

Midwest Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls: Assessment on Utility, 2009

Introduction

The Regional Board of Directors of the Midwest Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls (MACURH) responding to the thoughts and opinions of various members of the organization decided to commission an assessment on the utility of the organization. MACURH is one of the eight affiliates of the National Association of College and University Residence Halls, Incorporated. Although the national organization governs the eight affiliates, each affiliate has a very distinct culture with institutions with distinct needs. Further, as the national association has no clear structure in assessing any aspect of the organization, the Regional Board, the governing entity of MACURH, felt it necessary to begin a regional assessment effort to not only highlight areas of success and improvements but to also encourage other regions to follow suit.

Methodology & Respondent Demographics

An online survey through formsite.com was developed by a student and an advisor of the Regional Board. The survey provided for informed consent at the beginning of the survey. There were two sections of the instrument—Advisors and Student Leaders. Respondents were branched to the respective sections based on the positional information shared. Demographic information was not collected through the instrument. The survey was open for approximately three weeks after several e-mail reminders were sent via organizational list-servs. The instrument was composed of several sections of Likert-scale prompts with some open-ended questions. Respondents were able to answer questions at will or even terminate the survey before completion. Additional information was gathered from advisors at a focus-group facilitated at No Frills 2009 selected by random sampling.

Results

Seventy-eight (78) advisors and student leaders completely or partially responded to the survey. Most charts are based on 61-64 total responses (advisors and student leaders combined).

Figure 1: Respondents

Who Responded...



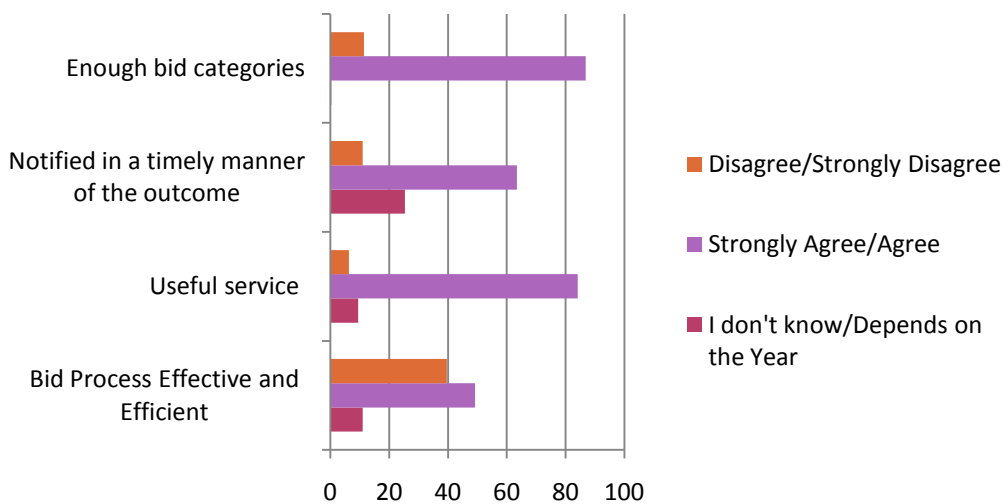
The respondents were then asked about their duration in MACURH: (excluding any involvement within other affiliates or on the national level of governance): The majority of advisors reported one-two years; with the next level being three-five years. In regards to student leadership, 50.0% of those responding had one-two years of experience in the organization.

Bids

Respondents were posed with several value statements and asked to rank on a Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Respondents had the option to choose “I don’t know” or “Depends on the year”.

General

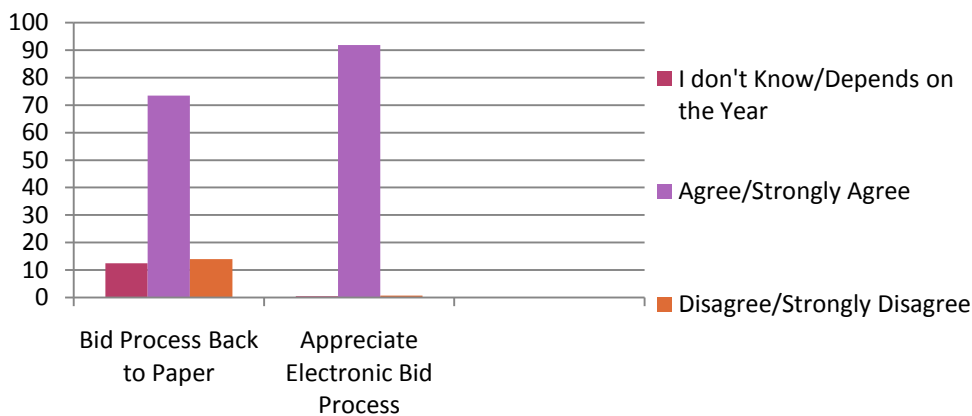
Figure 2: Bids, Part 1, Combined Advisor & Student Responses



In summary, comments shared indicated that feedback needs to be more immediate from the regional board to schools with winning bids, specifically related to conference bid feedback for schools. In regards to the conference bid process, it has been noted that schools would like to be able to receive and review these bids prior to arrival to the conference that they will be presented. In addition, there was also a theme of analyzing the bid writing process and trying to focus on why bids are submitted. Keeping in mind the bigger picture, and not smaller items that can be adjusted (ie: grammar, layout, etc), was a common theme in bid review.

