



Corporate Luncheon

2019 Event Assessment

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Marketing and Analytics Committee

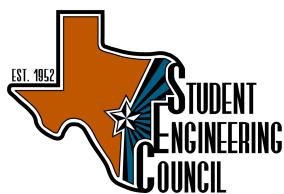


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Foreword

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 engaged in 1-2 planning meetings before the event and attended the event to collect feedback from all parties involved. A post-event audit meeting was conducted with the primary MALs to identify areas for improvement.

This report was compiled from several data streams. A [sign-in form](#) was stationed at the front table and collected general information and demographics about attendees. 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

This section highlights key facts about the event and is designed to inform new MALs, who lack previous experience with this event.

Corporate Luncheon is a networking event hosted by the Society of First-Year Engineers committee in the spring semester. This is the first year this event has occurred, as it has taken the place of Corporate Chili Cook-Off (CCC), which was the previous networking event held by SFE. CCC's event audit from 2018 can be found [here](#). CCC was removed on the premise that it was challenging to plan and coordinate corporate representatives preparing chili in their hotel rooms and that it did not have meaningful interaction between corporate representatives and students. **The Conclusion section of this report includes a detailed comparison between the two, which MAC believes to be the most important part of this report.**

Corporate Luncheon, as well as Chili Cook-Off in the past, was held the day before Spring Expo. Its purpose is to provide students a chance to meet corporate representatives and network in a more casual setting than Expo. Food and games were set up in the ETC T Room, and representatives were assigned to tables where students could sit and converse with them.

Key Contacts

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Key Findings

Things Done Well:

Planning Process

- Being resourceful and using contacts outside of admins

Marketing and Publicity

- Relative success through Facebook and SEC members outlets

Logistics and Day-Of

- High quality of conversation between students and recruiters
 - Improvement over Chili Cook-Off

Areas For Improvement:

Planning Process

- Communicate the benefits and impact of the event earlier with admins
- Coordinate efforts with admins earlier
- Emphasize need for student-facing publicity
- Announce ahead of time the expected companies attending

Marketing and Publicity

- Begin publicity earlier
- Establish better communication between Pub Committee and SFE Committee over expectations

Logistics and Day-Of

- Find better activities for icebreakers
- Issues with controlling food consumption
- Label which specific companies are sitting where

Financials

- Decrease or eliminate t-shirt spending
- Increase publicity spending
- Better optimize food budget



Analysis

Planning Process

There were 7 freshmen in SFE and 2 SEC MALs working on this event, meeting weekly starting 4-5 weeks before the event. The directors feel that the SFE freshmen did well at their planning tasks, helping accomplish the mentorship aspect of this event. Regarding the distribution, it appears as if the directors handled the reservations and communications with the companies but provided little guidance to the MALs, who were in charge of brainstorming and leading the freshmen. Perhaps because of the smaller nature of this event, the directors felt they could be more hands-off.

Despite getting an early start with planning this event, the directors and SFE MALs on Corporate Luncheon continuously ran into some challenges navigating the demands of the Cockrell administration. Because it allows students to interface directly with company representatives, Corporate Luncheon is perceived as an outward facing event by the Engineering Career Assistance Center (ECAC) and more direct supervision was provided than originally anticipated. As a result, the current directors should document the specific recurring concerns of the admins that prevented immediate adoption. The future team should heavily review these concerns and begin the planning process by curating a formal document, which outlines a detailed approach for recruiting company representatives and day-of implementation.

The first meeting for this event with ECAC occurred around December. In this meeting, SFE encountered difficulties with ECAC regarding the name of the event. While the original title “Corporate Kickback” was struck down because it is a euphemism for bribery, it better conveyed the uniquely casual nature of the event, which should be emphasized in further iterations. See the final “Chili Cook Off Comparison” section for MAC’s full recommendation. SFE was responsible for sending the information regarding the event to ECAC by the first week of January, but this was not met. In the meetings before the event, ECAC fixated on weird hypothetical issues, grammar issues, and obsessions with the shirts, all of which held up sending out the EXPO invitations.

Developing a stronger relationship with university leadership in these areas of campus earlier on in the academic year would allow for smoother approval processes. Additionally, many of the challenges were likely associated with inexperience running and organizing events. By looping in an officer to hold the admin team accountable for event invitations, SFE may have a better chance of getting corporate invitations out on time.

Scheduling a debrief meeting during the Spring semester with ECAC would allow them to feel as if they have an opinion on future planning. It is important to include these individuals as often as possible, with many touchpoints of communication, so they feel equally invested in



the process. In the Fall, primary objectives include (1) sending out corporate invitations aligned with Spring EXPO invitations, (2) assigning a full-time MAL to keep the admins appeased throughout the process, and (3) probing SEC member connections for corporate interest at the end of the fall semester. Generating excess lead times for outward communication is essential to recruiting the best companies.

