



Casino Night

2018 Event Assessment

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Marketing and Analytics Committee

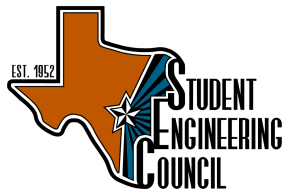


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Foreword

The Marketing and Analytics Committee (MAC) was created to centralize and standardize data collection about 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 engage in 3-4 planning meetings before the event 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 [ticket sales form](#) was filled out whenever an attendee purchased. This form collected the organization of the ticket seller, demographics of the ticket buyer, and the channel through which the buyer heard about the event. A [sign-in form](#), stationed at the top of the staircase on the EER entrance floor, collected general information and demographics about attendees during the actual event. A [post-event survey](#) was emailed out to all attendees using their emails provided on the sign-in form and collected feedback on specific parts of the event, including satisfaction, organization, engagement, and expected next year attendance. An MAL [audit form](#) was also used to gather qualitative feedback on operations. Quantitative information from our surveys was analyzed through [our database](#) for processing and to identify trends among the data. Our advice is also informed from feedback compiled from past and current event audits, [notes](#) about the event planning process taken during committee meetings, and [day-of field notes](#) and attendee interviews.



Overview

Summary

Casino Night is a charity event hosted by the Service Committee of SEC in the fall semester. This year was the second time this event was held since its inception in Fall 2017, with the intended goal of making this event an annual event. Its purpose is to provide a fun night where attendees can play poker and enjoy the “classy” social setting, while also raising money through ticket sales for donation to a chosen charity. This year, proceeds from Casino Night went to the Stop Abuse For Everyone (SAFE) Alliance charter school in Austin.

Logistics

Purchasing a ticket gives the attendant a \$10 buy-in for the poker games, and at the end of the night, attendants can exchange their chips for raffle tickets. During the event, there are several poker tables set up around the EERC Atrium. There is also a food station and a “mocktail” bar. There was a raffle station with the prizes on display above the atrium in the E-loft. There was also the chip station, where attendees can get their original poker chips as well as exchange their chips.

Partnerships

This year’s Casino Night event was partnered with Texas Sweethearts and Texas Blazers, though the majority of the responsibility was with SEC. SEC partnered with Texas Blazers for last year’s Casino Night as well. The responsibilities of the partner organizations were to help sell tickets for the event, in particular to non-engineering students, and provide volunteers on the day of the event.

Relevant Parties

For more information, please contact the 2018-2019 Service directors: Ana Ashrafi (214-471-8298) and Dhruv Soni (281-904-5008). The MALs serving on the subcommittee were Marc Sanchez (956-429-9140), Bryce Holladay (817-996-3326), Sean Nair (301-204-0756), Michael Nie (973-580-6481), Adam Halimi (214-668-0766), Ben Chow (281-889-0721), Lauren Gaggini (214-598-8081), and Nyle Ashraf (832-628-1676).



Key Contacts

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Key Findings

MAC has identified the following areas for growth:

1. Planning

- a. Reach out to big companies for raffle prize donations early
- b. Improve tabling to better advertise and explain the event
- c. Establish a speaker circuit schedule and follow it
- d. Better incorporate / include partner organizations

2. Operations

- a. Have a plan ahead of the event on where to store the EERC furniture being moved out of the lobby
- b. Have more volunteers at the chip bank table, or have separate tables for giving out chips and for converting chips into raffle tickets
- c. Have more poker tables

3. Financials

- a. Make more financially efficient food purchases
- b. Be wary of marketing costs/flashy items (chocolate fountain)

4. Marketing

- a. Increase awareness for the charity cause, SAFE
- b. Improve outreach to non-engineering students

5. Impact

- a. Need to focus on gearing marketing more for the charity itself rather than an independent event so the cause is well known
- b. Most attendees were not aware that their ticket dues were going to help a special cause
 - This is mainly because Publicity did not put SAFE on the event publicity or tickets and did not realize this until it was too late to update the marketing materials

	Planning	Operations	Financials	Marketing	Impact
Rating					

Analysis

Planning Outcomes

Internal Logistics

The planning for Casino Night began two months before the event date. Despite an early start to the planning process, it appears that a lot of decisions and item ordering still occurred at the last minute. From the audit and MAL feedback, decisions in particular seemed to take longer than many people felt they should have, pushing back the item ordering until last minute. This was due to the committee focusing on getting the donations for raffle prizes done first, ignoring the other tasks. Because of this, the supplies and next big steps were rushed.

Many of the MALs expressed discontent with the tabling performance. It appeared that tabling really only served as a method for those who already knew about the event to purchase tickets, when instead it should focus more on advertising and explaining the event to those who do not know. Potential ideas include having some of the raffle prizes on display, having a slideshow with pictures of previous Casino Nights.

