

**Longitudinal Study of Co-Curricular Involvement at
Texas A&M University**

Department of Student Life Studies

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Project Background

Research has demonstrated that being involved in student organizations can contribute to a college student's personal development (Astin, 1999; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Graham & Gisi, 2000; Huang & Chang, 2004), create community on campus (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005), and help build career-related skills (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) concluded that "Whatever form curricular and organizational reconfigurations might take, failure to incorporate and capitalize on students' out-of-class experiences risks increasing learning only at the margin" (p. 647).

The purpose of this study is to discover the longitudinal experiences of Texas A&M University undergraduate students in co-curricular organizations. The study explores what involvement opportunities students choose during their freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior years at Texas A&M, what leadership positions they accept, and what they learn in terms of skills throughout their involvement in student organizations. The study also explores the impact of their involvement in their eventual professional careers and what kind of work experience they gain throughout their college career. This report covers the first two years of the project and therefore involvement during the freshman and sophomore years.

Method and Sample

Recruiting Participants

All participants were recruited from the applicant pool for a consortium of organizations at Texas A&M University called FLOs (Freshmen Leadership Organizations). These ten organizations attract over 1,500 total applicants each year and use a common, on-line registration process to collect information from all of the applicants. The FLO applicants demonstrated a desire to become involved within the first few weeks of their college career and therefore were a solid population to draw from, regardless of whether or not they were selected for membership in one of the organizations.

To recruit freshmen, a registration link was placed at the conclusion of the on-line FLO application process. Applicants voluntarily visited the project link to learn more. If they consented to join the project, they were prompted for additional information to help with future contacts. This process was conducted with students who were freshmen in the fall of 2007 and the fall of 2008 and the project will follow these two cohorts throughout their college career and into the first few post-graduation years.

Project Population and Sample

Table 1 illustrates the campus freshman population during the recruiting period, the FLO applicant pool numbers during the recruiting period, the total number of initial project registrants, and the number of participants for each survey.

Population	Cohort I (Recruited in Fall 2007)	Cohort II (Recruited in Fall 2008)
Campus Freshman Population During Recruiting Period	9,380	9,190
FLO Applicant Pool	1,757	1,785
Total Project Registrants	254	406
October 2007	172	--
February 2008	113	--
April 2008	120	--
October 2008	83	261
February 2009	87	118
April 2009	81	139

Table 1—Population and participant numbers for both cohorts

Table 2 depicts the gender of participants in both cohorts for every survey.

Survey	Cohort I (Recruited in 2007)			Cohort II (Recruited in 2008)		
	Female	Male	Unknown	Female	Male	Unknown
October 2007	55%	44%	1%	--	--	--
February 2008	61%	37%	2%	--	--	--
April 2008	57%	42%	2%	--	--	--
October 2008	52%	46%	1%	61%	39%	--
February 2009	55%	43%	2%	66%	33%	1%
April 2009	57%	42%	1%	63%	37%	--

Table 2—Gender for the project participants for all surveys

Methods

All surveys were web-based and designed with Vovici EFM Community® software, which creates online surveys and databases. Surveys were sent via email to all project registrants at each collection period during the year (October, February, April). Up to three reminders were sent for each survey to those who had not responded in order to increase response rates. All quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and the qualitative data was prepared using Microsoft Excel®.

Most of the qualitative data was analyzed using a formal content analysis designed to minimize researcher bias. During the analysis, one staff member from the Department of Student Life Studies participated in each step of the process for continuity purposes. Additional staff members from the Division of Student Affairs participated in the analysis. Themes were developed during the analysis process and are included in this report. Student quotes are included throughout the report to demonstrate the main ideas. These quotes were chosen for inclusion on the basis of being well written, easy to comprehend, and representative of the main ideas expressed by students. All quotes are followed by the gender and academic college of the student who offered the comment.

The first survey both cohorts received in October of their freshman year contained 55 questions—35 qualitative, 19 quantitative, and one demographic. Some of these questions asked about their

high school involvement in order to establish what students' involvement experiences were like prior to enrolling at Texas A&M University. Subsequent October surveys contained six qualitative, nine quantitative, and two demographic questions. The February surveys had 20 questions—13 qualitative, five quantitative, and two demographic. The April surveys had 44 questions—15 qualitative, 26 quantitative, and three demographic.

Results

Results include frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (sd) for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. In addition, qualitative themes are contained within this report while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document.

Also included in this report are “confidence intervals.” Confidence intervals provide a range of values, within a specific probability, where the true mean would be located for the population being considered. For the purposes of this report, a 95% confidence level (“95% CI”) was used. In other words, for the population being considered, there is 95% confidence that the true mean is between the lower bound of the range and the upper bound of the range.

The results are divided into three chapters—High School, Freshman Year, and Sophomore Year. Each section contains several sub-sections to address the questions that were asked.

CHAPTER 2: HIGH SCHOOL

Overall Involvement in High School Organizations

All freshmen were asked if they were involved in community or student organizations during high school. Table 3 illustrates that almost all freshmen were involved during their high school career.

Were you involved in community or student organizations when you were in high school?	Cohort I (n=172)	Cohort II (n=261)
Yes	97%	97%
No	3%	3%

Table 3—Involvement in high school organizations

Those who were not involved in organizations during high school were asked to explain why. Two comments were offered by the first cohort that explained they were too busy with other activities to become involved in organizations. For the second cohort, seven comments were offered and said they were busy with school work and other activities, wanted to focus solely on their grades to get into college, were not interested in getting involved, and did not feel included in the activities they tried to join.

A follow-up question asked the involved freshmen to list up to five organizations they had been involved in during high school. Table 4, in descending order for Cohort II on the following page, demonstrates that the top five organizational categories were the same for both cohorts but in a different order. For Cohort I, the top five categories were Honor Societies, Arts and Music, Service and Philanthropy, Athletics and Sports, and School Government and Programming. For Cohort II, the top five categories were Honor Societies, Athletics and Sports, School Government and Programming, Service and Philanthropy, and Arts and Music. Both cohorts had an average of 3 organizations per student. The top three individual organizations were the same for both cohorts—National Honor Society, Student Government/Student Council, and Band (Marching, Concert, or Jazz).

Categories of High School Organizations	Number of Organizations Listed by Cohort I (n=166)	Number of Organizations Listed by Cohort II (n=253)
Honor Society	90	131
Athletics and Sports	52	95
School Government and Programming	49	91
Service and Philanthropy	63	85
Arts and Music	63	62
Religion and Spiritual Development	37	45
Academic	30	44
Leadership Development	2	44
Hobbies	4	30
Language and Culture	25	29
Personal Development	27	26
Spirit	4	23
Other	27	20
Competitive Performance	11	20
Publications	6	13
Community Government and Politics	9	11
Military	3	1
TOTAL:	502	760

Table 4—Categories of involvement for high school organizations

Reasons for Involvement in High School Organizations

Freshmen who were involved in high school organizations were asked to explain why they were involved in each of their organizations. A total of 584 comments were offered by the 166 freshmen in Cohort I who were involved. Several general themes emerged from all of the comments and they are outlined in Table 5, on the following page, followed by an explanation of each theme along with a sample of quotes. While general themes were identified, individual responses also were counted to help identify the most frequent reasons cited by freshmen for why they joined their high school organizations. The top five individual reasons for joining high school organizations were for community service opportunities (54 comments), participating in the fine and performing arts (43 comments), receiving a personal honor from membership (40 comments), interacting socially with other students (40 comments), and pursuing general enjoyment and diversion (29 comments). Additional reasons can be found in the summaries of each theme.

THEMES For each organization you were involved in during high school, please explain why you were involved.	Number of comments offered for Cohort I
Personal Gain	145
Personal Interests and Enjoyment	140
Service Opportunities	96
Persuaded by Others	78
Contribute to the School	52
Influence Over Others	31
General and Continued Involvement	28
Increase Awareness	14

Table 5—Cohort I - Reasons for involvement in high school organizations (n=166)

Theme 1: Personal Gain

For this theme, the student comments addressed benefits they received from their involvement in organizations. These benefits included being selected or invited to join a prestigious organization, having opportunities to develop their skills, building their resumés, having a variety of experiences and learning more things, and contributing to their future goals.

Representative Comments

- “I was nominated and accepted into the NHS [National Honor Society] by a teacher” (female, Agricultural)
- “Z-club teaches you good traits on how to treat and help others” (female, Education)
- “The art of speaking well is one that must be learned. I wanted to learn it” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I joined because I felt that it would look good on my resumé for organizations, scholarships, and college applications” (female, Agriculture)
- “I was on the show team and it was a big thing to be involved with in our small town” (male, Agriculture)
- “I got involved with Health Occupations Students of America because I have a longterm goal of becoming a health professional” (male, Science)
- “It helped towards my college expenses” (female, Agriculture)

Theme 2: Personal Interests and Enjoyment

For personal interests and enjoyment, comments explained that getting involved in high school organizations helped freshmen fulfill hobbies as well as just helped them enjoy their time overall. Hobbies listed by the freshmen included participation in fine and performing arts, academically related interests, and athletics.

Representative Comments

- “I love mariachi music” (female, Business)
- “I love theater and wanted to have an active role in the acting, directing, and set design for plays” (male, Engineering)

- “I enjoy the outdoors and a lot of the activities that the FFA offers. There aren’t very many other organizations in high school where you can weld, show animals, and do public speaking” (male, Agriculture)
- “Church is a big part of my life, and to have the opportunity to get involved in something I love was awesome” (female, Science)
- “I was interested in journalism” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I enjoyed my biology class tremendously and decided to learn more about it” (male, Agriculture)
- “I wanted to become more physically active, and volleyball just grabbed my attention” (female, Education)

Theme 3: Service Opportunities

This theme explained the service perspective of some freshmen. They selected their high school organizations based on opportunities to give back in some way to their community such as joining established programs or just wanting to help and having the avenue to do it within a specific organization.

Representative Comments

- “I wanted to give back to the community” (male, Engineering)
- “I wanted to be able to help other people” (female, Architecture)
- “Because I love God and it was a great place for me to serve and mentor people younger than me while still growing and learning myself” (female, Business)
- “I was a member because Crimestoppers has a good cause. We helped reduce the crime rate at our high school and became involved in the local police force” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I wanted to help mentally and physically challenged children play baseball in a safe and fun environment” (male, General Studies)
- “There is a great amount of Hispanics in Arlington, TX, and through the translation and the Hispanic Ministry, we were able to reach out to them” (male, Engineering)

Theme 4: Persuaded by Others

This theme discussed how other people impacted their decision to get involved with high school organizations. The influence came from the freshmen wanting to meet people, being encouraged to join by people close to them (mentors, family members, role models), and sharing values with the members of a group and therefore wanting to be around them more.

Representative Comments

- “In all honesty, I joined because my friends were joining” (female, Education)
- “I didn’t know anyone...I had just moved to the city and it was a way to meet new people” (male, Engineering)
- “My teacher was really involved with it so I began to check it out” (male, Business)
- “My youth minister asked me to” (female, Education)
- “My sister was in Stuco [Student Council] and got me involved as a freshman” (male, Education)
- “My mom and I thought it would be fun to spend time together and do community service at the same time” (female, General Studies)

- “I wanted to be joined with other believers and followers of Christ in a community” (female, Business)
- “TMC is...a place to hang out with people that don’t drink or do drugs” (female, Science)

Theme 5: Contribute to the School

This theme demonstrated that some freshmen wanted to get involved in activities that allowed them to give back to their school in various ways such as through representing the campus at specific events, promoting school spirit, or assisting their fellow students.

Representative Comments

- “I got involved in athletics to represent my school with my talents” (male, Business)
- “I had already been involved holding different positions throughout my high school years and decided to run for president because I really wanted to help make our graduation different” (female, Business)
- “I also had a lot of school spirit and so I loved to coordinate events that the school was holding like pep rallies and helping students be spirited, like creating dress up days for football games” (female, Education)
- “It was a program to help freshmen transition into high school and I wanted to be part of that” (female, Agriculture)

Theme 6: Influence Over Others

This theme highlighted comments that expressed an interest in guiding or leading other people as the main reason freshmen got involved in their high school organizations.

Representative Comments

- “Because I was heavily involved in the youth group and wanted to influence the direction that the youth group was going” (female, Engineering)
- “I got involved in band council because I wanted to have a say in what went on in band” (female, Agriculture)
- “I care for those that don’t have anyone to look up to as a role model and I can be that for someone” (female, Business)

Theme 7: General and Continued Involvement

This theme demonstrated that some freshmen joined high school organizations just to have something to do or to continue things they had been involved in for a long time.

Representative Comments

- “A good thing to do that didn’t require excellent athletic ability” (female, General Studies)
- “I wanted to do something while I was in school” (female, General Studies)
- “I started playing the piano when I was a kid and the trumpet when I was in 6th grade” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I’ve been involved since I was little and I continued on until I got my Eagle Scout, and then helped out at meetings after I earned it” (male, Engineering)

Theme 8: Increase Awareness

This theme captured the motivations of some freshmen who got involved in their high school organization to either increase their own or others' awareness of a cherished cause or topic.

Representative Comments

- “I love Spanish and the club seemed as an appropriate way to expand my knowledge about the culture and other aspects” (female, Education)
- “I think diversity is one of the most important things for world peace, so I wanted to participate in an organization that promoted awareness for other cultures, at the local (school) level” (male, Engineering)
- “Our community did not have a high rate of homelessness, but a significant percentage of our population lived under the poverty line or in sub-standard housing. Not many other people were aware of this, so I wanted to be a part of an organization that not only addressed the issues of homelessness, but educated the public about it as well” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

For Cohort II, a total of 1,102 comments were offered by the 253 freshmen who were involved. The top five specific reasons that were given for joining high school organizations were community service opportunities (96 comments), campus service opportunities (84 comments), fun and enjoyment (52 comments), love of sports (49), and the reputation of the organization (47 comments). Themes appear in Table 6 and are followed by an explanation of each theme along with sample student quotes.

THEMES For each organization you were involved in during high school, please explain why you were involved.	Number of comments offered for Cohort II
Personal Enjoyment	304
Serving Others	248
Personal Development and Skill Building	149
Academics and Career	116
People	109
Something to Do	99
Organization Details	57
Membership Selection	20

Table 6—Cohort II - Reasons for involvement in high school organizations (n=253)

Theme 1: Personal Enjoyment

This theme focused on the varying personal interests and hobbies of freshmen that motivated them to join certain high school organizations. Student interests included the arts, academic subjects, animals, athletics, and the environment.

Representative Comments

- “I tried out ‘cause I knew it was a blast” (male, Engineering)
- “Passion for volleyball” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I joined band because I wanted to learn to play an instrument” (female, Liberal Arts)

- “I found it interesting” (male, Engineering)
- “Because our school was really competitive with UIL and I enjoyed helping and contributing to our school’s academic success” (female, Engineering)
- “I wanted to join this organization because I wanted to learn more about American Government and the policies it is currently considering” (male, Business)
- “We did fun experiments” (female, Business)
- “I love to sing” (male, General Studies)
- “I love to dance” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “We did the announcements, and I like attention” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I wanted to exhibit animals in my local livestock show” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I enjoyed the outdoors” (male, General Studies)
- “I really like design and photography. I wanted to join an organization in which I could use these skills.” (female, Business)

Theme 2: Serving Others

This theme centered on students’ desire to join high school organizations in order to serve others. Their service interests included community service, working with children, sharing skills, being a role model, giving back to their school, and just wanting to make a difference somewhere.

Representative Comments

- “It allowed me to give back to the community that had done so much for me all my life. We would just serve the community with trash clean ups, cultural awareness festivals and just a lot of other neat opportunities” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “We went around the community and helped people less fortunate” (male, General Studies)
- “To become more involved in the decisions being made that effected myself and my peers” (female, General Studies)
- “I wanted to make an impact at my school” (male, General Studies)
- “To be role model to 5th graders and show them that drugs and alcohol aren’t necessary to lead a successful and fulfilling life” (male, Agriculture)
- “I wanted to join cheerleading to be a school role model” (female, Education)
- “In order to inform the community of ones power to vote” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “It was a really good cause. We taught women that couldn’t work a computer at all learn how to operate a mouse, type, work the internet, and send emails. There were 4 levels and I wanted to be involved just because it was something I thought made a real impact in people’s lives, including the woman that was our maid” (female, Liberal Arts)

Theme 3: Personal Development and Skill Building

This theme addressed a variety of ways in which high school organizations helped freshmen build skills such as languages and creativity as well as provided opportunities to learn new information such as becoming a leader or gaining knowledge about another culture. Some freshmen also discussed having an opportunity to build upon their spirituality through their high school organizations.

Representative Comments

- “I thought it provided a good deal of leadership education and allowed for me to learn and grow” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “It was cool to get together with all of the other different athletes and to have Bible study together” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I wanted to join it because I love the Spanish language” (male, Architecture)
- “I like being able to find time to work out/stay in shape during school hours” (male, Engineering)
- “It also helped me with the stresses of being an athlete” (female, Geosciences)
- “To participate in different cultural activities” (male, Engineering)
- “Because I’m part Hispanic and it helped me learn more about my heritage” (female, General Studies)
- “Through FFA I also learned other valuable things to help me through life” (female, Agriculture)
- “It let me show my feelings through art” (male, Agriculture)

Theme 4: Academics and Career

This theme addressed the motivation for freshmen to join high school organizations that somehow benefit career development and academic planning. This included preparing resumés and applications for college admittance, being recognized for outstanding academic achievement, finding a support network for maintaining or improving academic success, and finding scholarship opportunities for college.

Representative Comments

- “It represented a group of students who worked hard to succeed in school and make grades superior to other students” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I joined to prepare myself for a future occupation in the medical field” (female, Education)
- “To learn the skills necessary to get and maintain a job” (Male, General Studies)
- “It looks good on college applications” (male, Engineering)
- “I enjoyed being challenged academically” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Wanted to be a part of an organization that helped...keep me accountable for my grades” (male, Engineering)
- “I thought it would look good on my resumé” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “A chance to get a scholarship” (female, Engineering)

Theme 5: People

This theme encompassed the influences of other people on students’ decision to join high school organizations. In some cases freshmen knew peers who were already involved in the organizations or had someone they knew recommend membership. Some freshmen wanted to join organizations that would allow them to be around peers who shared their values. Other freshmen were motivated by the idea that they could meet new people and make friends. A few freshmen joined organizations that their family members had been involved in.

Representative Comments

- “My friends were in it” (male, Science)
- “I joined P.A.L. because it helped me branch out of my bubble” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I also joined it because it was a way to surround myself with like minded people. The students in this organization all wanted to be successful wherever they went” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Because I wanted to be a part of a group that had the same beliefs and morals that I did” (female, General Studies)
- “Because it allowed me to associate with people who cared about school” (male, Engineering)
- “Really like the people involved in the organization” (male, Engineering)
- “I knew I’d make lots of friends” (female, General Studies)
- “I loved the teachers who were the advisors for it and they told me to try it out and I ended up loving it!” (female, Business)
- “Parents urging” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “All of my cousins and my mom and aunts and uncles were in the marching band while they were in school. Sort of a tradition” (female, Engineering)

Theme 6: Something to Do

This theme addressed students’ desire to have activities and events to do while in high school. Most were motivated by a personal desire to get involved while a few seemed to be following the crowd or fulfilling obligations.