Submission Process, “Going Green”, & Technology

Figure 3: Bids, Part 2, Combined Advisor & Student Responses

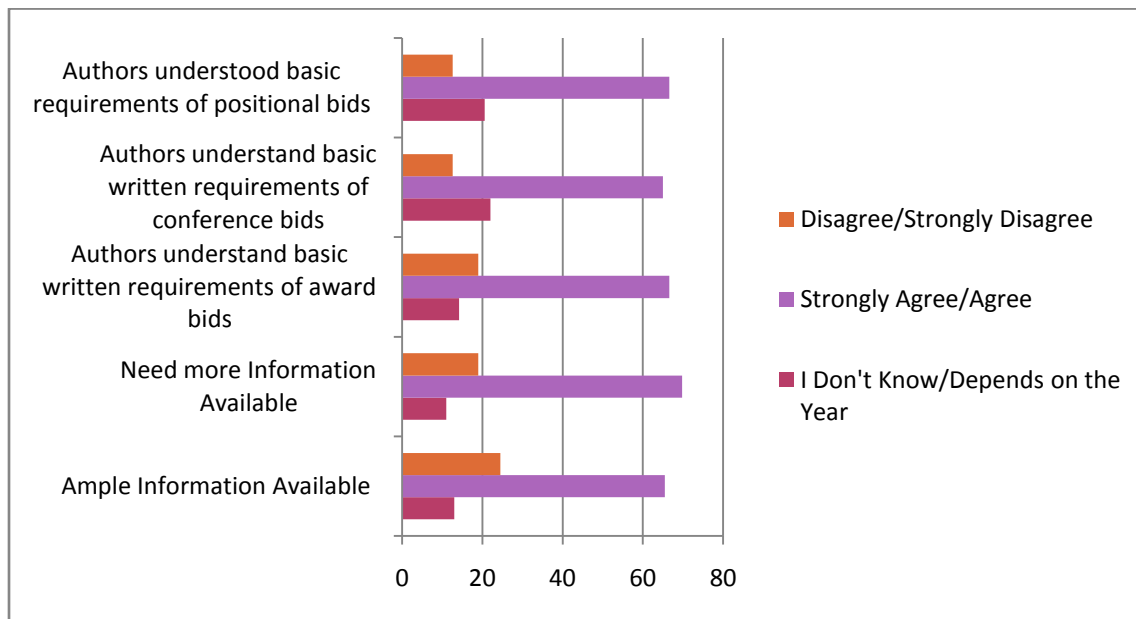


An additional question was asked of advisors only regarding if they felt like they (or their students) were able to maneuver the bid writing process. Sixty percent of advisors felt this was reasonable.

As summary of comments shared showed strong support for the bid process in electronic format versus the previous paper format. There were specific comments about ‘fear of printing’ as to not be seen as not ‘green’ and requests that the RBD find a balance in this process so that people can print if needed. There were some comments about not all students having access to technology and that a complete 100% paperless process not being the answer. There were also some concerns about finding ways to utilize Adobe to format the bid into the appropriate PDF format.

Information

Figure 4: Bids, Part 3, Combined Advisor & Student Responses



Overall, within the comments, there was a consistent theme that bids are too lengthy to spend time to put together by students to recognize efforts of those deserving. The length and requirements were often mentioned as a challenge. There was a consistent message that the RBD provides enough information about the bid process, however, it was suggested numerous times that a bid guide (provided some years and not others) be produced and published for ease in getting access to the information needed, and having that access available early.

Role of the Regional Board of Directors in Bids

The outcome on whether or not the RBD makes a good faith effort to aid authors in bid writing was that 27% did not know or stated it depends on the year; 44% agreed or strongly agreed, and 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In regards to whether or not the RBD responds in a timely manner about questions regarding bids, the majority was unaware (47%), those agreeing or strongly agreeing were 35%, and those who disagreed or strongly disagreed were 18%.