External Outreach

Many popular, expensive companies were willing to donate items for the raffles but required requests at least 3 months in advance. For the next Casino Night, donation outreach should occur much earlier than October if more “impressive” raffle prizes are desired, though it may be debatable how much this actually affects the attendance rates.

In the future, it would be helpful if SEC Publicity provided marketing to the partner orgs and other colleges, since Publicity already had marketing prepared and there was a huge lack in that area this year.

There were issues with the partner organizations, the Sweethearts and Blazers, who did not participate in the planning process. If more partner organization involvement is desired, the partner orgs should be treated as actual partners and brought on-board earlier, instead of just serving as another venue for ticket sales. However, we should be aware of “having too many cooks in the kitchen” and the difficulty of coordinating so many moving parts across 3 organizations. The best option is probably to have SEC maintain primary responsibility of the planning and logistics, and better outline and clarify the responsibilities for the partner orgs.

We worked with the Sweethearts/Blazers because it was a way to support our non-engineering marketing and because we needed extra volunteers to help run the tables during the event. Because Casino Night is marketed as a “social event,” it was believed that social orgs would make good partners and help convey this image. Blazers were specifically chosen likely



due to the past history of partnering with them last year, though there were mixed opinions on how helpful/reliable they were. The original partnership with Blazers likely came about due to a significant overlap in members in both SEC and Blazers. Sweethearts were added on this year, since a girl spirit group was wanted. On the actual day of, Sweethearts were helpful in volunteering, while Blazers had their “New Guy Event” and could not help volunteer. The partners themselves were cooperative and helpful, although they needed more clarification on their responsibilities.

A potential idea for next year is compartmentalizing the responsibilities more - e.g. Sweethearts could have been responsible for arranging the prize baskets, Blazers could have been responsible for getting the poker tables done. Communication between the orgs took place in a new Slack workshop. Overall, there was significant confusion during the whole planning process between the orgs regarding the responsibilities and involvement. While the spirit groups were chosen as partners to help market the social aspect of the event, another option would be to partner with an organization that is passionate about the cause (e.g. Not On My Campus), which would help emphasize the charity aspect of the event.

Speaker circuiting and presenting about the event to different organizations’ meetings was inadequate for this year. In the future, a firm speaker schedule should be established before the event, as speaker circuiting is one of the best ways to reach students that SEC normally does not.

Despite the areas for improvement, the planning process was overall a lot more efficient and a lot more organized than last year, which was fairly chaotic given that it was the first year the event was held. The progress made this year, especially regarding the supply sheet created, will serve as a good foundation for the future years to come. In the future, the committee directors themselves should meet with the partner organization representatives to establish explicitly what the expected work divide will be. A joint planning document would be effective in allowing for joint planning and and accountability.

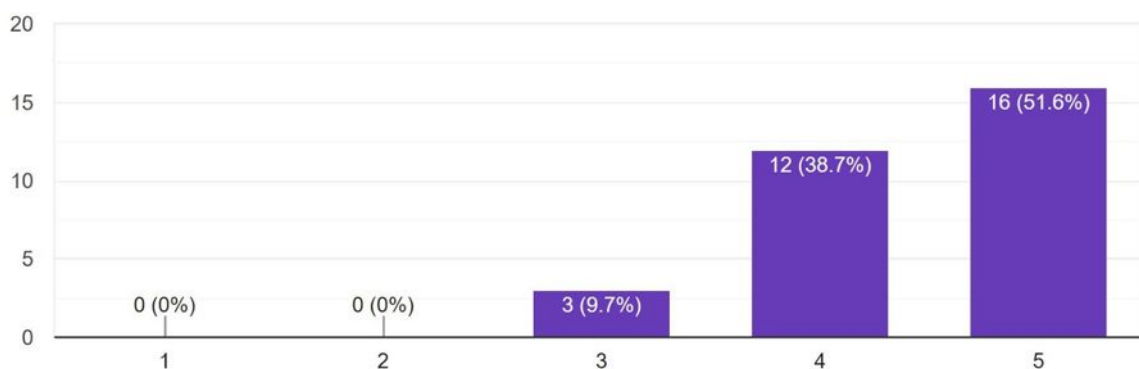


Operational Outcomes

Overall, MALs felt that the event ran smoothly the day of. Feedback from attendants after the event also supports this, as they rated the event an average of 88.4% on how organized it was. As documented in the [day-of responses](#), participants enjoyed the “variety of the finger foods” and were very engaged with the event, but cited “more tables” and a “larger variety of games” as potential improvements.

How organized was the event?