Representative Comments

- “Have competed in UIL since 3rd grade” (male, Engineering)
- “I have shown cattle since I was 8 and being in FFA helped to further this interest along. I also showed other animals throughout my high school years” (female, Agriculture)
- “I like to participate and be active in school” (female, Business)
- “To have another extracurricular activity other than athletics” (male, General Studies)
- “School spirit is important to me, so I wanted to do my part in helping the school support different activities” (female, Business)
- “Because just about everyone did it” (female, Business)
- “Why not” (male, Engineering)
- “Needed gym credit” (female, Engineering)

Theme 7: Organization Details

This theme highlighted the organizationally-based reasons that freshmen got involved during high school. Most of the comments came from freshmen who thought that the reputation of the organization was a good reason to join while other freshmen wanted to be part of a team or wanted the perks that were offered by the organizations.

Representative Comments

- “It is a very prestigious organization” (male, Architecture)

- “I joined this partially for the name” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I love to work with others toward one goal” (female, General Studies)
- “Travel with football team to away games” (female, General Studies)

Theme 8: Membership Selection

The comments contained in this theme addressed the issue of organizational processes for membership. Some freshmen joined their high school organizations because they met the membership requirements while others were nominated, invited, or selected to become members.

Representative Comments

- “This was a teacher appointed organization, and I was selected to be a part of it” (female, General Studies)
- “This is basically math honors society and I was selected as a member” (male, General Studies)
- “I was invited to join” (female, General Studies)
- “I was nominated by teachers to be able to join this organization” (female, Education)
- “I met the requirements” (female, General Studies)

Leadership in High School Organizations

Freshmen were asked if they served in leadership roles for their high school organizations. Almost three-quarters (72%) of Cohort I and 86% of Cohort II said they held leadership positions. Freshmen were asked to write-in what leadership positions they had held in high school. Table 7, on the following page, illustrates the different categories of positions each cohort held. There was an average of 2.06 positions for Cohort I and 2.46 positions for Cohort II.

Categories of High School Leadership	Number of Freshmen in Cohort I Who Held Leadership Positions in Each Category (n=124)	Number of Freshmen in Cohort II Who Held Leadership Positions in Each Category (n=191)
Top Organization Leader (President, Captain, etc.)	68	168
Assistant Leader/Vice President	27	60
Committee or Group Leader	38	45
Secretary/Reporter	14	42
Treasurer	16	39
Other Officer	24	35
Historian/Librarian/Photographer	8	20
Representative	6	16
Communications/PR Officer	5	12
Co-Leader	12	9
Member	17	9
Parliamentarian	3	6
Patrol Leader	8	4
Social Officer	2	4
Judicial Officer	3	1
Mentor	5	--
TOTAL:	256	470

Table 7—Leadership positions held in high school organizations

High School Summary

During their high school days, almost all students were involved in community or student organizations. Those who were not involved said they were busy with other activities such as school work or were not interested in joining groups.

Students who did join organizations in high school often found similar groups to join such as the National Honor Society, Student Government or Student Council, and Band. Athletic and service groups also common among those the students joined in high school. For both cohorts in this study, there was an average of three organizations per student during their high school experience.

Students said they joined their high school organizations for a variety of reasons, most of which were mentioned by both cohorts. The first cohort mainly joined organizations in order to participate in community service, enjoy the arts, gain prestige through selective groups, and interact with peers. The second cohort was similar but put an emphasis on serving the community and campus as their top reasons. They also wanted to have fun and participate in sports. All students were looking for the personal benefits they could gain from high school involvement such as building their résumés for college, developing skills, and gaining experiences that would help them in the future. They also expressed a desire to have fun with their peers and enjoy their high school experience.

A majority of students served in leadership roles at some point during their high school organization experience. There was an average of 2 to 2.5 leadership positions per student. Those positions

were dominated by top leadership roles such as being a president of a group or the captain of a team.

The students who participated in this study had similar high school experiences prior to attending Texas A&M University. The majority was involved in common organizations such as National Honor Society and held leadership positions such as President at some point during high school. These opportunities may have helped them prepare for admission to college as many of them mentioned joining organizations for personal gain. They also joined organizations to serve others and enjoy their time together with peers.

CHAPTER 3: FRESHMAN YEAR

Participation in New Freshmen Camps

Freshmen were asked what new freshmen camps they participated in from a provided select-all-that-apply list. The options included Fish Camp (an extended orientation camp for all freshmen), Impact (an off-campus, extended orientation camp for freshmen who identify as Christian), and ExCEL (a program, mainly targeted to minority students, that is designed to help freshmen and their parents transition into college). Table 8 demonstrates that a majority of freshmen in both cohorts participated in Fish Camp. When presented an opportunity to write-in another camp, one person from Cohort I wrote in SOAR. Cohort II wrote in Freshman Orientation Week for the Corps, SOAR, and Gig ‘Em Week.

Which new student camps did you attend at Texas A&M University? (check all that apply)	Cohort I (n=171)	Cohort II (n=223)
Fish Camp	82%	85%
Impact	12%	11%
ExCEL	2%	3%
Other	1%	2%

Table 8—Participation in new freshmen camps at Texas A&M (n=171)

Employment during Freshman Year

In October and February, freshmen were asked if they had a paying job. Table 9 illustrates that a small portion of both cohorts worked in fall semester of their freshman year. That number did increase a little by the spring semester. The range of work hours per week for both cohorts was between 5 and 17 hours. It is important to note that as the year progressed, there were survey participants who dropped out of the survey project; so the number of participants responding to questions decreased.

Do you currently have a paying job? -YES	Cohort I	95% CI for Hours Worked Per Week	Cohort II	95% CI for Hours Worked Per Week
October	10% (n=171)	5.89 to 14.83	8% (n=221)	7.27 to 12.98
February	19% (n=106)	11.84 to 17.32	16% (n=116)	9.77 to 15.91

Table 9—Employment status and hours worked per week

In April, freshmen were asked if they planned to work during the summer whether it was an internship, Co-Op position, or other type of job. For Cohort I (n=115), 80% did plan to work, 12% were not sure, and 8% said no. For Cohort II (n=130), 82% planned to work, 13% were not sure, and 5% said no.

Involvement in Bryan/College Station (BCS) Organizations during Freshman Year

In the October survey, freshmen were asked how many community organizations (not affiliated with Texas A&M) they had joined since living in the Bryan/College Station (BCS) community. Table 10 illustrates that a majority were not involved in community groups during either survey period. While it appears that Cohort I was involved at a higher rate than Cohort II, a review of their listed community organization revealed that half of those groups were really campus organizations, bringing their involvement levels very close to that of Cohort II.

Are you currently involved with Bryan/College Station community organizations (not affiliated with Texas A&M)?	Cohort I (n=163)	Cohort II (n=219)
Yes	29%	8%
No	71%	92%

Table 10—Involvement in Bryan/College Station organizations during freshman year of college

When involved freshmen were asked to list the BCS organizations they were involved with, Cohort I freshmen listed 22 campus organizations and 24 community organizations, the majority of which came from area churches and religious groups. Three freshmen from Cohort I said they held leadership positions in BCS organizations including being an assistant to the top leader, being a representative for the group, and serving as another type of officer. The involved freshmen were asked to explain why they chose to get involved with BCS organizations. A total of 65 comments were offered by Cohort I and the five main themes generated by the comments included seeking spiritual development and connection (16 comments), being invited or recommended (10 comments), having an opportunity to perform community service (7 comments), having opportunities for professional development (7 comments), and fulfilling special interests (7 comments). Other reasons included meeting new people, joining groups in which they already knew members, having previous experience with the organizations, and having a way to relieve stress. A sample of comments from all theme areas is included below.

Representative Comments

- “As a Christian, I need a church to fellowship with other believers and to grow in my faith. Grace [local church] is where I worship on Sundays, and they have a great college program” (female, Science)
- “Some friends invited me one evening” (male, Engineering)
- “Wanted to do volunteer work” (female, Engineering)
- “I plan on becoming an elementary school teacher so HOSTS will give me an opportunity to learn more about elementary students” (male, Business)
- “It’s a good way to meet people” (female, Science)
- “I have been in it throughout high school and wanted to continue in college” (female, Agriculture)
- “Looked really interesting and fun” (female, Agriculture)
- “A great place for me to go during the week to get away from the real world and reflect on what is really important” (female, Business)

Cohort II listed 30 community organizations, most of which came from area churches and religious groups. Two freshmen from Cohort II said they held leadership positions in BCS organizations but only one listed the position which was an assistant to the top leader. The involved freshmen were

asked to explain why they chose to get involved with BCS organizations. A total of 34 comments were offered by Cohort II and the six main themes generated by the comments included seeking spiritual development and connection (9 comments), personal interests (6 comments), serving children (6 comments), finding others who share their values and beliefs (6 comments), having an opportunity to perform community service (5 comments) and meeting people (2 comments). A sample of comments is included below.

Representative Comments

- “This gives me a chance to surround myself with my beliefs and learn on a weekly basis” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Volunteer at College Station Medical Center- I intend on pursuing a career in medicine, so this is a good way to gain experience” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I enjoy working with children and I believe education is very important, so I intend to give back to the community by tutoring the students that need help” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I like having a place to go where I can speak with other students that have my same faith and religious backgrounds” (female, General Studies)
- “I was looking for a church and checked out lots of different ones. I decided to get involved here because they seem to be Bible based and I think I can find a way to help out and be of use to the community through this church” (female, Engineering)

Reasons Why Freshmen Are Not Involved in BCS Organizations

Cohort I freshmen who were not involved in community organizations were asked to explain why. A total of 123 comments were offered by the 116 freshmen from Cohort I who said they were not involved in BCS organizations. The four main themes generated from the freshmen’ comments included time and priorities (61 comments), a need for more information (50 comments), lack of resources (7 comments), and a lack of motivation (5 comments). Explanations of each theme are included below along with a sample of comments.

Theme 1: Time and Priorities

The comments in this category addressed students’ concerns with issues such as time management, the time it takes to adjust to college and find a balance for activities, setting priorities, and focusing more on the campus community rather than the local community.

Representative Comments

- “I am a fish in the Corps of Cadets so my free time is nonexistent at the present time” (male, Business)
- “I want to be in some kind of community theater but my time is taken up this year with class and FAST” (female, Engineering)
- “Other than my church, I thought it would be smart to focus more on my studies this first semester” (female, Agriculture)
- “School is really important, and since I just started I wanted to not over fill my plate” (male, Veterinary Medicine)
- “Everything I am involved with is affiliated with Texas A&M” (male, Veterinary Medicine)

- “I am here to attend Texas A&M and I found an organization on campus that I love” (female, General Studies)
- “I’m still trying to manage everything, and I want a lot of time to dedicate to the activities I am involved in” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I haven’t tried to get involved. I am still trying to figure out a decent routine to see if I have the time/energy” (male, Science)

Theme 2: Need for More Information

Some freshmen did not get involved with community organizations because they were not aware of any while other freshmen were still exploring the opportunities to find one that fit their needs.

Representative Comments

- “I haven’t found anything yet—I really want to help out in a church when I find one, but for now I’m still looking” (female, General Studies)
- “It is hard to just search on google and see if things are a match” (female, Education)
- “I haven’t found any I like” (male, Engineering)
- “We get emails only about things involving A&M” (male, Engineering)
- “I have not been around very long therefore I have not been exposed to them” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

Theme 3: Lack of Resources

The handful of comments in this category expressed a feeling of being cut off from opportunities to join community organizations. A few freshmen believed that they could only do community service through student organizations and since they did not get accepted into any organizations, their opportunity for community groups went away. Another concern was that a few freshmen did not have transportation to get around the local community.

Representative Comments

- “I don’t have a car or bicycle so my means of transportation are somewhat limited” (female, Agriculture)
- “I was not accepted into a FLO [Freshman Leadership Organization] and therefore lost that opportunity” (female, Agriculture)

Theme 4: Lack of Motivation

Comments in this theme addressed the idea that freshmen did not have the internal drive or interest to find or join a community group.

Representative Comments

- “I have not taken the time or effort to try to become involved” (female, Education)
- “There haven’t been any that interest me” (female, Liberal Arts)

For Cohort II, a total of 307 comments were offered by the 201 freshmen who said they were not involved in BCS organizations. The six main themes generated from the comments included lack of knowledge (91 comments), busy (88 comments), other priorities (46 comments), lack of

connections (37 comments), barriers to involvement (29 comments), and already engaged with BCS organizations (16 comments). Explanations of each theme are included below along with a sample of comments provided by the freshmen.

Theme 1: Lack of Knowledge

The comments in this theme centered on freshmen not having information or a desire to be involved in BCS organizations. Some of the lack of knowledge was from just being new to the area.

Representative Comments

- “I have not really heard of any other organizations except the ones that exist on campus” (female, Engineering)
- “I haven’t found any that interest me” (male, Education)
- “I don’t know much about them because I am a freshmen and am still finding out much to do around this city” (female, Business)
- “I have only lived in College Station for two months and have not had the opportunity to learn about any community organizations” (female, General Studies)

Theme 2: Busy

The comments in this theme addressed the notion that freshmen felt they were too busy to join BCS community organizations. Some of their reasons were they were too busy in general or they had other conflicts that took up their time. A few said they would get involved in the future.

Representative Comments

- “A&M had so many clubs to offer it is hard to look somewhere else besides the university” (male, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I don’t have time between school, work, studying and chores” (female, Education)
- “I will eventually be involved in various church activities and possibly other community groups...” (male, General Studies)
- “I am really wanting to get involved in volunteering at the local Housing Authority, because that was one of the most rewarding volunteering experiences I had at home” (female, Education)

Theme 3: Other Priorities

The comments in this theme addressed the other priorities that the freshmen felt were more important than joining a BCS community organization. Some expressed school as one of those priorities while for others, transitioning and keeping a balance in their lives were more of a priority.

Representative Comments

- “I’ve been concentrating on school work this first semester and haven’t had time to branch out into the community” (male, Engineering)
- “My first and foremost job is to be a student, as long as I am keeping up well with that I can be involved in other things, but as I am behind and my GPA is too low I have to remain only a student” (female, Engineering)

- “Being a freshman is overwhelming and joining two student organizations is almost too much. I truly don’t have any time. I do attend church in the Bryan/College Station community” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Also its easier to get involved on campus than off because of things like MSC open house and these organizations hold meetings and such on campus so its very convenient” (female, Agriculture)
- “I don’t want to repeat high school by becoming super involved. I can manage it, but I wanted my own social time this year so I limited myself in organizations” (female, Business)

Theme 4: Lack of Connections

The comments in this theme addressed the lack of different connections the freshmen experienced that kept them from getting involved in BCS community organizations such as not being provided enough information, lacking interest in the organizations, and not looking for the organizations.

Representative Comments

- “I have not been informed about many opportunities outside TAMU” (male, Engineering)
- “I have not been invited to participate in any” (female, Business)
- “Didn’t feel the need to” (male, Engineering)
- “I haven’t really done the research into these types of organizations as of yet” (male, Engineering)

Theme 5: Barriers to involvement

The comments in this theme centered on the barriers freshmen said they encountered that prevented them from being involved in BCS community organizations such as not having transportation, being too far away from campus, and finding out about them at a late date.

Representative Comments

- “I have no means of transportation other then a scooter, so I can not get that far off campus” (male, Engineering)
- “Its too far away” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I find out about them when its too late to apply” (female, General Studies)

Theme 6: Already Engaged in BCS Organizations

The comments represented in this theme were from freshmen who were already engaged in some form with the community. Some listed organizations that were community-based but they did not seem to be aware of it while others said their campus organizations performed community service and they did not feel a need to pursue additional involvement.

Representative Comments

- “I was involved at church, but I haven’t done anything so far...” (female, General Studies)
- “I feel that my current organizations connects me with the Bryan/College Station Community already” (female, General Studies)

Involvement in Texas A&M University (TAMU) Organizations during Freshman Year

In each survey, freshmen were asked if they were involved with TAMU student organizations. Table 11 illustrates that both cohorts had a range of 82-92% involvement during their freshman year.

Are you currently involved in student organizations at Texas A&M? - YES	Cohort I	Cohort II
October	86% (n=163)	85% (n=225)
February	92% (n=109)	90% (n=117)
April	82% (n=98)	89% (n=139)

Table 11—Involvement in TAMU organizations during freshman year of college

In October, freshmen who said they were involved in campus organizations were asked to write in up to five campus organizations they joined. Table 12, in descending order for Cohort II, demonstrates that the top four organizational categories were the same for both cohorts but in a different order - Academic, Service and Philanthropy, Religion and Spiritual Development, and Leadership Development. Cohort I had an average of 1.74 organizations per student while Cohort II had an average of 1.76. The top four organizations for Cohort I were the Biomedical Science Association (13 citations), Freshmen in Service and Hosting (7 citations), Fish Council (6 citations), and Freshmen Leaders in Progress (6 citations). For Cohort II, the top four were Aggie Leaders of Tomorrow (12 citations), Freshmen in Service and Hosting (12 citations), Fish Council (10 citations), and Freshman Aggies Spreading Traditions (10 citations).

Categories of Campus Organizations	Number of Organizations listed by Cohort I (n=114)	Number of Organizations listed by Cohort II (n=191)
Academic	55	73
Leadership Development	15	55
Service and Philanthropy	19	34
Religion and Spiritual Development	18	34
School Government and Programming	14	26
Hobbies	6	26
Arts and Music	7	15
Greek	7	14
Community Government and Politics	6	13
Athletics and Sports	15	12
Spirit	11	10
Language and Culture	7	10
Other	4	9
Military	1	6
Personal Development	7	0
Competitive Performance	1	0
Residence Life	5	4
TOTAL:	198	341

Table 12—Involvement in campus organizations in October of the freshman year

In the October survey, freshmen who were involved in campus organizations were asked to explain why they were involved in each of their organizations. They could list up to five organizations. A total of 263 comments were offered by the 141 Cohort I freshmen who were involved. The top three reasons for joining TAMU organizations was because they were interested in what the organization had to offer (39 comments), wanted to participate in service opportunities (21 comments), and wanted to be around people like themselves (20 comments). Five themes were generated by the comments and include personal development and interests (104 comments), interpersonal development and influence (77 comments), career preparation (42 comments), school spirit (24 comments), and ease of getting involved (16 comments). Each of the themes is summarized below and includes some representative comments from the freshmen.

Theme 1: Personal Development and Interests

The comments in this theme centered on individual interests and needs. Many freshmen had personal interests they wanted to pursue or specific skills and talents they wanted to develop. They considered these interests and needs as they selected what organizations they would join.

Representative Comments:

- “I love soccer with all my heart and wanted to play” (male, Science)
- “Because I always secretly wanted to be a figure skater” (female, Engineering)
- “Because I am also a very environmental person and I want to keep our campus beautiful, which is what this group does” (female, Engineering)
- “They are all about community service and helping others, and that is what I like to do and I think we can make a difference in peoples lives” (male, Education)
- “MSC FISH emphasizes and fosters service as a priority in students and provides opportunities to work in the community” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “It sounded really fun” (male, Education)
- “I want to find out more about my strengths and weaknesses so I can become a stronger Aggie leader” (male, Business)

Theme 2: Interpersonal Development and Influence

The comments in this theme centered on the impact other people had on freshmen when they were considering what campus organizations to join. Some freshmen were looking for peers who were like them while others wanted to make new friends and feel connected. Other ideas included someone inviting freshmen to join, opportunities to network, and joining organizations because they knew people in it.

