Engineering Day of Service

2019 Event Assessment

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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 2-3 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, the committee directors, as well as the associated Publicity MALs to identify areas for improvement.

This report was compiled from several data streams, including meeting notes, previous event audits, the current event audit, the publicity audit, and the sign-in form responses. A sign-in form collected general information and demographics about attendees. Interviews conducted during the event provided opinions from attendants. Quantitative information from our surveys were 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.

Overview

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

The Engineering Day of Service (EDoS) is a volunteering event hosted primarily by the Service committee of the Student Engineering Council (SEC). EDoS is traditionally held during the spring semester on the first Saturday of Engineer's Week (E-Week), a week-long competition organized by the Engineering Activities committee of SEC (EA) and hosted jointly by a number of engineering student organizations within the Cockrell School of Engineering.

EDoS is generally considered to be the largest annual volunteering event conducted by any organization within the Cockrell School as it involves coordinating between 150 and 200 student volunteers who are slated to visit one of 6 to 8 volunteering locations in the Austin area. The purpose of this event is to provide an opportunity to connect with and serve the local community to as many engineering students as possible, as well as to strengthen the relationship between the Cockrell School and key volunteering partners.

It should be noted that this event also plays a key role in E-Week, as it is typically the second major activity of E-Week following the "E-Week Kickoff" celebration. EDoS allows students to earn points for their respective organizations towards the E-Week Competition by volunteering their time. While EDoS is important for furthering competition, it is also an important opportunity for fostering collaboration between members of different organizations as they work towards a common goal at particular volunteering locations. The organization of carpools and volunteering groups for EDoS should always be made with this point in mind.

Key Contacts

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Key Findings

This section indicates the most striking conclusions developed in this report, and is meant to quickly summarize the points that will be analyzed in-depth later on in order to give readers a quick-glance understanding of areas of future improvement.

Things Done Well:

Planning Process

- Committee was able to respond well to last-minute hiccups, relied on assistance from ESS as well as backup volunteering locations.
- The food, t-shirts, supplies orders have become largely standardized, allowing for more planning time spent on other aspects.

Marketing and Publicity

- Reach is naturally augmented by the connection to E-Week, while having Scavenger Hunt items tied to EDoS participation also improved visibility of event.

Operations

- No major pitfalls in terms of day-of organization, locations, carpools, and food were all handled with little confusion or complaint from participants.
- Largely positive feedback from volunteer locations, ample opportunity for future partnerships.

Financials

- Costs were under budget and effectively spent.

Areas For Improvement:

Planning Process

- Begin contacting volunteer organizations earlier, especially ones we are not familiar with.
- Create a system for organizing drivers and communicating them to everyone.
- Find ways to engage different engineering orgs with each other i.e.
    - Picnic/Lunch after day of service
    - Ice breakers or games at the morning meet up (if time permits)
    - Change up carpool organization

Marketing and Publicity

- Take advantage of pre-event marketing avenues outside of Facebook.

Operations

- Find more efficient sign in form, such as a QR or remote access code.
- Have a better system of communication between drivers/volunteers.

Financials

- Look for areas to cut on food or t-shirt orders if possible.

Analysis

This section gives a much more comprehensive description of positive and negative aspects of the event in question, drawing from many of the sources indicated in the Foreword.

Planning Process

Feedback Methods

With regards to the planning process, an important first step for the Service committee to look into, in terms of coordination with either the Marketing and Analytics Committee (MAC) or EA, is the implementation of a standardized feedback form for this event in particular. Given that this event is considered to be a part of the dense series of events that take place over the course of E-Week, this year's source of student feedback was also grouped together with the standardized form EA used for all of the E-Week events. This approach is particularly suited towards highly efficient feedback, as the E-Week form was largely used for events where competitors needed to complete the form as quickly as possible in order to begin participating in the event. However, given that this event is planned within the Student Engineering Council (SEC) and more than likely requires a much more involved planning process than most other E-Week events, it is highly advisable that a feedback method unique to EDoS is developed such that participants can give more quality feedback to the organizing committee after they have finished their volunteering shifts.

Specifically, this feedback method would most likely take the form of an email blast that is produced and sent out by the Service committee at the conclusion of EDoS. This email blast would then include a link to a form produced through collaboration with the Service and MAC committees to ask detailed questions regarding specific elements of EDoS. Filling out this feedback form could also be linked to some amount of E-Week Competition points, as specified by EA, in order to incentivize well thought-out and constructive feedback to ensure continuous improvement of the event.

