

I. Background

Every year, thousands of students and community members across America participate in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service by providing financial literacy, job placement and skill development training, emergency food, and education related and other services to the masses. For instance, in 2013, 148,295 volunteers served for nearly 1.3 million hours of service (National Corp Website). Given the life and work of Dr. King in advancing social justice and the discourse on civil (dis)obedience, the national trend has been to encourage active citizenship and civic engagement on MLK's holiday in response to potential passivism. In 2013, members of the Vanderbilt community contributed to this initiative with over 900 hours of service, including some 265 participants across some 26 different project sites in the greater Nashville community. The data and findings that follow will outline Vanderbilt's continued involvement in this day of action for 2014.

II. Methodology

To better understand what is taking place during our weekends of service, and to better capture the impact upon those involved, including project leaders and all participants, OACS staff created a two-page assessment tool containing both open-ended response items and scales. The assessment tool was created in both paper and electronic forms in an effort to increase participation rates. Paper surveys were given to project site leaders present at a training session held the morning of January 17th, and was then distributed digitally to all involved. Participation was tracked through AnchorLink, though additional participants and their contact information was captured in person or via email.

Site leaders were responsible for disseminating the paper surveys to project participants at the close of their project and were tasked with returning all completed surveys to OACS—no later than the Friday after the MLK Weekend of Action. Once paper surveys were returned, a staff member manually input the responses into Survey Monkey. By doing so, one was better able to capture the totality of the data and to better report on these findings.

To reiterate from a methodological perspective, paper surveys were employed to maximize the response rate. We rationalized that students may be more prone to complete a short survey following their service experience, as opposed to a few hours or days later. For those participants that did not have the option of completing a paper survey, we sent out links to the survey created on Survey Monkey in a follow-up email at the close of all activities.

III. Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes were incorporated from assessment documents created mid-Fall 2013 and were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (none, very little, some, a fair amount, and very much). Below are the five learning outcomes we identified and wanted to measure for MLK Weekend of Action:

- Developed a greater understanding of the issue addressed during the project
- Identified with people of different backgrounds and social classes on the basis of humanity
- Been impacted (your attitudes or values) by working with diverse communities or cultures.
- Sought justice by engaging in this experience.
- Spent time in a cultural setting very different from your own.

Given the recent passing of Nelson Mandela in December 2013, MLK Weekend of Action was broadened to include his contribution to the mission of advancing social justice. In short, we were particularly concerned

with assessing the extent to which students felt they honored the legacy of MLK Jr. and Nelson Mandela through this experience, whether or not students felt connected to larger, societal issues influencing service projects, and how this weekend may have impacted the Nashville community. Responses to these questions were open-ended.

IV. Results and Analysis

Approximately 265 members of the Vanderbilt community participated in MLK Weekend of Action—contributing roughly 900 hours of service across 26 different projects. 82 participants completed evaluations, yielding a 31 percent response rate. We feel the use of paper surveys is likely to have increased the response rate. Survey respondents, moreover, accounted for 263 hours of service. The charts included in the appendix provide a visualization of who participated in the Weekend of Action and in what ways.

General Demographic Information:

Current Status at Vanderbilt:

- Sophomores accounted for 26% of respondents, our largest cohort
- 22% First-Year students, 20% Juniors, 16% Seniors, 6% Graduate/Professional, 6% Humphrey Fellows, and 5% Staff

How did you learn of the MLK Weekend of Action?

- 62% from a Vanderbilt student organization or group, 59% from Email/listserv
- Only 13% reported learning of the opportunity from posters and/or “a friend”

The registration process, through AnchorLink, appears to have been quite easy for participants.