31 responses



Setup

There was significant setup required to transform the EERC into a suitable setting for Casino Night. This year, the setup began early enough in the day and had sufficient volunteers to have the setup complete on time, in comparison to last year, when the setup ran late past the start of the actual event. Having an initial floor plan to guide the setup helped with this.

There needs to be a meeting with the building manager, Susan, and/or Alyson beforehand to figure out where the furniture that is being moved needs to go. Substantial time and effort was wasted this year when the furniture had to be moved multiple times due to not knowing this information.

Day-Of Logistics

The bar and food tables were big hits and had no long lines during the night, which was again an improvement from last year. The volunteer stations were handled smoothly and skillfully. The photographers at the event successfully took a lot of great pictures, which is helpful for advertising the event going forward.

Despite the major day-of improvements over last year, there were still several issues that rose throughout the night. The biggest issue during the night was that the chip bank table, where chips were exchanged for raffle tickets and where people got more chips, was very crowded. In the future, more volunteers are needed for this job. Additionally, more space or a better arrangement to take advantage of the space used is needed for next year.

MAL Perspective

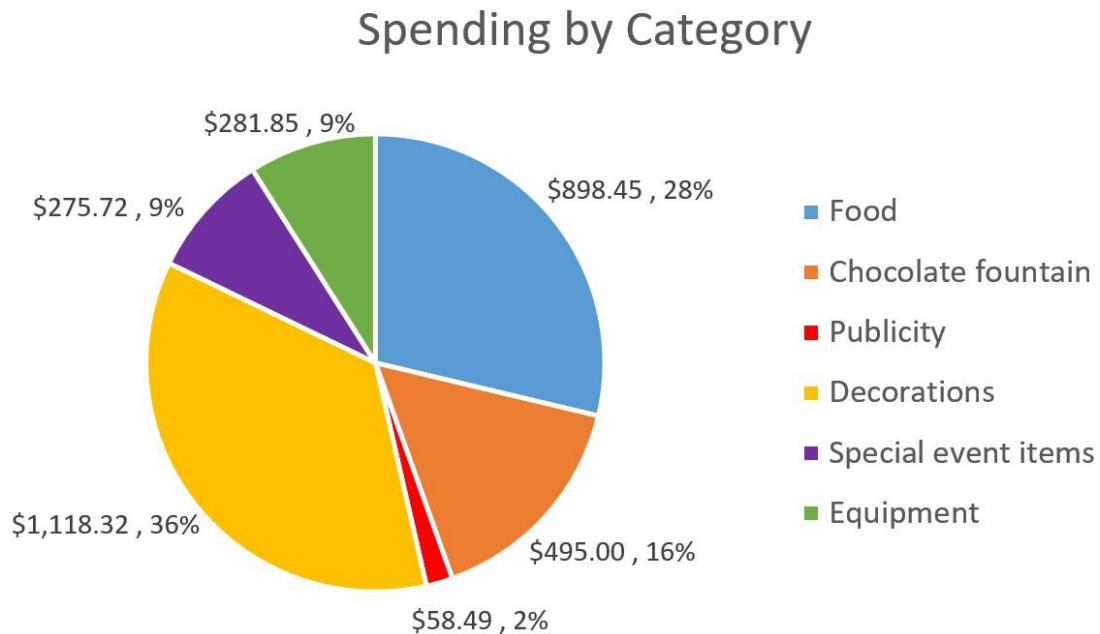
There is some discontinuity between what attendees felt about the event and what the MALs working on the event felt. The MALs working on the event felt that the purchased supplies, including poker chips and food, was sufficient for everyone. However, according to the post-event feedback survey, attendants only ranked their enjoyment of the food an average of 78.7% and many felt that more food was needed. The attendants' biggest complaint was that there was not enough poker tables to play on, while many of the MALs thought there were sufficient tables.

Other issues included that the EERC was still populated with students when setup began, making moving the furniture difficult. Students remained in the EERC throughout the event working, which distracted from the event. Despite having a floor plan for the poker tables and food stations, there was no plan on where to put the EERC furniture that was moved out of the way, which wasted a fair amount of time figuring out a non-fire-hazard location. Additionally, a few attendees came in through the back entrance along San Jacinto, which did not have a prompt to sign-in. However, this wasn't as much of an issue as expected, due to SEC volunteers watching the exit and directing these attendees up to the proper entrance.