This year's approach for gaining detailed participant feedback involved combining the efficient E-Week form with the results of interviews conducted by members of MAC the day of the event. However, due to the difficulty of collecting in-the-moment feedback while also contributing towards the volunteering efforts of the group, this approach was found to be undesirable as it interfered with the core goal of the event: to diligently serve the interests of the Austin community and the Cockrell School's volunteering partners.

Event Attendance

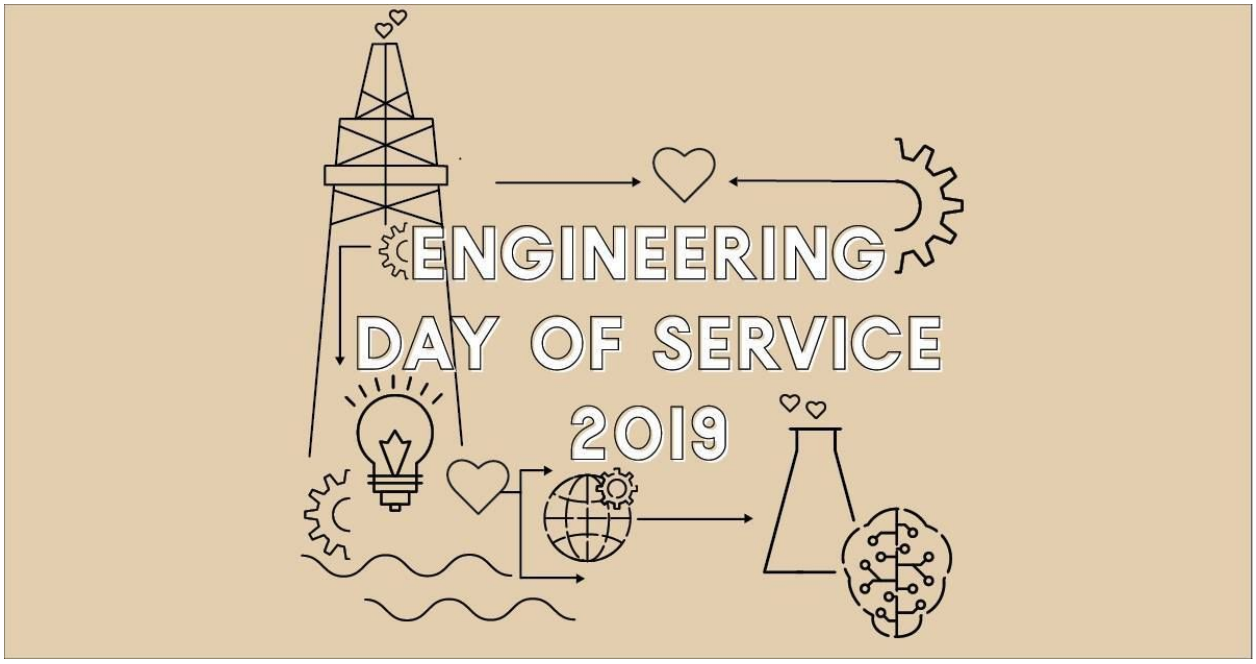
One pain point of this event was the confusion between drivers and the volunteers they were taking to each location. 190 people signed up, but only 160 actually showed up leading to some drivers not knowing who they were actually driving on the day of. Similarly, some drivers did not show up leading to last minute adjustments with carpools. This problem could be tied to the 7:30 am start time of the event on a Saturday which might inevitably lead to some people flaking from the night before. To combat this, repercussions could be added to sign ups for people that do not show up after registering for EDOS. For example, deduct X number of points from an E-week team if someone does not show up. This kind of incentive is especially important for drivers to ensure that they show up to EDOS.

For sign-in forms, we should look into even more efficient methods of conducting event sign-ins, as signing in volunteers through a limited number of laptops turned into a huge bottleneck. One simple fix may be to require drivers to bring their laptops the morning of in order to increase the number of laptops or to start check-ins after the group splits into separate locations. This additional burden on drivers could then be balanced by giving bonus E-Week points for drivers who actually remember their laptops. Another suggestion is to send out a QR code or some other form of remote access code that could be distributed to all of the event participants at once, thus allowing them to sign into the event using their own mobile devices. This QR code could also potentially be distributed to drivers for the event, who in turn communicate the code to their passengers for the day.