Representative Comments:

- “To be involved with other Jews” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I wanted to join a group with people from my heritage” (female, General Studies)
- “The club is a good way to meet people with similar interests” (male, General Studies)
- “To meet new people” (female, Engineering)
- “I wanted to find a community on campus” (female, Education)
- “As my major is in Bilingual Education, I wanted to be involved in BESO so I could meet others in this field” (female, Education)

- “In order to create relationships with people within the business program” (male, Business)
- “I knew some people in it” (male, Engineering)

Theme 3: Career Preparation

The comments in this theme addressed benefits received from student organizations that somehow factored into a career development path. Some freshmen wanted to focus on making the most of their current academic situation while other focused on things that would help them somewhere in the future.

Representative Comments:

- “To gain insight into my major” (male, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I’m going premed, I thought it would be good to get some information” (female, Science)
- “Get tips from older students about BIMS coursework and applying to vet school” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “It is a good way to get involved with industry” (male, Engineering)
- “I want to be a nurse and since there isn’t a nursing school at A&M I want to know all there is that this school can provide for me...” (female, General Studies)

Theme 4: School Spirit

The comments in this theme addressed being engaged in the campus, whether it was just participating in campus activities, promoting traditions, or representing the school to others.

Representative Comments:

- “I love being involved in events in the school” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “Traditions are what sold me on this campus...It’s a way I can promote our great traditions and help make other students college choices easier” (male, Engineering)
- “Because Howdy is AMAZING. Not enough people say it and I want to help spread the spirit” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “They are in charge of putting together all the big traditions” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

Theme 5: Ease of Getting Involved

The comments in this theme centered on freshmen joining organizations that were either a continuation of something they did prior to entering Texas A&M University or because the membership process was easy to navigate or incentive-based.

Representative Comments:

- “I wanted to jump right into it and pick up where I left off from high school” (female, General Studies)
- “It was available for sign up when I registered for classes” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “At first they gave us extra credit in our Chemistry 100 class” (female, Science)

For Cohort II, a total of 532 comments were offered by the 191 freshmen who were involved in TAMU organizations. The top three reasons freshmen joined organizations was to explore their

careers and professional environments (62 comments), fulfill personal interests and hobbies (44 comments), and participate in community service opportunities (40 comments). Eight themes were generated by the comments and included people (103 comments), personal interests (98 comments), academic and career issues (82 comments), benefits from membership (81 comments), wellness (59 comments), service (58 comments), skill development (43 comments), and membership selection processes (8 comments). Each of the themes is summarized below along with a sample of student comments.

Theme 1: Service

This theme focused on serving others. Most of the comments addressed freshmen joining TAMU organizations that provided opportunities to perform community service. A smaller group of freshmen joined organizations in order to somehow give back to the campus. And a few freshmen wanted to participate in something bigger than themselves.

Representative Comments:

- “I heard what they were doing for the children in Africa and I wanted to be a part of this amazing thing” (male, Engineering)
- “I know the impact that YOUNGLIFE not only made in my life in high school but in my fellow peers! I want to be able to experience that incomparable joy and share with the urban youth out there who have no hope” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I enjoy working with kids with disabilities” (male, Business)
- “I am in the honors program, and I wanted to find a way to give back to it, so I decided that this organization was a good way to do so” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I wanted to serve the Aggie community” (male, Education)
- “I joined because I wanted to make a difference in my dorm” (female, Education)
- “I love to be a part of something bigger that serves a good purpose” (female, General Studies)

Theme 2: People

This theme centered on freshmen joining TAMU organizations because of the people. Some wanted to meet people, socialize, and expand their social networks. Others had friends who were members or wanted to make friends with the people who were members. A few freshmen were looking for peers who shared their values and interests while others joined organizations because of family who had been members in the past.

Representative Comments:

- “Wanted to meet new people” (male, Engineering)
- “It’s a great way to meet people” (female, Business)
- “Because it gave me the opportunity to make new friends” (male, Engineering)
- “I wanted the type of sisterhood friendship that sororities offer” (female, General Studies)
- “To expand my network of friends and classmates” (male, Engineering)
- “Allows access to a huge network outside of college” (female, Engineering)
- “I knew some people in ALOT and they really influenced me to apply” (female, Business)
- “Some of my friends joined” (male, General Studies)

- “I think it is a great way to meet people who all have the same purpose” (female, Business)
- “This is a good way to meet others that feel the same way” (male, Engineering)
- “It was highly recommended by a respected friend of mine, so I applied” (male, Engineering)

Theme 3: Academic and Career Issues

This theme mostly covered the idea that freshmen join TAMU organizations in order to gain more knowledge about their majors and professional fields and network with others in that environment. A few others joined organizations in order to get assistance with their academic performance.

Representative Comments:

- “My major is biomedical science and honestly I changed my major the day of my new student conference on a whim. I basically signed up for this organization to find out more about my major. It turns out that was one of the best impulse decisions I have ever made!” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I want to pursue my career doing petroleum engineering. By joining this club, I wanted to learn a lot of information about energy” (male, General Studies)
- “To learn different methods to help me when I become a teacher” (female, Education)
- “I wanted to speak with professionals” (female, Engineering)
- “It will help expose me to different companies that look for students from my major” (male, Engineering)
- “I figured it will help me with connections for internships” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “To receive help with my school work” (female, Education)

Theme 4: Personal Interests

This theme addressed the varying interests of freshmen that prompt them to join TAMU student organizations. These interests include hobbies, political and social issues, and music as well as wanting to get involved in special organizations such as those dealing with campus traditions. Some freshmen joined organizations because of a previous experience with the activities or in order to engage in competition.

Representative Comments:

- “I am really interested in Dairy Cattle” (female, Agriculture)
- “I love kids” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “It would let me be interactive with my ethnic group” (female, General Studies)
- “Very interested in film and making movies” (male, Engineering)
- “SCONA is a good way for me to be involved with leaders in government” (male, Engineering)
- “I wanted to find out more about the upcoming election” (female, Engineering)
- “I love to sing” (male, Engineering)
- “I played in high school” (female, Business)

- “I like all the traditions they keep alive and in the process bring the student body together” (male, Engineering)

Theme 5: Benefits from Membership

The comments in this theme focused on the benefits freshmen gained from joining organizations such as being engaged in the campus community, having fun, sharing in a good reputation, obtaining a smooth transition to college, getting in to events free, and having the organization accommodate their personal needs.

Representative Comments:

- “I’ve always heard getting involved is something vital to personal success at Texas A&M” (female, General Studies)
- “To get involved more than I was in high school” (male, Engineering)
- “It seems like is going to be a lot of fun” (male, Agriculture)
- “I had heard great things about it from everyone” (female, Engineering)
- “I love what they stand for” (female, Education)
- “To get an idea of college from the eyes of the experienced” (male, Engineering)

Theme 6: Wellness

This theme focused on freshmen joining TAMU organizations as a well to tend to wellness issues such as developing spiritually or personally, finding a support system or a sense of belonging, managing stress, and staying active.

Representative Comments:

- “I was born and raised a Catholic so getting involved in my religion is something that was very important to me” (female, Agriculture)
- “To help host retreats for individuals interested in learning more about their religion” (male, Engineering)
- “I felt that I could learn a thing or two” (male, Engineering)
- “I needed to find direction. I wanted to find what I’m passionate about” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I wanted to join an organization that would allow me to be myself” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “It’s a mentoring program so I wanted to be able to have someone to talk to if I ever felt the need to do so” (female, Agriculture)
- “I really wanted to find my niche in a TAMU group” (male, Engineering)

Theme 7: Skill Development

The comments in this theme mainly focused on freshmen wanting to improve their leadership skills and experiences. A few freshmen, however, wanted the opportunity to express themselves so they joined organizations that allowed them to do so.

Representative Comments:

- “The L3C is a community in Aston that helps us learn what a leader is and how leadership is shown. I wanted to join because it is very important to develop leadership skills” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I wanted to be involved with a leadership organization” (female, Education)

- “Wanted to be involved in an organization where I can express my politic beliefs and not be reprimanded” (female, Liberal Arts)

Theme 8: Membership Selection Process

This theme centers on the selection process for organizations as a catalyst for why freshmen joined organizations. Most of the comments explained that because freshmen had been rejected from one organization, they looked for another as a way to still be involved. One student joined a TAMU organization because she was selected for it.

Representative Comments:

- “Rejected from FLO and this was my back up” (male, Engineering)
- “I needed a group to accept me after being denied by FLOs and rejected from the TAMU choirs” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Because I qualified for it and got in. Its an incredible way to acclimate freshmen into the university and it is a major component of my overall happiness with the university” (female, Liberal Arts)

Reasons for Not Being Involved in TAMU Organizations

In October, freshmen who were not involved in campus organizations were asked to explain why. A total of 22 comments were offered by the 22 freshmen in Cohort I who said they were not involved. The main reasons they cited were not getting in to their preferred organizations (10 comments), still exploring the options available to them (5 comments), and problems with their schedule (2 comments). In addition, some individuals said they had other priorities, had future plans to get involved but could not do so right now, and had problems with the application processes from organizations. A sample of their comments is included below.

Representative Comments

- “I applied to some FLOs however did not get accepted” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Because I did not make it into any of the organizations that I applied for” (female, Business)
- “I am looking for an organization that does community service” (male, Business)
- “I have not found any that fit my interests and do not conflict with my schedule” (female, General Studies)
- “I haven’t found any I care for, even after looking a bit” (male, Engineering)
- “I plan on trying to get involved in an organization at the beginning of the spring semester if I don't this semester” (male, Business)
- “People told me how easy it was to be involved, a statement I find to be contrary to the truth. If anything at all I feel alienated from the university” (female, General Studies)
- “I applied for a flo and didn’t get it. By then it was to late to join the others” (female, Education)
- “The FLO I wanted to join had meetings the night of my Chem Lab” (female, Science)
- “My major requires alot out of me” (male, Engineering)
- “I was really sick when I wrote my application, so it was not very good, so I didn't get an interview” (male, Engineering)

For Cohort II, 49 comments were offered by the 34 freshmen who said they were not involved. The main reasons they cited were plans to get involved at a later date (10 comments), not getting in to their preferred organizations (10 comments), a focus on academics (7 comments), still exploring the options available to them (5 comments), missed application deadlines (4 comments), and problems with their schedule (3 comments). A sample of their comments is included below.

Representative Comments

- “I am getting used to the school and learning how to manage my time. Next semester I will join 2 organizations” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I applied to three FLOs and didn’t get into any of them” (female, Geosciences)
- “I don’t have the time and energy to maintain my grades and be sufficiently involved in any campus organization this semester” (female, Education)
- “I have not found the right club for me” (female, Education)
- “I applied for a few organizations and was not accepted, but I am now focusing on school and will apply for other organizations next year” (male, Business)
- “When I attempted to get an interview with FLIP, they told me they couldn’t interview me that Friday due to hurricane IKE. They told me they would email me with a time for an interview and nothing came up, so I called them and when I did they said I missed the deadline for interviews” (male, Engineering)

Joining New TAMU Organizations during Freshman Year

In February 2008, Cohort I was asked if the number of organizations they were involved in had changed since October 2007 and over half (57%) said no. Those who did have a change in the number of organizations (n=44) were asked to explain why that involvement changed. A total of 41 comments were offered. Most of the comments (32) addressed freshmen becoming more involved in organizations for a variety of reasons such as wanting to explore new interests, having more development opportunities, and having more time. Nine (9) comments indicated that a few freshmen had to decrease their involvement because of a lack of time or a change in their academic program. A sample of their comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I recently joined the Dance Arts Society, which I was not a member of before” (female, Engineering)
- “My level of involvement with organizations has changed because I have become more aware of the organizations here – I feel like I can do more” (male, Science)
- “I have become more involved with all of my organizations (becoming exec, going to more meetings, etc.)” (female, Science)
- “Well, I made some new friends through my organization at the time and they introduced me to new groups and/or organizations” (male, Agriculture)
- “I feel like I have become more comfortable with my surroundings leading me to become more involved with my school and my community” (male, Engineering)
- “In October 2007 I was taking 15 hours, now I’m taking 17 hours and have reduced my activities to better support my course load” (female, Agriculture)
- “I am no longer volunteering for hosts or in my specific majors because I changed majors” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

In April 2008, Cohort I freshmen (n=95) were asked if they had joined any new organizations since February. Almost half (46%) said they had joined new organizations and they were asked to explain what organizations they had joined and why. There were a number of organizations listed but two were mentioned more than any others. Fish Camp was mentioned 19 times and Impact Camp was cited 8 times. Both are organizations that offer extended orientation programs to freshman students and they accept membership applications during the late spring. For the reasons they joined these new organizations, freshmen explained that they gained service opportunities, received personal benefits such as contributing to future plans or fulfilling interests, and had a chance to interact with new people or friends. In total, 66 comments were offered. A sample of comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Aggies United for Israel, there needs to be a pro-Israel movement on campus” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Aggie Swing Cats, because I like to dance” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Engineers without Borders. It’s related to my major” (female, Engineering)
- “Fish Camp—I wanted the opportunity to do for the incoming freshmen what my counselors did for me” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Impact because it showed me how living a Christian life at A&M is possible and I want to pass that knowledge onto the class of 2012” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Help the families who have lost loved ones” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “AOLP [Aggie Orientation Leader Program], because it allows me to be a representative of A&M” (male, Agriculture)
- “The reason I have joined is because the group offered opportunities for me to meet new people” (male, Agriculture)

Cohort II was asked in both February and April what organizations they had joined since the last survey period. In February 2009, Cohort II (n=105) was asked if they had joined any student organizations since October 2008 and 43% said yes. They were asked to list the organizations they joined. The list was long and diverse but the most common reference was a plan to apply for Fish Camp (6 citations). In April 2009, half (50%) of the 119 freshmen said they had joined a new organization since February. Their organization list was also long and diverse but the references to Fish Camp went up dramatically (20 citations). All freshmen were asked to explain why they had joined the new organizations. The February and April explanations were similar so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why Cohort II freshmen joined new organizations during the year. A total of 130 comments were offered. The five themes included giving back to others (46 comments), personal gain (36 comments), career development (20 comments), social development (16 comments), and all about the organization (15 comments). Explanations of each theme are included below along with a sample of comments provided by the freshmen.

Theme 1: Giving Back to Others

The comments in this category were primarily given by freshmen who became involved in their organizations as a way to give back in to other students at A&M, the community or the university. Freshmen in this category often expressed giving back in many different ways and with many different organizations.

Representative Comments

- “The Big Event, because I like the idea of community service and giving back in such a BIG way” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Project Sunshine, I enjoy working with disabled children” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Muster Hosts- want to give back and help families of fallen Aggies” (male, General Studies)
- “Fish Camp... I’m so excited to show this new generation what A&M is all about!” (female, General Studies)
- “Fish Camp- I wish to share my love for the university with the incoming freshmen” (male, Engineering)
- “Conference on Student Government Association. I am a Host to the delegates, and share with them the various organizations and programs that have worked at Texas A&M” (male, Engineering)
- “Freshmen Business Initiative because I will be able to lead a group of freshmen and make their first semester wonderful” (female, Business)
- “Impact, helps me to mentor freshmen and also be a Godly example to those around me” (male, Engineering)
- “I’ve joined MEDALS because I felt it would... have an impact on the young people who come to our conference” (female, Liberal Arts)

Theme 2: Personal Gain

The comments in this theme were focused primarily on personal needs and desires. Some freshmen were focused on how the organizations they joined could help them while others were just concerned about fulfilling personal interests.

Representative Comments

- “MSCC ALOT- It has the right balance of social and volunteering aspects to fit my personality” (female, General Studies)
- “TAMU Orchestra, because I have a passion for music” (male, General Studies)
- “On-Campus Bible Study and Leaders in Freshmen Engineering are the two organizations I have been involved in so far. I wanted to do something that mattered... so I joined organizations that pertained to my interests” (female, Engineering)
- “I’ve joined MEDALS because I felt it would be a great opportunity to build my on campus leadership resumé” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Gymnastics Club- I wanted to stay active” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “Fish camp—because it’s a great experience to grow as a person...” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

Theme 3: Career Development

The comments in this theme addressed the forms of career and professional development that freshmen felt they gained from being involved in their organizations.

Representative Comments

- “FAST (Future Agricultural Science Teachers) I want to become an Ag teacher when I graduate!!” (female, Agriculture)

- “PAID. I changed majors and decided that I wanted to be more involved and learn more about it” (male, Engineering)
- “Student Engineering Council because I thought it would allow me to meet more serious engineering student like myself” (male, Engineering)
- “Lambda Sigma... looks good on a resumé” (male, Engineering)

Theme 4: Social Development

The comments in this theme addressed the different social reasons that student participated in their organizations. There were several forms of social development that the student commented on such as meeting new people, having fun, joining because they knew others in the organization, and building their Aggie network.

Representative Comments

- “FAST- Freshmen Aggies Spreading Traditions- I got involved with this organization because it is a great way to meet new people” (female, General Studies)
- “CARPOOL- it’s a really fun organization” (male, Engineering)
- “TAMU Orchestra, because I... know a few people in the orchestra” (male, General Studies)
- “MSCC ALOT- I wanted an organization that would help me ‘plug in’ to the A&M network” (female, General Studies)

Theme 5: All About the Organization

The comments in this theme focused on the organizations. Freshmen said they joined new organizations because they loved it, agreed with the mission, wanted the experience that came with membership in the organization, and the opportunity to share values with peers.

Representative Comments

- “CARPOOL- I have just applied, and I joined because I really connect with the program and their cause” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Fish Camp because it’s one of my favorite A&M traditions and I wanted to be a part of it” (female, Science)
- “Aggie BSM. I got involved because I am a Baptist student that was seeking other Baptists students to study the Word with” (female, Liberal Arts)

Stopping Involvement in TAMU Organizations during Freshman Year

Cohort I (n=117) was asked in April 2008 if they had stopped their involvement with any student organizations since the February 2008 survey. Fifteen percent (15%) said yes and they were asked to explain. Their comments detailed how they lost passion for their organizations, felt that the organizations were different than they expected, had conflicts with meetings times or requirements, wanted to spend more time with academic obligations, changed majors and therefore had to drop related organizations, experienced health problems, and encountered unfriendly people in the organization.

Cohort II was asked in February and April 2009 if they stopped their involvement with any organizations since the last survey period. In February 2009 (n=109), 17% said they had stopped their involvement with an organization since October. In April 2009 (n=135), 17% said they had

stopped their involvement with an organization since February. All freshmen were asked to explain why they had dropped their organizations. The February and April explanations were similar so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why freshmen stopped their involvement with organizations during the year. A total of 44 comments were offered and covered ideas such as being busy, losing interest, having other priorities, focusing on academics, and problems within the organization. Below is a sample of comments to better explain students' reasons for dropping out of organizations.