Financial Outcomes

Cost Breakdown



This event was paid for entirely by SEC, with the exception of the raffle basket prizes, which were donations from local companies. SEC took on all of the finances because we did virtually all of the planning and were helped only on day-of operations by Blazers/Sweethearts. This event served as publicity for these partner organizations as well - as such, perhaps the financial burden should be split among the three organizations. Proceeds from the ticket sales (\$10 a person to attend) were donated to the chosen charity, SAFE alliance. The budget was \$3000, and \$3127.83 was spent. Casino Night 2017, by contrast, beat the budget of \$4000 by \$415.59 for a total of \$3684.41. Holistically, Casino Night 2017 was better at cost management but Casino Night 2018 was cheaper as a whole (though still over budget).

Serious thought should be given on whether or not the ticket price could be raised. Given that the tickets were all paid for electronically through Venmo, the ticket prices do not have to remain at convenient-for-cash \$5 increments. A small increase to \$12 would likely not deter many attendees and could make a sizeable increase in the final amount donated to the cause (~\$500). More data is needed to establish the optimal price point (so as to maximize profit without sacrificing participant numbers).

\$1,393 was spent on food and drink items, including \$495 on a chocolate fountain. Considering that many attendants felt there wasn't enough food at the event, next year the food



spending needs to be more efficient. While the chocolate fountain was an exciting addition, its net return is questionable. The SEC members working on this event strongly feel that it played a big role in marketing the event, though this claim is hard to evaluate.

While Casino Night 2018 did not achieve its budget goals, relative to Casino Night 2017 it was about \$500 cheaper and more efficient. In the future, however, there needs to be a larger effort to be more profitable, especially because there were several lines in the budget that could have been cut down.

Ticket Analysis

231 tickets were hypothetically sold ahead of time, with an additional 14 purchased at the event. 198 attendants signed in on the form. It is unknown if the difference in tickets sold versus attendants is due to people not attending after purchasing a ticket or due to people not signing in at the event, although, as mentioned previously, this may be due to the fact that one of the entrances was unaccounted for in that people who entered through the back likely did not sign in.

Combined, the Texas Sweethearts and Blazers sold a total of 16 tickets (6.9% of total ticket sales). Using an overall attendance of 245, the event cost an average of \$12.77 per person. Compared to other events, such as Cockrell Kick-Off (\$5-6 per person), Engineering Tailgate (\$5-6), and Freshman Case Comp (\$2), this event is almost 200% more expensive per person to hold.

While this event was only slightly over budget, many of the MALs expressed discontent over donating less than was spent on the event. \$2396.50 was deposited to Venmo, with a total of \$3000.50 donated. This is 95.9% of the total spent on the event, which is close to breaking even. Decorations constituted a majority (35.8%) of Casino Night spending, but this number may be reduced by reusing past decorations/looking for cheaper variants.

Future Suggestions

Looking forward, critically identifying areas of the budget to cut costs will be key. Some of the supplies will be able to be reused next year, such as the furniture and poker tops, which will help decrease the spending.

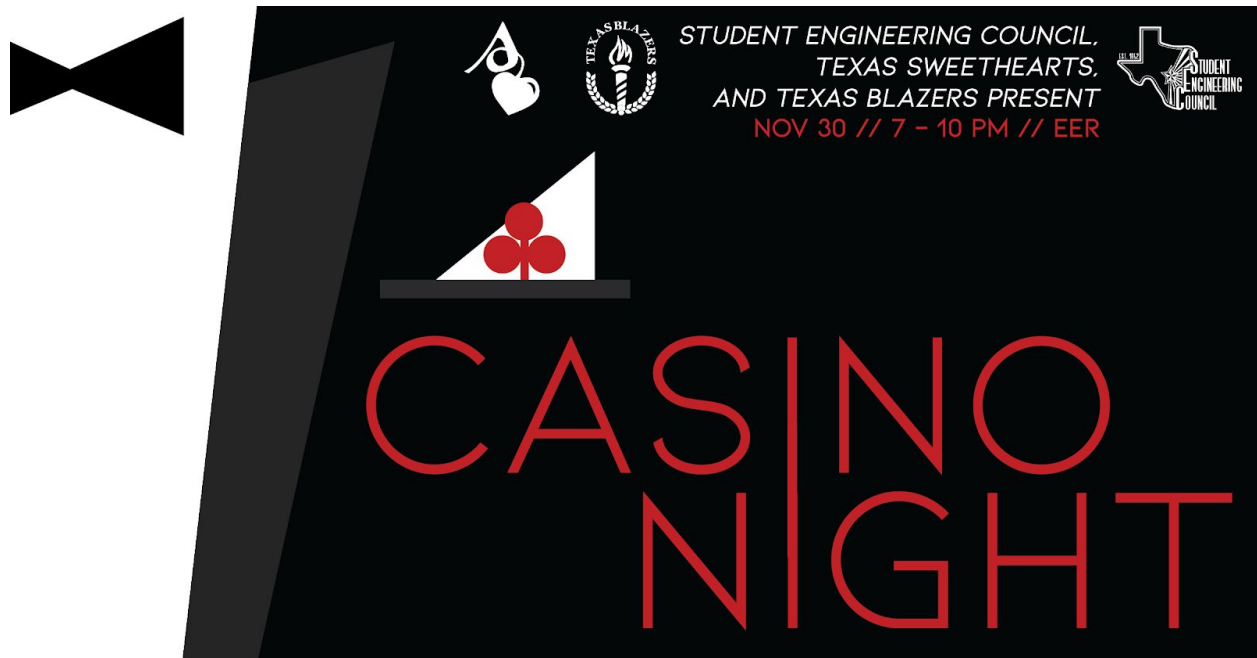
Given the donation-based nature of this event, “breaking even” at minimum should be the committee’s main goal. While Casino Night was able to donate \$3000.50 to SAFE, the total spending needs to decrease. Donating a sum that undercuts the total cost of the event would be the same as simply donating directly without having to hold an event at all. If the future budget remains at \$3000, then a minimum of 300 tickets must be sold.