The current method of signing in through laptops is somewhat old fashioned but presumably chosen in an effort to avoid falsification of sign-ins in order to earn extra points for the E-Week Competition, as organizations are only assured as many points as they have participants physically at the event when it starts and ends. The concern of a remote access code would be that organizations would distribute this code as soon as an event begins such that all members would be able to sign in and out regardless of whether they physically attended the event. Of course, this concern has already been somewhat balanced by the use of time stamps to ensure no entries are made to the Google Form except at the beginnings and ends of events and the ‘Head Count’ entry included in the SEC event judge’s form. Ideally, introducing a few more security measures in conjunction with a remote access code, such as the use of severe penalties on offending organizations and an emphasis on self-policing to identify other competitors who are abusing the new system, would be sufficient to ensure that this more efficient process would

not result in an increase in cheating during E-Week. Conducting trials in future E-Weeks may bear out whether this approach would be more ideal.

Marketing and Publicity



Engineering Day of Service Poster by the Publicity Committee

Diversifying Publicity Outlets

The marketing strategy for this event was primarily through a Facebook event page that was advertised constantly to all relevant engineering groups. The event itself had a fairly strong engagement number of 319 people responding "Going" or "Interested" and 772 event page views. However, the 160 sign-ins on Airtable represents a 50% conversion rate, even though the event's reach exceeded 6000 people. For the most part, Facebook has never been an effective way to spread the word about an event since the event page only circulates between mutual friend circles. The majority of EDOS attendees are participating in E-Week with their respective orgs, so advertising should be focused more on rallying each organization to bring out as many people as possible.

The most crucial improvement that should be made is as identified above. Numerous outlets that have been identified in previous events were to our knowledge neglected in the case of EDoS. Among them, including information about this volunteer opportunity on the

Engineering Student Services newsletter as well as the newsletters of the respective departments within the Cockrell School could have helped to improve turnout amongst students who were not participating specifically because of their connection to an organization competing in E-Week. This ideally would not be an incredibly time intensive process, as general information about what the Engineering Day of Service is should already be well known amongst the Service committee MALs at the time this information is to be shared with the producers of these newsletters.

The only likely constraint that this would impose upon the Service and/or the Publicity committee is that a sign-up link would need to be produced before a blurb can be added to newsletters. However, given that this form will not likely deviate from the sign-up forms of previous Engineering Days of Service, it should be expected that the Service committee can produce this form and a small blurb and have all of this information out to the department advisors two weeks in advance of the event itself.

Moreover, if this roadblock has not already been addressed, it should be investigated as to whether a database of the emails of all of the newsletter submissions the Student Engineering Council could leverage exists. If it does, this database should be integrated by default into the Publicity development process for most events to ensure that students from all majors are reached in at least one form of marketing. If it does not, it is an important task that the Publicity and MAC committees will likely need to develop together for use in future years.

T-Shirts

The other point relevant to improving the marketing of Engineering Day of Service is to further evaluate the benefits of t-shirts as a marketing mechanism. One point brought up by a Publicity MAL is that the model of shirt used for EDoS this year lacked comfortability, and this may lead to there being not very many people actually wearing the shirt outside of the context of E-Week or perhaps another volunteering event. This would mean that the EDoS shirts would not increase knowledge or visibility of the event beyond the people who participated or their close friend groups.

Given that the Engineering Day of Service was a part of E-Week, and that the vast majority of participants indicated an association with at least one organization participating in E-Week, it is likely that most of the people who have seen the EDoS t-shirts other than the participants who received one are also already aware of what EDoS is and how it ties in to E-Week. This fact, considered in tandem with the fact that the number of t-shirts taken by

participants tends to be less than the amount of shirts ordered by the organizing committee across most of SEC's events, would seem to suggest that there is merit in investigating whether financial resources spent on shirts could be reduced in favor of more considerable investment in other marketing avenues or other operational considerations for events.

Logistics

Carpool Organization

The two main points of emphasis regarding the logistics of the event were the manner in which carpool and volunteering location selections were made, and the actual choice of the six volunteering locations visited over the course of EDoS. With regards to the determining of carpools, the initial idea had been to achieve a balance between the mixing of members of different organizations with a sufficient amount of students in the same organizations at each event. This notion was developed based on the feedback of an MAL from the previous year who suggested that this approach would better help to encourage collaboration and socialization between students even as their respective organizations competed for E-Week points.