Representative Comments

- "I couldn't seem to continue to make the time for it" (female, Engineering)
- "Work conflicts" (female, Education)
- "Got boring" (female, Liberal Arts)
- "They never included me" (female, Business)
- "It was all business and no fun. I had to work harder in that than I did in my EN classes. And it wasn't what I thought it would be" (male, Engineering)
- "Because they are sometimes overly insulting in the manner that they present their views, (which I still support their views just not in the way that they express them)" (male, Engineering)
- "Not informed of the meetings" (male, Engineering)

Continuing Current Involvement in TAMU Organizations into Sophomore Year

In April, both cohorts were asked if they were planning to continue their involvement with their current organizations in the fall semester of their sophomore year. A majority (87%) of Cohort I (n=95) said they would continue into the fall. Those who did not wish to continue (n=12) were asked to explain why. Their comments mentioned focusing more on academic obligations, belonging to an organization that was meant to be a one-year commitment only (e.g., Freshman Leadership Organizations), losing interest in the organizations, wanting to join something different, and not being selected to continue in the organization.

A similar percentage (88%) of Cohort II (n=121) planned to continue into the fall semester with their current organizations. Those who were not planning to continue (n=15) were asked to explain why. Their comments mentioned no longer being eligible for the organization (e.g., freshmen only), a need to prioritize academics, plans to transfer to another college, and being busy with other activities.

Plans to Join New TAMU Organizations during Sophomore Year

In April, both cohorts were asked if they planned to join any new student organizations during the fall of their sophomore year. Three-fourths (73%) of Cohort I (n=117) said yes. Those who said no (n=32) were asked to explain their reasons for not wanting to join new organizations. Their comments indicated that most were happy with their current organizations and wanted to devote their time to them. Others said they received leadership positions in their current organizations so would not have time for others. One student did not know what else to join while another expressed frustration with his/her previous organization and that frustration led to a general disenchantment with organizations.

Three-fourths (76%) of Cohort II (n=135) said they were planning to join new organization in the fall 2009 semester. Those who said no (n=33) were asked to explain why they would not join new organizations. Their comments indicated they were busy with other activities, would continue on in their current organizations and wanted to focus attention there, needed more time to devote to academic issues, and they were taking on leadership positions in their current organizations. Two freshmen said they were leaving the institution in the fall semester.

Leadership in TAMU Organizations during Freshman Year

Freshmen who were involved in organizations were asked if they held leadership positions. Table 13 illustrates that leadership positions increased for freshmen between October and February for both cohorts.

Do you hold a leadership position in any TAMU student organizations? -YES	Cohort I	Cohort II
October	11% (n=172)	13% (n=186)
February	19% (n=104)	31% (n=117)

Table 13—Leadership in TAMU organizations during freshman year of college

Satisfaction with Texas A&M during Freshman Year

In February, freshmen were asked how satisfied they were with their overall Texas A&M experience including academics, living situation, involvement, etc. A scale of 5=Very Satisfied, 4=Satisfied, 3=Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, and 1=Very Dissatisfied was used. Table 14 contains responses from both cohorts and reveals the most freshmen are satisfied with their experience.

How satisfied are you with your overall Texas A&M experience?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Mean (sd) (n)
Cohort I	51%	38%	8%	1%	2%	4.36 (.81) (n=113)
Cohort II	45%	43%	10%	2%	--	4.32 (.73) (n=117)

Table 14—Overall satisfaction with Texas A&M experience during freshman year of college

Those who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied were asked to explain. Nine comments were offered from Cohort I and revealed problems with living conditions in the residence halls, trying to figure out what to get involved with, needing to make better grades, not being able to find a place to belong, and regrets over not having gotten involved in the campus sooner. Two comments were offered from Cohort II and described not fitting in, being overwhelmed, and finding the student organizations too selective.

Defining Academic Success during Freshman Year

Freshmen were asked to define “academic success” using a provided select-all-that-apply list. Table 15, in descending order for Cohort II, illustrates that all of the definitions had support from a large portion of both cohorts. Good grades, doing my best, and achieving goals were the top three reasons for both cohorts. One person in Cohort II selected the “other” response and wrote in “be able to share the knowledge gained” as another way to define academic success.

How do you define academic success? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=139)
Getting good grades	76%	71%
Doing my best	75%	69%
Achieving a goal (degree, graduate school, job)	76%	68%
Being able to apply what I have learned	65%	64%
Learning something	70%	60%
Becoming a well-rounded person	58%	55%
Other	--	1%

Table 15—How freshmen defined “academic success”

A follow-up question asked freshmen if they believed they had been academically successful based on their personal definition. A majority of Cohort I (71%) said yes, 13% said no, and 17% were not sure. Cohort II responded in a similar fashion – 73% said yes, 11% said no, and 16% were not sure.

Reasons Why Involvement Enhances Academic Success during Freshman Year

In April, freshmen were asked to describe how involvement enhanced their academic success as they defined it. For Cohort I, a total of 144 comments were offered by 98 freshmen. The themes generated by the comments included enhancing personal growth (56 comments), providing interpersonal benefits (31 comments), increasing performance in the academic environment (19 comments), increasing personal enjoyment and happiness (17 comments), and becoming a source of motivation (16 comments). Another five comments said that involvement had no impact on academic success. A description of all of the themes is included below along with a sample of comments from freshmen. At the beginning of each comment is the response the student provided to the question of whether or not s/he had been academically successful.

Theme 1: Personal Growth

All of the comments in this category addressed freshmen developing something about themselves because of involvement in student organizations. They were a combination of intangible and tangible improvements such as becoming well-rounded and learning how to better manage time.

Representative Comments:

- (NO) “The student organizations I am a part of help foster ... values of integrity” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (NO) “Only a small percentage of skills needed I the real world can be learned in the classroom. By being involved, one can enhance their qualities that are outside of the classroom” (male, General Studies)

- (YES) “It enhances it because it helps make me a well rounded person that can do more than just study” (male, Business)
- (YES) “It has taught me to manage time better. I have learned to have serious ‘study time’ and also to find time for community service projects” (female, Business)
- (YES) “It often times gives me a place where I can apply what I’ve learned” (male, Agriculture)
- (YES) “How to deal with real life situations as opposed to math problems or geology” (female, Education)

Theme 2: Interpersonal Benefits

The comments in this category all discussed being able to meet more people, network, and build interpersonal skills.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “It allows me to get to know other people” (female, Business)
- (NOT SURE) “Being involved in student organizations gives you the opportunity to meet a lot of people” (male, Business)
- (YES) “It makes me more aware of the resources around me and that I have access to whether it’s by talking about it with my peers or something that is suggested to me by my mentors” (male, Liberal Arts)
- (NOT SURE) “Networking with people I usually would not come in contact with” (male, Agriculture)
- (YES) “It teaches you to work with others” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

Theme 3: Increased Performance in the Academic Environment

The comments in this category described how involvement enhances academic success by providing study support, accountability for making good grades, and helping with concentration.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “It has allowed me to use my peers to help me learn material” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (YES) “They give me friends that are able to help me study and teach me things my teachers do not explain well” (female, Liberal Arts)
- (NO) “Helps me find others to study with and work on homework with” (male, Engineering)
- (NOT SURE) “Through my involvement I am required to maintain good study habits and grades” (female, Business)

Theme 4: Personal Enjoyment and Happiness

The comments in this category centered on how the freshmen were feeling. Being involved in student organizations gave them a break from school, generally made them happy, and helped them find a connection to the school. In turn, this helped them be more academically successful.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “It acts as a stress relief” (female, Liberal Arts)

- (YES) “It helps you take a much needed study break” (male, Education)
- (NOT SURE) “Allows me to do something other than school” (female, Engineering)
- (YES) “It makes me enjoy my time at A&M more” (male, Agriculture)

Theme 5: Source of Motivation

Some freshmen said that being involved in organizations helped their academic success because it motivated them to do better in school.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “Being surrounded by people that encourage you to do well and can help you to succeed” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (NO) “It gets me around people who do strive to do their best in class, which in turn motivates me” (male, Engineering)
- (NOT SURE) “We all help and encourage each other to do our best” (female, General Studies)

Theme 6: Involvement Has No Impact

Some freshmen did not believe that being involved in student organizations had an impact on academic success.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “I cannot think of any ways that it enhances my academic success” (female, Education)
- (NO) “It doesn’t” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

For Cohort II, a total of 210 comments were offered by 145 freshmen. The themes generated by the comments included skill building (58 comments), scholastics (37 comments), external assistance (29 comments), relationships (25 comments), personal development (20 comments), engagement at A&M (15 comments), emotional wellness (13 comments), and future preparation (9 comments). Another four comments said that involvement had no impact on academic success. A description of all of the themes is included below along with a sample of comments from freshmen. At the beginning of each comment is the response the student provided to the question of whether or not s/he had been academically successful.

Theme 1: Skill Building

The comments in this theme centered on the skills that the freshmen expressed they developed as a result of being in student organizations. Some of the freshmen expressed that their skill level in certain areas was enhanced by their involvement and because of this their success in areas inside and outside the classroom increased.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “Forces me to do my work when I have the chance so I can attend meetings, participate in activities, etc.” (female, Engineering)
- (YES) “My organizations have to do with some of my future career goals, as do some of my classes” (female, Agriculture)

- (Not Sure) “I’m in the organization called One Love & this has helped me be aware of the people around and how equally we should all be treated” (male, General Studies)
- (YES) “It helps keep me focused on important things” (male, Engineering)
- (YES) “It helps me to apply leadership skills” (female, Liberal Arts)
- (YES) “I’ve learned to ... organize” (female, General Studies)
- (YES) “Improves communication skills” (male, Engineering)
- (YES) “Introduces additional responsibility” (male, Engineering)

Theme 2: Scholastics

The comments in this theme addressed the different forms of scholastic tools that freshmen gained from being involved in student organizations.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “It motivates me to make good grades because if I don’t maintain a certain GPA then I can’t participate” (female, Liberal Arts)
- (YES) “It also helps me make friends in my classes that I am able to look to for help on a problem or assist them in understanding” (male, Engineering)
- (YES) “It provides an outlet for me to apply newly gained knowledge and skills e.g. leadership through knowledge and initiative” (male, Liberal Arts)
- (YES) “It helps create study groups” (female, Business)
- (YES) “I... know more about resources for studying, tutoring, and basic knowledge to make better grades” (female, General Studies)
- (YES) “I apply many of the things I learn by being in a leadership position in my different organizations to class” (female, Agriculture)
- (NOT SURE) “It helps because I often run into people in my classes or who have taken courses before me and can be of much help” (female, Education)
- (NO) “I’m able to ask those in my organizations who are older for certain advice on classes” (female, General Studies)

Theme 3: External Assistance

The comments in this theme addressed the different forms of external assistance that students received from their student organizations that they felt helped them in different areas such as academics or their personal endeavors.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “The support of peers influences my achievements” (female, Engineering)
- (YES) “It gives me a reason to do my best, so I can participate in all of the activities” (female, General Studies)
- (YES) “Additionally nearly everyone in my organization is very intelligent and being surrounded by smart people motivates me” (male, Engineering)
- (NO) “When I do well in organizations, I want to do well in school, too” (female, Business)

Theme 4: Relationships

The comments in this theme centered in the relationships that students gained from being in organizations. Each form of relationship provided students with some kind of benefit that they felt helped them.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “It helps me meet other people” (female, Architecture)
- (YES) “I wouldn’t be a very happy person if I didn’t have my friends to go eat lunch and take study breaks with” (male, Business)
- (YES) “I am able to meet people that may help me find a job when I start searching and after I graduate” (female, Agriculture)
- (NOT SURE) “Also, I am in Fish Camp now and getting to know my counselors working with me this summer has increased my network” (male, General Studies)

Theme 5: Personal Development

The comments in this theme addressed the areas of personal development in which students felt they had grown from being involved in student organizations.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “Where class teaches you knowledge student organizations teaches you character” (male, Engineering)
- (YES) “It keeps my busy. Giving me time to be lazy only helps me to feel I need to be that way in the future” (male, Engineering)
- (YES) “I think, while it requires a great deal of my time it allows me to be well rounded” (female, Liberal Arts)
- (YES) “I have learned so much about myself this past year through numerous opportunities from selfless service and my many organizations” (female, Liberal Arts)
- (NOT SURE) “It helps round out your student experience” (female, Engineering)

Theme 6: Engagement at A&M

The comments in this theme center on the increase in engagement that with the campus freshmen said they experienced from being involved in student organizations.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “It gives me a stronger connection to the A&M community” (male, Engineering)
- (YES) “[Being involved] makes me feel more passionate about doing my best for A&M” (male, Engineering)
- (NO) “Gets me involved in student life giving me a sense of belonging” (female, General Studies)

Theme 7: Emotional Wellness

The comments in this theme centered on the skills that the freshmen expressed they developed as a result of being in student organizations. Some of the freshmen expressed that their skill level in certain areas was enhanced by their involvement and because of this their success in areas inside and outside the classroom increased.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “Gymnastics gives me an out to relieve some stress when things are getting tough academically” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (YES) “It gives me time to relax” (male, Agriculture)
- (NO) “Makes me happier” (female, General Studies)

Theme 8: Future Preparation

The comments in this theme addressed the preparation for future endeavors that freshmen said involvement in their student organizations provided.

Representative Comments:

- (YES) “Premed society gives me opportunities to apply what I’ve learned to clinical and volunteer experiences” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (YES) “It allow me to ... essentially learn LIFE management” (male, Geosciences)

Reasons Why Involvement Detracts from Academic Success during Freshman Year

In April, both cohorts were asked to explain how involvement detracts from their academic success. A total of 92 comments were offered by 85 freshmen in Cohort I, and predominantly covered the idea of involvement impacting time management issues (59 comments). Other issues included problems with finding a good balance for all of their obligations, wellness issues, and distractions caused by involvement. A sample of comments is listed below. At the beginning of each comment is the response the student provided to the question of whether or not s/he had been academically successful.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “They take up time that I could, but not necessarily would, be studying” (male, Engineering)
- (Yes) “Sometimes my obligations to student organizations conflict with studying or homework” (female, Agriculture)
- (Yes) “Sometimes I will want to do something with my organization instead of study, so therefore I have to stay up later to finish it, therefore I lose sleep, and the assignment is not as good as it could be” (female, Engineering)
- (Yes) “Like any commitment, it can detract time that could be used for studying or other class related material” (male, Agriculture)
- (Yes) “It takes up a lot of time and you would rather spend time with your friends then spend time studying” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (Yes) “It is a commitment, so it’s something I have to learn how to balance. Presently, I am not the best at doing that, so learning how to balance things is my education now, class will come next” (male, General Studies)
- (Not Sure) “I have to attend meetings which takes away from studying time” (female, Agriculture)
- (No) “They take up a lot of time. Professors forget that we have student organizations and student organizations forget that we have classes. It’s impossible to please both” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

- (No) “I often have to choose whether to commit my time to studying or organizational activities” (male, Engineering)

Cohort II offered a total of 133 comments by 106 freshmen. The majority of comments addressed student organizations taking time away from studying and other academic issues or impacting their ability to manage their time well and prioritize effectively (96 comments). Twelve comments explained that involvement did not detract from academic success. A sample of comments is listed below. At the beginning of each comment is the response the student provided to the question of whether or not s/he had been academically successful.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “Worrying about organizational things and not academic things will detract from my success” (female, Liberal Arts)
- (Yes) “Well, obviously if you are spending time hanging out with friends or in organization meetings, then you aren’t studying so that is the biggest way being involve can detract from success (*sic*)” (male, Business)
- (Yes) “The organizations have a lot of projects that may take some time away from studying, like weekend retreats, or community service” (female, General Studies)
- (Yes) “The benefits of involvement greatly outweigh any risks or problems” (male, Engineering)
- (Yes) “Sometimes it is hard to know when to say when as far as what I can commit to in ASSIST and what I can’t” (female, General Studies)
- (Yes) “Some of my friends and sometimes my organization encourages me to put off academics for them” (female, General Studies)
- (Yes) “It’s helping me grow as a person” (female, General Studies)
- (Yes) “It challenges my priorities at times” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (Yes) “I over involved myself and so I neglect studies sometimes” (male, Engineering)
- (Not Sure) “Gives me stress” (male, Engineering)
- (No) “Since I am involved with organizations, meeting times conflict with Week-In-Review for math, and SI’s [Supplemental Instruction] for other subjects that I think would benefit me greatly if I were able to go” (female, General Studies)

Skill Development during Freshman Year

Freshmen were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding specific skills they might have used during their first year. For each skill, freshmen selected from a provided list what area of their lives might have required that skill during the year. There was an option of “Did Not Use This Skill.” For those who indicated they did use the skill during the year, they were asked if that skill had improved during the year, and, if so, what specifically helped them improve. Freshmen who said programs, workshops, or conferences required them to use the skill were offered an opportunity to write-in the name of the event. In addition, an opportunity was provided to write-in other areas where skills were used. All tables are listed in descending order for Cohort II.

Written Communication

Table 16 illustrates where freshmen from both cohorts used written communication skills during their first school year. Both cohorts responded in a similar fashion with academic classes and student organizations topping the list.

Where have you used Written Communication Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=135)
Academic Class or Laboratory	79%	77%
Student Organization	60%	60%
Peers	39%	46%
Family	38%	43%
Volunteer Opportunity	26%	25%
Work or Internship	20%	19%
Learning Community	8%	13%
Program, Workshop, Conference	7%	10%
Other	5%	4%
Did Not use This Skill	4%	4%

Table 16—Where freshmen used written communication skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used written communication skills, Cohort I freshmen listed the High School Service Conference, Student Leaders of Tomorrow (SLOT), job training, the Professional Association for Industrial Distribution (PAID) Career Fair, and the FASTrack to Aggieland program. Cohort II freshmen listed the SLOT conference, the Conference on Student Government Associations (COSGA), and the National Hispanic Business Association (NHBA) national conference. For the “other” response, Cohort I freshmen said they used written communication skills when completing fundraising letters and applications as well as using e-mail and Facebook. Cohort II freshmen listed student organization applications, blogs, financial aid forms, and a letter to a government representative.