Comments regarding the role of the RBD reflecting a theme that the RBD can do more to be helpful during the bid process both as a group and individually. It was also noted that the “no confidence” voting during positional bidding is a process that people should be re-evaluated, with comments noting that this is an organization that should be building students up and helping them learn and grow in these positions (Timing of the evaluation was after the 2009 No Frills conference where two “no confidence” votes were issued). In this area there were also comments in regards to the way legislation is presented and represented in a boardroom, specifically when submitted from a non-RBD member.

Programming at Regional Conferences

Respondents were posed with several value statements and asked to rank on a Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Respondents had the option to choose “I don’t know” or “Depends on the year”.

Figure 5: Programming, Part 1, Combined Advisor & Student Responses

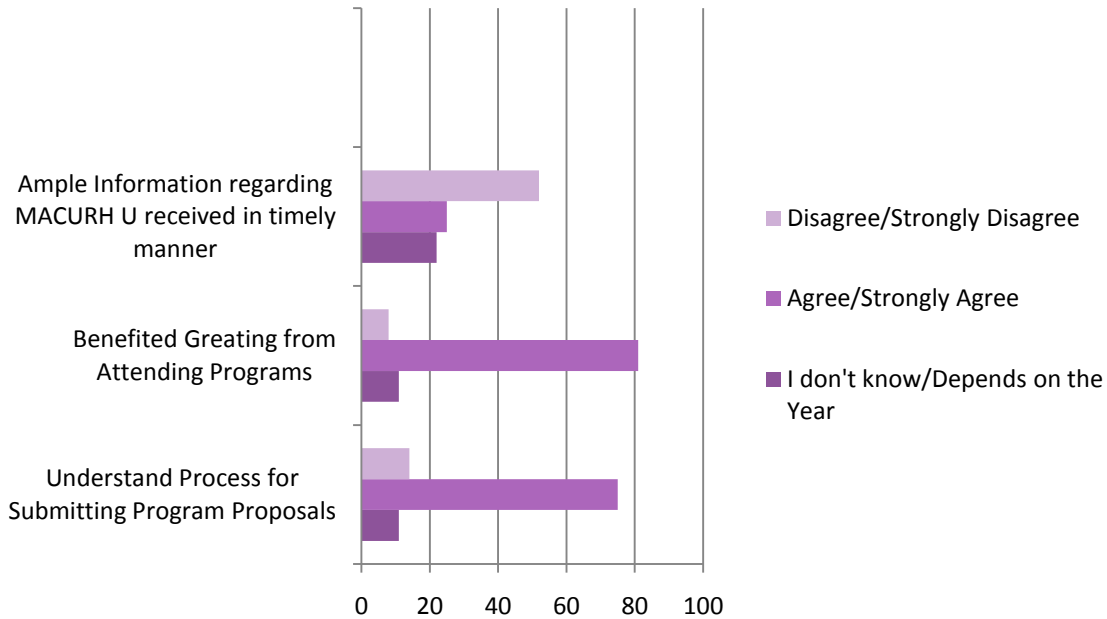


Figure 6: Programming, Part 2, Combined Advisor & Student Responses)

