more equipment, like grills and fryers, and could also provide some more attractions like live-music.

Event planning was slowed down by the uncertainty of the game time. In the future, we recommend that there are multiple plans ready to tackle this uncertainty, and not to be slowed down by this detail.
Event planning could also be made better by having a central database of all the resources that SEC uses often for events. Instead of having to run to different directors and have inefficient communication, it would be beneficial to be able to look up what resources one needs to use for an event in that database, and plan to acquire them as needed.

Running out of food is a good sign that the estimated number of attendees was accurate, but running out of food early leaves a bad taste in their mouths. As was noted by the MALs, there were not enough fries ordered for the estimated lower bound of attendees. In the future, better estimation should be done to ensure enough food not only for the other students attending the event, but also for our partner orgs and volunteers.

What really made this event come together was the strong communication between the Directors, the MALs involved in the planning process, and the other MALs assisting the event. Without the level of internal communication they had, the event may not have been as successful. Having clear internal communication was very vital.

External Outreach
While the plans and emails to the partner orgs were made fairly early, there was not enough action taken on following up with them until later. There was not enough communication with the partner orgs until just 2 days before the event (9/19/19). Figuring out which orgs had what equipment, and keeping them more involved in the planning process would make day-of execution easier. It would also foster a better relationship between SEC and the partner orgs in general. In particular, figuring out which orgs took care of which food stations, and what their roles were during the event would allow for less confusion.

Operational Outcomes

Setup
The event took 1.5 hours to set up. Most of the set up involved having the partner orgs set up their tables, and equipment. The gaga ball pit should have been found earlier and ended up taking more time than necessary day-of. The carts used for transporting the materials were inadequate, and is something that SEC should look into for future events. As noted above, having a database

for SEC with a list of often used resources and their locations would help planning for these events.

Day-Of Logistics

Thanks to EA MAL Jacob Stokes' great idea, the sign-ins were parallelized using QR codes and allowed students to get to their food faster. Unfortunately, the burgers ended up taking about 15-20 mins, which is about twice as long as last year's burgers took. This lead to many people standing in line forever, and some dissatisfaction was noted in the on-site interviews. But many of the students appreciated being offered drinks while they were standing in line.

The partner orgs felt like they were treated much better than Spring Cookout. They appreciated being checked on often, and being given drinks to cool off. There was some confusion day-of, since the people in charge of using the deep fryer didn't know how to. Thankfully, one of the MALs had previous experience with a deep fryer and taught the others how to use it. In the future, sufficient time should be given before the event to teach the volunteers how to use the equipment.

Burgers ran out 1.5 hours into the event, with 1.5 hours still left to go. One of the MALs took initiative to go purchase more burgers for the students and partner orgs to eat. While this was an excellent decision in order to ensure everyone enjoyed and got food, it was on oversight on the planning process and better estimates can be made in the future for the amount of food needed.

According to MAL feedback, it was noted that there could have been better assigned roles day-of. When partner orgs and volunteers asked questions, it was unsure as to who had the concrete answer. For the future, we could assign roles for the day of, and any questions of a certain type will be handled by that person. This will mean less scrambling, and a better event.

MAL Perspective

The MALs involved in planning the event did an excellent job given the time they had. Of course, there is always room for improvement, and many of the MALs feel that they could have definitely done better. Jacob Stokes' comments in particular were very insightful and valuable.

Financial Outcomes

The event came in well under budget. Of a $1000 budget, costs were recorded at $757.72, shown below.

Engineering Wide Tailgate					
Date	Vendor	Cost	Items Purchased	hod of Purch	Who Made Purc
9/20/19	Sam's	$166.11	Food and stuff	Procard	Scott
9/20/19	Target	$23.67	Supplies	Reiumbursen	Scott
9/21/2019	Sam's	$348.08	Fresh Food and stuff	Procard	Scott
9/21/2019	Amy's Ice Cream	$95.26	Ice Cream	Reiumbursen	Scott
9/21/2019	HEB	$92.41	More food	Procard	Scott
9/16/2019	OfficeMax	$31.99	Poster	Procard	Scott
Budget	#REF!	$1,000			
Total Spent	$757.52				
Amount Ren	#REF!	$242.48			

As expected, the primary expense was food, which included burgers, toppings, ice cream, drinks, and other snacks. Excluding the food that was purchased during the event, only about ⅔ of the budget was used, so purchasing more food ahead of time would have been a good idea. Many MAL's on the committee felt that they were pressured by not having a corporate supporter; it is unclear why this is so as the event had a $250 surplus. Other options for the future could be explored for reducing spending, such as using hot dogs (which are generally cheaper per person than burgers).

Orgs were also only reimbursed for their propane usage, which I think SEC can strive do more since they were willing to help out so much (and it wouldn't have happened without them). Consider giving extra money in the name of depreciation or grill cleaning to make orgs more willing to help out at other events on in future years.

Altogether, the event came in well under budget, which was great for SEC's coffers. We suggest either widening the scope of the event or decreasing the budget in the future as a result.