Alternatively, if a significant amount of supplies will carry over from this year to next, the committee should consider lowering the allocated budget and not feel the need to maximize their spending with “exciting” but non-essential purchases such as a chocolate fountain. On the other hand, the fountain may not have broke even as an investment, but it surely contributed to the increase in attendees from last year’s event. In the future, MAC should consider asking in the



post-event feedback survey how much of an impact novel but non-essential items (e.g. the chocolate fountain this year) affected the attendee's decision to come.

Marketing Outcomes



Casino Night Poster by the Publicity Committee

Data Analysis

As expected, Casino Night benefited greatly from word-of-mouth marketing and did relatively well compared to other events in other marketing mediums such as the EERC Poster and the Cockrell Newsletter. More of a concern, however, is the fact that a third of the participants (which is an underestimate due to survey bias) were unaware that the proceeds were going to SAFE. Publicity should focus on other ways of increasing awareness of the selected cause for future Casino Night events, and doing so will certainly attract a larger attendance base as well. Looking forward, it is clear that social media efforts are better used elsewhere.

There was a [Facebook event page](#) created to help promote this event. It reached 3,700 people, leading to 921 event page views. 260 people responded to the event, including 107 “Going” responses and 153 “Interested” responses. This is compared to the 198 people who signed into the event.

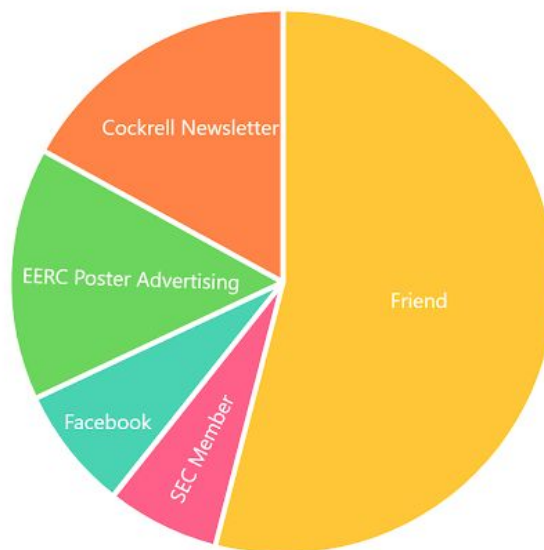


MAL Perspective

Furthermore, feedback from MALs involved with the event agreed that there was a severe lack of participants from other colleges. However, the data we collected from sign-ins say otherwise, since there were forty-six participants who represented other colleges besides Cockrell (18.6%). This event was one of SEC's most successful in reaching non-engineering students. This can certainly be improved for next year's event and publicity does need to find other methods of reaching out to non-engineering majors. Existing methods like the EERC Poster, Cockrell Newsletter, Facebook Events, and SEC Members all heavily favor engineering students.

