

**National Partnership for Educational Access
6th Annual Conference
Evaluation Results**

On April 24-25, 2014, the National Partnership for Educational Access held its 6th annual conference. Hosted in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the conference included three keynote presentations (Scott Barry Kaufman, University of Pennsylvania; Esmeralda Santiago, Author; and Janie Ward, Simmons College), a panel presentation (alumni from different academic enrichment programs), 38 workshops, and a networking reception. The conference drew a national crowd of 268!

A comprehensive evaluation was administered both at the conference and online after the event to gauge participant experiences. In total, 156 conference attendees completed the survey, representing 71 percent of those eligible. Of those who responded, 60 percent were first time conference attendees, while 40 percent had previously attended. Of the returners, 39 percent attended the 2013 conference in Boston, while 18 percent attended the two previous conferences.

Why attend the conference?

In terms of why respondents chose to attend the conference, **93 and 92 percent indicated ongoing professional development and opportunities for networking, respectively, were either important or very important in their decision to attend.** Some 92 percent indicated meeting new colleagues was an important or very important reason they attended, while 50 percent noted the cost of the conference as an important or very important consideration. Typical of past years, responses suggest the conference keynotes were not a strong reason why people chose to attend. Please see Table 1 below for more detailed findings on the reasons people decided to attend the conference.

Table 1. Participant motivation for attending the conference

How important was each of the following in your decision to attend the conference?				
	Not important	Only a little important	Important	Very important
Ongoing professional development	2.6% (4)	3.9% (6)	32% (49)	61.4% (94)
Opportunities for networking and connecting with colleagues	1.3% (2)	6.4% (10)	34.6% (54)	57.7% (90)
Meeting new colleagues and networking with others in the field	0.7% (1)	7.2% (11)	36.6% (56)	55.6% (85)
I was presenting at the conference	58.6% (85)	3.4% (5)	11.7% (17)	26.2% (38)
Conference theme	25.2% (39)	25.8% (40)	27.1% (42)	21.9% (34)
Conference location	29.2% (45)	27.3% (42)	19.5% (30)	24% (37)
Cost of conference	22.4% (34)	27.6% (42)	27.6% (42)	22.4% (34)
Receipt of fee waiver	59.9% (82)	6.6% (9)	6.6% (9)	27% (37)
Scott Barry Kaufman keynote address	43.3% (65)	22.7% (34)	21.3% (32)	12.7% (19)
Esmeralda Santiago keynote address	35.9% (55)	25.5% (39)	25.5% (39)	13.1% (20)
Janie Ward keynote address	40.5% (62)	23.5% (36)	24.8% (38)	11.1% (17)
Other speaker or session	46.3% (57)	17.1% (21)	25.2% (31)	11.4% (14)

Satisfaction with Conference

A range of questions was asked to gauge participant satisfaction with the conference, including both the structure and the quality/value of the conference.

Evaluation results indicate participants were very happy with the conference logistics, with **97 percent indicating they were satisfied or very satisfied with both the logistics and the overall event.**

In terms of specific aspects of the conference, respondents identified the overall conference offerings as the most valuable aspect of the conference, with 97 percent rating it valuable or very valuable. **Opportunities to exchange best practices with others** was rated valuable or very valuable by 97 percent of attendees, while **opportunities to collaborate with colleagues** in the field and the range of topics covered during the conference were rated valuable or very valuable by 95 and 93 percent attendees, respectively. In addition, 89 percent of respondents found the keynote speakers valuable, while 88 percent found available resources to assist their organization as valuable or very valuable. The various workshop sessions were rated valuable or very valuable by 87 percent of attendees. Table 2 below displays the full results of these questions.

Table 2. Value of Conference Sessions and Offerings

How valuable did you find each of the following?					
	Not valuable	Somewhat valuable	Valuable	Very valuable	Not Applicable
The conference overall	0% (0)	3.4% (5)	28.9% (43)	67.1% (100)	0.7% (1)
Opportunities to exchange best practices with others	0% (0)	3.3% (5)	32.5% (49)	62.3% (94)	2% (3)
Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in the field	0% (0)	4.7% (7)	31.3% (47)	61.3% (92)	2.7% (4)
The range of topics covered during the conference	0% (0)	6.7% (10)	44.7% (67)	48% (72)	0.7% (1)
The keynote speakers	2% (3)	8.6% (13)	39.1% (59)	48.3% (73)	2% (3)
Available resources that will assist my organization/institution in achieving its goals	0% (0)	11.9% (18)	43.7% (66)	39.7% (60)	4.6% (7)
The various workshop sessions	0.7% (1)	12% (18)	46% (69)	40.7% (61)	0.7% (1)
The pre-conference site visits	0% (0)	2.1% (3)	4.8% (7)	8.3% (12)	84.8% (123)
Morning session with Scott Barry Kaufman	2.7% (4)	10.7% (16)	30% (45)	44.7% (67)	12% (18)
Lunch session with Janie Ward	4.7% (7)	12% (18)	35.3% (53)	44.7% (67)	3.3% (5)
The networking reception on Thursday evening	1.3% (2)	13.3% (20)	32.7% (49)	25.3% (38)	27.3% (41)
The pre-conference workshops	1.4% (2)	3.4% (5)	8.8% (13)	8.8% (13)	77.7% (115)
Lunch session with Esmeralda Santiago	2% (3)	18.8% (28)	30.9% (46)	36.2% (54)	12.1% (18)
Opening session featuring alumni panel	4% (6)	18.7% (28)	36% (54)	32.7% (49)	8.7% (13)