Some specific issues that arose this year are as follows. ECAC prevented SFE from officially contacting any companies attending EXPO until ECAC deemed SFE “ready” enough to send out invitations, which is what resulted in late emails this year. In order to send out earlier invitations, this event should be well-planned and “ready” as early as possible in order to get ECAC’s approval sooner. Second, while SEC has substantial personal connections with corporate representatives that would ideally be capitalized upon, ECAC disapproved of SEC for inviting Accenture without going through ECAC this year. In the future, either these personal invitations should be better kept from ECAC or potentially the corporate representative could approach ECAC about attending Corporate Luncheon.

The two major choke points for the planning process were the corporate invitations and the student-facing invitations. Due to its informal and spontaneous nature, this event does not require extensive preparation of materials prior. The corporate invitations were discussed above. The publicity for the event can be improved simply by emphasizing it earlier in the academic year.

Finally, it was observed that students did not extensively utilize the games laid out during the event. Some students also still felt awkward when approaching company representatives. MALs should brainstorm ways to increase contact between students and representatives, such as small activities to laugh over. Corporate Luncheon also lacks the cachet of a “Chili Cook-Off”. MALs need to reevaluate what the “pull” factors are for this event and emphasize that in publicity towards students.



Marketing and Publicity



Corporate Luncheon Poster by the Publicity Committee

The outlets of publicity used for this event included a Facebook event, a poster in the EERC main lobby, advertisements in the weekly ESL newsletter, and word of mouth. The Facebook event was hosted by the Student Engineering Council at University of Texas and by the Society of Freshman Engineers at UT Austin pages. On the event page, 28 marked "Interested", 38 marked "Going", and 181 others were invited. The event reached 538 people, the largest demographic being men between 18 and 24 years old (44% of people reached), and had 164 views on the page. While the Publicity MALs wanted to expand to other social media platforms, they did not have enough time.

However, the major question with Facebook events is how many "new" audience members are we reaching? Most of the people invited tend to be SEC members or close friends of SEC members, as opposed to all engineers, especially those who would not normally attend SEC events. Additionally, it is worth noting that there were 10 drafts of the Facebook cover photo made. While having nice-looking photos is useful for advertising, MAC really questions if 10 drafts were needed when most people barely pay attention to the Facebook cover photo. Instead, this time could have been used by the Publicity MALs to attend org meetings and present the event there or to create advertisements for other social media outlets.

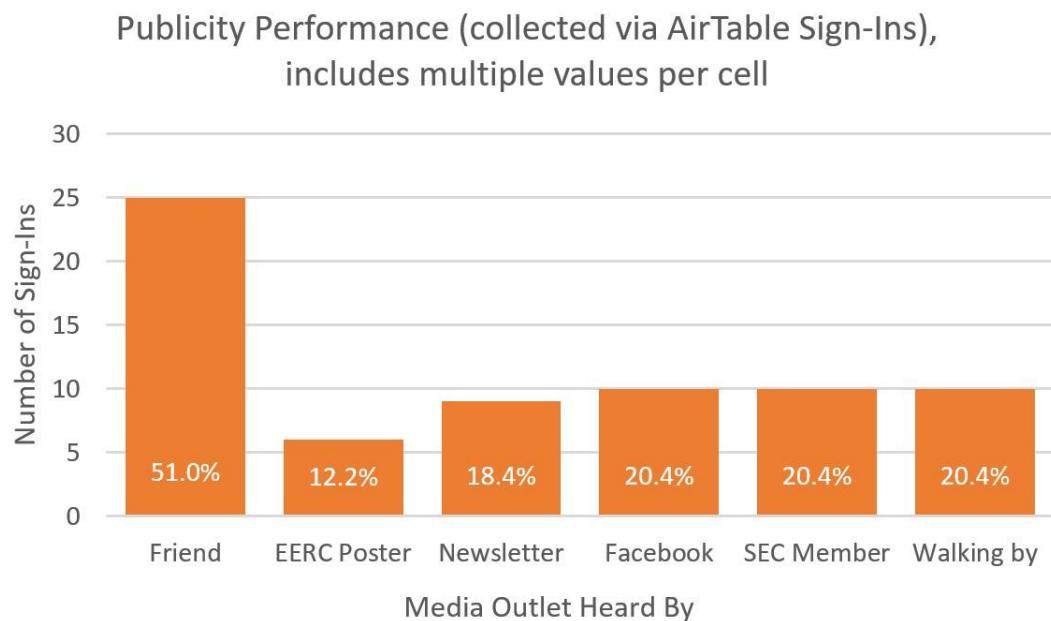
There were five Publicity committee MALs assigned to this event. They felt that there was not enough time to publicize the event and that most attendees didn't associate CL with the