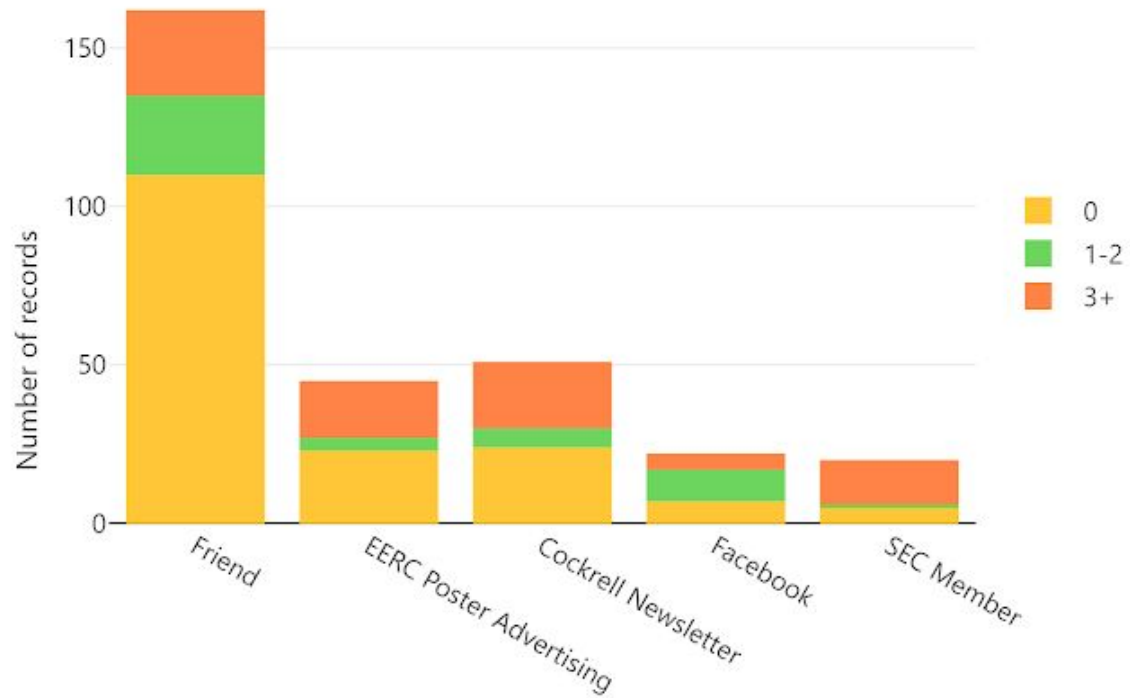
A holistic look at the marketing mediums used and the results suggests that publicity played a relatively small role in providing/attracting the event's attendance base, and were not successful in bringing awareness to the cause. Most of the marketing stemmed from SEC word-of mouth and internal members, not Sweethearts/Blazers. In order to increase the non-engineering attendees, more responsibility should be given to the partner orgs, since they are our main communication and publicity outlet with non-engineers.

Advanced Trend Analysis



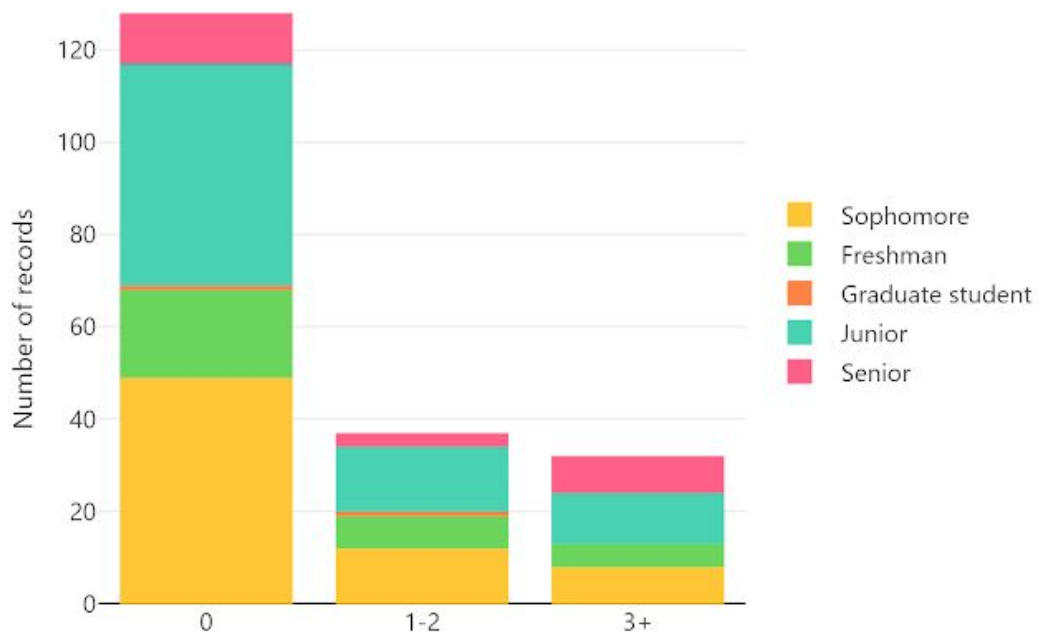
Distribution of Publicity Mediums





How did you hear about this event?

Recurrence by Publicity Medium



How many other SEC events have you attended this past semester?