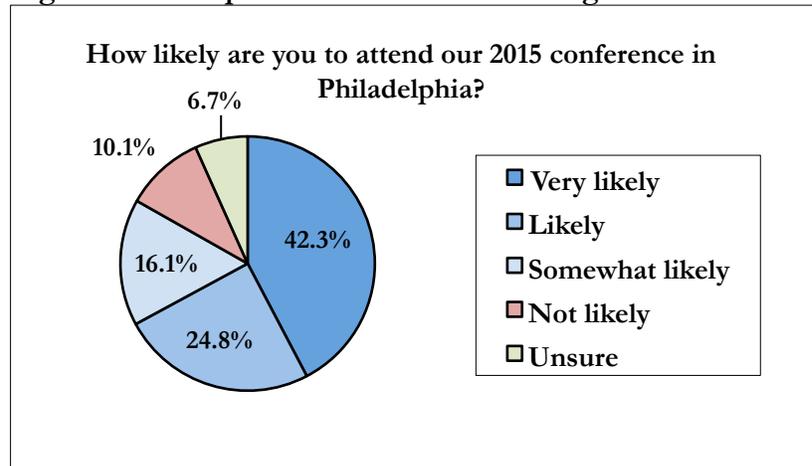
Respondents: 151

Future Conference Going

This year, we included questions to gauge how likely participants are to attend next year’s conference in Philadelphia, as well as preferences for conference locations. Of the 149 people who answered this question, **42 percent indicated they are very likely to attend next year.** Closely following, 25 percent of respondents are likely to attend, and 16 percent are somewhat likely. Only 10 percent of

respondents are unlikely to attend, and 7 percent are unsure. Figure 1 below displays the results of this question.

Figure 1. Participant likelihood of attending 2015 conference.



In terms of what factors are most influential in their decision to attend, 84 percent of respondents indicated the **workshop speakers are the most important consideration**, followed closely by networking opportunities. The conference location is an important factor for 65 percent of respondents, while the cost the cost of registration was significant to 63 percent. Table 3 below displays the full results of this question.

Table 3. Likelihood of attending future conferences

What factors are most influential in your decision to attend future NPEA conferences?					
	Not important			Most important	Rating Average
Workshop speakers and topics	3.4% (5)	13% (19)	36.3% (53)	47.3% (69)	3.27
Networking opportunities	4.1% (6)	13.7% (20)	36.3% (53)	45.9% (67)	3.24
Cost of registration	9.5% (14)	27.2% (40)	31.3% (46)	32% (47)	2.86
Conference date	4.1% (6)	30.6% (45)	41.5% (61)	23.8% (35)	2.85
Location	9% (13)	34.5% (50)	25.5% (37)	31% (45)	2.79
Hotel room rate	12.9% (19)	36.1% (53)	28.6% (42)	22.4% (33)	2.61
Keynote speakers	15% (22)	37.4% (55)	31.3% (46)	16.3% (24)	2.49
Conference theme	21.8% (32)	33.3% (49)	26.5% (39)	18.4% (27)	2.41
Whether I am a conference presenter	39.9% (57)	24.5% (35)	19.6% (28)	16.1% (23)	2.12
Pre-conference workshops	49.7% (71)	34.3% (49)	14% (20)	2.1% (3)	1.69
Respondents: 148					

Qualitative Responses

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, the survey included open-ended questions designed to capture participants overall thoughts and impressions of the conference. In particular, two questions elicited helpful feedback when planning for next year’s conference: “Do you have any speakers or

topics you would like to hear at next year's conference?" and "Do you have any additional comments or suggestions about the conference?"

Suggested Speaker and Workshops

Overall, 88 respondents had suggestions for possible speakers or workshops for next year's conference. While there was a wide range of suggestions, several common speakers and workshop topics emerged. On the high end, Carol Dweck, Claude Steele, and Paul Tough were suggested multiple times, with Claude Steele receiving more suggestions than any other speaker or topic. Other suggested speakers included perennial favorite Geoffrey Canada, as well Lisa Delpit, David Conley, Frank Tuit, Bob Ballard, Michael Eric Dyson, Greg Walton, and Gloria Ladson-Billings. Perhaps not surprising given the positive reviews to her 2013 keynote, Angela Duckworth was requested as a repeat presenter multiple times.

In terms of possible workshop topics, there were many requests to address the achievement gap, as well as affirmative action, supports for undocumented students, and social-emotional/non-cognitive skills. When asked about specific themes or tracks, the most popular responses were program development (47), student services (38), evaluation (31), and financial aid (24).

Additional Comments and Suggestions

Finally, 85 respondents shared additional comments and suggestions. While the overwhelming majority of comments were compliments and thanks-you's, some of the comments offered valuable feedback for next year's conference.

The most common area of feedback focused on the workshops. In particular, several people commented the quality of some workshops was not as strong and consisted more of a description of a program as opposed to tangible take aways and best practices. For instance, one respondent commented, "We are all in this work and already have the information and overview of topics. I wanted to share resources and best practices more than hear about problems students face." While one commented noted a mismatch between the workshop descriptions and the actual content, another said some workshops "were like infomercials for the presenters program or organization." A helpful piece of feedback for next year, one respondent commented the workshops that were strategic in focus, instead of programmatic, were the strongest.

Another area of feedback was to include more intentional networking opportunities. For instance, one person suggested we have assigned seating at one meal as a way to connect people with new faces. Along similar lines, there was a suggestion to have topics areas during the networking reception to help those who don't know anyone have an easier way to make connections.

Finally, in terms of programming for next year, there were suggestions to offer site visits again as they were very well received, and to include some form of career fair during the conference for member organizations who are recruiting for staff positions.