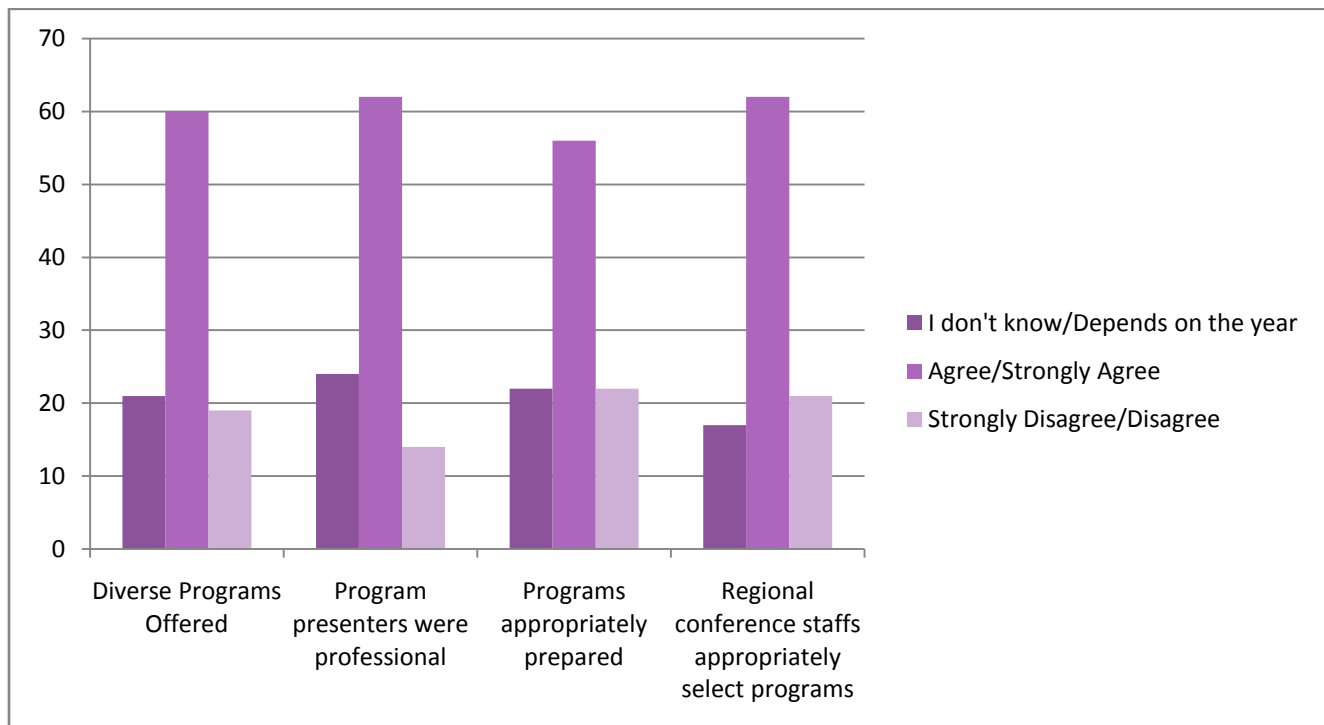
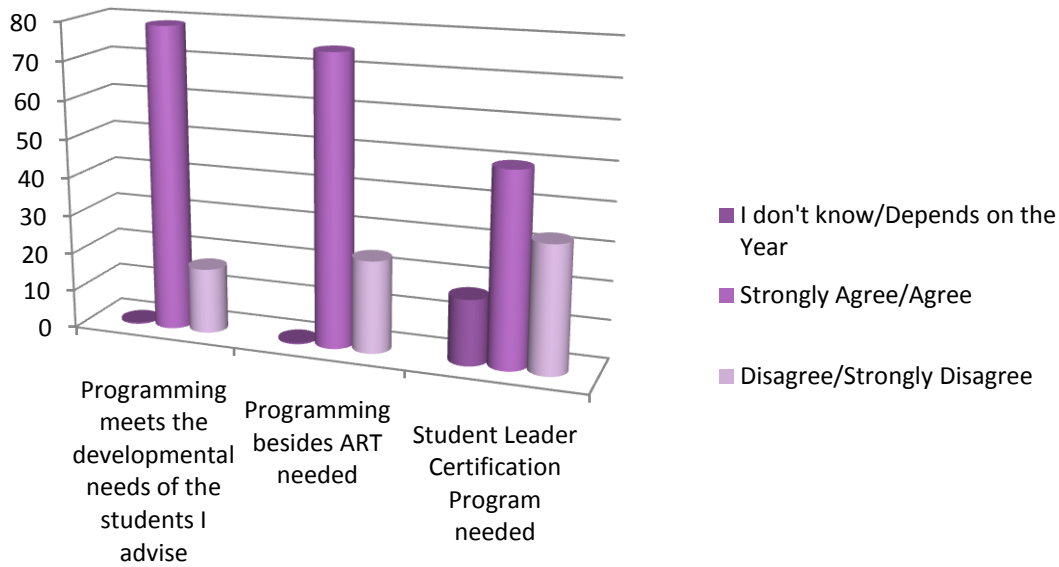


Figure 7: Advisor Questions on Programming (asked only of advisors – 24 advisor responses)



Students were asked two additional questions related to programming:

If they believe the regional conference staffs provided ample information about the submission processes: 39 students responded: 12 responded “I don’t know” or “Depends on the year”. Out of the 27 remaining responses, 63.0% (17) of respondents agreed. 37.0% (10) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

If the conference staffs provided ample information regarding the programming categories or tracks: 39 students responded: 7 responded “I don’t know” or “Depends on the year”. Out of the 32 remaining responses, 62.5% (20) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed. 37.5% (12) of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Overall programming comments showed that often students and advisors do not hear about program acceptance in a timely manner from the conference staff. It was also suggested that the programming grant offered from MACURH is an excellent resource but needs to be publicized more so more schools can access this resource. Overall, programming was a benefit students receive from attending the conference. There were concerns centered on the variety of programs offered at conferences, the on-going sex-education programs as a theme, and balancing the number of programs from schools being presented if similar programs are offered from another school. The largest concerns centered on an understanding of the purpose of MACURH U. In addition, this is an area that respondents felt could use some more publicity so that it is best understood.

Regional Board of Directors (RBD)

Respondents were posed with several value statements and asked to rank on a Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Respondents had the option to choose “I don’t know” or “Depends on the year”.