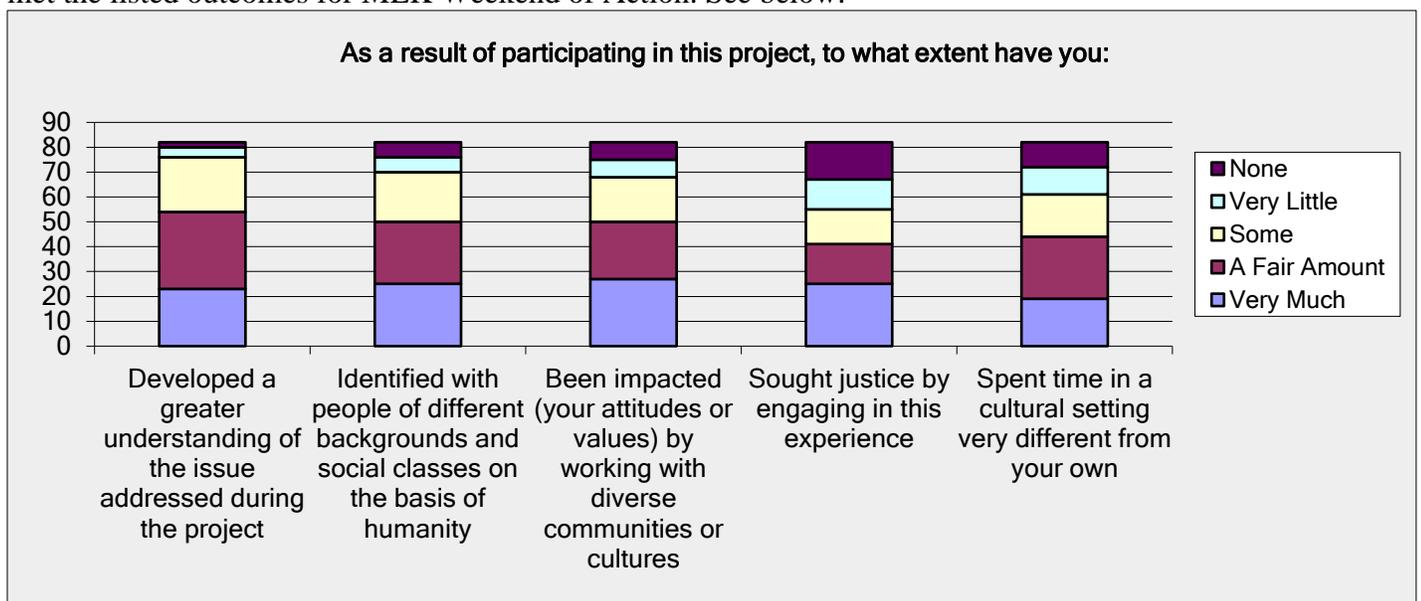
- 80% found it Very or Moderately Easy, and 17% of the remaining responses reported an N/A on this question, having signed up directly through a service organization

Types of Service Opportunities varied in their areas of interest:

- 50% Education, Tutoring, Mentoring
- 20% Homelessness or Poverty
- 13% Environment and Sustainability
- 12% Health and Wellbeing
- Community Development
- Senior Residents

Specific Learning Outcomes

Concerning the learning outcomes, survey responses demonstrate that a fairly large portion of participants met the listed outcomes for MLK Weekend of Action. See below:



The majority of respondents reported to feeling like they “helped” in some issue or capacity, lending hands to projects and activities already in motion in the city. Interpretation of one’s impact ranged from “service

to community” and “I feel like I was able to connect with the Vanderbilt community, but the work lacked an impact on the Nashville community as a whole” to “felt proud to be a part of the solution to one of the world’s most burning problems, which is ‘climate change and other related environment issues,’” and “It would have taken them days to complete the work that we did in a few hours. By helping them prepare these spaces, they will be able to house more homeless families and start them on a path to security and success.”

Why did the majority of respondents participate?

- “I wanted to help” or “It feels like the right thing to do”
- “Opportunity to serve”, and/or “I enjoy service”
- “Become more active” – Responses centering around the importance of action in ones life

Honoring Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela

- The majority of respondents felt that they did honor the legacy of these great men, but it was to varying capacities and many felt that their small contributions were more about making small waves rather than the extent to which these men went for justice and equality

What could be improved?

- “T-shirts!” was a frequent response
- Better or more comprehensive descriptions of each project
- More publicity
- More education on the front-end

V. Limitations

We identified the following limitations regarding the construction of this year’s MLK Weekend of Action:

- It should be noted that we cannot control for the extent to which having a site leader present may have pressured students to complete the survey. In addition, we may or may not have lowered our response rate in ways not measured by waiting 3 days to send out a follow up email to participants.
- Estimates for total participants were taken from AnchorLink signups and then multiplied by an estimated average hours of service (3 hours) which provided the total number of hours.
 - In short, these estimates could be too high or too low. As such, they should be considered with a healthy grain of uncertainty
- Our findings may not be generalizable to the larger pool of participants.