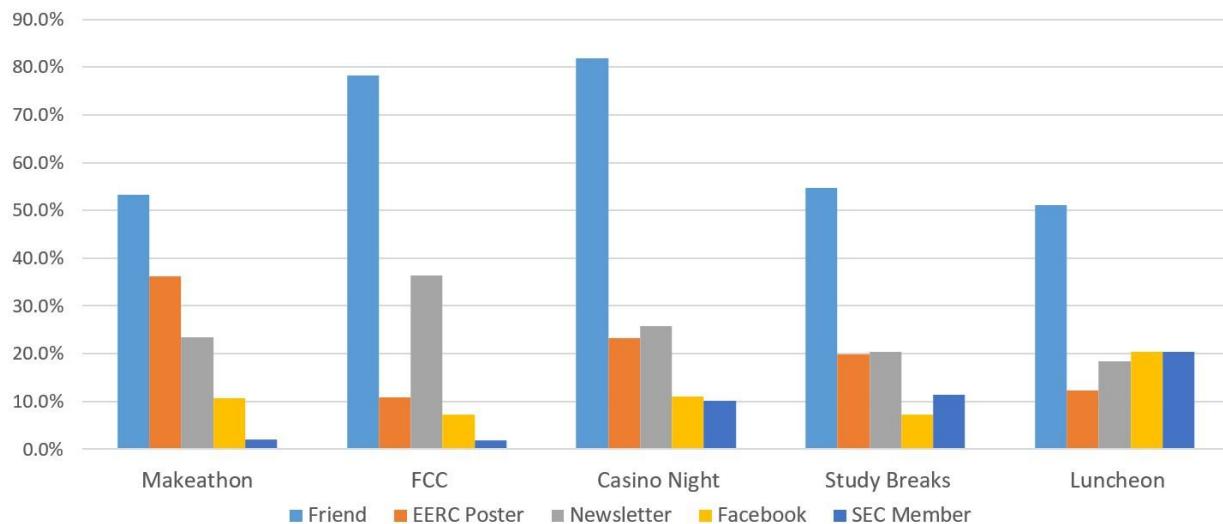
famous CCC of previous years. Additionally, some felt that the timing of the event in the middle of the day could have made it difficult for some students to attend. More importantly, one MAL expressed uncertainty in whether or not publicity is actually effective for events like this, i.e. *does the publicity actually convince someone who otherwise would not have been at the event to attend?* They believe that most people attended because of convenience (time/location) and food. This raises the question of how can publicity best address both of its two goals: advertising and raising awareness of the event and encouraging those who are aware to actually attend.

The location had benefits and drawbacks. While some MALs felt it was a good location to attract people who were walking by between classes, others felt that it was out of the way for most engineering majors and only attracted MEs who were walking by, indicating that publicity was ineffective. Some MALs commented that lots of attendees only came for the food and left without interacting with employers.

The t-shirts given at the event could be perceived as “post-event publicity,” though most of the MALs expressed doubt over how effective the shirts are at raising awareness of the event, especially since a good portion of the t-shirts end up going to SEC members and one can assume another good portion of the shirts either end up as sleeping shirts or tossed shortly after.