Figure 8: Regional Board of Directors, Part 1, Combined Advisor & Student Responses

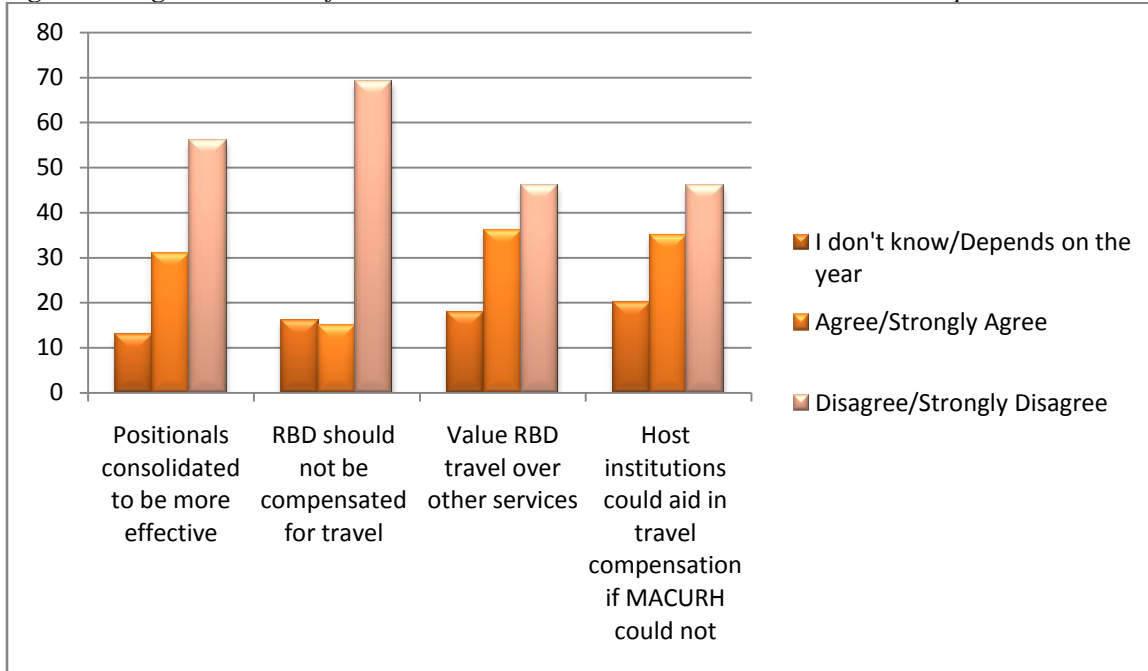


Figure 9: Regional Board of Directors, Part 2, Combined Advisor and Student Responses

