

Aggieland Saturday
Department of Residence Life
Spring 2012

Background

Texas A&M University hosted Aggieland Saturday on February 18, 2012. Aggieland Saturday is an annual campus-wide event aimed at recruiting prospective students, including high school and transfer students, to Texas A&M University. This open house event offers an estimated 10,000 prospective students and their families the opportunity to learn about everything Texas A&M has to offer, including information on admissions, academics, financial aid and scholarships, student organizations and services, campus facilities, and on-campus housing. Aggieland Saturday is sponsored by the Office of Admissions and The Association of Former Students.

Aggieland Saturday allows attendees to choose among several programs and structured tours, in order to tailor their experience to individual areas of interest. The Department of Residence Life participated in Aggieland Saturday by hosting a Residence Life Tour. During this event, about 3,000 potential students and their family members toured the TAMU residence halls in one day. As part of Residence Life's mission to provide a "welcoming, educational, and sustainable community living" experience, this survey was created to assess attendees' perceptions of the tour program during Aggieland Saturday.

Method and Sample

The survey was developed using Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The six-question survey contained five quantitative questions and one qualitative question.

Of the 3,000 people who attended the Residence Life Tour on Aggieland Saturday, 1,126 received an email invitation by Residence Life to respond to the open online survey. The online survey remained open from February 18, 2012 to April 30, 2012, and no reminders were sent out. Of the 1,126 who received a survey invitation, 69 participated in the survey for a 6% response rate. Although the response rate was low, the original population size and the number of responses were large enough to provide an adequate assessment of the attendees.

Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages 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%. Tables are presented in descending mean order, unless specified otherwise. Also, while qualitative themes are reported here, a comprehensive list of responses can be found in a separate document.

Attendees were asked to rate their agreement with three statements regarding the tour, two which were positive and one which was negative. Table 1 shows that the vast majority of attendees (91%) either agreed or strongly agreed that they “enjoyed the tour presentation.” Also, the majority (89%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they “got [their] questions answered.” Then attendees were asked to respond to a negative statement: “the wait in line was too long prior to seeing the tour rooms.” While the majority (55%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, 23% remained neutral, and a few (22%) either agreed or strongly agreed.

Tour Statements	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd)	n
I enjoyed the tour presentation	52%	39%	4%	3%	1%	4.37 (0.80)	67
I got my questions answers	49%	40%	7%	1%	1%	4.34 (0.80)	67
The wait in line was too long prior to seeing the tour rooms	8%	14%	23%	35%	20%	2.54 (1.20)	65

Table 1: Aggieland Saturday Experiences (n=67)

Next, attendees were asked whether or not taking the tour helped them decide to apply for on-campus housing. The majority (72%) said yes, 10% said no, and 17% said that they were not sure.

Attendees were then asked to indicate how many people, including them, were in their party during the tour. Most attendees (40%) had parties of three people, 37% had parties of four or more, 19% had parties of two, and only 3% had parties of one.

At the end of the survey, attendees were given the opportunity to offer suggestions for improving the tour program next year. Thirty-two responses were recorded. Almost one-third of the comments only provided positive feedback toward the tour and did not make suggestions. Of these comments, many focused on the friendliness and helpfulness of the students.

The rest of the comments indicated many shared themes. The most common suggestion made was to reduce the size of the tour groups. Many attendees who responded to this question shared that they felt crowded, rushed and/or unable to hear or ask questions. A few people indicated that they were unable to attend a tour because of the long tour lines. A second common theme was wishing to see more rooms and more various room styles. Many felt disappointed in the limited number and selection of rooms they were able to view. A few attendees expressed a desire to tour, or be given more information about, other residence halls. Others requested more information about various residence hall aspects, such as common areas, benefits unique to each residence hall, and prices. One attendee requested more sessions with the academic colleges, and another attendee said they couldn’t attend the tour because the academic tour took too long.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The attendees who responded to the survey seemed to have a good experience during the Residence Life Tour. The vast majority indicated that they enjoyed the tour and had their questions answered. Several people felt the tour helped them decide to live on campus and noted the hospitality of the students. Several responses in the qualitative section supported these trends and offered additional positive feedback for the program.

Although the majority did not find the waiting time in the tour lines to be too long, the number of attendees who did find this to be true was noticeable. Many of the comments that expressed dissatisfaction dealt with the large group sizes, the long lines, and the desire to tour different rooms and/or additional residence halls.

Residence Life may wish to consider the organization of tours during Aggieland Saturday and how to best accommodate the large number of attendees. Due to the large number of people wishing to receive a tour in a single day, Residence Life could try to increase the number of tours available by making more model rooms available (perhaps on different floors as well) and using more tour guides. In addition, offering tours at multiple residence halls would create space for additional tours, decrease crowding, and provide an opportunity for attendees to receive information about more than one residence hall and room style.

Residence Life leadership is encouraged to read through all of the comments, as doing so would provide a more comprehensive picture of attendees' suggestions for improvement. Also, sharing the results of the survey with Residence Life leadership in charge of planning the tour for Aggieland Saturday 2013 would provide valuable information about what aspects of the tour worked most effectively and what aspects could use modification to improve the program next year.

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