

LASA2016 Survey Report

by PILAR RODRÍGUEZ, Congress Coordinator | pir5@pitt.edu

Our 50th anniversary Congress was filled with exciting panels, stimulating debate, and wonderful networking opportunities. Overall, from our perspective, it was a successful Congress. We were honored to have among us the honorable presidents Luis Guillermo Solís, president of Costa Rica, and Ricardo Lagos, former president of Chile, as well as theorist and activist Noam Chomsky, to name a few. For the Gran Baile, LASA went all out to put together an animated dance party, inviting the famous Nuyorican salsa musician Willy Colón and Milly Quezada, the “Queen of Merengue.” Regardless of all the enthusiasm around the Congress we wanted to ensure that our most important constituents (our members) agreed on the success of LASA2016 and thus our yearly online survey was sent to collect demographic information and respondents’ feedback, and to measure the overall experience during our time in the Big Apple. We thank the 667 participants who responded, who represent 10.4 percent of all of the LASA2016 registered participants (a 6 percent drop from 2015).

The three survey categories captured were demographics, LASA2016, and future Congresses.

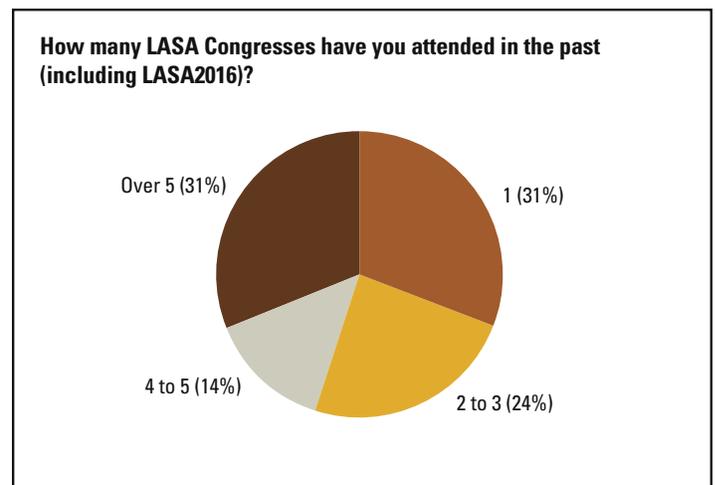
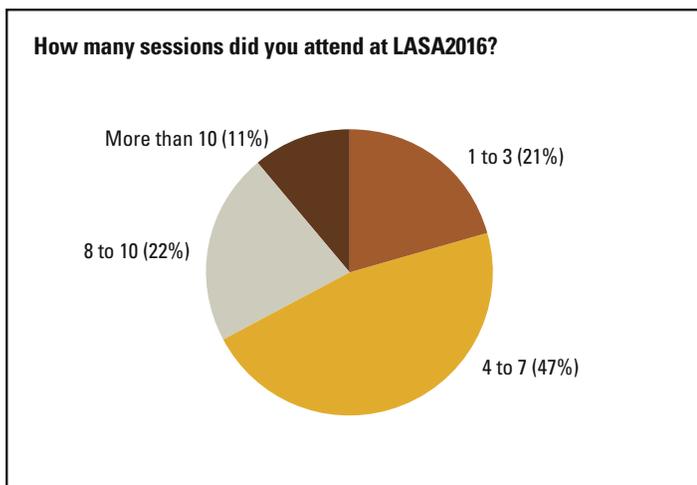
Demographics