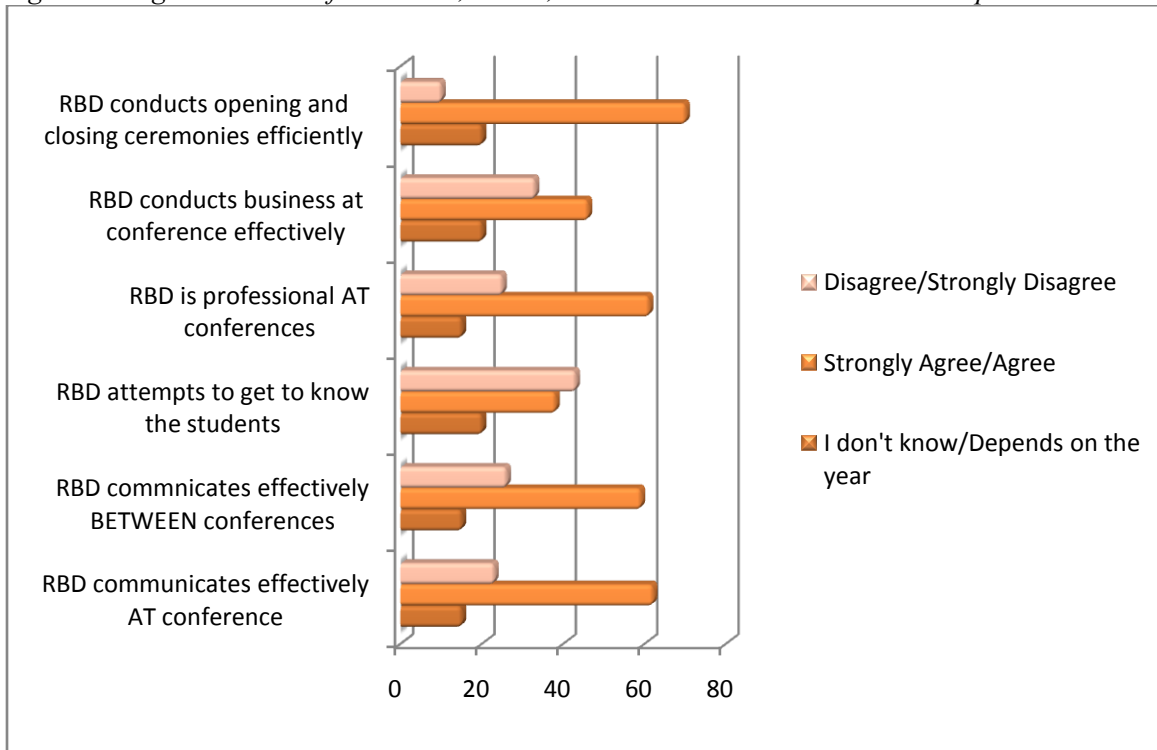


Figure 10: Regional Board of Directors, Part 3, Combined Advisor and Student Responses

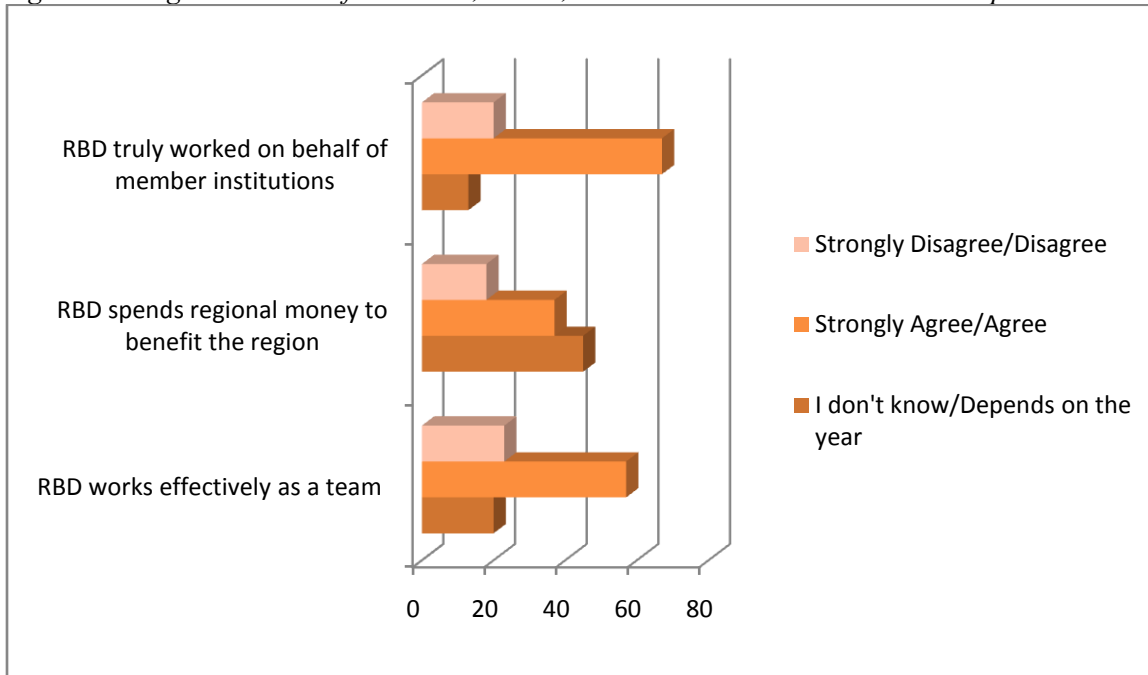
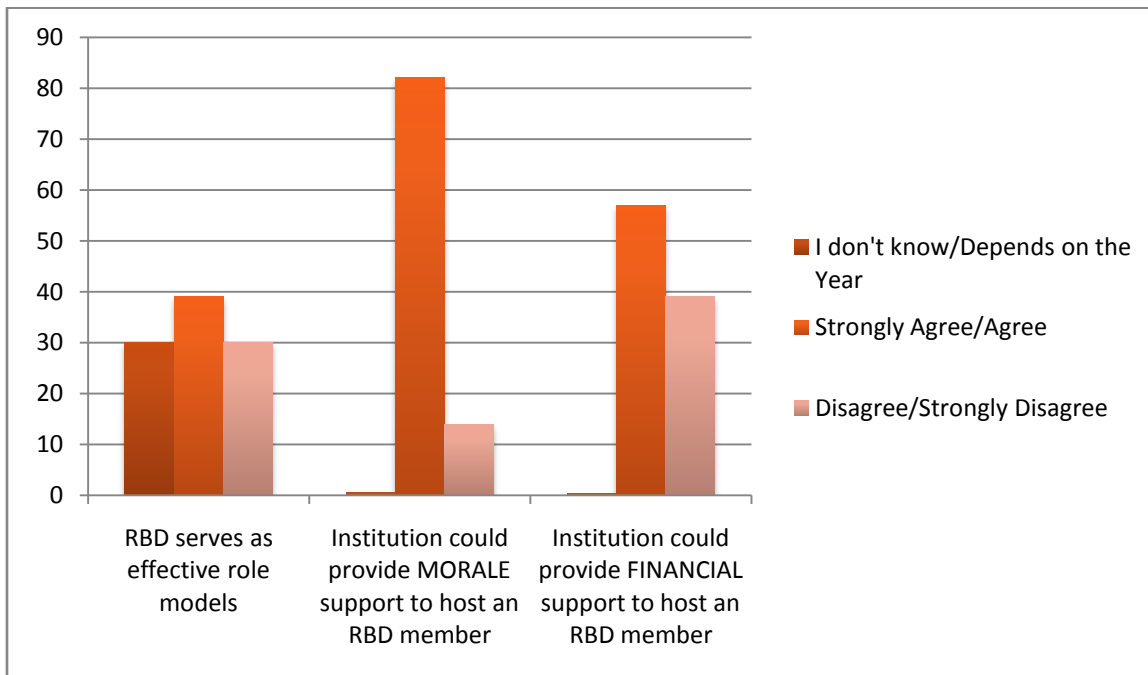