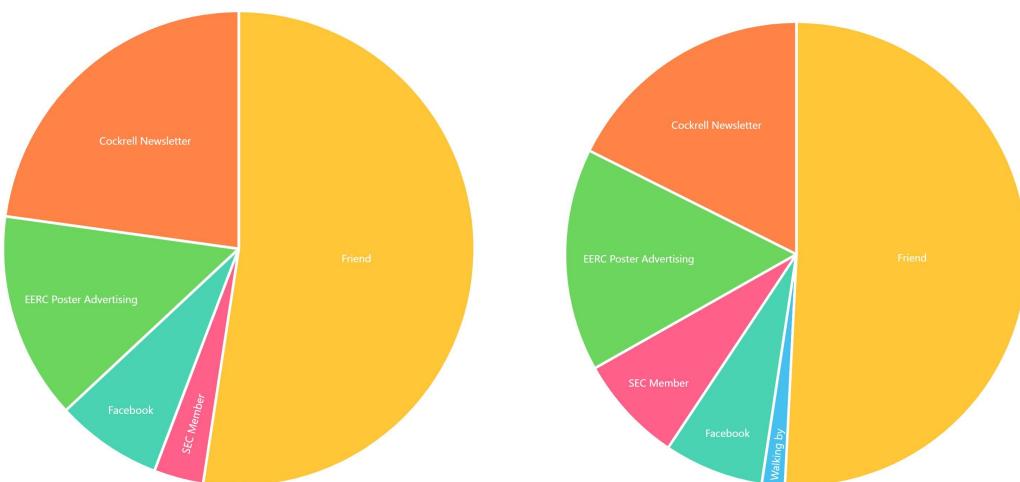


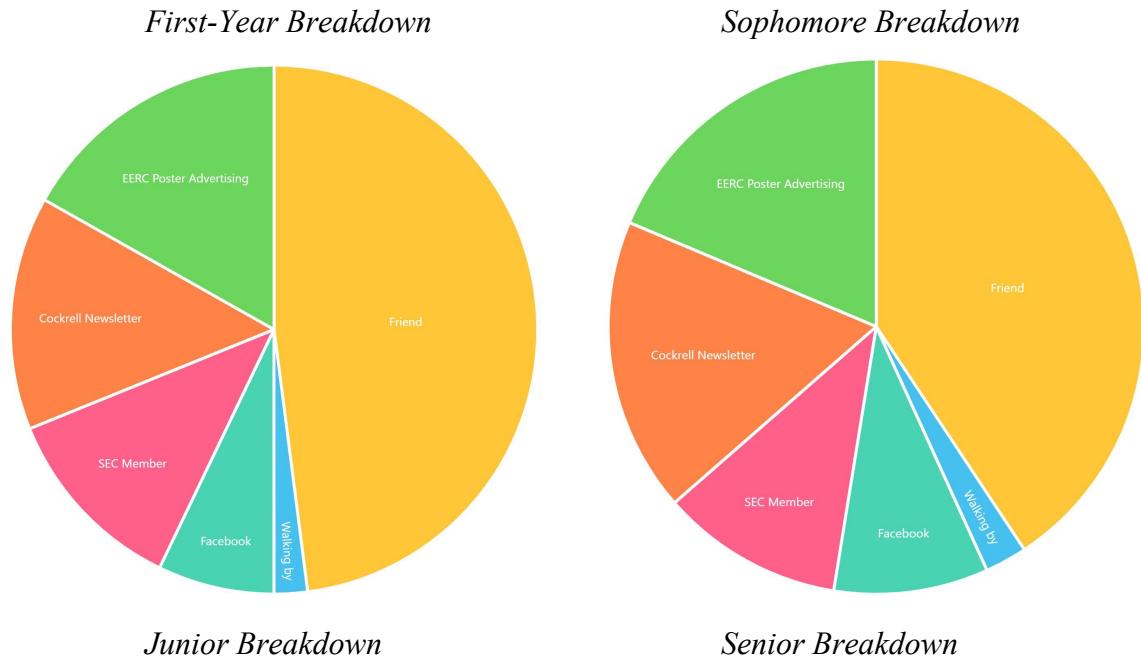
Percentage of Attendees Who Heard Through That Outlet



The first graph above shows the number of sign-ins who reported hearing about Corporate Luncheon from that media outlet, allowing for multiple selections (i.e. a sign-in could choose multiple outlets they heard about the event from). The second graph shows the percentage of students who reported hearing through that outlet, comparing Corporate Luncheon to previous events held by SEC.

As seen in the graphs, most attendees heard about the event through a friend. However, compared to other events, fewer people reported hearing about the event through a friend, indicating that word-of-mouth was not as reliable of a publicity outlet for this type of event. More people reported hearing about the event from Facebook or an SEC member in comparison to previous events as well, while the EERC Poster had less success.





The above four graphs show the percentage breakdown of people who cited hearing about an event through a specific outlet, broken out by year, cumulated for every event in our database. Though similar, there are some key differences between the years. Seniors on average hear about events much less often through friends relative to the other outlets than the other three years. The EERC Poster is a slightly more effective relative to the other outlets for upperclassmen (juniors and seniors). This could be because upperclassmen are more likely to be in the EERC (for upper-division classes, org leader spaces, offices, events, etc.) than underclassmen. Upperclassmen are much more likely to hear about events through an SEC member than sophomores, who are still more likely than first-years. This may be because upperclassmen are more likely to know more people, and more SEC members, than first-years. Facebook is relatively equally effective for all four majors, though slightly more effective for seniors. The Cockrell Newsletter is much more effective for first-years, who are potentially more likely to read through the emails rather than merely deleting them, and interestingly enough for seniors as well.

However, one should bear in mind that although the percentages are different, it is uncertain if the differences are statistically significant.

Depending on Corporate Luncheon's target audience, SFE should target its publicity in the future. If the intended audience is mainly first-year and sophomores, which the purpose of providing a casual/worry-free introduction to EXPO and corporate representatives, then SFE should push for more newsletter and email publicity, potentially advertising at FIG meetings too,



as well as adding posters in places where underclassmen are more likely to be (such as ETC, CPE, etc.).

If the target audience is upperclassmen, with the purpose of actually helping them make connections and land jobs, publicity should expand in the EERC, potentially having additional flyers in specific offices like the ECAC office or the Student Org Space. Additionally, speaker circuiting should focus more on org meetings rather than FIG meetings.

Additionally, depending on the target audience, SFE can better modify the proclaimed purpose of the event and more directly market it as such.

Although the publicity request form was submitted well in advance of the event, Publicity MALs were not assigned until late, and as a result publicity was finished only a week or two before the event. This explains why fewer people heard through official outlets, such as the EERC Poster and the Cockrell Newsletter. There seems to be a disconnect between the Publicity Committee and the Society of First-Year Engineers Committee regarding the proper allocation of publicity resources between the various committees. In the future, there should be explicit discussions regarding the resources that are expected and that are available, so that SFE does not have to rely on internal publicity as much.

One of the biggest rooms for improvement was the area of publicity. Everyone believed that publicity of the event had to improve for next year with ideas like speaker circuiting at classes a few days before the event, buying Facebook ads, more visible signs on campus, and marketing to specific engineers who would benefit the most by attending, potentially electrical and chemical engineers who are not already targeted by the event's location and advertisement in the ETC.

Logistics

Overall, SFE had a very positive experience and logistics ran pretty smoothly. All the members on the committee raved about the high level of student to recruiter interaction. Many members claimed the substance of conversation to be even better than at Expo. The question cards that allowed students to walk into conversations openly and freely helped alleviate a lot of the stress that comes about when engaging with a recruiter. Before, students would have to prepare questions and be a little more robotic in their interactions. Sign-ups were well-mediated and made sure that only people who were contributing to the event were allowed in. It was a definite improvement over Corporate Chili Cook-Off since recruiters could focus on their interactions with the students instead of on the food. For a more detailed comparison of the two events, please see the conclusion.

