

## **COSA – Conference On Social Awareness 2012**

### **Brief description of program:**

ASUU's 8<sup>th</sup> annual Conference on Social Awareness (COSA) was held on Saturday, February 4, 2012 at the University of Utah's A. Ray Olpin Student Union Building. This year's conference theme was "Unity through Diversity." Undergraduate students, graduate students, staff, faculty, and community members were invited to participate in this conference. The central purpose of COSA is to create conversations and support continued dialogue regarding overcoming historic inequalities on campus and within our society. Specifically, this approach to racial, social, and economic justice acknowledges the power and joy in solidarity and connecting across intersecting identities and communities, while also recognizing the struggles and complexities that emerge when we engage in justice work within systems that reproduce identities of privilege and oppression.

### **Who was asked to complete survey:**

Conference attendees included undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and staff from the University of Utah and surrounding institutions of higher education (e.g., Westminster College, Utah Valley University, and Salt Lake Community College).

**Response Rate:** 26.3% (49 of 186)

**Administration Type:** Campus Labs mailing system

### **Summary of Key Findings:**

This year, ASUU restricted several pieces of COSA as well as added Wellness Activities to COSA in order to promote relationship building and explore a new way in which to break up the conference. Based on feedback from last year's survey, the 2011-2012 Diversity Board decided to have the keynote at the beginning of conference instead of the end. While this change seemed to increase attendance at the keynote, it seemed to have a negative impact on attendance of breakout sessions that followed. It seemed that our response rate of "Did Not Attend" increased this year when compared with last year. In regards to the addition of the Wellness Activities, there was a mixed response. Some of the feedback on this piece suggests connecting the Wellness Activity to the theme of COSA in a more intentional manner. This year's keynote was Rinku Sen. Her content and presentation received positive feedback from attendees.

Perhaps one of the most encouraging finding was the increased awareness on issues of social justice expressed by participants. Approximately 75% of participants indicated that they were able to meet and connect with new people. 78% of participants indicated that COSA inspired them to participate in future efforts towards advancing social justice. 24% and 53% of attendees indicated that they were either extremely aware or very aware of social justice and diversity issues prior to the conference respectively. These levels of awareness increase after the conference with 33% and 58% participants indicating that they were either extremely aware or very aware of social justice and diversity issues prior to the conference respectively.

### **Actions Taken:**

With regards to the content of the conference, a number of participants indicated a desire to address the following topics at future COSA conferences: advocacy/social mobilization, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, Critical Race Theory, spirituality, and an in-depth transgender discussion. Several participants indicated a desire to have the keynote speak for longer and/or lengthen the time allotted for question and answer. All of these findings and suggestions will be included in COSA transition material to the 2012-2013 Diversity Board Director and the 2013 COSA planning committee.

### **Which department and/or program goals does this survey align with?**

Both Student Affairs and ASUU are committed to examine the effectiveness of programs and activities in an effort to better meet the changing needs of the student body.

### **Which Student Affairs goals does this program align with?**

1. Develop students as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the body, mind and spirit.
2. Provide education that ensures all staff is properly trained to provide professional and competent service.
3. Promote diversity on campus through effective programming
5. Partner with faculty, staff and external constituencies to foster student development and enhance the greater community.