Figure 11: Regional Board of Directors, Part 4, Advisor ONLY questions (23 responses)



Students were asked one additional question related to the RBD:

If the regional board acted appropriately at conferences: 38 students responded: 1 responded “I don’t know”; 74% strongly agreed/agreed; 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Overall comments on the RBD section reflected that the RBD should assess the boardroom process regarding the length, the organization (flow of the agenda) and the process used to conduct business, specifically within the NCC boardroom. Furthermore, it was noted that the RBD could reach out to the students more often to be more transparent and welcoming, thus also working to promote their own positions in the end. It was commented that this years’ RBD seems to keep more secrets and be less organized. Suggestions to aid in the transparency were focused on reports, specifically to what is happening at the national level. The separation between RBD and students, often seen as a “power trip” on the part of the RBD was noted and suggested to be reviewed.

Many statements about the culture of MACURH, which is facilitated by the RBD, were listed in the comments. Items such as dress in the boardroom and frustrations of how students and advisors are treated in the boardroom were mentioned. Length of time in the boardroom and the in-depth use of policy, that not everyone understands or is aware of, can hinder the way students feel connected to MACURH. Finally, several comments were listed about image, role modeling and professionalism of the RBD. While it depends on the year most often, it was noted that the RBD has become cliquish, on a power trip, exclusive, and often moving their own agenda versus that of their constituents. It was noted that the RBD could work more on hiding the display of their non-verbals in board rooms, watching what they share and with whom they share it, and utilizing the guidance of the regional advisors more often.

It was also suggested that the RBD could reach out to the students more often, specifically at conferences, by breaking out of their role to be spirited when appropriate, and also maintain professionalism when appropriate. Suggestions were made that the RCCs could be more active with their subregions in the boardroom, which used to occur. There were also comments about the concept of “joint” boardroom. It was noted that much of joint boardroom is still focused on NCCs and not inclusive of others (PCCs, NRHH reps), citing that this continues to show the focus on NCCs as being the focal point of the organization.

Finally, additional comments focused on travel, citing that it seems that the RBD travels too often, or more often than needed. Suggestions of utilizing other communication modes (Skype, webcasting, chats, and phone conferencing) were noted.

Services

Respondents were posed with several value statements and asked to rank on a Likert scale from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Respondents had the option to choose “I don’t know” or “n/a”.