This is a good idea and certainly helps to achieve the aim of SEC to be a connecting point between different organizations within the Cockrell School. However, the issue with this approach to selection means that it will definitely take a considerable amount of time to appropriately pick groups such that students from different organizations are mixed into the same volunteering locations. The other issue is the fact that students might choose to spend all of their time volunteering only really interacting with the members of their organization that are at the same location. This, of course, might be seen as a positive at it at least ensures some level of comradery between members of the same organizations as they work towards a common goal.

Overall, it would still be worthwhile to identify volunteering opportunities that offer a variety of tasks and require at least some spontaneous interaction with others. For example, although this is not a surefire answer, spreading mulch at a local park (a very familiar volunteering activity to those who have worked with the Austin Parks Foundation previously) usually involves at least some mixing as you help others to load their wheelbarrows with mulch, exchange tools or positions as you move from one task to another, and while groups are taking breaks to drink water and eat snacks. Again, while this is not certain to solve the issue of participants choosing to stick with their own organizations, it would at least be more likely to result in collaboration than picking up trash with Keep Austin Beautiful, where volunteers were encouraged to split up in small groups and search different areas for trash.

While Keep Austin Beautiful is certainly an indispensable volunteering partner for SEC, and the priority of EDoS should always be ensuring as many volunteering spots as possible, it would still be helpful to give some thought to identifying volunteering locations that encourage the sort of positive interactions between engineering students -regardless of organizational affiliation- that SEC is always looking to foster.

Identifying Ideal Volunteering Opportunities

The second major focus of logistical analysis revolves around the positives and negatives of interacting with each of the 6 volunteering locations selected for EDoS 2019. Of course, while the previous discussion about encouraging mixing of students is important, there are other points to consider that may take priority when identifying candidates for EDoS 2020. For example, as a strong proportion of the total volunteering spots involved outdoor activities like picking up litter, planting trees, and tending to outdoor gardens, there is the obvious risk that the success of EDoS is largely reliant on the cooperation of the weather. While the weather risk is almost impossible to eliminate, there should be a contingency plan with backup locations or additional spots at the indoor locations.

An important point to consider for all locations is a confirmation of the actual work that needs to be done at the respective volunteer locations. Many participants have likely had one or two previous volunteering experiences, and thus are fairly certain of what to expect if they are selected for Austin Parks Foundation or the Central Texas Food Bank. However, it is still generally helpful to inquire what tasks need doing when arranging for volunteer spots and to include a small blurb when ride selection emails are being sent out to give inexperienced volunteers an idea of what they signed up for.

This was most notably the case for Austin Dog Alliance, as both the selected participants and the organizing Service MALs were surprised to find that the tasks prioritized for infrequent ADA volunteers involved little to no interaction with animals. Rather, much of the work involved raking leaves, pulling weeds, and generally attending to the outdoor garden areas at ADA's nearby adoption center. Of course, including blurbs in the ride emails would have mitigated any dashed hoped about getting to pet dogs, but more importantly, they would have communicated that the majority of the work took place outside and therefore would have likely helped the selected volunteers to dress expecting to mostly be outside.

The final point of consideration with regards to logistics involves starting the process of identifying location candidates earlier and, more importantly, identifying key points of contact for each candidate as quickly as possible. While the Service MALs generally considered each

volunteering location and corresponding point of contact for EDoS 2019 to be acceptable, there were still inevitably issues with points of contact arriving late leading to wasted volunteer time (ESW Greenhouse), last minute cancellations resulting in volunteer rearrangements (Umlauf Sculpture Garden), and lapses in communication that meant volunteers were not entirely aware of what their tasks would be upon arrival (Austin Dog Alliance and Keep Austin Beautiful).

Most involved parties will agree that organizations like Austin Parks Foundation, Central Texas Food Bank, and Austin Dog Alliance have become fairly consistent connections for SEC as well as other student organizations within the Cockrell School. It is important for future members of the Service committee to leverage these strong connections throughout the year. Whether this comes in the form of multiple Days of Service or isolated volunteering opportunities organized by member organizations with the help of Service, we should always be looking for opportunities to deepen our volunteering relationships. This will be helpful in identifying logistical and communication issues that may come up when Engineering Day of Service rolls around, as well as increasing the likelihood of the Student Engineering Council enjoying something of a 'preferred status' with volunteering partners when seeking to organize volunteer spots the day of EDoS.