In terms of logistical improvements, according to the event audit, there were a few complaints with the food. Although tasty and affordable, Potbelly did mess up the order,

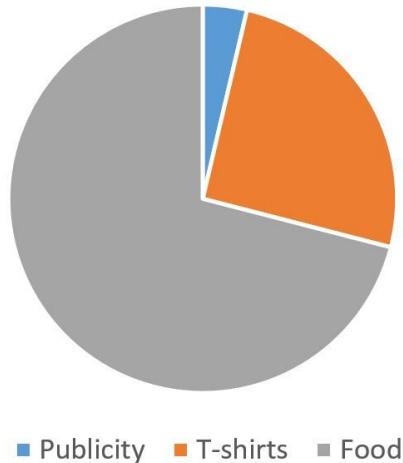


forgetting to get 5 vegan sandwiches. There were also complaints from MALs running the event that people weren't sticking to the half sandwich rule, which can be difficult to enforce, even though there was an SEC volunteer assigned to monitor food during the event. For future iterations of the event, the volunteer responsibilities and meal expectations should be better clarified beforehand. There should also be clearly defined labels, with dietary information, on all the food options so people can clearly get what they want. Finally, there were some comments from the MALs about the diversity of food, claiming that there were too many dessert options.

Pivoting from food, many members claimed that company reps would just get their food and camp at a table instead of walking around and socializing. A potential improvement could be taking away the seating so students and reps were forced to interact with each other. Another improvement could be putting labels on each table about the company and what engineering majors they were interested in. This could help streamline a lot of students' attack plan while they decide what companies to talk to. The activities that SFE had laid out weren't really being used by either party. So the money and effort it took to set those games up could be repurposed towards something else. One of the biggest rooms for improvement in logistics was the area of publicity. In regards to this, please see Publicity analysis section for more details.

Financials

Budget Allocation



The budget for this event was \$750, and the total spent was \$857.96. Only 49 attendees (including SEC and SFE members, some of who were there to volunteer and some of who were there to attend the event, but excluding the corporate representatives) signed in to the event, meaning that the event was expensive at \$17.51 per person (compared to Casino Night, which was \$15.80 per person and provided substantially more to the attendees).



85 full sandwiches were purchased from Potbelly, with the intention of serving half sandwiches to students. Despite this rule, the sandwiches ran out, indicating that the rule was not followed and that many people took food who did not sign in. Future iterations of this event should make better attempts to match the amount of food purchased to the expected attendance, and actually enforce food serving rules.

As seen in the pie chart above, the vast majority was spent on food. While the event was advertised as a lunch, and thus needed a substantial amount of food to match expectations, there is room for optimization here. Chips, dessert, and water bottles were given out in addition to the sandwiches, costing almost \$100. MAC questions if there was really a need for dessert and for water bottles specifically. If SFE wants to give attendees a way to drink water and avoid becoming hoarse while networking, perhaps they can look into providing recyclable cups to use at the water fountain in the future. While Potbelly does offer side items (such as chips, desserts, etc.), it was cheaper to purchase these elsewhere, which was a smart decision for this year; future committees should continue to compare the prices before blindly choosing either option.

Only 3.7% of the budget (\$31.49) was spent on publicity, while over \$200 was spent on t-shirts. To the Marketing and Analytics Committee, this seems like an exceptionally poor allocation of the budget. In truth, corporate representatives and volunteers are very likely not to care at all about the t-shirts, especially now that the event has been updated. While Corporate Chili Cook-Off was kitchy / unique enough to perhaps benefit from t-shirts, Corporate Luncheon is a standard event that sees no need for t-shirts. Both CCC and Corporate Luncheon had a budget of \$750, which both events went over. Last year's CCC event audit cites the t-shirts as a primary reason for going over budget, a problem which occurred again this year, indicating a trend. Even with the novelty of a "chili cook-off", one does not see many CCC t-shirts around the engineering buildings, and one most likely will see even fewer Corporate Luncheon t-shirts going forward.

As one possibility, this money could have been spent on goodie bags for students to take home that would help them at EXPO and in the recruiting process - containing items such as breath mints, pens, notepads, etc. Additionally, if shirts were still desired, SFE in the future could encourage corporate sponsors to bring merch to Corporate Luncheon like they bring to Expo. While these shirts wouldn't be direct advertising for Corporate Luncheon the way a Corporate Luncheon t-shirt would be (if it were ever worn), they would incentivize students to come and then tell other students about the event, as well as help facilitate talking between the students and representatives.

If the cost of the t-shirts were eliminated, the event would have cost \$13.07 per person, which is much more reasonable. Conversely, part of that money could have been spent to increase the publicity, through banners or flyers in different buildings.

