

Student Life Research

Center for Campus Life - Texas Tech University - Fall 2003

Tech Students Show Program Preferences

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Incoming Freshmen Indicate Their Programming Preferences Using Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Survey

The 2002 CIRP survey requested incoming freshman students (n=397) to rate their level of interest for entertainment events and programs, cultural events and programs, and spirit and tradition events (Table 1a). Responses indicated that they were very interested in on-campus entertainment events and programs (76%) and spirit and traditions (73%) and somewhat less interested in cultural events and programs (41%) (Table 1a).

Incoming freshman students also rated the likelihood that they would attend events on the Texas Tech campus. Highest interest expressed by respondents was for Tech spirit events (70%), that is, homecoming, pep rallies, and spirit related activities. Following spirit events, the most preferred types of activities students were interested in were contemporary films (45%), contemporary music (45%) and classical productions of music or dance (41%). Somewhat less interesting to students were rap music (38%), independent films (30%) and speakers or lecturers (30%). International films (25%) political presentations (24%) and Tejano music (9%) showed the least amount of interest for freshman students. Areas showing lower amounts of interest tended to have higher percentages of neutral or not certain responses indicating that the freshman students may not have had exposure to the entertainment mediums, and therefore, had not established a definite opinion (Table 1b).

Second Semester Freshman Review Their Programming Preferences Using Your First College Year (YFCY) Survey

The 2003 YFCY survey used a smaller sample of second semester freshman students. The students were asked similar questions about their program preferences after

having had a longer exposure to programs on the Tech campus. Using the YFCY survey, students (n=194) were asked questions about their program or entertainment preferences. Highest interest expressed by second semester freshman respondents was for Tech spirit events (85%), that is, homecoming, pep rallies, and spirit related activities. Following spirit events the next most popular programs were general entertainment events and programs (74%) and cultural events and programs (35%). Students were not asked about specific types of events, music, films, etc. in the additional question portion of the YFCY study (Table 2).

Table 1a. CIRP Survey		Incoming TTU Freshman (n=397)			
Program Interest Ratings		Hi/Med	Neutral	Diss	No Exp.
Entertainment Events/Programs		76%	19%	4%	1%
Spirit and Traditions		73%	19%	7%	1%
Cultural Events/Programs		41%	43%	13%	3%

Table 1b. CIRP Survey		Incoming Freshman (n=397)		
Likelihood of Attending	Likely	Not certain	Less Interest	
Spirit Events	70%	17%	11%	
Contemporary Films	45%	30%	21%	
Contemporary Music	45%	35%	16%	
Classical Productions	41%	34%	20%	
Rap Music	38%	30%	26%	
Independent Films	30%	41%	21%	
Speakers or Lecturers	30%	42%	25%	
International Films	25%	38%	30%	
Political Presentations	24%	39%	31%	
Tejano Music	9%	25%	52%	

Tech Students "Focus" On Campus Programs

The Center for Campus Life seeks to select programs that appeal to the widest audience participation on the Texas Tech campus. In an attempt to find out exactly what students want, a recent collaboration with Student Affairs Marketing Department sought to use focus groups to find out how students view on-campus events and what would make them want to attend on-campus events. This study would serve as a comparison to recent surveys asking first and second semester students about their satisfaction level with Texas Tech on-campus events.

Four focus groups were conducted with a total of 34 students participating in discussions on programs and events offered on the Texas Tech campus during the summer and early fall 2003. Randomly selected students were contacted by phone or email and asked to attend and participate in the 60-minute focus group discussions in return for dinner and a \$10 incentive upon completion. International and diverse students were included in two of the four meetings to broaden the focus group perspective. Focus group students represented the freshmen (n=2), sophomore (n=7), junior (n=9), senior (n=10), graduate (n=5) and unknown (n=1) college levels.

From the focus group summaries participants believed

that underclassmen and students living on campus represented the largest number of attendees to on-campus programs. Unawareness, lack of interest, scheduling conflicts, and wanting a separation between school and social life were reasons given for not attending. No bus transportation, driving onto campus after hours and finding parking were also expressed as reasons for not attending. Many students had not heard of the on-campus programs that were being offered and recommended set times, days and location as ways to draw their participation.

Students could be drawn to attend more events that were “free or provided student discounts,” “had food,” or were “modern.” Participants would attend speaker events only if there was a personal interest in the topic, the presenter was a well-known celebrity or role model for them, but avoided presentations that they believed would be too much like a classroom experience. Some diverse students indicated that they believed that campus events were planned for the mainstream students. International and other minority participants believed that there was not enough university support for the programs. Establishing larger events with multiple activities occurring simultaneously were also recommended as a way to include more variety.

Implications

Can campus activity and events programmers meet the broad range of taste and interests that Texas Tech students seem to seek? Yes, but making all of the people happy all of the time isn’t likely to happen. Highly specialized programs and events are often selected to bring differing viewpoints to the campus and broaden the intellectual experience of the students. While some program areas are selected to simply provide entertainment, still

other programs are selected to bring a more “global” view of the world to the campus. This is an era where limited funds require difficult decisions for on-campus programs and events that will draw the most student attendance,

while still meeting university goals of diversity, cultural and educational entertainment propriety. Programmers and campus departments seek to provide the

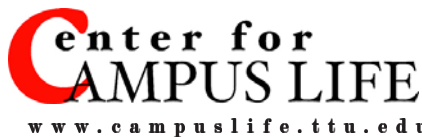
maximum enjoyment for attendees without the benefit of the larger budgets that mainstream media and entertainment venues yield. Unlimited cable programming, the Depot District, local community and arts programs are all in direct competition on-campus programs and events.

Students have indicated the most satisfying on-campus programs and events are those that are highly spirited and tied to traditional college themes of sporting competitions, holidays and/or community service. But why is that, and what makes these programs and events largely successful while other programs are modestly so? Homecoming is a campus and community-wide effort, crossing barriers by drawing alumni, administrators, students, faculty and staff into a week of program events. High profile athletic competitions unite campus administration, the athletics department, student government association and event programming offices together for a successful outcomes. Festive traditions like Carol of Lights and Arbor Day bring together the rank and file, students and the larger community with great results. Perhaps therein lies the key to the on-campus program and events challenge; students participate more often, have greater satisfaction levels and bridge the barriers of personal preference when viewing adult leaders, i.e. the administration, faculty, staff, and local community, bridging the gap and setting the bar as role models for them to follow!

Table 2. YFCY Survey Second Semester TTU Freshman (n=194)

Program Interest Ratings	Hi/Med	Neutral	Diss	No Exp
Spirit and Traditions	85%	12%	2%	1%
Entertainment Events/Programs	74%	20%	4%	2%
Cultural Events/Programs	35%	41%	8%	16%

Percentages do not equal 100 due to rounding



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