National Partnership for Educational Access
4th Annual Conference
Evaluation Results

On April 19-20, 2012, the National Partnership for Educational Access held its 4th annual conference. Hosted in Chicago, Illinois, the conference included 3 keynote presentations (Melissa Roderick, University of Chicago; Eric Bettinger, Stanford University; Wes Moore, Author), two panel presentations (five alumni from four different academic enrichment programs and a panel of practitioners leading innovative collaborations), 24 workshops featuring 69 presenters, and a collaboration summit that included 16 presenters from 13 organizations. The conference drew a national crowd of 321!

A comprehensive evaluation was administered both during the conference and online after to gauge participant experiences. In total, 187 conference attendees completed the survey, representing 66 percent of those eligible.

Demographics of Responders

Of those who responded to our evaluation survey, **67 percent were first time conference attendees**, while 33 percent had previously attended. Of those who had attended a conference before, the majority attended the 2011 conference in Atlanta. Given the high percent of first-time attendees, it is a bit surprising that **65 percent of all responders were NPEA members**, versus only 35 percent who were non-members.

Some **35 percent of attendees were from education nonprofits**, followed by 12 percent from charter schools, 12 percent from academic enrichment programs, 12 percent from colleges of universities, and eight percent from traditional public schools. Table 1 below displays the eleven different organizational types identified in the survey.

Table 1. Types of organizations represented at conference

Which of the following best describes your work environment?	
Education Nonprofit	34.9%
Charter School	12.4%
Academic Enrichment Program	11.8%
College or University	11.8%
Traditional Public School	8.1%
Other Nonprofit	7.5%
Independent School	7%
Corporation/For Profit	2.7%
Foundation	2.2%
Government Agency	1.1%
Research Organization	0.5%
	Respondents: 186

Why attend the conference?

For all attendees, **the most common way of learning about the conference was from a colleague**. Indeed, some 32 percent of respondents learned of the conference this way. In terms of why respondents chose to attend the conference, **ongoing professional development** and **opportunities for networking and connecting with colleagues** were the most important reasons. Please see Table 2 below for more detailed findings on the reasons people chose to attend the conference.

Table 2. 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	0.5%	4.4%	36.6%	58.5%
Opportunities for networking and connecting with colleagues	0%	6%	31.3%	62.6%
I was presenting at the conference	60.3%	0.7%	7.1%	31.9%
Conference theme	21.7%	22.9%	32%	23.4%
Conference location	20.6%	27.2%	25.6%	26.7%
Cost of conference	13.7%	30.9%	32.6%	22.9%
Receipt of fee waiver	50%	12.2%	12.2%	25.6%
Eric Bettinger keynote address	36.7%	29%	21.3%	13%
Wes Moore keynote address	23.6%	22.4%	27%	27%
Melissa Roderick keynote address	29.9%	30.5%	25.7%	13.8%
Other speaker or session	36.8%	15.8%	29.3%	18%

Respondents: 185

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.

Logistics and Structure

Evaluation results indicate participants were very happy with the structure of the conference.
- 98 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the **length of individual workshop sessions**
- 96 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the **structure of general sessions and workshop sessions**
- 95 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the **length of the conference**
- 80 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the **exhibit tables**

Value of Conference

The next series of questions focused on the value of the conference on the whole as well as specific aspects of the conference, including the general sessions. Overall, **92 percent of respondents found the conference valuable or very valuable**. Consistent with why people chose to attend the conference, **opportunities to collaborate** with colleagues and **exchange best practices** were the most valuable aspects of the conference. Table 3 below displays the results of these questions.

Table 3. Value of Conference Sessions and Offerings

How valuable did you find each of the following?	Not valuable	Somewhat valuable	Valuable	Very valuable
The overall conference offerings	0%	11.7%	45.8%	42.5%
The various workshop sessions	0%	17.3%	48.6%	34.1%
The Collaboration Summit and networking reception	14.8%	27.7%	39.4%	18.1%
Topic and region specific networking tables at breakfast	21.9%	30.8%	30.8%	16.6%
Opportunities for dine-arounds	22.4%	27.6%	35.5%	14.5%
Pair - matching activity	46.1%	26%	20.8%	7.1%
The range of topics covered during the conference	1.1%	13.4%	47.5%	38%

Opportunities to collaborate with others in the field	1.1%	6.3%	47.1%	45.4%
Opportunities to exchange best practices with others	0.6%	8%	47.7%	43.8%
Available resources that will assist my organization/institution in achieving its goals	1.7%	14.5%	47.1%	36.6%
				Respondents: 179

On the whole, evaluation respondents found the general sessions to be very valuable. Of those who attended the general sessions:

- 96 percent found Wes Moore's presentation valuable or very valuable
- 92 percent found the alumni panel presentation valuable or very valuable
- 86 percent found Eric Bettinger's keynote address valuable or very valuable
- 77 percent found Melissa Roderick's keynote address valuable or very valuable
- 63 percent found the collaboration panel valuable or very valuable

Qualitative Responses

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, the evaluation 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 Workshops

Overall, 120 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. Some of the more frequently suggested speakers included Geoffrey Canada, Arne Duncan, Claude Steele, and Bridget Terry Long. Perhaps not surprisingly given their positive reviews, Wes Moore and Eric Bettinger were requested as repeat presenters multiple times.

In term of possible workshop topics, there were several requests for workshops focusing on working with undocumented students, including one suggestion for a workshop around the DREAM Act. The other most frequent request was for another researcher/data person, similar to Eric Bettinger and Melissa Roderick. Several respondents also suggested management-focused workshops, for instance on non-profit management or staff leadership.

Additional Comments and Suggestions

Finally, 114 respondents shared additional comments and suggestions. While the majority of comments were compliments and thanks-you's, some of the comments offered valuable feedback for next year's conference:

- Several people commented that the collaboration summit was not as beneficial as we would have hoped. While many of the comments focused on the collaboration summit being too much after a long day, one person suggested, "I think people really wanted the reception to network and move from conversation to conversation."
- A few people noted the conference had a heavy focus on college and did not include as much information for people working with younger students or in independent schools.
- A number of the comments suggested adding additional workshop sessions, whether by adding another day or half-day or by replacing the collaboration panel with a workshop session. In addition to adding additional workshops, several respondents suggested ending with a Wes Moore-type speaker so as not to short change the workshop sessions following such an inspirational speaker