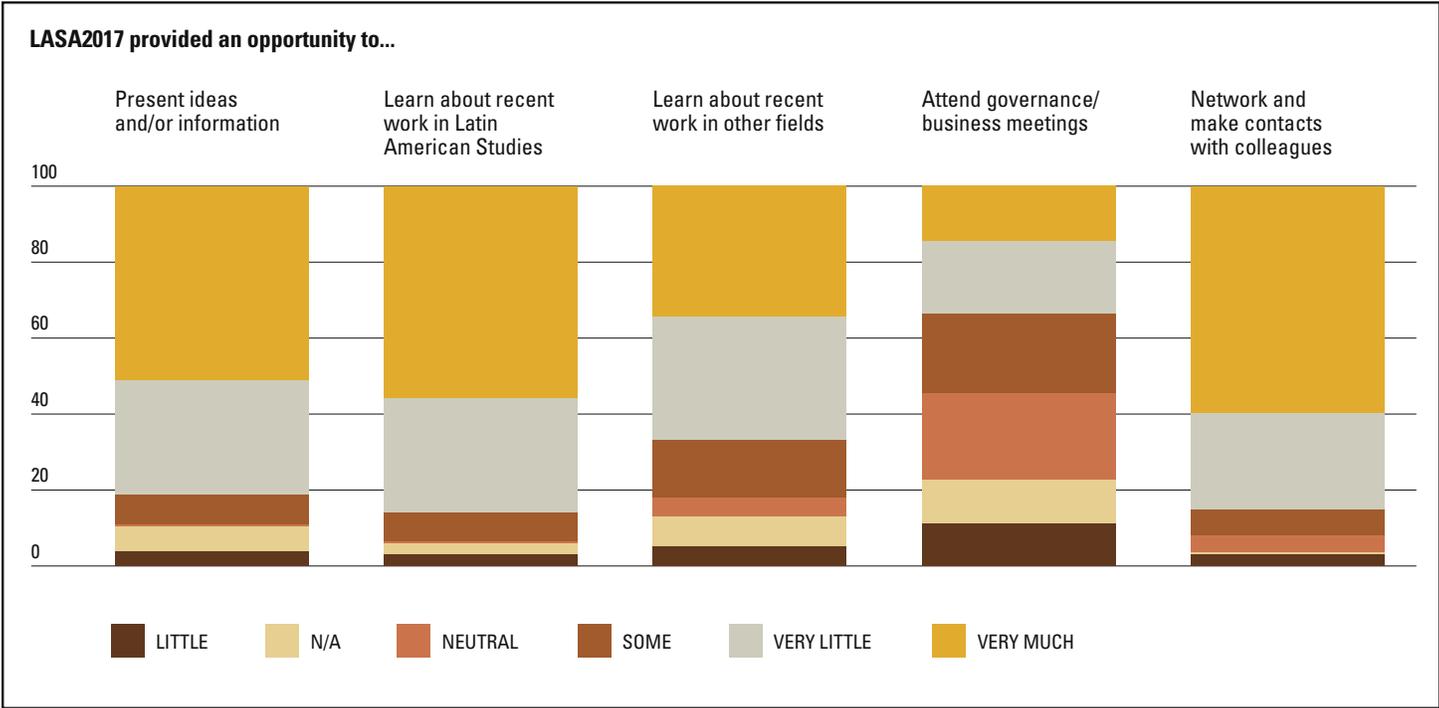
This year, there were more respondents from Latin America (46 percent) than from the United States and Canada (43 percent), this is an 8 percent increase in participation for our Latin American colleagues, which we appreciate as your feedback is very important in preparing us for Lima, Peru. Similar to previous years, our respondents focus mainly on research activities (60 percent) and 30 percent in education. However, unlike previous years, which were heavy on first-timers’ feedback, this year first-timers were tied (31 percent) with seasoned attendees (attended five or more LASA Congresses). Both groups are important to us as you evaluate the Congress with new lenses as well as with experienced ones. The trend continues to be that most participants attend between four and seven sessions during the Congress.

We realize that many sessions occur at the same time, and some of the same topics simultaneously, but due to the high volume of sessions allowed in the Congress, to be able to honor the spirit of inclusiveness, multidisciplinary, and diversity of LASA, this overlap is bound to happen. We hope that the multiple simultaneous sessions permit a wide range of session options in which you can participate and grow.

LASA2016

Most respondents noted the slight change in session times this year. We went from an hour and forty-five minute sessions to an hour and thirty minutes. The reason for this change was to include plenaries (sessions with no other competing panels) that included VIP guests such as Alejandro Mayorkas of the Department of Homeland Security and Julia Preston of the New York Times. To avoid the sessions running too late in the day and competing with business meetings and receptions (as well as New York’s gastronomy), the sessions were





shortened by fifteen minutes. Your concern for additional discussion time was noted and Lima will have the usual allotted time.

Another common concern which was mentioned again this year is that the size of the room was inadequate for the number of attendants in a session. Unfortunately, it is impossible for us to predict the number of attendees for a particular session, thus this factor is not usually considered when assigning rooms. Additionally, since LASA2013, to further allow networking opportunities between colleagues in the same disciplines, we started assigning neighboring rooms by program tracks/similar themed tracks. Sometimes this practice risks having small meeting rooms next to each other. However, we have received very positive feedback on having track-designated rooms as it has improved networking opportunities. We hope this additional networking compensates for the sometimes crowded rooms.

As the graph illustrates, LASA Congresses continue to be first a networking opportunity and then an opportunity to learn about work in Latin America, which is directly linked to LASA’s mission.

Overall, 77 percent of the participants were satisfied with LASA2016, 13 percent were neutral, and 10 percent were dissatisfied. This was a decrease of 4 percent over last year’s satisfaction rate. The slight decrease in satisfaction from Puerto Rico, based on the feedback, may be due to the discussion time having been reduced and the fact that New York City, though a great location, was a bit expensive. Surprisingly enough, 79 percent of respondents were satisfied with the registration process and most commented on how it has been the fastest registration in years. Clearly this group was not at the registration area during the first hour of opening, when we encountered an unexpected computer glitch due to over-usage. We apologize to those who had to endure the wait and thank all for your patience and understanding.

Our LASA Congress app continues to grow in popularity: 66 percent of our respondents used the app this year (a 5 percent increase from last year). We continue to work with our vendors to make it as user-friendly as possible.

As in every Congress, LASA is very grateful to our faithful sponsors/foundations and to the Endowment Fund, which continue year

after year to provide partial travel grants to our participants. We were able to sponsor over 400 participants this year to come to LASA2016 and share their research.

Future Congresses

Around 41 percent of the survey respondents are planning to attend LASA2017 in Lima, Peru. We are looking forward to the exciting theme Diálogos de Saberes as LASA returns to Latin America. LASA2017 will be held in the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, PUCP; we are excited to partner with the PUCP as it celebrates its 100th birthday.

We thank all those who took the time to complete the survey. Your feedback helps us improve by acknowledging situations that we may have not been aware of, and thus allows us to focus on our members and their needs. As always, please feel free to reach out to us with any questions or further suggestions. We hope to see you at LASA2017! ■