Freshmen who used written communication skills were asked if their skills had improved during the school year. Over half (58%) of Cohort I (n=112) and 67% of Cohort II (n=129) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 66 comments were offered by 55 freshmen in Cohort I. The three themes generated by the comments were having some kind of external evaluation of their writing (32 comments), having opportunities to practice (26 comments), and having some kind of motivation to improve (8 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I am in a writing intensive class. This has been very useful” (female, Education)
- “ENGL 104... planning out and writing essays by writing multiple drafts before having a final essay to turn in” (male, Engineering)
- “Writing essays for history has helped me better communicate my ideas” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “[My English teacher] was also very good at analyzing weaknesses in our writing and coming up with ways to overcome them” (male, General Studies)

- “Filling out and writing essays for different applications greatly improved my writing skills” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I am more able to be direct in emails and letters, because the kind of constant communication you have to use with organizations and sometimes advisors and teachers. I have to compete for reading time, and I realize that a wordy [email] is not always read” (male, General Studies)
- “Your written communication skills are something you have to utilize all of the time, forcing you to improve” (female, Business)
- “Lots and lots of practice” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Being involved in my organization, PAID, and contacting specific companies about our Career Fair” (male, Engineering)
- “Communicating with important members of the A&M community” (female, Education)
- “Speaking communication skills correlate directly with written communication skills. My speaking communication skills have improved because of my involvement and the different situations that I have had to verbally communicate effectively in” (male, General Studies)
- “Just being at Texas A&M and among my peers has called me to a higher standard” (female, Science)

A total of 70 Cohort II freshmen offered 89 comments. The main ideas generated by the comments were class (31 comments), practice (18 comments), and student organizations (11 comments). Other ideas included expectations from others, building complementary skills, reaching personal goals, and getting assistance. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “My English teacher is ridiculous, so to please him I had to write perfectly to even pass” (female, Engineering)
- “Both my English and my Philosophy courses this past year served as a great medium for improving my written communication skills” (female, Agriculture)
- “I took an English class this semester, and it really helped my writing skills” (male, Engineering)
- “Lab reports have helped me write more scientifically and have helped me be more concise on my papers” (male, Engineering)
- “The fact that I used them a lot” (female, Agriculture)
- “Having to specifically link things I have learned in my classes to writing different newsletters for my students organizations” (female, Agriculture)
- “Also, I had opportunities within some of my organizations to apply these skills; for example, I wrote a proposal for a campus event to my college’s dean for my FLO” (female, Agriculture)
- “I have become the scholarships chair for Alpha Delta Phi sorority, and am required to send out a great deal of written communication to advisors and members. It is very important to convey a message without causing confusion or negative feeling, and so I have to think a great deal about every word I choose” (female, Business)
- “The need for professional communication required me to spend effort to enhance my writing skills” (female, Liberal Arts)

- “Also, all the organizations I applied to have an application process and I had several friends proofread them” (male, General Studies)
- “The University Writing Center helped a lot!” (male, General Studies)
- “My own drive to better my grasp of the English language” (male, Engineering)

Public Speaking

Table 17 demonstrates where freshmen used public speaking skills during the school year. About a quarter of both cohorts said they did not use public speaking during the year. For those who did use public speaking, student organizations were the main venue for using these skills.

Where have you used Public Speaking Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=132)
Student Organization	48%	54%
Academic Class or Laboratory	41%	38%
Did Not Use This Skill	26%	27%
Peers	18%	27%
Family	11%	14%
Volunteer Opportunity	17%	13%
Work or Internship	10%	10%
Program, Workshop, Conference	9%	9%
Learning Community	4%	9%
Other	--	1%

Table 17—Where freshmen used public speaking skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used public speaking skills, Cohort I freshmen listed the High School Service Conference, Student Leaders of Tomorrow (SLOT), the PAID Career Fair, and the FASTrack to Aggieldand program. The Cohort II freshmen listed SLOT, a recruiting presentation, and the National Hispanic Business Association. There were no “other” responses from either cohort.

Freshmen who used public speaking skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Over half (54%) of Cohort I (n=84) and two-thirds (67%) of Cohort II (n=96) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 44 comments were offered by 39 Cohort I freshmen. The six themes generated by the comments were improving skills through student organization involvement (21 comments), having general opportunities to practice (10 comments), using the skills in class (5 comments), using the skills at work (3 comments), having personal traits that helped them improve (2 comments), and getting encouragement or pressure to improve (3 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Having to speak with at least 80 companies for Career Fair” (male, Engineering)
- “Having to interview for an organization pushed me to improve my speaking skills” (male, Business)
- “My sorority because I am required to speak in front of the chapter every meeting” (female, Agriculture)

- “Through my student organizations, I had had to give information or presentations about our projects in front of other organizations” (male, Engineering)
- “Being in more public situations calls for obvious skill in speaking and dealing with all types of people; the more practice you have, the better at it you’ll be” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I’ve had several opportunities to improve my public speaking skills this year, mostly in classes where I have had to give presentations of projects” (female, Engineering)
- “In my job we have to speak to the customers” (female, Business)

A total of 51 Cohort II freshmen offered 69 comments. The main ideas generated by the comments were having general opportunities to practice (20 comments), using the skills in class (18 comments), using the skills in student organizations (17 comments), and gaining self confidence (6 comments). Other ideas included using the skills at work, being influenced by peers, and reaching personal goals. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “With every speaking event that you go to, you improve your skills” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Being placed in front larger groups of people increased my comfort” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “I had a lot of practice in my class” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “The Corps of Cadets taught me to have confidence in what I say and do” (male, General Studies)
- “My organizations provided opportunities to test out and polish my public speaking skills” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I gained confidence as a person which in turn allowed me to be a better public speaker” (male, Engineering)
- “At work I have learned to be a better public speaker by having to interact with both current and former students” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “Having others around me that are very good at public speaking had influenced and ultimately improve my public speaking skills” (female, Agriculture)

Interpersonal Communication

Table 18, on the following page, depicts where freshmen used interpersonal communication skills during the school year. Peers and student organizations were the top two areas for both cohorts.

Where have you used Interpersonal Communication Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=130)
Student Organization	62%	56%
Peers	65%	55%
Academic Class or Laboratory	58%	46%
Family	50%	42%
Volunteer Opportunity	31%	23%
Did Not Use This Skill	12%	15%
Work or Internship	25%	13%
Learning Community	9%	9%
Program, Workshop, Conference	4%	6%
Other	2%	1%

Table 18—Where freshmen used interpersonal communication skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used interpersonal communication skills, a Cohort I freshman listed the High School Service Conference while a Cohort II freshman listed the Gilbert Leadership Conference. For the “other” response, a Cohort I freshman listed tutoring.

Freshmen who used interpersonal communication skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Around three-fourths (71%) of Cohort I (n=101) and two-thirds (67%) of Cohort II (n=106) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 71 comments were offered by 53 Cohort I freshmen. The comments all highlighted activities or personal characteristics that helped the freshmen improve their skills. These included meeting new people (21 comments), practice and general experiences with people (14 comments), being involved in student organizations (11 comments), being around their peers (8 comments), analyzing their interactions (6 comments), academic classes and events (5 comments), work (4 comments), and interacting with others in their living environment (2 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Simply coming to college and having to deal with new people” (female, Engineering)
- “Being around so many new people made me speak and act with confidence, it was either that or be lost in the crowd” (female, General Studies)
- “These skills improved the only way they can, through more interaction with other persons” (male, Engineering)
- “The diversity of people in [my organization] helped me figure out how I fit in with such a group and subsequently improved my communication skills” (female, Engineering)
- “Organizations make you put yourself out there and get to know people” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I met more people this year than ever before in my life and had to start from scratch making new friends. It was a good experience” (male, Agriculture)
- “Learning to be open, not judging people immediately” (female, Business)

- “I took COMM 101 and they teach about interpersonal communication” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I do tutoring quite frequently this semester, and through the process, it somehow enhance my communication skills” (male, Engineering)
- “My roommate and I went potluck and living with someone that I had never met before has made me more sensitive to others’ feelings” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

A total of 54 Cohort II freshmen offered 73 comments. The four main themes included one-on-one communications (26 comments), working with others (25 comments), personal development (14 comments), and having a good environment in which to improve their skills (8 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I had to work with a diverse group of people, improving my interpersonal communication skills” (male, Engineering)
- “The diverse environment lends to a necessity of communication with all different types of people” (female, Engineering)
- “Being away from my family I had to talk to them and fill them in on what was going on in my life. Not being able to see them everyday made it where I had to rely on talking to them and making sure they knew what I was going through and facing since they were not here to see me” (female, Agriculture)
- “My involvement in organizations required me to communicate with people almost daily” (male, General Studies)
- “I had to learn to communicate my ideas and issues with others throughout the year by working with teams and groups” (female, Engineering)
- “I have become more outgoing and easy going around new friends and familiar people. It is easy for me to start a conversation” (female, General Studies)
- “I pushed hard to emphasize the listening portion of communication” (male, Engineering)

Critical Thinking

Table 19, on the following page, illustrates where freshmen used critical thinking skills during the school year. Critical thinking was defined on the survey as “decision-making and problem-solving.” Academic class or laboratory was the main area for both cohorts where freshmen used critical thinking skills.

Where have you used Critical Thinking Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=131)
Academic Class or Laboratory	84%	86%
Student Organization	43%	50%
Peers	28%	26%
Family	23%	19%
Volunteer Opportunity	20%	18%
Work or Internship	18%	17%
Learning Community	10%	16%
Did Not Use This Skill	5%	8%
Program, Workshop, Conference	2%	6%
Other	2%	--

Table 19—Where freshmen used critical thinking skills

A Cohort II freshman listed “FLiP” as a program, workshop, or conference that required critical thinking skills. For the “other” response, two Cohort I freshmen offered the personal experiences of working on a vehicle and trying to work through financial management.

Freshmen who used critical thinking skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Around two-thirds (67%) of Cohort I (n=109) and three-fourths (73%) of Cohort II (n=120) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 68 comments were offered by 56 Cohort I freshmen. The three themes generated by the comments were academic requirements and experiences (31 comments), improving smaller skill sets that build into critical thinking (9 comments), co-curricular experiences (9 comments), general experience with using the skills (9 comments), having to deal with higher expectations for using the skills (7 comments), and having meaningful interactions with peers (3 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I have been taking more advanced math and science classes than I have ever taken, and they naturally improved my critical thinking skills” (male, Engineering)
- “Some of the stuff we did in my classes was so hard that my skills had to improve, or else it would be bad news” (female, Agriculture)
- “My physics classes especially improved my critical thinking skills because I had to do a lot of the learning on my own and had to teach myself” (female, Engineering)
- “Being more independent has made me have to make decisions on my own and develop my critical thinking skills” (female, Agriculture)
- “Having more than one problem at a time has helped me to create solutions to different problems quickly” (female, Architecture)
- “Being an RA has improved my skills, especially when having to make decisions about residents” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Planning events made me discover that you cannot always be prepared for everything. I am more ready to make decisions on the spot” (male, General Studies)
- “Being at A&M, I am among some of the smartest college students in the state. This has propelled [me] to a higher level of thinking” (female, Science)

- “In high school I really did not have to do that much. However, in order to stay in good standings with Texas A&M, I have to push myself. Most of the exams are critical thinking questions” (male, Business)
- “Intellectual conversations with my boyfriend who goes to Rice have improved my critical thinking skills. He is always quick to point out fallacious arguments, forcing me to think careful (*sic*) as I construct my arguments” (female, Liberal Arts)

A total of 62 Cohort II freshmen offered 159 comments. The four themes generated by the comments were academic requirements and experiences (39 comments), personal development (25 comments), experience with higher order skills (10 comments), and non-academic activities (10 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “The college classes I am taking make me think critically and really apply the information learned in the classroom to really do well on the tests” (female, General Studies)
- “With classes like psychology and education, you’re only option is to think critically” (male, Geosciences)
- “The engineering projects assigned are specifically designed to challenge our critical thinking skills so each project faces us with new problems that we are required to fix” (female, Engineering)
- “I had ... better instructors who really challenged my mind” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Having to make decisions and solve problems made me more comfortable with the process” (male, General Studies)
- “College tests are a lot different than in high school, so that was an adjustment I needed to make” (male, Agriculture) (row 68).
- “Simply using them and exercising them like a muscle, nothing special” (male, Engineering)
- “I believe that since a higher standard was expected, my critical thinking skills were improved” (female, General Studies)
- “I have become more diverse in my thinking and I can attribute this to RHA” (male, Engineering)
- “Being in a position in my organization that forced me to think on my feet, and come up with new ways to get events done” (male, General Studies)
- “At my job, they tell me how to do something and then I’m on my own” (female, Agriculture)

Project Management

Table 20, on the following page, demonstrates where freshmen used project management skills during the school year. Project management was defined on the survey as “planning and implementing an event.” Academic class or laboratory was the most common response for Cohort I while student organizations were the most common response for Cohort II.

Where have you used Project Management Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=135)
Student Organization	64%	69%
Academic Class or Laboratory	68%	49%
Peers	26%	35%
Volunteer Opportunity	41%	33%
Family	18%	17%
Work or Internship	22%	14%
Did Not Use This Skill	10%	11%
Learning Community	7%	11%
Program, Workshop, Conference	8%	7%
Other	1%	--

Table 20—Where freshmen used project management skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used project management skills, Cohort I freshmen listed the Student Leaders of Tomorrow (SLOT) Conference, the Seniors Experiencing Aggie Life (SEAL) Conference, the Professional Association for Industrial Distribution (PAID) Career Fair, and the High School Leadership Conference. Cohort II freshmen listed Aggie Girl Scouts Aggie Day, SLOT, Project Fish, and a church retreat. For the “other” response, a Cohort I freshman said s/he used project management skills when working on a personal vehicle.

Freshmen who used project management skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. A majority (81%) of Cohort I (n=105) and 88% of Cohort II (n=121) thought their skills had improved and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 73 Cohort I freshmen offered 91 comments. The four themes generated by their comments were having an ongoing place to practice skills (45 comments), being able to improve smaller skills that contribute to effective project management (25 comments), having personal situations and characteristics that have helped improve the skills (18 comments), and participating in specific events (3 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Being involved with the Association for Social Entrepreneurship. Instead of choosing which organization to volunteer for, we create our own opportunities for creating a difference in the realm of social justice” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Something I learned from my friends as well as from FLiC is that people rarely make an idea their own until you start doing it—until it actually looks like it will become a reality. I used to just propose ideas and never see them happen because not enough people were interested, but now I understand the value of starting something” (male, General Studies)
- “Classes requiring group projects” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I had to specifically take on tasks and delegate others tasks to other people in order to do well in ENGR111” (female, Engineering)
- “Working as a resident advisor” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I really got overwhelmed this semester with my internship, school, and my car. Basically, I was forced to schedule out my life and come up with ways to manage everything in a limited time frame” (male, General Studies)

- “Being involved with other people hones the skills you have for project management” (female, Business)
- “I was put in several leadership positions and forced to step up. If you’re in a group where no one else is willing to take charge, you learn to do projects and lead people in those projects” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “Having the drive that the parents won’t do it for me anymore” (female, Science)

A total of 86 Cohort II freshmen offered 104 comments. The main ideas from their comments included having direct responsibility for planning events (27 comments), improving a corresponding skill such as time management or group processes (24 comments), obtaining general experience in project management (21 comments), participating in student organization projects (13 comments), and having required projects in class (11 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Being part of Freshmen Leaders in Progress. Everything we do is geared towards improving our leadership so things like project management skills naturally fall under that category” (male, Engineering)
- “In my organization, FLiC, I am on Big Project committee and we are responsible for planning a service event for 80 people. We have to cover risk forms, transportation, and get everything planned out” (female, Education)
- “I was put in charge of getting all the horses ready for the equestrian team competitions. It was kind of a do or die situation. Either step up, or we lose kind of thing” (female, Agriculture)
- “I had to help plan a Golf Tournament for my organization and it really helped me learn to keep everything organized and how to talk to businesses in a professional manner”(female, General Studies)
- “My engineering class has had many topics about project management skills” (male, Engineering)
- “I have had to come up with service projects ideas for a class. I feel that I understand more how to do it effectively then I did when I was in High School where project management skills weren’t really emphasized” (female, General Studies)
- “I have learned that it is better to plan ahead and make arrangements so that if things do go wrong there is time to fix them” (male, Agriculture)
- “I went to a conference, called FLDR and they helped improve and refine skills such as project management to enhance our capabilities and opportunities” (female, Liberal Arts)

Time Management

Table 21, on the following page, depicts where freshmen used time management skills during the school year. Academic classes, student organizations, and peers were the top three for both cohorts.

Where have you used Time Management Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=135)
Academic Class or Laboratory	93%	91%
Student Organization	72%	79%
Peers	54%	59%
Family	45%	51%
Volunteer Opportunity	44%	44%
Work or Internship	25%	28%
Learning Community	11%	23%
Program, Workshop, Conference	6%	10%
Did Not Use This Skill	2%	2%
Other	1%	2%

Table 21—Where freshmen used time management skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used time management skills, Cohort I freshmen listed the FASTrack to Aggieland program and seminars taken for classes. Cohort II listed Women’s Leadership Forum, Gateway, Project Fish, and FALCON. For the “other” response, a Cohort I freshman said s/he used time management skills when studying while a Cohort II freshman said school in general.

Freshmen who used time management skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. A majority (82%) of Cohort I (n=114) and 85% of Cohort II (n=129) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 95 comments were offered by 80 Cohort I freshmen. The five themes generated by the comments were being forced to improve their skills (26 comments), practicing specific techniques and strategies (23 comments), having some kind of motivation to improve (23 comments), being involved with organizations and other outside of class activities (13 comments), and having experience stemming from poor time management skills (10 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Being thrown into situations where you have 30 assignments, meetings, and tests you don’t really have a choice but to get better at it” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “Trying to fit everything into 24 hrs...there are deadlines you have to make and if you don’t then you don’t...there is no second chance here” (male, Education)
- “It’s really the ability to prioritize your life with what matters the most to you. There aren’t enough hours in a day to do everything so knowing what is important is crucial to succeeding” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I had a lot to do in a small amount of time. I got a planner and started scheduling all my classes and work schedules so I had one place to look to see when I needed to get things done” (male, General Studies)
- “I was able to go to counseling during the fall semester to get help with time management” (male, Business)
- “The scholastic probation certificate program” (female, Education)
- “Becoming an RA and having many responsibilities and many tasks to take care of in a limited amount of time helped me dramatically” (female, Engineering)

- “I’ve learned that studying at the last minute won’t cut it any more and that I have to make time each day to do school work” (male, Agriculture)
- “It just takes time to learn how many hours you have to devote to different aspects of your life” (female, Business)
- “Being involved in many different activities has forced me to better manage my time. There are several different meetings and socials and events that I try to work in to my schedule every week so that I can become more involved. This makes me look ahead to verify that I will have enough time to participate in the activities that I want” (female, Science)

A total of 91 Cohort II freshmen offered 143 comments. The three themes generated by the comments were maintaining their obligations (97 comments), having strategies or resources to assist them (30 comments), and going through the maturation process (16 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Bombing a couple tests really just taught me what was important and what truly was not” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Having so much stuff to do helped me with managing my time this year” (male, Engineering)
- “I had to- I’m really busy” (male, General Studies)
- “Keeping classes, assignments, events, friends, and family in balance was essential” (female, Engineering)
- “To balance living on my own, my classes, my organizations, my summer employment, and my friends is more that I have ever been faced with before” (female, Engineering)
- “Every week I map out all the things I have to attend/accomplish as a means of visualizing the time I have to work with: a huge help” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “It was a trial to see what worked and what didn’t work” (female, Business)

Delegation

Table 22, on the following page, illustrates where freshmen used delegation skills during the school year. More than a third of both cohorts said they did not use delegation skills during the year. For those who did, student organizations were the main area where the skills were used.

Where have you used Delegation Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=79)	Cohort II (n=130)
Student Organization	42%	44%
Did Not Use This Skill	34%	37%
Academic Class or Laboratory	36%	25%
Volunteer Opportunity	13%	18%
Peers	18%	15%
Family	13%	11%
Work or Internship	14%	8%
Learning Community	4%	6%
Program, Workshop, Conference	1%	4%
Other	1%	1%

Table 22—Where freshmen used delegation skills

No freshmen listed programs, workshops, or conferences that required the use of delegation skills. For the “other” response, a Cohort I freshman said s/he used delegation skills during “life in general.”