Financials

Overview

In financial terms, Engineering Day of Service can be considered quite comfortable as it was conducted fairly within budget and very likely can be subjected to a few budget cuts with little to no reduction in the quality of the event. Of course, more detailed participant feedback would be necessary to ensure that there aren't needed materials that Service has failed to purchase so far, but at the moment the financial performance of EDoS is strong.

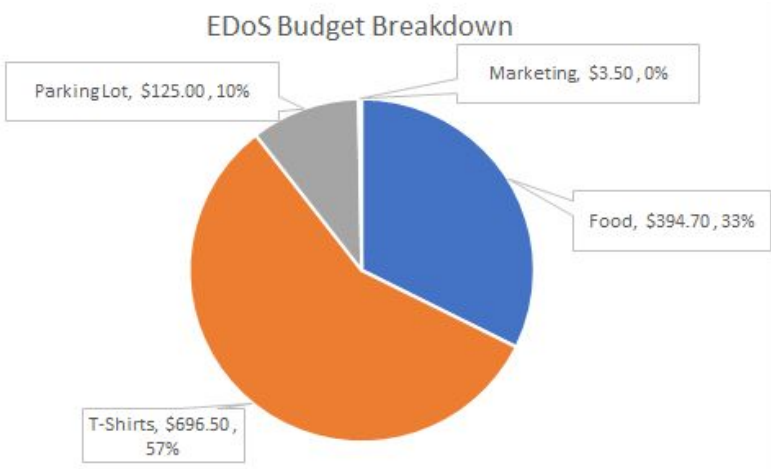


Figure 1: Event Budget Breakdown

To begin, this year's EDoS came in at a total spend of $1,219.70, out of an initial projected budget of $1,500.00. This resulted in a budget surplus of $280.30, or approximately 18.7% of unused capacity. This would have certainly been enough to handle any unexpected increases in the unit costs of core event materials such as the Einstein's Bagels order or the event t-shirt shipment. It should also be noted that this year's event was conducted following a budget reduction of $100 after the 2018 EDoS was observed to have had a considerable amount of leftover breakfast items such as coffee following the day-of morning meeting.

The only item worthy of likely improvement is the amount spent on resources such as food, supplies, and t-shirts. While the overall budget has certainly been shown to be about appropriate for this event even when taking into account previous budget cuts, it is still worth considering whether the amount of t-shirts supplied to participants the day-of is not more than what is actually needed. Taking into account the prevalence of no-shows and/or late arrivals at the morning day-of meeting, it is virtually guaranteed that ordering on the expectations of 200 people will result in unused food and/or t-shirts. It will likely be necessary to revise estimates down further as even participants who do make it to the day-of event will not always take advantage of the free food or shirts. Trying to revise predictions of t-shirt and food orders to more closely match expectations of event turnout will help to maintain control of the event budget in future years.

Engagement and Impact

Engineering Day of Service tries to bring Cockrell students together to serve their community in a fun and engaging way. There are two ways we can judge the impact of this event: impact on the Austin community and impact on the engineering school. From a pure numbers standpoint, this event did well in making an impact in the Austin community as it brought in 160 engineering students to 6 different volunteering locations in Austin. This equates to about 320 volunteer hours contributed by engineering students.