General

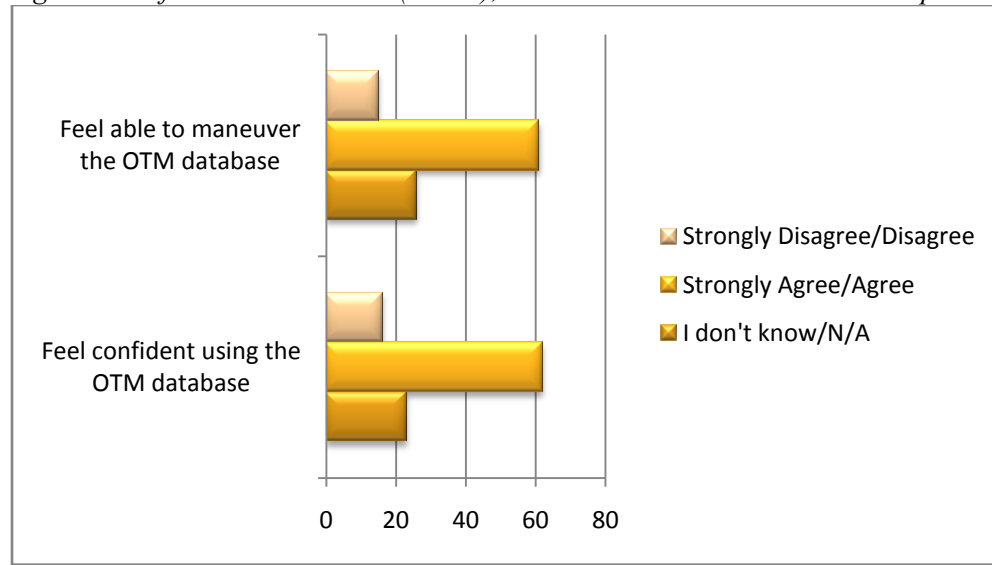
Students only were asked if they felt that MACURH was a valuable resource to their schools. Out of the 38 student response, four responded “I don’t know”. Out of the 34 remaining responses, 88.2% (30) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Only 11.8% (2) of respondents disagreed.

Strong services of MACURH that were valued and mentioned were conferences, programming at conferences, learning leadership skills, networking with other student leaders, NRHH support and resources, advising programs and networking support for advisors, and on going communication.

Services that were possibly lacking within MACURH were program ideas not focused on sex-education, finding a purpose (more than sitting in a boardroom), centralized resources after each conference, sponsorship of a regional webinar on a leadership topic, resources for affiliation, and continued support for advisors through roundtable type discussions.

Of The Month Awards

Figure 12: Of the Month awards (OTMs), Combined Advisor and Student Responses



Comments shared on the OTM process noted that schools need more help and support from the RBD on how to increase OTM submissions. In addition, it was noted that the change in OTM systems seems unnecessary at this point in time and if a change is to occur, more information is needed on the how, when and why for schools.

On Campus Marketing (OCM)

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with their relationship with On Campus Marketing. Out of 61 responses; 25% stated “I don’t know” or “N/A”. 70% were satisfied or very satisfied; and .5% stated that they were not satisfied.

NACURH Information Center

Respondents were asked if they were able to easily maneuver the annual affiliation process.

Out of 61 responses; 20% stated “I don’t know” or “N/A”, 59% were able to maneuver the process; and 21% disagreed.

Respondents were asked if their students (if advisors) or themselves desired to utilize the Resource File Index.

Out of 61 responses; 20% stated “I don’t know” or “N/A”, 34% agreed or strongly agreed; 46% disagreed.

Comments about the Resource File Index showed an ongoing problem with gaining access, understanding the system and how it can benefit students, and also a delay in materials requested. Technology was mentioned for better ease in accessing the Resource File Index information. In regards to affiliation, it was noted that there still seems to be a gap in communication between the National Information Center and the region. It was noted that there are a lot of details and for new schools, advisors, and students, the process can be challenging. It was noted that advisors should be included in correspondence of what is needed.

List-servs

Respondents were asked if they valued having access to student list-servs.

Out of 62 responses; 30% stated “I don’t know”, 63% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed; and 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Advisors were asked if the advisor list-serv was an effective tool of communication. Out of the 24 advisor responses, only three responded “I don’t know” or “n/a”. Out of the 21 remaining responses, 81.0% (17) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Only 19.0% (4) of respondents disagreed.

Comments from advisors indicated that the satisfaction with the list serv was in direct proportion to how often it was being utilized. The advisors felt like, in recent months, more information was being shared with advisors. Overall comments indicated that it would be useful for information on all list servs to be consolidated.

Recommendations

The larger survey results were shared at the MACURH transitional retreat in April 2009, thus sharing the information with the outgoing and incoming RBD members. This conversation was in depth and led to the start of discussion on goals for the 09-10 year. Items below are recommended from researchers, and outcome of the assessment, to be considered for review in this next academic year by the new RBD as they set goals.

- Review bid writing process and guidelines, including updating and posting the bid guideline to be accessible at all times for students.
- Review the dress code policy for boardrooms
- Focus on the culture of MACURH and ways the RBD can be more transparent, more inclusive, more interaction with students, promote positions more, and be more welcoming overall.
- Focus on communication – clear, direct, and transparent – to the region and look to include national updates.
- Publicize and implement better use of MACURH resources, such as the programming grant
- Assist students and advisors with the use of technology for bids and the OTM writing process
- Continue to assess how all RBD members are using their time, specifically how the RCCs can better assist in the boardroom and with the affiliation process for schools.
- Focus on MACURH U and making it more user friendly to students, as well as assessing how it can best serve the region and be a tool that individuals can understand.