Freshmen who used delegation skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Over half (55%) of Cohort I (n=73) and 61% of Cohort II (n=80) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 35 comments were offered by 31 Cohort I freshmen. The comments all addressed specific avenues where they gained experience with delegation such as student organizations (9 comments), daily life (7 comments), leadership positions (4 comments), working with teams (4 comments), class (4 comments), interacting with others (4 comments), and trying to manage personal issues (3 comments). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “In MSC FISH, we (the freshmen) had to plan and organize our own service project. This meant we had to find what needed to be done and then split it up amongst the committee members” (male, Agriculture)
- “When there were situations in our organizations where someone had to establish order and organize the activity. This is when I would step in and take over a certain responsibility and assign tasks to others” (male, Engineering)
- “With practice, I improved” (female, General Studies)
- “Working in groups for presentations, had to delegate who would do what” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “Engineering projects with people who did not want to do the work. I had to step up and assign people jobs so that things got done” (female, Engineering)
- “Fitting everything into 24 hrs, again you cannot do alone...split it up” (male, Education)
- “I got to meet lots of new people and learned how to read them and decide what kind of person they were and what specific tasks would fit well with their personality” (female, Engineering)

A total of 37 Cohort II freshmen offered 49 comments. The main ideas addressed by the comments included venues such as class (12 comments) and student organizations (9 comments) along with other opportunities such as general practice (11 comments), experience as a leader (10 comments), and personal development (7 comments). One student did not know what delegation meant. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “A class project allowed me to work with 3 unknown students and I learned how to communicate and delegate tasks to each one of them” (female, Business)
- “I usually had to delegate things that needed to be done or else it would have been up to me to get them all done” (male, Engineering)
- “When I was put in charge of all the horses, there is no way I could do that alone so I had to delegate to others” (female, Agriculture)
- “During our FLO meetings, they encouraged us to step up and I got the opportunity to tell other people what needed to be done” (female, General Studies)
- “With our large service projects, MSCC Fish needs the help and assistance of most members, so as we are planning the project, we are delegating at every step” (female, Engineering)
- “I learned that everyone cannot do everything” (female, Engineering)
- “Working with diverse groups helped me to view things from different perspectives” (male, Engineering)

Effective Meetings

Table 23 demonstrates where freshmen used skills for planning and running effective meetings during the school year. Almost half of the freshmen in both cohorts said they had not used effective meeting skills during the year. Those who did use these skills selected student organizations as the most common place to use them.

Where have you used Effective Meeting Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=120)	Cohort II (n=130)
Did Not Use This Skill	48%	44%
Student Organization	33%	44%
Academic Class or Laboratory	13%	16%
Peers	8%	8%
Volunteer Opportunity	8%	7%
Work or Internship	7%	4%
Family	3%	3%
Program, Workshop, Conference	3%	4%
Learning Community	2%	7%
Other	--	1%

Table 23—Where freshmen used effective meeting skills

Cohort I listed two programs, workshops, or conferences that used effective meeting skills – the High School Service Conference and the Student Leaders of Tomorrow (SLOT) Conference. Cohort II freshmen list the SLOT conference and Project Fish. No freshmen offered an “other” response.

Freshmen who used effective meeting skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Around two-thirds (65%) of Cohort I (n=54) and three-fourths (71%) of Cohort II (n=69) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 30 comments were offered by 29 Cohort I freshmen. The comments offered a variety of sources to improve skills such as student organizations (8 comments), general experience and practice (8 comments), taking personal responsibility for meeting tasks (6 comments), academic class responsibilities (5 comments), getting advice from role models and peers (2 comments), and work (1 comment). A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I had to sit in on WAY too many meetings that wasted valuable time. It showed me the importance of being organized and getting to the point. An extra hour is a big thing, especially the night before an exam” (male, Agriculture)
- “Meetings in [the organization] helped me learn the value of being clear concise and the value of staying on topic. I learned that meetings have to be planned. I don’t expect topics of discussions to run their own course any more, but if that happens I know that it is a valuable thing (as rare as it sometimes is)” (male, General Studies)
- “Having to set up study groups then making sure we stay on task” (female, Science)
- “My counselors in [the organization] provided a good example to follow in conducting meetings, so that gave me something to go off of” (female, Engineering)
- “Working at a newspaper pushes me to plan well” (male, Business)

A total of 41 Cohort II freshmen offered 47 comments. The main ideas from their comments included student organization experiences (25 comments), general practice (11 comments), and classroom experience (6 comments). Other ideas included necessity, study groups, learning from others, and teamwork. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I learned from my student organizations how effective meetings are planned and how they work” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “My organization holds two weekly meetings, so the freshmen had to really learn how to prepare for the meetings and to be involved so they go faster and we get more done” (female, General Studies)
- “The experience that came with planning and running meetings improved these skills” (male, General Studies)
- “Learning through trial and error” (male, Engineering)
- “Endured a lot of meetings” (male, Engineering)
- “Throughout the semester, my engineering group was responsible for meeting several times. Team leaders were assigned each meeting and were responsible for leading the team that week, this practice really gave me a chance to lead meetings very often” (female, Engineering)

Group Dynamics

Table 24 depicts where freshmen used group dynamic skills during the school year. Group dynamic skills were defined in the survey as the “ability to effectively work in groups or teams.” Academic class was the main venue for Cohort I while student organizations made the top of Cohort II’s list.

Where have you used Group Dynamic Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=106)	Cohort II (n=130)
Student Organization	57%	63%
Academic Class or Laboratory	60%	62%
Peers	32%	32%
Volunteer Opportunity	29%	31%
Learning Community	8%	12%
Family	16%	11%
Work or Internship	13%	10%
Did Not Use This Skill	12%	8%
Program, Workshop, Conference	3%	6%
Other	--	--

Table 24—Where freshmen used group dynamic skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used group dynamic skills, a Cohort I freshman listed the High School Service Conference while Cohort II freshmen listed SLOT, FASTrack to Aggieland, Camp CAMP, and the Gilbert Leadership Conference. No one offered an “other” response from either cohort.

Freshmen who used group dynamic skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. A majority (70%) of Cohort I (n=100) and 75% of Cohort II (n=119) thought their skills improved and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 64 comments were offered by 53 Cohort I freshmen. The three main themes generated by the comments were experiences in student organizations (20 comments), experiences in academic environments (15 comments), and getting practice working in groups (14 comments). Other ideas that were expressed included improvement with the acceptance of differences, being able to analyze personal traits, work, and meeting new people. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I can delegate and work with teams better now than I used to due to my involvement in the Business Career Fair” (male, Business)
- “On the judging team there are a variety of people and each one has their own personality so you have to learn how to handle each individual person” (male, Agriculture)
- “It’s something that improved naturally when I joined an organization” (female, Business)
- “Since group projects are a grade in Engineering, I have to be sure to keep good relations with all of my group members” (female, Engineering)
- “You are put in groups with people you have never met and you have to give and take to make it work” (male, Education)

- “Repetition of group work in all sorts of situations helped my group dynamic skills” (female, Engineering)
- “Work gave me a challenge, since I didn’t like many of my co-workers, so it made me improve my skills b/c I had to work in unfavorable situations” (female, Business)
- “Living in the honors dorm” (female, Engineering)

A total of 64 Cohort II freshmen offered 85 comments. The main ideas generated by the comments were experiences in student organizations (24 comments), experiences in academic environments (22 comments), and obtaining some general opportunities to practice the skills (21 comments). Other ideas that were expressed included learning different perspectives, participating in a learning community, and meeting personal goals. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “FLiP had assignments to help people work in groups and learn teamwork” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “In every one of my classes I have team/group work and we must work together to complete all assigned tasks” (male, Engineering)
- “I have had to work in assigned groups with some people that were not as academically aware as I am and had to deal with that” (female, Engineering)
- “I usually am one to want to be in control but allowing someone else to be in charge gave me the chance to observe their leadership tactics, what I would do and what I wouldn’t do and become a better leader myself after witnessing the reactions to them” (female, General Studies)
- “Before I used to be an a** about things and not know how to let a group work if it wasn’t my opinion. Now I know how to sit back and let everyone pitch in” (male, General Studies)
- “Being in FBI really helped me in working better with groups” (female, Business)

Freshman Year Summary

As the freshmen were starting Texas A&M University, a majority of them participated in Fish Camp. Less than a fifth said they were employed during their first year and those who were employed worked approximately 5 to 17 hours per week. A majority of the freshmen said they did plan to work over the summer break. In terms of satisfaction with their Texas A&M experience, freshmen said they were satisfied to very satisfied. The few who were dissatisfied expressed problems with living conditions, low grades, campus involvement, as well as being overwhelmed and feeling like they did not fit in on campus.

Freshmen did not join Bryan/College Station community groups in large numbers and some were confused about the difference between campus and community organizations. Those who did join community groups were mainly involved in religious organizations affiliated with local churches. The freshmen who chose not to join community organizations said they were too busy, needed more information about the organizations, did not have appropriate resources such as transportation, or were just not interested in joining those groups. Some freshmen said that their campus organizations performed community service projects and that those connections were all they needed to feel like they were contributing to the community.

For campus organizations, 82 to 92% of freshmen were involved at some point during their first year of college. Although many freshmen cited involvement with the Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLOs) they were recruited from, no one organization dominated the list. However, certain categories of organizations did figure prominently into their involvement. Academic organizations topped the list for both cohorts. The remaining top three categories of organizations they joined were service and philanthropy, religion and spiritual development, and leadership development. There was an average of approximately 1.75 campus organizations joined per student. Freshmen said they joined campus organizations mainly because they had interest in the organizational purpose, wanted to serve others, wanted to be around people with similar interests, and wanted to further explore their chosen careers. The freshmen also joined so they could meet more people and participate in campus life. Only a small portion of freshmen (11-13%) held leadership positions in organizations in October, but that number increased by February to between 19-31%.

The freshmen who indicated that they were not involved in campus organizations during their first year explained that they were not selected for their preferred organizations, were still exploring the available organizations, or were too busy to join.

Around half of freshmen joined new organizations in February or April of their first year. They cited reasons for joining such as pursuing new interests, serving others, developing their career skills and knowledge, wanting to meet new people, and having more time to join. The majority of those who joined new organizations during the year cited Fish Camp as the group they added to their involvement list. Less than a fifth of freshmen said they stopped their involvement with student organizations during the year. The main reasons cited for dropping organizations was a lack of time, other priorities, a loss of interest in the organization, and problems within the organization such as unfriendly people.

For plans to continue their current organizational involvement into their sophomore year, a majority of freshmen appeared to like their groups and wanted to stay with them for another year. Those who said they would not continue said it was because they needed to fulfill academic obligations, belonged to an organization that was only meant for freshmen, were busy with other activities, had lost interest in the organization, were planning to transfer out of Texas A&M, or were not selected to continue in the organization.

Three-fourths of freshmen said they planned to join new organizations during their sophomore year. Those who said they would not add another organization to their involvement plans explained that they were happy with their current groups, planned on obtaining leadership positions in those groups and wanted to focus their attention on those activities, and were busy with other activities and priorities.

Freshmen defined academic success mainly through getting good grades, doing their best, and achieving a personal goal. Based on their own definition, more than two-thirds of freshmen said they were academically successful during their first year. When explaining how student organization involvement enhanced academic success, freshmen said involvement enhanced their personal growth and development, improved academic performance, provided resources and important relationships, increased personal enjoyment of college life, and motivated them to do better. They also expressed reasons why involvement detracts from academic success, mainly through the time it takes from their schedules.

For skill development, academic classes were the main way students used written communication, critical thinking, and time management skills. Student organizations were the main way students used public speaking, delegation, and effective meeting skills. Both venues seemed to provide an equal opportunity to use both project management and group dynamics skills. In addition, academic classes and student organizations were the main two venues for almost all the skills listed. The only exception was interpersonal communication where peers and student organizations were cited as the primary areas where this skill was used. It is interesting to note that almost a third of freshmen said they did not use delegation skills during the year and that almost half did not use effective meeting skills.

A majority of freshmen who used each skill during the year felt that their skills improved. When asked to explain what specifically helped them improve each of the skills, freshmen always mentioned being able to practice the skills at some point during the year. In addition to just having opportunities to use their skills, there were other reasons provided for the improvement of specific skills. Written communication skills improved mainly from having someone evaluate their writing and provide feedback, typically through a classroom setting. Interpersonal skills improved when freshmen met new people and joined student organizations. Critical thinking skills improved because of challenging academic environments and maturation processes. Project management skills improved because of a direct responsibility for planning events as well as improving related skills such as organizing information. Time management improved because freshmen had to meet their obligations or adopted strategies that provided structure to their schedules. Delegation skills improved because of involvement in student organizations and having leadership responsibilities. Skills in public speaking, effective meetings, and group dynamics improved because of student organization involvement and classroom experiences.

Freshman Year Conclusions

Because freshmen came into Texas A&M University with a high level of involvement, it is not surprising that most of them continued their involvement in organizations during their first year at Texas A&M University and indicated plans to do the same for their second year. However, freshmen gravitated towards slightly different kinds of experiences during their first year of college than they did in high school. The service drive that emerged from their high school organizations seemed to be replaced by a desire to plan for a career. While they expressed a desire to serve others during their high school days, they did not demonstrate the same desire once they got to college. It could be that freshmen felt tied to their hometown communities and felt a stronger need to give back to that familiar environment. At Texas A&M, the familiar environment is the campus and some freshmen expressed a desire to only focus on the campus and not venture out into the community. It may also be that freshmen are new to the college environment and still trying to adjust to all of the emerging demands on their time and attention.

Freshmen frequently mentioned a lack of time as reasons for not getting more involved in campus organizations or joining any community groups. However, most are not employed during the school year and have joined an average of 2 organizations. It may be that the transition to college and trying to figure out the new academic demands may be about all freshmen can handle. In fact, as the year went on, freshmen joined new organizations and expressed a desire to continue or add to that involvement in their second year. Only a small portion of freshmen dropped organizations they

had previously joined. Freshmen may feel more comfortable with their schedules and how they are managing all of their responsibilities by mid-year.

In terms of academic success and skill development, many freshmen articulated that academic classes and student organizations contributed more prominently to their personal development throughout the year than other areas of their lives. However, some skills such as delegation, public speaking, and effective meetings are not being used, at least in the perception of the freshmen. It may be that these skills will be used in later years as the freshmen move through their academic career and begin to take on more leadership positions that may require use of these skills.

CHAPTER 4: SOPHOMORE YEAR

Employment during Sophomore Year

In October and February, sophomores were asked if they had a paying job. Table 25 illustrates that a little over a third of Cohort I worked during both semesters of their sophomore year, which is an increase over freshman year. The range of work hours per week over the entire year was approximately 12 to 19 hours.

Do you currently have a paying job? -YES	Cohort I	95% CI for Hours Worked Per Week
October	37% (n=82)	13.04 to 19.22
February	38% (n=85)	12.27 to 16.12

Table 25—Employment status and hours worked per week during sophomore year

In April, sophomores were asked if they planned to work during the summer whether it was an internship, Co-Op position, or other type of job. For Cohort I (n=79), 81% did plan to work, 10% were not sure, and 9% said no.

Involvement in Bryan/College Station (BCS) Organizations during Sophomore Year

In October and February, sophomores were asked if they were involved with Bryan/College Station organizations. Table 26 illustrates that a majority of Cohort I was not involved in community groups during either survey period, although the percentage did increase.

Are you currently involved with Bryan/College Station community organizations (not affiliated with Texas A&M)? -YES	Cohort I
October	27% (n=82)
February	38% (n=86)

Table 26—Involvement in Bryan/College Station organizations during sophomore year of college

Sophomores also were asked if they held leadership positions in Bryan/College Station organizations. Table 27 illustrates that only a small portion of Cohort I held leadership positions in community organizations during each survey period.

Do you hold leadership positions within Bryan/College Station community organizations? -YES	Cohort I
October	6% (n=81)
February	8% (n=87)

Table 27—Leadership in Bryan/College Station organizations during sophomore year of college

Reasons for Not Being Involved in BCS Organizations during Sophomore Year

Sophomores who were not involved in community organizations were asked to explain why. For Cohort I, there were 60 sophomores not involved in BCS organizations in October and 53 not involved in February. Explanations offered in October and February were similar so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why sophomores were not involved in BCS organizations. A total of 108 comments were offered by Cohort I. The main ideas generated from the comments included being busy with other things (35 comments), a lack of familiarity with BCS organizations (26 comments), a preference for on-campus activities (12 comments), and being overly involved already (11 comments). Other ideas included not having transportation, lacking interest, and needing someone to tell them about opportunities. A sample of comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I don’t have time due to school and my other leadership activities” (male, Business)
- “I am not currently involved in BCS organizations because of lack of time to participate in them” (female, Education)
- “Don’t know much about any of the Bryan/College Station organizations to apply or participate in them” (male, Engineering)
- “I do not know how to become involved in them” (female, Education)
- “I see myself more as a student of Texas A&M than a resident of B/CS” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I would rather be involved in A&M ones” (male, Agriculture)
- “I am involved in enough organizations on campus and am satisfied with them” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I would like to. However, I do not currently drive, but when I do I will be more likely to do so” (male, General Studies)
- “I haven’t found any to get involved in that greatly appeal to me. That is, unless you include church, which I attend off campus” (male, Engineering)
- “I haven’t been approached by any organizations that have interested me” (female, General Studies)
- “I am not currently involved in BCS organizations because of lack of publicity of them” (female, Education)

Joining New BCS Organizations during Sophomore Year

In October, sophomores were asked if they had joined any new BCS organizations since April of their freshman year. Sixteen percent (16%) of Cohort I (n=81) said they had joined a BCS organization since the end of their freshman year. In February, the involved sophomores in Cohort I (n=32) responded to the question and 25% of them said they had joined a BCS organization since October. Those who joined a BCS organization were asked to explain why. The seven comments offered in October and February by Cohort I were similar so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why sophomores joined BCS organizations during their second school year. There were three main ideas expressed by Cohort I. The first reason sophomores joined a BCS organization was to serve children. Three comments were offered in this area. One student who joined HOSTS said s/he “joined because I needed to do community service for a

Spanish class, but I've stayed in it because I love helping the kids" (gender unknown, Science). The second reason was to serve others through religious organizations, and three comments were offered in this area. One student who joined a church evangelism team said, "I was looking to join a Christian organization in which I could serve through outreach and not just service (service projects, etc.)" (male, Engineering). The third reason sophomores joined BCS organizations centered on the military, and one comment was offered. The sophomore explained he joined the local Marine Corps Selection Office because "I want to be an officer in the USMC" (male, Agriculture).

Stopping Involvement in BCS Organizations during Sophomore Year

In October, sophomores were asked if they had stopped their involvement with any BCS organizations since April of their freshman year. Thirteen percent (13%) of the involved members of Cohort I (n=38) said they had dropped involvement with a BCS organization since the end of their freshman year. In February, 6% of the involved members of Cohort I (n=49) said they had dropped involvement with a BCS organization since October. Those who dropped a BCS organization during the year were asked to explain why. The seven comments offered in October and February by Cohort I were similar so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why sophomores joined BCS organizations during their second school year. Six Cohort I sophomores explained that they did not have the time to continue their involvement in BCS organizations. One student said she dropped her involvement with the St. Mary's Church Women's Chorus because it "too much time because of being assistant and I couldn't keep up with chem homework" (female, Science). A final comment explained that a sophomore dropped his involvement with Pioneers Kids Friday Church because he "prayed about it and realized that that was not the ministry I was supposed to be involved with" (male, Engineering).