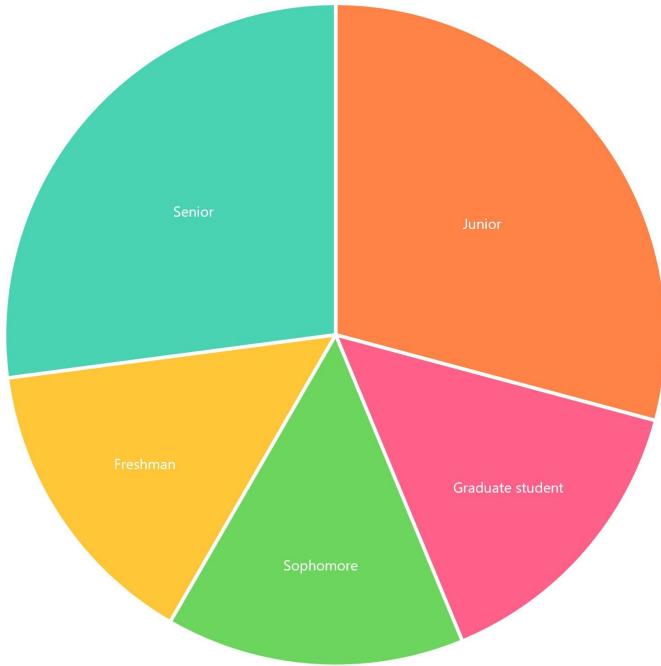


Engagement and Impact

In general, the expectations of attendees were met, but judging from the day-of interviews, there was markedly a lack of enthusiasm regarding the event. Because the primary driver for this event is its association with the career fair and students' professional aspirations, most students are simply there to learn about companies, practice communication skills, and feel comfortable leading up to the career fair. Even the older students said they attended for the "chance to talk informally with recruiters" and "prep for EXPO tomorrow" (taken from the day-of interviews). Overall, the event had a theme of general preparation, rather than company-specific job recruiting. Unlike EA events, Corporate Luncheon is not something students go to to relax. Improvements to the event should focus on further facilitating ease of communication between recruiters and students. Several students mentioned that they were relatively unaware of which companies were represented at the event and it would have been nice to know for which company each individual worked. While the emphasis of the event is informality, many students still went into the luncheon expecting a more formal or facilitated atmosphere.

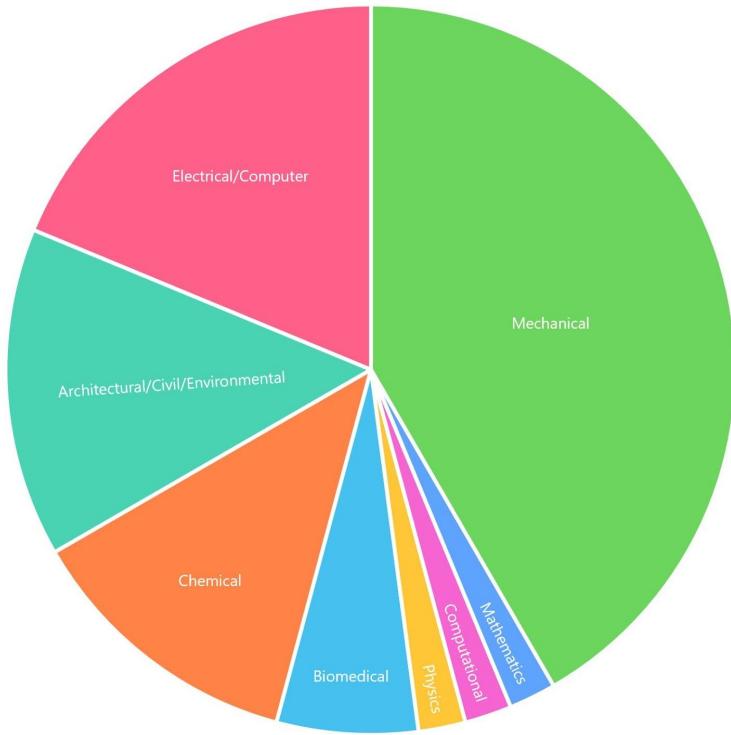
Teams leading future iterations of this event should continue using name tags for each of the recruiters that dictate specifically what company they are from, in case they are not wearing corporate attire. However, marking the tables at which recruiters were sitting would prevent students from aimlessly wandering around the room, especially if they are only present for a particular company. Additionally, depending on the size of the group, implementing a facilitated activity at the beginning of the event could further encourage interaction between parties. It is important to note that many of the students naturally feel more uncomfortable speaking with professionals. While it was beneficial to some to have an open environment to speak, this level of freedom could be perceived as intimidating to some of our target audience. Building in some amount of inclusion to the event could mitigate these concerns.