Recurrence by Year

A more in-depth look at Casino Night 2018 reveals a slightly lackluster marketing/publicity performance. Overall, a majority of 54% of the attendees heard about the event through a friend, which demonstrates the power of engagement-based marketing. Because Casino Night is generally considered one of SEC's most engaging events, word-of-mouth marketing is the most efficient and effective forms of publicity simply due to the nature of the event. However, it is also important to note that a vast majority of the people who heard about Casino Night from a friend had never been to any other SEC event before (most likely because this includes the large amount of non-engineering students who would otherwise have no exposure to SEC publicity).

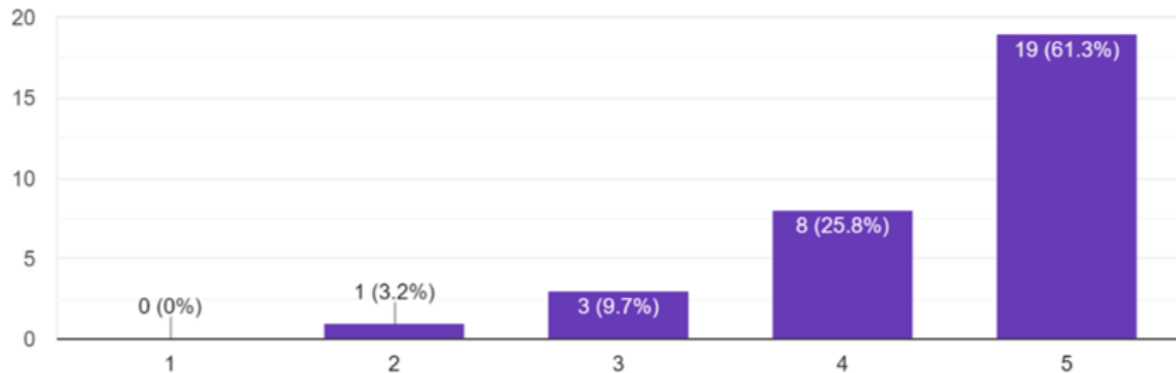
In addition, people who had attended three or more SEC events were more likely to look at the EERC Posters or the Cockrell Newsletter for event information. This may demonstrate the lack of publicity power in the poster/newsletter for new attendees (since almost 50% of those who heard about these events through the poster/newsletter had attended three or more events in the past). Lastly, it seems that most freshmen, sophomores, and juniors were attending an SEC event for the first time while seniors were fairly distributed around all three categories.



Event Impact

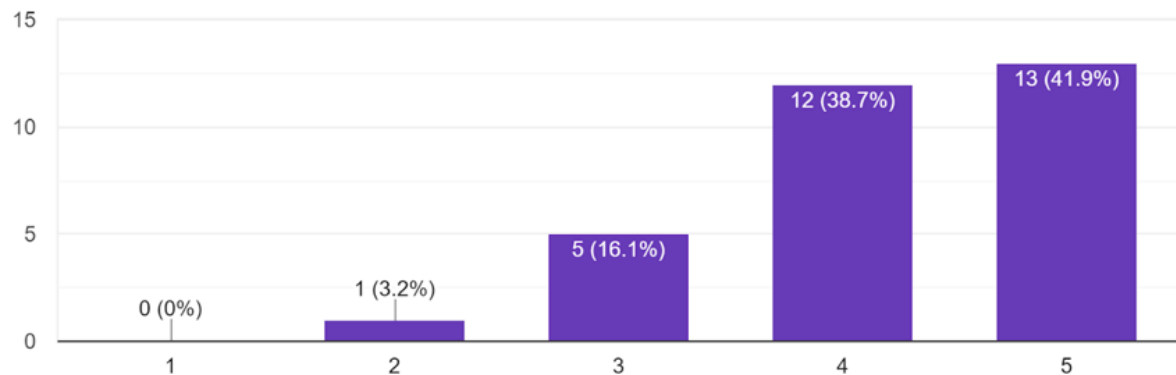
How likely are you to attend this event next fall?

31 responses



How engaged were you throughout the event?

31 responses



As mentioned earlier, it seems that the impact of the event was very limited due to the fact that the event's costs exceeded the total amount raised towards SAFE. However, a majority of the participants were certainly engaged throughout the event (as shown in the chart above),



and we can expect a reasonable amount of participant retention next year. From the day-of and post-event interviews, it is clear that Casino Night has no problem with engagement.

Most of the improvement ideas provided by the participants revolved around having more tables and a larger array of games. The MALs involved agreed that Casino Night would be more impactful if the costs of the event were reduced and if publicity was more focused on the specific charity involved.

Potential ways to improve awareness about the charity include having the charity name on all publicity/tickets for the event, making announcements about the charity during speaker circuiting and during the actual event, and having a representative from the charity attend the event as well.