VI. Recommendations

In moving forward with future Weekend of Actions, one recommends the following:

- Use both paper and digital surveys for assessment purposes, as a combination of each seems to result in a higher response rate.
- Continue to publicize via digital media (i.e. Facebook, AnchorLink, etc) and increase our mechanisms for word of mouth; advertise early and consistently.
- Continue to convene a site leader training session on the initial day of any Weekend of Action, and think about ways to enhance overall education throughout the event
- Manage signups via AnchorLink and enhance our descriptions of each project
- Increase our emphasis of this event and any additional weekends of service to service organization leaders, aiming for each and every organization to participate in some capacity
- Target first-year students in a more strategic fashion by working with Faculty Heads of House and House Service Commissioners on the Commons
 - Possibly create a Day of Action for all incoming first-year and transfer students throughout the Nashville community

VII. Appendices (Summary Statistics)

Table 1: How did you learn about the MLK Weekend of Action? (Please check all that apply)

Key Finding (s):

62.2 percent of respondents learned of such opportunities via student organizations/groups

58.5 percent of respondents learned of such opportunities via email/listserv

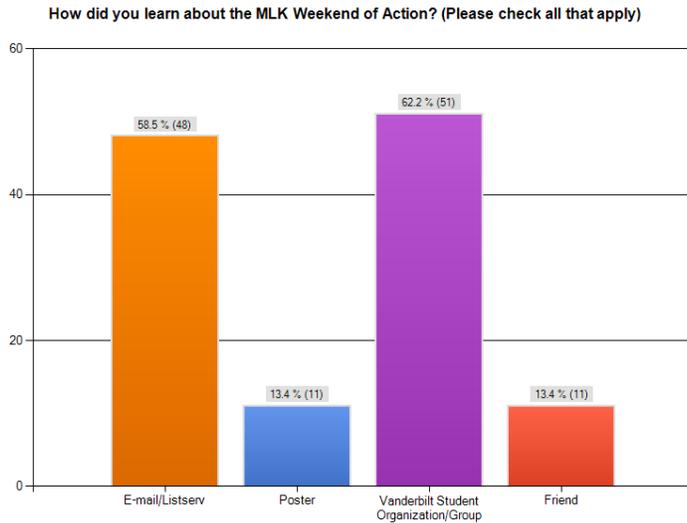


Table 2: How easy was the registration process on Anchor Link for this event?

Key Finding(s):

58.5 percent of the survey respondents found it “very easy” to sign up on Anchor Link

17 percent of the survey respondents signed up directly with service groups

How easy was the registration process on Anchor Link for this event?

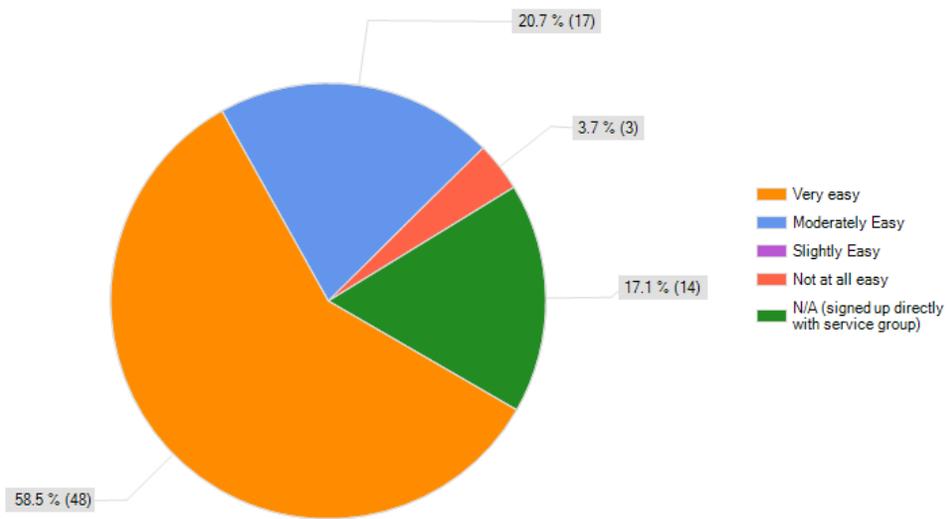


Table 3: What service area(s) were addressed in your project? (Please check all that apply)

Key Finding (s):