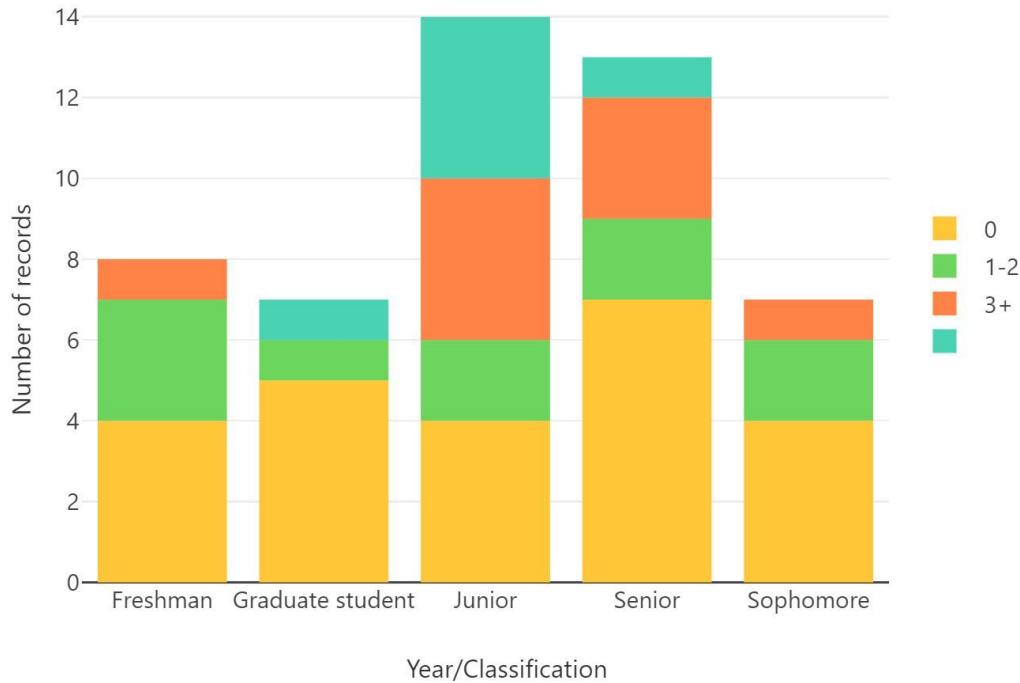
The above pie chart shows the attendee demographic breakdown by year classification. SEC events have traditionally been better attended by younger students in the past. As seen above, more than two-thirds of the attendees of Corporate Luncheon were juniors or older. This is an interesting outcome that is worth looking into, as SEC aims to increase its turnout of underrepresented students. One possible explanation is that the upperclassmen students are more interested in professional and networking events, given that internships and jobs are more immediate for them. If this were the case, SEC should consider holding more professional events in the future in an effort to increase the turnout of upperclassmen students.





The above graph shows the demographic breakdown by major. The largest percent of attendants were mechanical engineering, which logically makes sense given that the event was held in the mechanical engineering building, allowing for more word-of-mouth and walk-bys. In the future, for events that are held in major-specific areas, effort could be made to ensure the other majors are still equally aware of the event - placing targeted posters in the CPE or BME buildings, advertising specific companies looking for these majors, etc.

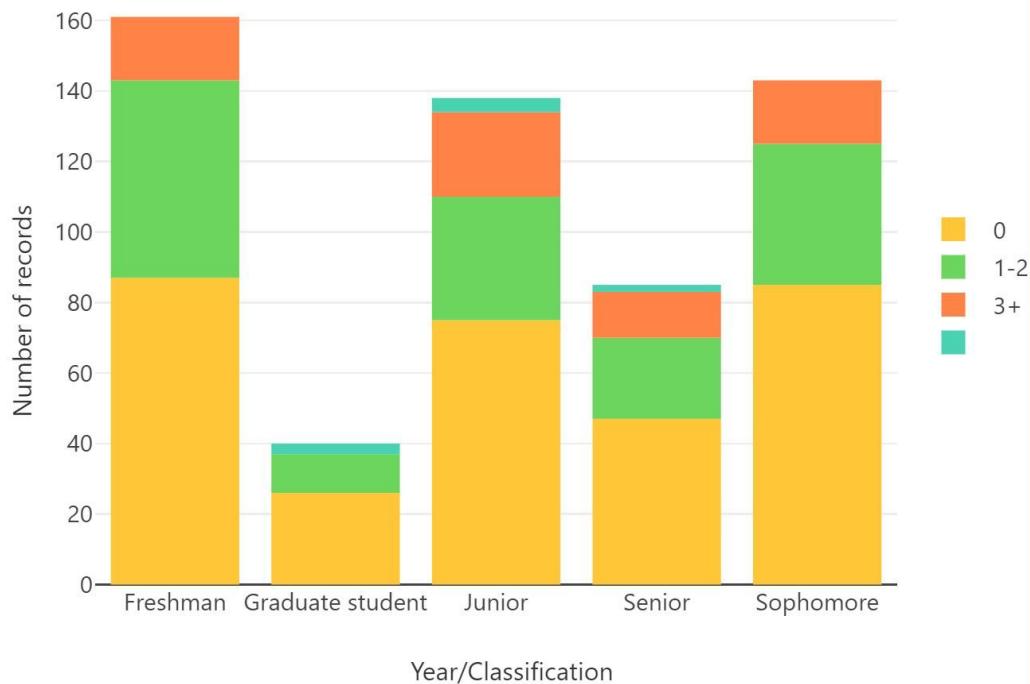




The above graph shows how many SEC events the person has attended this year, broken down by year. This graph shows that across all years, for most of the attendants, this was their first SEC event. No graduate student had been to more than two events. This is an area for improvement, as while SEC is the undergraduate engineering council, our events are open to graduate engineers as well and we should aim to increase our attendance of graduate students. In the future, SEC could communicate with the Graduate Engineering Council to advertise our events.