Conclusion

Planning

The planning process was relatively efficient, with all tasks being split properly and clear communication between all internal members. Service did a great job with the initial outreach to companies and businesses. However, due to the underwhelming amount of assistance provided by the Blazers/Sweethearts, MAC recommends securing a larger effort from these partner organizations. If SEC desires a true equal division of work, explicit divisions of tasks or equal contributions of time and labor need to be established from the beginning. Alternatively, if the main purpose of these partnership orgs is to promote the event to non-engineering audiences, then SEC needs to find a way to incentivize the partner orgs to raise more awareness and sell more tickets. This could be done through the use of rewards (e.g. giving their members a certain number of chips for every ticket sale milestone) or through requiring the partner orgs purchase a certain number of tickets up front themselves and then selling them to others.

Furthermore, we have found that the tabling for Casino Night was not very effective, and this time would be better used towards other avenues of participant attraction, such as displaying the prizes. We also recommend that the Casino Night timeline be shifted earlier so that Service can reach out to donation companies, delegate responsibilities, and purchase supplies and rentals with ample time left over for any problems. Lastly, the snake couch in the EER caused a lot of problems, which can be avoided next year if Service directly coordinates with the building staff beforehand. The point of contact to coordinate with the building staff is Jim Smitherman (jims@austin.utexas.edu).

Publicity

Publicity was certainly the weakest aspect of this event. Simply put, most participants heard about the event from their friends and arrived unaware of both the dress code and the selected charity organization. MAC recommends a more targeted advertising effort - one that



involves other student organizations. While publicity for Casino Night did attract a larger variety of students from other schools besides Cockrell (nearly 25% of total attendance), it never hurts to have a more diverse demographic. Overall, the lack of awareness of the partner charity organization severely limited the impact of this event, and publicity seems to have played only a minor role in Casino Night's attendance.

Logistics

Logistics was an area in which Casino Night did well in. Feedback from the participants and the MALs involved demonstrates a high level of foresight - the chocolate fountain and food overall scored very well with the participants, and the decorations/bar helped contribute to the very successful ambiance of the event. However, there were a few things that could be improved for next year. More specifically, as mentioned before, the partner organizations could definitely have done more to help out during the event. MAC also recommends posting at least three volunteers to the chips area to assist with sorting, distribution, and exchange. This year there were two volunteers at the chip bank station, working from 7 to 10PM. The raffle system will have to be better refined in terms of timing. MAC suggests that the raffle include a few "big-ticket" items and perhaps a "grand prize" to provide even more of an extrinsic motivation to participate in the raffle. Participants also requested more tables and a larger array of games.

Financials

Financials were frankly disappointing - the event was over-budget and had high enough costs as to offset the total amount of donations collected. Simply put, the event did not manage to breakeven (though it was close) despite an enormous participant pool of 245 people. As mentioned before in the "Financials" section, the event yielded a per-person cost of \$12.77, which is far too high. MAC recommends being more efficient with spending on food, in the hope that this event can become both an enjoyable night for the students attending as well as a profitable charity fundraiser.

Impact

The impact of the event had mixed results. The event had a high turnout, making it one of SEC's most well-known and successful events. However, the percentage of attendees actually aware of the charity being donated to and the amount of money actually donated hit below expectations.

Retrospective

Given that last year was the first iteration of this event, it was expected and achieved that this year's Casino Night would be an improvement. A comparison of the financials is a mixed bag, as last year was under-budget but still totalled to \$3684.41, while this year was over-budget but totalled to \$3127.83. Excluding the chocolate fountain, Casino Night 2018 spent significantly less on general food, on decorations, and on specialty event items.



According to last year's event audit, "nearly \$3000" was raised for their chosen cause, Hurricane Maria Relief, more than the \$2450 raised this year. Overall attendance did increase from 189 to 245, however, which is a good improvement. The higher donation from last year may be due to a few attendees donating more than the required ticket price amount.

Logistically, setup/teardown duration were fairly similar between the two years, beginning at around 12PM noon and lasting until 12AM midnight. The bar ran much more smoothly this year, never getting the long line that plagued it last year. However, issues and disorganization with the poker chips was a problem both years. Last year also reported not having enough poker tables, a problem that was not resolved this year. Furthermore, Casino Night last year reported having difficulties working with Blazers, which again was an issue this year. In the future, different partner orgs should be considered.

Suggested Future Targets

- Reduce per-person cost to \$10.00/person
- Increase ticket sales of partner orgs to at least 15% of total sales
- Establish a speaker circuit and present event at 5 organization meetings
- Increase donation amount to match total spent on event
- Increase charity organization awareness to 80%
- Achieve a 25% non-engineering major attendance
- Increase number of poker tables from 12 total to 15



Appendix