Involvement in Texas A&M University (TAMU) Organizations during Sophomore Year

In each survey, sophomores were asked if they were involved with TAMU student organizations. Table 28 illustrates that almost all of Cohort I was involved in October but that involvement dropped a little at each survey period during the year.

Are you currently involved in student organizations at Texas A&M? -YES	Cohort I
October	99% (n=83)
February	91% (n=86)
April	86% (n=80)

Table 28—Involvement in TAMU organizations during sophomore year of college

Reasons for Not Being Involved in TAMU Organizations during Sophomore Year

In October and February, sophomores who were not involved in campus organizations were asked to explain why. For Cohort I, there was one student not involved in October and eight students in February. A total of seven explanations were offered in October and February. Responses were similar for both surveys so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why sophomores chose not to be involved in campus organizations during their second school year. Four comments explained that students were busy and did not have time to be involved. One

explained, “I spend a lot of time going to school and working. If I had more time I would consider joining one but I’m not sure which one. I have a hard time dedicating my time to a single hobby or field. Right now, I’d rather spend the little free time I have with my friends” (male, General Studies). The three remaining comments covered ideas such as being solely involved in community organizations, not being able to find any campus organizations, and being rejected from organizations they try to join.

Joining New TAMU Organizations during Sophomore Year

Sophomores were asked on each survey if they had joined any new student organizations since the last survey period. In October, 56% of Cohort I (n=82) indicated that they had joined a new organization since the end of their freshman year. In February, 30% of Cohort I (n=78) said they joined new student organizations since October. And in April, 29% of Cohort I (n=69) said they joined new student organizations since February. Sophomores who joined campus organizations during the year were asked to list the organization they joined and explain why. The two main organizations they joined during the year were Fish Camp and MSC LEAD (a sophomore leadership organization). Other organizations included CARPOOL, Impact Camp, Habitat for Humanity, and The Big Event. Explanations as to why they joined the organizations were similar across all surveys so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why sophomores joined new organizations during their second year of school.

Cohort I offered a total of 95 comments. The three main ideas were that they joined new organizations in order to socialize and network with other students (14 comments), participate in community service projects (12 comments), and to have an opportunity to mentor new college students (11 comments). Other ideas included learning more about academics, following personal interests, gaining leadership experience, and being selected or appointed into the organization. A sample of comments is provided below.

Representative Comments

- “I got involved with Spencer Leadership Conference because I... wanted to be with other sophomores and network” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Engineering Projects in Community Service. It is a class, but it is also a student organization, and I got involved so that I could interact with the community and apply the knowledge I have learned in class” (female, Engineering)
- “Aggie Access Learning Community-I was involved as a freshmen and thought it would be great to serve as a mentor to freshmen” (female, General Studies)
- “The International Students Mentoring Association. Assisting with the international students is great. I got involved because it was a great opportunity to... help out students studying abroad in America” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I joined ASCE (Civil Engineering) because I changed my major to civil engineering and they bring in speakers from industry every two weeks so it’s a good way to learn what I’ll be doing when I get out of school” (female, Engineering)
- “I joined the Occupational Therapy Society to learn more about the profession and getting admitted to OT schools” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “TAMU Ballroom Dancing Association. I joined this organization because I was interested in learning how to ballroom dance” (female, Business)

- “Fish Camp, because I was a counselor last year and I absolutely loved it so I reapplied this semester!” (female, Engineering)
- “MSCC Human Resources, because it joined an opportunity to gain leadership experience in a business-type setting” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Sigma Alpha Lambda, I was invited over the summer and it is an academic organization. So I believe it was because of my grades. And I joined because I take pride in my grades and it is an opportunity to be recognized for them” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

Stopping Involvement in TAMU Organizations during Sophomore Year

Sophomores were asked on each survey if they had stopped their involvement with any student organizations since the last survey period. In October, 39% of Cohort I (n=82) said they had dropped involvement with an organization since the end of their freshman year. In February, 25% of Cohort I (n=83) said they had dropped their involvement with student organizations since October. And in April, 15% of Cohort I (n=80) said they had dropped their involvement with student organizations since February. Sophomores who dropped campus organizations during the year were asked to list the organization they dropped and explain why. The list of organizations varied and there was no dominant group. The list included Class Councils, COSGA, Lambda Sigma, Hall Council, Figure Skating Club, FAST, and ALOT. Explanations as to why they dropped the organizations were similar across all surveys so they were combined in order to provide a concise overview of why sophomores joined stopped their involvement in organizations during their second year of school.

A total of 65 Cohort I sophomores offered 133 comments. The three main ideas were that they stopped involvement in organizations in order to have more time for other activities (24 comments), that the organization was only for a set period of time and that time was now over (21 comments), and that their personal interests did not fit with the organization (12 comments). Other ideas included setting priorities and conflicts with the organization. A sample of comments is provided below.

Representative Comments

- “Archery- not enough time, I now have nearly a full time job (36 hrs. per week) money takes priority over extracurriculars when you’re trying to keep away from student loans. Time is also an issue since I’m trying to graduate a year early” (female, Agriculture)
- “Texas A&M Beef Cattle Association. Increased school work has left me limited with my time and unfortunately school work comes before involvement in organizations” (male, Agriculture)
- “My term as an FBI mentor is done, as its as only a semester long activity” (male, Business)
- “Lohman Learning Community- it is a community for only freshmen and I’m no longer qualified to be part of it” (female, Education)
- “Biomedical Science Association- dropped for the time being, I found that I wasn’t as interested or dedicated last year as I should have been” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

- “Impact Freshmen Bible Study,...I did not apply to be a leader because of anticipated duties as a leader elsewhere on campus” (female, Agriculture)
- “CARPOOL... did not get along with others involved” (female, Veterinary Medicine)

Continuing Current Involvement in TAMU Organizations into Junior Year

In April, sophomores were asked if they were planning to continue their involvement with their current organizations into the fall semester of their junior year. A majority (84%) of Cohort I (n=69) said they would continue into the fall. Those who did not wish to continue (n=11) were asked to explain why. The eleven comments mentioned that the sophomores were participating in study abroad programs during their junior year, they had interest in joining other organizations, they were too busy with other obligations to continue on with the organizations, and that they were no longer eligible to be in the organization.

Plans to Join New TAMU Organizations during Junior Year

In April, sophomores were asked if they planned to join any new student organizations during the fall semester of their junior year. Around half (53%) of Cohort I (n=80) said yes. Those who said no (n=38) were asked to explain their reasons for not wanting to join new organizations and 50 comments were offered. The main ideas indicated that sophomores had future plans that prohibited them from joining such as study abroad (13 comments), did not have time to join any new student organizations (12 comments), and that they were content with the organizations they were already involved in (9 comments). Other ideas included having a lack of interest, already being involved in a lot of activities, problems finding an organization, and not wishing to make a commitment to an organization. A sample of comments is included below.

Representative Comments

- “I have found the organizations that fit me and the ones that I really enjoy” (female, Agriculture)
- “I’m tired of trying to find something that suits me” (female, General Studies)
- “I just got a job as a teacher’s assistant for the fall and will be studying abroad in the spring” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Just trying to get good grades this next semester” (female, Liberal Arts)
- “I am busy with what I have” (male, Business)
- “Lack of interest, not much time for other activities” (male, General Studies)
- “Too little time and taking harder classes” (female, Education)

Leadership in TAMU Organizations during Sophomore Year

Sophomores who were involved in campus organizations were asked if they held leadership positions. Table 29, on the following page, illustrates that almost two-thirds of Cohort I held leadership positions during their sophomore year.

Do you hold a leadership position in any TAMU student organizations? YES	Cohort I
October	60% (n=82)
February	62% (n=78)

Table 29—Leadership in TAMU organizations during sophomore year of college

Satisfaction with Texas A&M during Sophomore Year

Sophomores were asked how satisfied they were with their overall Texas A&M experience so far. A scale of 5=Very Satisfied, 4=Satisfied, 3=Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, and 1=Very Dissatisfied was used. Table 30 contains responses from Cohort I and reveals that they were satisfied with their campus experience in October and February of their sophomore year. Their responses are virtually identical to those provided during the freshman year.

How satisfied are you with your overall Texas A&M experience?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Mean (sd) (n)
October	56%	31%	9%	4%	1%	4.37 (.88) (n=82)
February	51%	37%	8%	4%	--	4.36 (.79) (n=84)

Table 30—Overall satisfaction with Texas A&M experience during sophomore year of college – Cohort I

Those who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied were asked to explain. Seven sophomores in Cohort I offered comments. Two students stated that they were not as engaged as they would like to be. One said “I don’t feel as engaged as I thought I would. Not just in schoolwork but with the community. I know most people would say that joining an organization would help but I tried last year and it really didn’t. Instead it had a negative impact. I guess I also haven’t met as many people as I would have liked. People here seem a lot harder to connect with” (male, General Studies). Another student said that it was hard to get involved while two others explained that they did not like the people at A&M. One student said s/he was not dissatisfied.

Defining Academic Success during Sophomore Year

In April, sophomores were asked to define “academic success” using a provided select-all-that-apply list. Table 31, on the following page, illustrates that all but “becoming a well-rounded person” had support from approximately two-thirds of Cohort I and this definition decreased in response from the freshman year. One person in Cohort I selected the “other” response and wrote in “finding the truth, not just believing what someone says.”

How do you define academic success? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=81)
Achieving a goal (degree, graduate school, job)	72%
Doing my best	69%
Getting good grades	65%
Being able to apply what I have learned	64%
Learning something	64%
Becoming a well-rounded person	47%
Other	1%

Table 31—How sophomores defined “academic success”

A follow-up question asked sophomores if they believed they had been academically successful based on their personal definition. A majority of Cohort I (78%) said yes, 6% said no, and 16% were not sure.

Reasons Why Involvement Enhances Academic Success during Sophomore Year

In April, sophomores were asked to describe how involvement enhanced their academic success as they defined it. For Cohort I, a total of 123 comments were offered by 66 sophomores. The themes generated by the comments included personal development (49 comments), people (30 comments), learning (11 comments), personal benefits (15 comments), and purposeful preoccupation (14 comments). A few other ideas included meeting personal goals, increasing productivity, and enhancing the campus experience. A description of all of the themes is included below along with a sample of comments from Cohort I. At the beginning of each comment is the response the student provided to the question of whether or not s/he had been academically successful.

Theme 1: Personal Development

The comments in this theme centered on individual development. Many sophomores said that involvement in student organizations assisted them in their personal, academic, and professional development.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “Organizations provide... problem solving” (female, Science)
- (Yes) “My involvement teaches me leadership” (female, Education)
- (Yes) “My involvement teaches me ... people/ public relations (handling/situations with different people appropriately and maturely)” (female, Education)
- (Yes) “My involvement in a pre-professional organization has allowed me to build my resumé for occupational therapy school” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (Yes) “It enhances my success by making me more well-rounded” (male, Engineering)
- (Yes) “I feel like I truly am getting the full college experience” (female, Business)
- (Not Sure) “Being involved in student organizations helps me with time management” (female, Business)

Theme 2: People

The comments in this theme addressed the opportunities for interactions and networking among people in student organizations. The sophomores considered these opportunities as benefits to being involved in a student organization.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “It is key to not only come out of school knowing what is in the books, but to meet people that will be writing the books in the future” (male, General Studies)
- (Not Sure) “I routinely study with a group of friends I met through involvement with a student organization” (female, Agriculture)
- (Not Sure) “Allow me to grow my aggie network...” (male, General Studies)

Theme 3: Learning

The comments in this theme mainly addressed the opportunities that being involved gave sophomores for the application of learning as well as creating new knowledge.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “I have more applicable skills other than just book intelligence” (male, Science)
- (Yes) “I may learn things in the classroom but involvement in activities helps me apply it more often” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- (Yes) “It allows me to be culturally diverse and learn more about others in foreign countries” (male, Education)

Theme 4: Personal Benefits

This theme addresses the personal incentives that sophomores expressed they gained from being involved in student organizations such as getting good grades and increasing the focus on schoolwork.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “To be involved in some student organizations, you have to keep your grades up” (female, General Studies)
- (Yes) “I currently have a 4.0 this semester because I push myself because I want to be a part of the organization that I am in” (male, Business)
- (Yes) “It gives me motivation to get my studying done early so I can attend the fun activities of my organization” (female, Engineering)
- (Yes) “Being involved in the organizations keeps me focused on my schoolwork more because I know I must do well” (male, Business)

Theme 5: Purposeful Preoccupation

This theme centers on the students using their involvement in student organizations as a means of intentionally occupying their time in a way that benefits them psychologically and emotionally.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “I don’t obsess over school as much” (female, Education)

- (Yes) “The fellowship I gain from being involved keeps my spirits up” (male, Agriculture)
- (Yes) “I[t] keeps me active in a non academic way” (male, Business)
- (Yes) “Gives me a way to ... be creative outside of school activity!” (female, Business)

Reasons Why Involvement Detracts from Academic Success during Sophomore Year

In April, sophomores were asked to explain how involvement detracts from their academic success. A total of 87 comments were offered by 66 sophomores in Cohort I. The two main themes generated by the comments included time management (73 comments) and psychological impact (10 comments). Three sophomores said involvement does not detract from academic success and one student was not sure how it detracted. A description of all of the themes is included below along with a sample of comments from Cohort I. At the beginning of each comment is the response the student provided to the question of whether or not s/he had been academically successful.

Theme 1: Time Management

The comments in this theme are focused on the time issues that students said they encountered while being involved in different student organizations. Some of the time issues were positive in nature but students felt some of the other issues had more of a negative impact on their academic success.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “Time to study/focus on academics. If I wasn’t involved in anything, I would, without a doubt, have a 4.0. That being said. I would rather make a 3.5 or so and be involved than have a 4.0 and no friends or life outside of school” (female, Education)
- (Yes) “That time could be used to do a lot of other things to enhance my future” (male, Engineering)
- (Yes) “Some parts of student organizations are mandatory, so they take away time to study” (female, Engineering)
- (Yes) “One of my organizations is a dance organization and we have a lot of practices. Most of the time I can balance the two pretty well but this semester I did not do as good a job as I usually do with time management” (male, Agriculture)
- (Yes) “My grades have slipped because I put so much time into my organizations” (female, General Studies)
- (Not Sure) “Obligations to Student Organizations often cause homework and studying to be pushed back to a later time in the day or a later date” (female, Agriculture)
- (Not Sure) “Many times I will volunteer for a project within the organization that might take up more time than I thought” (female, Agriculture)
- (No) “I spend too much time hanging out with my fish camp” (male, Engineering)
- (No) “I am unable to give the necessary amount of attention to schoolwork” (female, General Studies)

Theme 2: Psychological Impact

The comments in this theme came from students who expressed that their participation in student organizations had and affect on their psychological well-being and this impacted their academic success.

Representative Comments:

- (Yes) “Sometimes there is so much to do that something has to give” (female, Engineering)
- (Not Sure) “It sometimes is difficult to tell friends in my organization that I can’t attend functions because I need to study” (female, Business)
- (No) “I am often so overwhelmed with tasks from student organizations”(female, General Studies)

Skill Development during Sophomore Year

Sophomores were asked to respond to a series of questions regarding specific skills they might have used during their second year of college. For each skill, sophomores selected from a provided list what area of their lives might have required that skill during the year. There was an option of “Did Not Use This Skill.” For those who indicated they did use the skill during the year, they were asked if that skill had improved during the year, and, if so, what specifically helped them improve. Sophomores who said programs, workshops, or conferences required them to use the skill were offered an opportunity to write-in the name of the event. In addition, an opportunity was provided to write-in other areas where skills were used.

Written Communication

Table 32 illustrates where sophomores used written communication skills during their second school year. Academic classes topped the list for Cohort I followed distantly by student organizations.

Where have you used Written Communication Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=80)
Academic Class or Laboratory	81%
Student Organization	55%
Peers	49%
Family	46%
Work or Internship	33%
Volunteer Opportunity	25%
Learning Community	11%
Program, Workshop, Conference	8%
Did Not use This Skill	8%
Other	3%

Table 32—Where sophomores used written communication skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used written communication skills, Cohort I sophomores listed Aggie Shadows and the American Academies of Forensic Science. For

the “other” response, Cohort I sophomores said they used written communication skills on Facebook, with scholarships, and during the campaigning season.

Sophomores who used written communication skills were asked if their skills had improved during the school year. Around three-fourths (74%) of Cohort I (n=74) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 73 comments were offered by 51 sophomores in Cohort I. The three main ideas generated by the comments were experiences in class (23 comments), personal communication with others (17 comments), and being able to practice (12 comments). Other ideas included student organization involvement, trying to meet expectations, job experiences, and visiting the Writing Center for assistance. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I am in journalism classes that have helped improve my communication skills” (female, Agriculture)
- “My technical writing course has taught me several different types of written communication and enhanced my knowledge of what I already knew” (female, Agriculture)
- “I write so many letters and emails to friends around the country and here in College Station. That has helped me mature my writing style” (male, Business)
- “Practice. Lots of practice” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “I was expected to provide written memos and updates to the adviser, fellow members, and constituents of one of my organizations, an area in which I had little prior experience” (female, Agriculture)
- “I needed to communicate, sometimes with high- profile University Administrators, and these experiences forced me to improve” (female, Education)

Public Speaking

Table 33 demonstrates where sophomores used public speaking skills during the school year. Student organizations were the main place Cohort I sophomores used public speaking skills, followed closely by class. About a fifth said they did not use public speaking during the year.

Where have you used Public Speaking Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=80)
Student Organization	54%
Academic Class or Laboratory	48%
Did Not Use This Skill	19%
Peers	18%
Volunteer Opportunity	16%
Work or Internship	16%
Family	11%
Program, Workshop, Conference	8%
Learning Community	5%
Other	--

Table 33—Where sophomores used public speaking skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used public speaking skills, Cohort I sophomores listed Explore Simplicity and the Spencer Leadership Conference.

Sophomores who used public speaking skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Over half (61%) of Cohort I (n=65) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 46 comments were offered by 37 sophomores in Cohort I. The main ideas generated by the comments were practicing the skills (13 comments), participating in student organizations (12 comments), having experiences in class (9 comments), and improving their self concept (6 comments). Other ideas included job experiences, having self confidence, using specific techniques, and becoming more comfortable around other people. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I volunteered to give tours of the campus and that really put me out into the public” (female, Agriculture)
- “I have to speak at every meeting for my organizations and I am much more comfortable speaking in front of large groups of people” (female, Business)
- “I took a public speaking class last summer which helped” (male, Agriculture)
- “I took the basic Communications and Public Speaking class and that probably helped me the most. I was graded on my performance even though I think I had some experience. I leaned a lot due to this course” (female, Education)
- “In my organization every Monday I speak in front of them and I used to be extremely nervous when I would speak in front of a group. This had taught me to face my fears and become a better speaker” (female, Business)
- “Relaxing and taking a deep breath” (male, General Studies)
- “I have always been comfortable speaking in front of people” (male, Agriculture)

Interpersonal Communication

Table 34 depicts where sophomores used interpersonal communication skills during the school year. Peers, student organizations, and academic classes were at the top of the list for Cohort I.