50 percent of survey respondents served in education/tutoring/mentoring areas

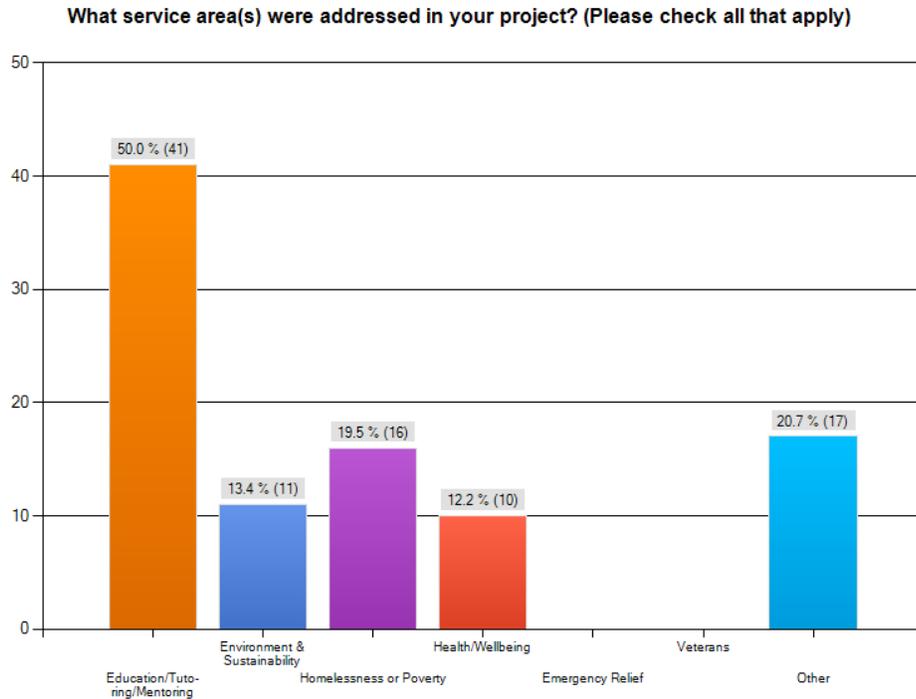


Table 4: Which days did you participate in a MLK Weekend of Action project? (Please check all that apply)

Key Finding (s):

83.5 percent of survey respondents participated in projects on Saturday.

21.5 percent of survey respondents participated in projects on Friday.

Which days did you participate in an MLK Weekend of Action project? (Please check all that apply)

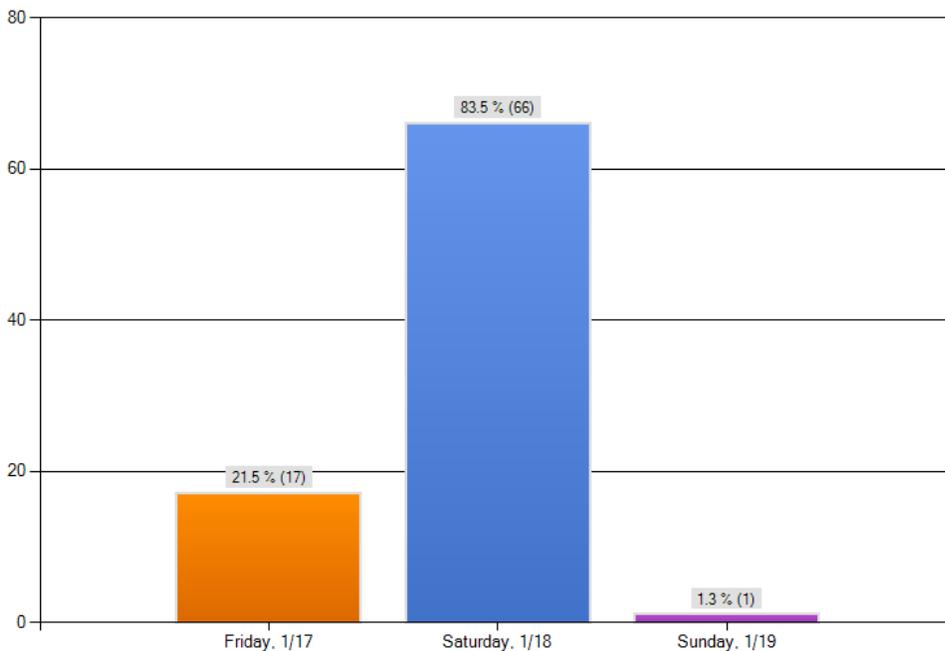


Table 5: What is your current status at Vanderbilt University?

Key Finding(s):

What is your current status at Vanderbilt University?