Marketing Outcomes

Facebook, poster, word-of-mouth, and student org advertising were used to market the event. Most of the attendees either heard about the event from an SEC member or a volunteer org member. While SEC members weren't able to circuit orgs to advertise the event, several orgs shared it in their internal communication, primarily the ones that volunteered. We definitely

suggest making the member orgs feel more invested in the event, which would make them more likely to advertise it with high energy to their members. Emphasizing student org location played well into attendance, as students came out on their way to the game. Publicity reused the same poster from last year as well, whether this impacted the public perception of the event is unknown. Communication between EA and Pub was seamless, due to the simple nature of the event marketing-wise. The poster in EER seemed to be successful, catching the eyes of students entering the building. The Facebook event was not active, according to Pub, which could be due to fewer MALs on the event to share with friends. We suggest prioritizing social media sharing in future (I believe in past years, we've used targeted Facebook ads which are actually pretty cheap).

For more detailed visualization of Marketing Outcomes, see Appendix.

Impact Outcomes

Student org members and friends of SEC were the primary attendees, as noted above. For these groups, however, the event helped build their internal senses of community. From the MAL perspective, the event helped build the Cockrell community by bringing students together across engineering. From our perspective, however, we saw a lot of students interacting with people they already knew. Volunteers got to meet each other, especially the folks grilling, but students that didn't know many people coming in tended to stay alone or leave quickly. We suggest finding ways for those groups to be engaged. It appeared that groups that came out had a great time.. At first, the games were underused, but seemed to be utilized more towards the end of the event. Students from a variety of majors and years showed up to the events.

Overall, students were able to hang out in a casual environment and get food. The event served those purposes well.

Conclusion

Planning

In conclusion, here is what went well: MALs Jacob and Tyler took excellent charge of leading the event. They had the right ideas of setting up a project plan, and set good deadlines. Their internal communication with the Directors and the other MALs involved were crucial to getting tasks done on time. Planning to buy food over the span of two trips reduced the stress on the MALs and allowed some room for error. The new burgers tasted great, and the students loved them. The "Spring Cookout" style of the event was a lot more enjoyable and seemed to foster a stronger sense of community. The partner orgs were contacted early, and the info-session helped clear up a lot of confusion.

Here is what could be done better: Planning began 2 weeks before the event date, which made it difficult to obtain a corporate sponsor, which in turn reduced the funds available for the event. While the committee did not struggle to keep the event within their budget, having a corporate sponsor would allow for more attractions to be afforded. A live-band among other things could create a more fun atmosphere for the students. Planning was difficult since the game schedules were not released until later. In the future, it would be easier to figure out the day-of logistics later on but begin planning general things like which orgs need to be reached out to for partnerships, and what equipment would be necessary for the event. Working backwards will help create better deadlines for tasks to be completed, so there is less to be done last minute. The estimates for event attendees and the food could use optimization. While it was excellent that food ran out, it was not good running out of food mid-event. Better estimation of food demand should be done in the future. A common issue among the students was the wait time to get the food. The new burgers took 15-20 minutes to cook, and led to very long lines and wait-times. In the future, it could be better to have burgers that come out faster so that students have to wait less. Partner orgs should be brought into the planning process earlier to allow sufficient time for drop-outs and other unseen circumstances. Setting up meetings with them earlier, either 1-on-1 or with all the orgs together will create a good communication channel. Outlining goals with them and planning clearly will create a more inclusive environment and reduce any miscommunications.

Overall, the planning process was decent, but can always have room for improvement.

Operations

Operationally, some equipment was not accounted for before the event (gaga ball) or was inadequate for the scale of the event (transportation carts). The set-up time was approximately 1.5 hours and included setting up partner orgs and their equipment. Partner organizations appreciated being checked in on and offered water, and noted that they felt like they were being

treated well. Sign-ins were parallelized using QR codes, which removed signing in as a potential bottleneck. Though this wasn't clearly visible, as many people waited in the sign-up line for the food to be cooked, we recommend continuing this method of sign-ins in future iterations of this event, and recommend parallel QR code sign-ins to events with large turnouts. MALs were committed to the success of the event, and acted decisively when things didn't go according to their plan, with one MAL taking the initiative to purchase more burgers when it became clear that they would run out in the middle of the event.

Finances

The event spending resulted in a roughly $250 surplus, despite the lack of a corporate sponsor. We believe this surplus may have resulted from cautious spending in fear of going over budget without a corporate sponsor's support. Future iterations of the Engineering Tailgate should look at past attendance and event spending to better estimate how much and what kind of food should be bought. Running out of food early or buying higher quality food that creates bottlenecks in preparation isn't ideal, and was one of the most common sources of dissatisfaction amongst those in attendance.

Marketing

The bulk of attendees heard about the event from a friend, were an SEC member, or were a member of an org partnering on the event. As such, MAC recommends getting partner organizations engaged earlier and getting them more invested, increasing the likelihood of them advertising the event in their communication channels, which occurred with some of the volunteer orgs this year. Social media presence, specifically on the Facebook event, was inactive. It may be useful to reevaluate the effectiveness of Facebook events of advertising for the tailgate.

Impact

The event's purpose of fostering community among students in the Cockrell school was partially reached. The event offered an opportunity for SEC members and volunteer organizations to get to know one another. However, many attendees did not deviate from the social groups they came with. Many people that came in small groups or alone didn't engage in any of the activities, instead of just grabbing burgers then leaving. MAC recommends that future tailgates better engage students and promote the formation of new connections, rather than serving as a food grab.

Appendix