Where have you used Interpersonal Communication Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=79)
Peers	68%
Student Organization	67%
Academic Class or Laboratory	63%
Family	56%
Work or Internship	40%
Volunteer Opportunity	30%
Did Not Use This Skill	10%
Learning Community	8%
Program, Workshop, Conference	4%
Other	1%

Table 34—Where sophomores used interpersonal communication skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used interpersonal communication skills, a Cohort I sophomore listed the QPR Suicide Prevention Workshop. For the “other” response, a Cohort I sophomore listed “boyfriend.”

Sophomores who used interpersonal communication skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Two-thirds (66%) of Cohort I (n=71) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 53 comments were offered by 37 sophomores in Cohort I. The main idea was that students gained experience using their skills and therefore improved them (20 comments). Other ideas included job requirements, increase in self-awareness, student organization involvement, and working with others in various settings. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Constant use” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “With my position I have met more people than ever and I’ve noticed that I have become more social when I talk to people” (female, Business)
- “I worked as a waiter for awhile and had to become a lot more personable to the guests and also more effective in communicating with the kitchen” (male, General Studies)
- “Being a Resident Advisor has helped me learn how to deal with a multitude of people at once” (female, Engineering)
- “I was always shy and very nervous trying to strike a conversation with someone but now I feel more comfortable” (female, Business)
- “I know myself better b/c of the stress I’ve been under” (female, Business)
- “I had to meet and talk to a lot of new people this year in order to coordinate for my volunteer event” (male, Agriculture)
- “By being around all different types of people, you have to learn how to effectively communicate and what types of communication are effective” (female, Agriculture)

Critical Thinking

Table 35, on the following page, illustrates where sophomores used critical thinking skills during the school year. Critical thinking was defined on the survey as “decision-making and problem-solving.” Academic classes were the main area for sophomores to use critical thinking skills, followed distantly by student organizations.

Where have you used Critical Thinking Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=79)
Academic Class or Laboratory	94%
Student Organization	56%
Work or Internship	35%
Peers	29%
Volunteer Opportunity	24%
Family	23%
Learning Community	6%
Program, Workshop, Conference	5%
Did Not Use This Skill	3%
Other	--

Table 35—Where sophomores used critical thinking skills

No one in Cohort I offered the name of a program, workshop, or conference. In addition, no one selected the “other” category.

Sophomores who used critical thinking skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Around two-thirds (68%) of Cohort I (n=77) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 45 sophomores in Cohort I offered 62 comments. The two main ideas generated by the comments were classroom experiences (28 comments) and obtaining practice (12 comments). Other ideas included solving problems within groups, exercising creativity, dealing with work situations, and having outside pressures. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “More difficult classes which require deeper thought instead of superficial facts” (male, Science)
- “My classes have gotten harder, and with that the problems have gotten more complex, so my critical thinking skills have to improve to do well in class” (female, Engineering)
- “My ability to analyze literature and art has greatly improved through my Russian classes” (male, Liberal Arts)
- “Experience” (female, Agriculture)
- “I’ve learned to rely on the help of others when faced with an unexpected problem this year by working with a team I trusted on projects where problems surfaced unexpectedly. This has improved my critical thinking skills” (female, Agriculture)
- “At work I have to think about which is the best way to solve the problem” (female, Agriculture)
- “Also, during the conference that I put on, things would go wrong and I would have to think on my feet to solve the problem” (female, Engineering)
- “I read a book on Einstein over Christmas that kind of inspired me” (male, General Studies)

Project Management

Table 36 demonstrates where sophomores used project management skills during the school year. Project management was defined on the survey as “planning and implementing an event.” Student organizations were the most common response for Cohort I.

Where have you used Project Management Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=80)
Student Organization	71%
Academic Class or Laboratory	53%
Volunteer Opportunity	38%
Peers	31%
Work or Internship	24%
Family	23%
Did Not Use This Skill	10%
Learning Community	10%
Program, Workshop, Conference	6%
Other	1%

Table 36—Where sophomores used project management skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used project management skills, Cohort I sophomores listed Resident Advisor training and Explore Simplicity. For the “other” response, a Cohort I sophomore explained that she used project management skills when helping her sister plan a wedding.

Sophomores who used project management skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. A majority (82%) of Cohort I (n=72) thought their skills had improved and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 55 sophomores from Cohort I offered 70 comments. The three main ideas generated by their comments were obtaining practice for the skills (11 comments), being a student leader and having responsibilities for events (10 comments), and having opportunities to use the skills in class (10 comments). Other ideas included working with groups, improving peripheral skills such as time management, and participating in a learning community. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Project management skills are something that improve with practice. The more you do it, the better you get” (female, Business)
- “I was a counselor in an organization so I used project management daily in order to get programs running/completed as well as motivate others to step up to the plate” (female, General Studies)
- “I had to plan projects in classes and manage them as deadlines got closer” (female, Education)
- “I work on the career fair for the business student council and I learned a lot this year in relation to putting it on” (male, Business)
- “Managing a group of people always helps” (male, General Studies)

- “I’ve been placed in situations where I had to manage extremely important projects. Without being able to do this, I would have let tons of people down” (female, Agriculture)
- “I started using a daily planner and have stuck with it. I am now able to plan ahead more and balance my time more wisely” (male, Engineering)
- “The Leadership Living Learning Community required me to lead a group of freshmen to plan a project and I developed due to this experience” (female, Education)

Time Management

Table 37 depicts where sophomores used time management skills during the school year. Academic classes topped the list for Cohort I.

Where have you used Time Management Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=80)
Academic Class or Laboratory	90%
Student Organization	75%
Family	54%
Peers	50%
Work or Internship	41%
Volunteer Opportunity	35%
Learning Community	14%
Program, Workshop, Conference	6%
Did Not Use This Skill	5%
Other	--

Table 37—Where sophomores used time management skills

For the programs, workshops, and conferences where they used time management skills, Cohort I sophomores listed the American Academies of Forensic Science and the Spencer Leadership Conference.

Sophomores who used time management skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Over half (62%) of Cohort I (n=76) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 59 comments were offered by 42 sophomores in Cohort I. The main ideas generated by the comments were being busy and having to improve their skills (14 comments), being involved in student organizations (13 comments), and using some kind of system (12 comments). Other ideas included prioritizing, finding balance, using tips and resources, and figuring it out through trial and error. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I am extremely busy and have numerous things I need to get done and I’ve had to make sure I am able to finish everything” (female, Business)
- “Deadlines and project assignments made it extremely vital to have great time management” (male, Education)

- “By being involved in organizations. I had to learn to juggle those well with academics as well” (female, Education)
- “I’ve learned to manage my time through making schedules and sticking to them” (female, Business)
- “I started using a daily planner and have stuck with it. I am now able to plan ahead more and balance my time more wisely” (male, Engineering)
- “I have learned what my priorities are and how to go about getting everything done that I need to do” (female, Science)
- “I am more involved with my organization and I have a boyfriend. These both require time and I can now balance all aspects of my life more in regards to spending adequate time with school for studying, my officer position in my organization, and still being close with my friends and boyfriend” (female, Business)

Delegation

Table 38 illustrates where sophomores used delegation skills during the school year. No venue had a clear majority of responses for Cohort I, although student organizations topped the list. A quarter said they did not use delegation skills during the year.

Where have you used Delegation Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=79)
Student Organization	49%
Academic Class or Laboratory	43%
Did Not Use This Skill	25%
Work or Internship	20%
Volunteer Opportunity	19%
Peers	16%
Family	9%
Learning Community	6%
Program, Workshop, Conference	1%
Other	--

Table 38—Where sophomores used delegation skills

No Cohort I sophomores listed programs, workshops, or conferences that required the use of delegation skills. There also were no Cohort I sophomores who selected the “other” option.

Sophomores who used delegation skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Almost two-thirds (63%) of Cohort I (n=59) thought their skills had improved and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 41 comments were offered by 31 sophomores in Cohort I. The comments addressed ideas such as improving out of necessity (12 comments), being involved in student organizations (8 comments), having opportunities in class (6 comments), and practicing (5 comments). Other ideas included improving peripheral skills like teamwork, having opportunities at work, and having a poor role model and wanting to improve. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Having so many tasks that it was necessary to rely on others to get them done” (female, General Studies)
- “As fundraising chair of my pledge class I was overwhelmed and forced into learning and developing this skill. I’ll be the first to admit, I’m terrible at this. I want to do it all myself and have trouble trusting members in my groups often times” (female, Science)
- “I got tired of group work being such a pain to deal with, so I took charge and started making sure everyone had something to do so we could just get it all done” (male, General Studies)
- “My experience in the Residence Hall Association and Leadership Living Learning Community centered around delegating and leading others. I had to practice this skill” (female, Education)
- “I had never been the head of a committee before, so delegation was new to me. Experience has helped” (male, Science)
- “I am an assistant manager at my work so delegation is required” (female, Veterinary Medicine)
- “By having things delegated to me poorly and realizing what would have improved the delegation (clear instructions, a timeline, etc.) I was able to improve my delegation skills by ensuring I included these things” (female, Agriculture)

Effective Meetings

Table 39 demonstrates where sophomores used skills for planning and running effective meetings during the school year. Almost half of the sophomores in Cohort I said they had not used effective meeting skills during the year. Those who did use these skills selected student organizations as the most common place to use them.

Where have you used Effective Meeting Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=79)
Student Organization	42%
Did Not Use This Skill	41%
Academic Class or Laboratory	20%
Peers	8%
Volunteer Opportunity	8%
Work or Internship	6%
Learning Community	6%
Family	4%
Program, Workshop, Conference	4%
Other	1%

Table 39—Where sophomores used effective meeting skills

A Cohort I sophomores listed “RPTS 485,” which is an academic class, as a program, workshop, or conference that used effective meeting skills. For the “other” response, a Cohort I sophomore listed the student body election as a place where effective meeting skills were used.

Sophomores who used effective meeting skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. More than two-thirds (70%) of Cohort I (n=47) thought their skills had improved, and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 33 comments were offered by 27 sophomores in Cohort I. The comments generated ideas such as experience preparing for meetings (14 comments), learning how to do it from others (7 comments), and obtaining general experience (6 comments). Other ideas included improving out of necessity, having opportunities in class, and taking minutes for a meeting. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “I have never been required to plan or run meetings before this year. Although small, this year I quickly realized that unless sub-committee meetings for one of my student organizations were planned they would proceed very inefficiently and be completely ineffective” (female, Agriculture)
- “I had to run my own meetings in my student organization, FLiP, so I learned how to run meetings much more effectively” (male, Business)
- “I have been exposed to organizations that has [sic] meetings that are run very smoothly and organizations where meetings have been poorly run. Being exposed to both types, it has made me realized [sic] how to plan meetings and how to make them effective” (female, Agriculture)
- “My EPICS class/organization requires meetings and since all of the team members were short on time, meetings had to be very concise” (female, Engineering)
- “I have learned the importance of taking notes or delegating someone to take notes in meetings. They are necessary in the case of helping a friend who could not make it and for general records” (male, Agriculture)

Group Dynamics

Table 40 depicts where sophomores used group dynamic skills during the school year. Group dynamic skills were defined in the survey as the “ability to effectively work in groups or teams.” Student organizations topped the list for Cohort I followed closely by academic classes.

Where have you used Group Dynamic Skills this year? (select all that apply)	Cohort I (n=79)
Student Organization	70%
Academic Class or Laboratory	63%
Peers	30%
Volunteer Opportunity	29%
Work or Internship	22%
Family	18%
Did Not Use This Skill	8%
Learning Community	6%
Program, Workshop, Conference	5%
Other	--

Table 40—Where sophomores used group dynamic skills

No one from Cohort I listed programs, workshops, or conferences where they used group dynamic skills. And no one from Cohort I selected the “other” category.

Sophomores who used group dynamic skills were asked if they thought their skills had improved during the school year. Three-fourths (73%) of Cohort I (n=73) thought their skills improved and they were asked to explain what had specifically helped them improve. A total of 58 comments were offered by 42 sophomores in Cohort I. The main ideas generated by the comments were experience working with groups (15 comments), being involved in student organizations (12 comments), and having opportunities to work on projects (7 comments). Other ideas that were expressed included having a variety of ideas from others, opportunities in class, improving communication skills, and opportunities at work. A sample of the comments is included below.

Representative Comments:

- “Every time you spend more time in groups, you learn to deal more effectively with them” (male, Agriculture)
- “You gain more experience with working in a group which makes group dynamic skills almost come naturally” (female, Business)
- “In my organization it is extremely important that we work together. We depend on each other and work together to be productive” (female, Business)
- “In class I had a very diverse learning community for a particular group project, I was discouraged but ended up learning so much and really improving my ability to work in a group” (female, Science)
- “I had a lot of group projects this year and I hated doing them but I had to, so I learned how to run groups just to get them over with” (male, General Studies)
- “This year on many large events and activities I learned better how to rely on the strengths of my peers to cover my weaknesses and how to function cohesively” (female, Agriculture)
- “I’ve learned how to be a part of a decision making entity and balancing others opinions with my own in order to come up with a final solution that everyone can support and feel comfortable with” (female, Education)
- “I’ve learned to be sensitive with conflicting personalities but still express my opinion” (female, Education)

Sophomore Year Summary

More than a third of Cohort I sophomores worked at a paying job during their second year of college. Those who did work put in between 12 and 19 hours per week. A majority planned to work during the summer break. In terms of satisfaction with their Texas A&M experience, Cohort I sophomores said they were satisfied to very satisfied. The few who were dissatisfied said they did not feel engaged in the campus community or did not like the people they met.

Between a quarter and a little more than a third of Cohort I sophomores said they were involved in Bryan/College Station community organizations, and less than 10% said they held leadership positions in those groups. Those who were not involved in community organizations said they were busy with other activities, did not know very much about the organizations, had a preference for campus organizations, and were involved in enough already. Up to a quarter of the involved sophomores said they joined new community groups during the year, mainly to serve children and

participate in religious organizations. Less than 15% of involved sophomores said they dropped involvement in a community organization during the year, mainly due to a lack of time.

A majority of Cohort I sophomores were involved in campus organizations during their second year of college. Almost two-thirds said they held leadership positions in those organizations. The few students who were not involved said it was mainly because they were too busy. Between a quarter and half of the Cohort I sophomores said they joined new campus organizations during the year, with Fish Camp and MSC LEAD being the two most frequently cited organizations joined. The reasons they joined these organizations during the year was to interact with their peers, participate in community service projects, and mentor new college students as they transitioned into Texas A&M University. Between 15 to 25% of Cohort I sophomores stopped their involvement with a campus organization during the year. The list of organizations varied but the reasons included needing more time for other activities, being involved with a group that was for a set period of time or project that had now concluded, or changing personal interests.

For involvement plans during their junior year, the majority of Cohort I sophomores were planning to continue with their current organizations. The ones who did not wish to continue said it was because they had plans to study abroad, had interest in joining other organizations, were too busy to continue, and were no longer eligible for membership in the organization. A little more than half of the Cohort I sophomores planned to join new campus organizations during their junior year. Those who did not plan to join new organizations said they would be participating in study abroad, did not have time to join new groups, or liked the organizations they already belonged to.

Cohort I sophomores defined academic success as achieving a personal goal, doing their best, getting good grades, applying what they learned, and learning in general. Based on their own definition, more than three-fourths of the sophomores said they were academically successful during their second year. When explaining how student organization involvement enhanced academic success, Cohort I sophomores said involvement enhanced their personal growth and learning, allowed them to build relationships, and kept them occupied in a beneficial manner. They also expressed reasons why involvement detracts from academic success, mainly through the time it takes from their schedules. Other sophomores said being involved can negatively impact their psychological well-being such as adding stress or prompting feelings of being overwhelmed.

For skill development, academic classes were the main way Cohort I sophomores used written communication, critical thinking, and time management skills. Student organizations were the main way students used public speaking, project management, group dynamics, and effective meeting skills. Both venues seemed to provide an equal opportunity to use delegation skills. In addition, academic classes and student organizations were the main two venues for almost all the skills listed. The only exception was interpersonal communication where peers and student organizations were cited as the primary areas where this skill was used. It is interesting to note that a fifth of sophomores did not use public speaking skills during the year, a quarter did not use delegation skills, and almost half did not use effective meeting skills.

A majority of Cohort I sophomores who used each skill during the year felt that their skills improved. When asked to explain what specifically helped them improve each of the skills, sophomores always mentioned being able to practice the skills at some point during the year. In addition to just having opportunities to use their skills, there were other reasons provided for the improvement of specific skills. Written communication skills improved mainly through

experiences in class and personal communications with others. Interpersonal skills improved just upon using them frequently with others. Critical thinking skills improved because of classroom experiences. Project management skills improved because of a direct responsibility for planning events in organizations as well as classroom experiences. Time management improved because sophomores had to juggle different activities and fit them all into their schedule. Delegation skills improved because of involvement in student organizations and having opportunities to use the skills in class, mainly through group projects. Effective meeting skills improved because of student organization responsibilities in running meetings as well as watching others run meeting. Skills in public speaking and group dynamics improved because of student organization involvement and classroom experiences.

Sophomore Year Conclusions

While many things remained the same between the freshman and sophomore years, there were a few changes that were notable. Compared to the freshman year, about 20% more sophomores were employed while attending school and they worked a few more hours per week. Involvement in community organizations remained low for the Cohort I sophomores but did increase a little from the freshman year. Along with religious organizations, groups that serve children seem to draw most of the interest from sophomores looking to get involved off campus.

For campus involvement, leadership positions were up from less than a fifth of students in the freshman year to around two-thirds of students in the sophomore year. While students joined new groups during both years, the sophomore motives for joining new organizations were slightly different. Although they cited interacting with peers as a reason for both years, the sophomores also wanted to join new groups in order to participate in community service projects and mentor new college students. Up to a quarter of sophomores stopped their involvement with campus organizations during the year, which increased a little from the freshman year. However, the reasons for stopping that involvement remained similar.

As they did in their freshman year, most Cohort I sophomores planned to continue with their current student organizations into their junior year. Those who would not continue, however, gave one reason that had not been mentioned the previous year – that they would be participating in study abroad and could not commit to the organizations for a full year. Around half of the sophomores said they would join new organizations during their junior year, which was down about a quarter from the freshman year.

Cohort I sophomores defined academic success more broadly than they did during their freshman year and more of them thought they had been successful during their second year of school. For skill development, student organizations were cited as the most frequent place to use project management skills and group dynamics skills which had been about equal to academic classes during the freshman year. The number of sophomores saying they did not use delegation skills during the year decreased slightly from the freshman year. And around a fifth of the sophomores said they did not use public speaking skills during the year, which is a slight decrease from the freshman year.

Overall, the sophomore year seemed to be filled with about the same level of campus involvement with increasing leadership. Community involvement also seemed to increase a little as did the motive of wanting to serve others. Sophomores also appear to be making choices about the kinds of

organizations and activities they want to be involved with, with more stopping their involvement during this year than they did in their freshman year. There are also new activities filling their current and future plans such as getting a job and participating in study abroad, which could be helping them prioritize what kind of involvement opportunities to pursue. In addition to changes in their involvement, sophomores appear to have more confidence that they are academically successful and see that they are developing skills both in and out of the classroom.

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