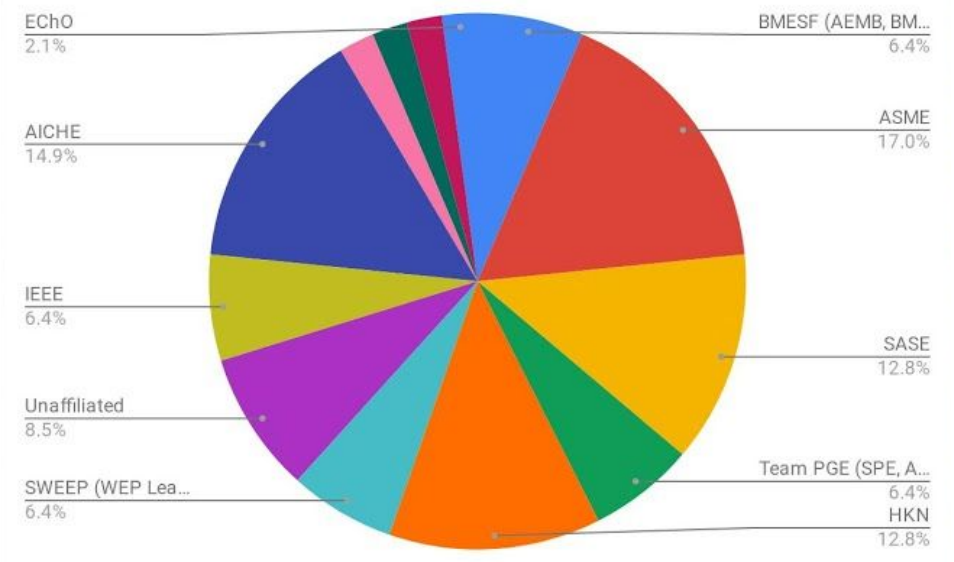


Figure 2: Attendee Breakdown by Organization

As for the impact of this event on the Engineering school, we can take a look at the kind of attendees that were engaged. This event was mainly geared toward participating engineering orgs although anyone could attend. Looking at the figure above, it can be inferred that this event would have very poor attendance if it wasn't associated with E-week. Only 8.5% of attendees were not a part of an engineering org, and it is likely that they were friends of people participating with organizations. If our goal is to reach all Cockrell students with impactful events such as Day of Service, consider how we can expand the reach of this event beyond engineering orgs. Ignoring this fact, we can judge the engagement of this event by the representation of the engineering orgs. From the figure above, 11 of the 20 participating E-week orgs attended, 9 of them being large orgs. Service should focus on getting small orgs more involved and incentivize attendance. One way we can increase small org attendance is by giving extra points to a small org and large org that attend the Day of Service together.

Another aspect of day of service is the interaction amongst all engineers during the event. MAC was not able to collect substantial feedback from attendees. However, from our audit, service MALs thought we did great with the community but didn't "believe we connected the Cockrell community as well as we could have". Other observations cited by MALs were that people mostly stayed with their perspective orgs at the campus meet-up and during volunteering as they split up into groups. Consider introducing some activities or games at the morning meet-up to get people interacting with each other. Also ensure MALs are facilitating engagement and aren't just talking amongst themselves.

Conclusion

This section again quickly dilutes the analysis conducted previously into a few high-level summary tools to give readers a quick-glance understanding of the key areas of improvement for this event.

Overall Assessment

	Planning	Publicity	Logistics	Financials	Impact
Rating					

Future Targets

- Increase E-Week related incentives and/or penalties to improve on the 75% event attendance vs. sign-ups rate.
- Diversify publicity by having committee MAL's speak in at least 3 member organization's general meetings.
- Close budget capacity gap to at least 90% of funds used, either by spending more to improve participant engagement or further reducing budget.