The following graph shows the same data for all events that SEC has data on. As seen in this graph, SEC events traditionally are attended by people for the first time, and seniors are less likely to attend multiple SEC events. However, Corporate Luncheon attracted more juniors and seniors who have been to multiple SEC events. This indicates that CL is the type of event that upperclassmen who attend lots of events.





Conclusion

Corporate Chili Cook-Off Comparison

Because this event was designed to directly replace a previously-existing event, a comparison between the two is important in judging if this new event actually solved perceived problems with the old event.

Corporate Chili Cook-Off, while “fun” and had a bigger scope of attendees, was cited as being challenging to coordinate and stressful to plan and execute. Company reps had to handle chili supplies in their hotel rooms while visiting Austin and spent most of the event dealing with the chili instead of connecting with students. Many students only attended for the free chili samples, providing extra noise to the event that potentially interfered with the students actually there to network. It is important to remember that for the CCCs in 2016 and 2017, the EERC was not yet built and open. Because of this, the ETC/CPE area had significantly heavier foot traffic compared to now, given how much of a central hub the EERC has become.

In 2016, CCC had 7 companies, with 3 to 7 representatives from each company; the estimated attendance was around 350 students. In 2017, CCC had 3 companies and in 2018, it had 4 companies. From discussions with previous SFE directors, it is felt that the large drop in corporate turnout is due to a change in corporate communication. In 2016, the SFE directors reached out directly to corporate representatives regarding the event. In 2018, ECAC became stricter and only allowed invitations to go through them, but only sent out two emails regarding CCC, including it as a footnote in general EXPO emails. Additionally, these emails were only sent to approved EXPO companies, not companies on the waitlist, who could have used CCC as an alternative event for recruitment given that they could not attend EXPO. 6 companies attended CL (in 2019). I believe after ECAC approved SFE’s emails, SFE was able to email companies directly. Additionally, some SEC members contacted company representatives personally, against ECAC’s wishes. Both of these facts may have contributed to more companies registering, not merely the fact that CL was “less stressful and time-consuming” compared to CCC.

One area CCC did exceptionally well in was its huge appeal as a more “social, casual” event, being a unique opportunity to interact informally with recruiters. This is a strong selling point that did not carry over into the perception of what Corporate Luncheon would be. Instead, Corporate Luncheon was expected to be a more formal event, similar to the various other “Lunch and Learn” events that many other orgs put on. Going forward, SFE should work to recapture and maintain this appeal. CCC is one of SEC’s signature events and the sharp 180 degree turn this event took from last year’s iteration may not be the solution to last year’s CCC troubles.



In short, MAC feels that this event needs further modifications. While CL appears more successful in terms of numbers - 6 companies attending, a ratio of 50:9 students to representatives - holistically, MAC feels CL was a step backwards.

The location in the ETC greatly affected the atmosphere of the event, serving as a barrier to entry. While ideally most attendants would know about events beforehand, students who find out just from walking by are an important part of the event audience and help contribute to the overall casual vibe. Additionally, it is doubtful if students would come all the way inside the ETC unless they really wanted to network with a specific company at CL, which is unlikely given that the companies attending were not announced ahead of time.

The “mentoring and leadership development” aspect of this event appeared to be missing as well. The SFE freshmen in the past were involved with assisting the companies, while this year they were primarily managing the sign-in table and food. The freshmen should be better utilized in future iterations, allowing them to serve as a connection between the students attending and the company representatives, and should be more involved with running the event and potentially facilitating student-company interaction.

Corporate Luncheon was much smaller in scale and more formal and standard than CCC. For next year, SFE should aim to increase the scope of the event and restore its uniqueness. SFE could consider moving Corporate Luncheon (or the replacement event) back to a more public space, instead of the T-room of the ETC where it was this year, such as back out to the CPE lawn or to the EERC Atrium.

It seems like the biggest issues with the most recent CCCs were ECAC and the difficulty of contacting companies. MAC believes that returning CL to its CCC origins (with slight food modifications) is the best option for this event and that serious effort should instead be put on modifying the company outreach part of this event, either by communicating with ECAC earlier or reaching out to non-EXPO companies directly.

One possible idea is holding a “Corporate Picnic,” out on the EERC lawn or CPE lawn. This event would attract a greater number of attendants and be similar to the large, casual atmosphere of CCC without the hassle of having to prepare chili. Additionally, because the corporate reps wouldn’t need to be preparing and handling the chili, there would be more interaction with the students.



Overall Assessment

	Planning	Publicity	Logistics	Financials	Impact
Rating	Red	Red	Green	Yellow	Yellow

Suggested Future Targets

- Gain approvals from administration at least 2 weeks prior to Spring EXPO invitations
- Increase companies attending to 8
- Have physical signs in at least 3 buildings
- Advertise at 5 meetings (org meetings, FIG meetings, classes)
- Decrease costs to \$10 per person
- Aim for 100 attendees
- Investigate the possibility of holding event twice (once for fall EXPO)