Appendix

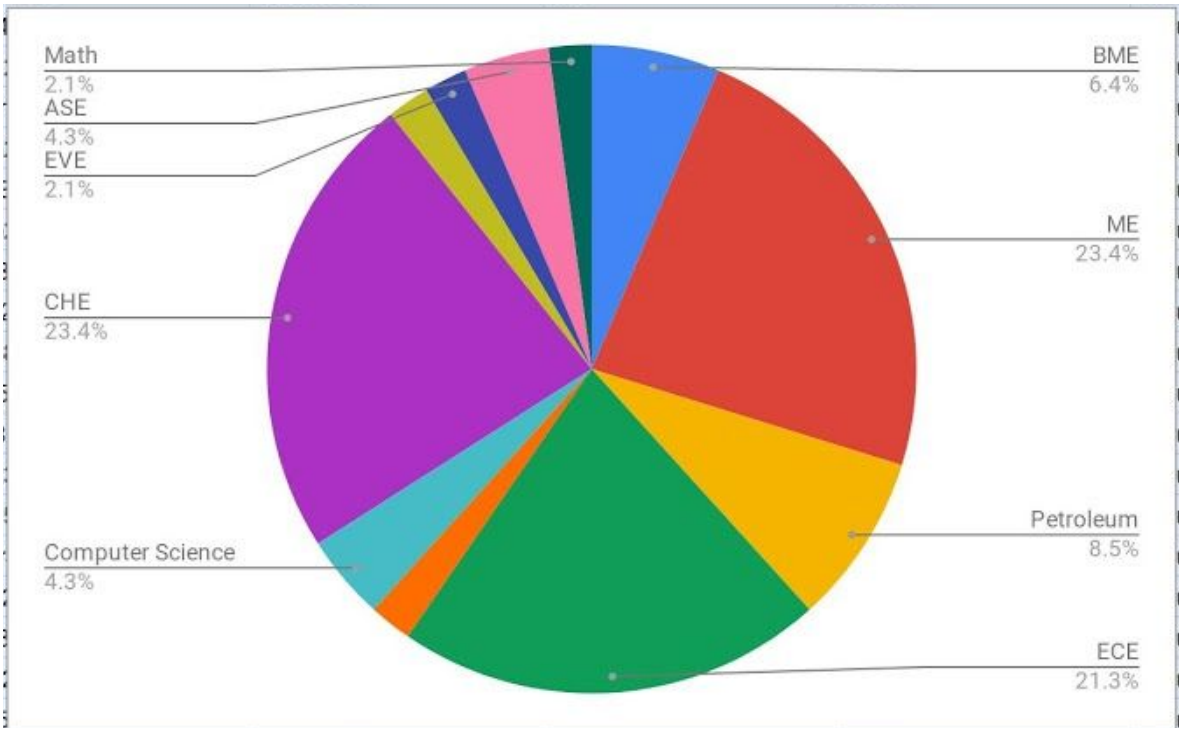


Figure 3: Event Attendance Breakdown by Major

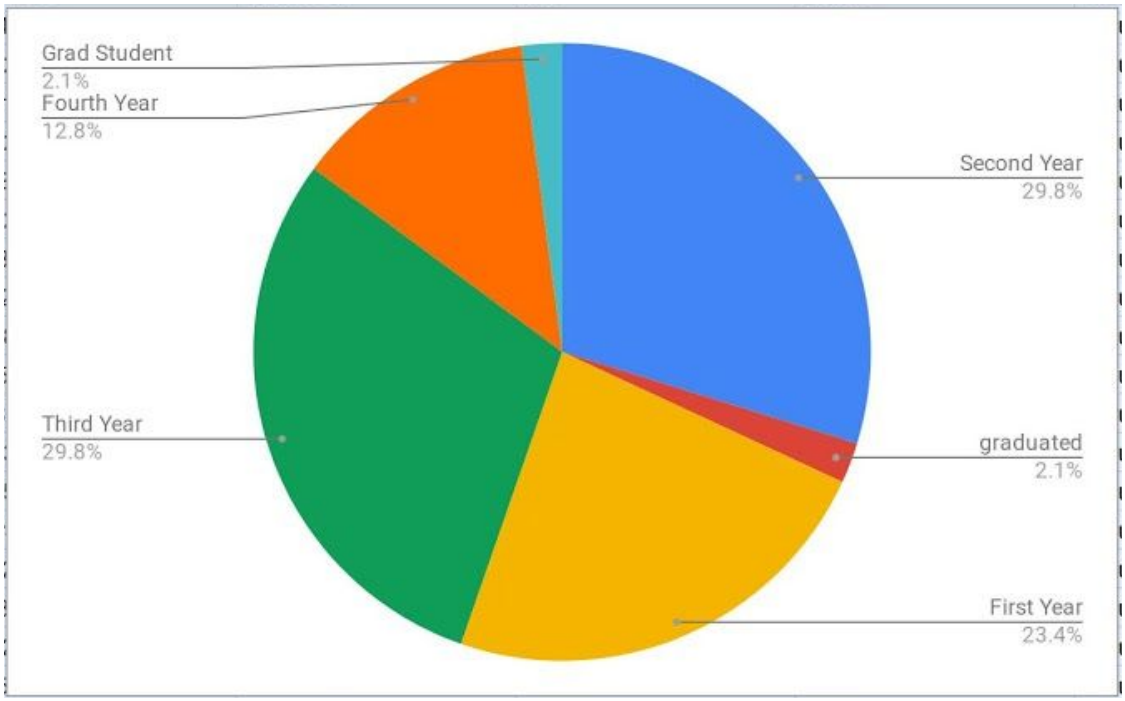


Figure 4: Event Attendance Breakdown by Classification