

# **Aggie Up! Noise Abatement Course Off-Campus Student Services Offices of the Dean of Student Life January – December 2015**

## **Background**

In 2008-2009, Off-Campus Student Services (OCSS) in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life created a three-hour class for off campus Texas A&M students who have been found in violation of College Station's noise ordinances. The course was developed in conjunction with the police department, OCSS, Student Conflict Resolution Services in Student Life, the Texas A&M Student Government Association, and the municipal court. A College Station judge can assign the course as an option for first-time violators. Students pay to enroll in the class, and if they successfully complete it, the judge will reduce their sanction.

The workshop curriculum includes discussion of the city codes, seeing the issues from another's perspective, being a good neighbor, conflict management, and party planning skills. Several goals and learning outcomes were established as a foundation of the curriculum. The goals focused on educating students about their rights and responsibilities as community members and providing expectations about appropriate behavior. The learning outcomes were:

- Students will be able to translate course content into action steps that can be applied to current neighborhood relations.
- Students will be able to list applicable city codes as they relate to off campus living.
- Students will be able to list ways to have a safe and responsible party.
- Students will be able to articulate different life perspectives of their neighbors.

Student Life Studies has worked with OCSS on assessing this course since 2009.

## **Method and Sample**

This 18-question survey was created using Teleform<sup>®</sup>, survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. Of the 18 questions, five were quantitative, eight were qualitative, and five were demographic. The data was analyzed using SPSS<sup>®</sup>, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Word<sup>®</sup>. All 53 students who completed the course from January - December 2015 took the survey, yielding a 100% response rate.

## **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%. Qualitative themes are reported in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. Comparisons will be made to past courses where appropriate.

Students were asked about the effectiveness of different components of the workshop. Table 1, on the following page, indicates that most students found the program effective in all areas. Participants reported all areas more positively in 2015 compared to 2014, especially the officer interaction component.

|                              | Very Effective<br>(5) | Somewhat Effective<br>(4) | Slightly Effective<br>(3) | Not Very Effective<br>(2) | Not at all Effective<br>(1) | 2015 Mean (sd) [n]    | 2014 Mean (sd) [n]      | 2013 Mean (sd) [n]     | 2012 Mean (sd) [n=142] |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Facilitator(s)</b>        | 98%                   | 2%                        | --                        | --                        | --                          | 4.98<br>(.14)<br>[53] | 4.88<br>(.35)<br>[117]  | 4.93<br>(.30)<br>[110] | 4.80<br>(.53)          |
| <b>Ordinance Information</b> | 85%                   | 12%                       | 4%                        | --                        | --                          | 4.81<br>(.49)<br>[52] | 4.78<br>(.47)<br>[118]  | 4.75<br>(.60)<br>[109] | 4.25<br>(.95)          |
| <b>Officer Interaction</b>   | 85%                   | 9%                        | 4%                        | 2%                        | --                          | 4.77<br>(.61)<br>[53] | 4.19<br>(1.65)<br>[118] | 4.52<br>(1.0)<br>[77]  | *                      |
| <b>Activities</b>            | 81%                   | 14%                       | 6%                        | --                        | --                          | 4.75<br>(.56)<br>[52] | 4.53<br>(.78)<br>[118]  | 4.62<br>(.66)<br>[110] | 4.15<br>(.96)          |

Table 1 – Workshop Effectiveness  
\*Question not asked in previous years.

When asked if this class was engaging, all (100%) of the respondents said yes. Then respondents were asked to explain their response. Several students made comments about the facilitator being personable, and engaging. Additionally, students reported the class was informative and interesting, and they appreciated the interactive activities and discussion.

Workshop participants were asked about how they would improve neighbor relations. Many of the responses focused on communicating with neighbors and getting to know them in order to build better relationships. Others discussed informing them of upcoming social events and talking with them afterwards.

When asked to list a city code violations that applies to off campus students, the responses varied. Students talked about noise violations, disorderly conduct, sanitation, trash, and parking. A few mentioned about not having grass longer than 12 inches.

The survey asked respondents to list a party smart skill that could be used before, during, or after a party. Responses included ideas such as communicating with neighbors before the party, monitoring the music level, staying sober or having a sober host, and cleaning up after the party.

When asked to list life perspectives from their neighbors that were different from their own, students could offer numerous ideas. The most common ones included neighbors having families, full-time jobs, and having different schedules (going to bed and getting up earlier). Some talked about differences in values and how they spend their free time or their interests.

Students were asked about information that they expected to learn but was not covered. Most students reported that everything was covered. A few wanted to know more about neighbor relations, citations, drug enforcement, and dealing with law enforcement. When asked about how the workshop could be improved, most students indicated the workshop was very good or did not need any improvements. Some students suggested having sessions at more convenient times or later in the day. Additionally, some students would like the workshop to be shorter, include food, and focus more about preventative measures on noise rather than violations.

Demographic questions were asked to understand the student make-up attending the course. Table 2, on the following page, shows the demographics of the participants. Students selecting the “other” option for ethnicity were provided the opportunity to write in a response and reported Bengali, India, and Middle Eastern. In comparing 2015 to previous years, there are a few slight changes. There was an increase in freshmen attending

the course as well as an increase in students who had lived off campus for 0 – 2 years. Additionally, more students were living in apartment complexes.

| <b>Demographics</b>                          | <b>2015<br/>Percentage<br/>[n=53]</b> | <b>2014<br/>Percentage<br/>[n=118]</b> | <b>2013<br/>Percentage<br/>[n=110]</b> | <b>2012<br/>Percentage<br/>[n=142]</b> |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Gender</b>                                |                                       |  |  |  |
| <b>Female</b>                                | 21%                                   | 25%                                    | 36%                                    | 22%                                    |
| <b>Male</b>                                  | 79%                                   | 73%                                    | 60%                                    | 78%                                    |
| <b>Transgender</b>                           | --                                    | --                                     | --                                     | --                                     |
| <b>Classification</b>                        |                                       |  |  |  |
| <b>Freshmen</b>                              | 11%                                   | 3%                                     | 5%                                     | 3%                                     |
| <b>Sophomore</b>                             | 23%                                   | 20%                                    | 25%                                    | 16%                                    |
| <b>Junior</b>                                | 21%                                   | 28%                                    | 27%                                    | 32%                                    |
| <b>Senior</b>                                | 42%                                   | 44%                                    | 42%                                    | 45%                                    |
| <b>Graduate Student</b>                      | 4%                                    | 5%                                     | 4%                                     | 4%                                     |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                             |                                       |  |  |  |
| <b>African American/Black</b>                | --                                    | 10%                                    | 5%                                     | 3%                                     |
| <b>Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander</b> | 8%                                    | 5%                                     | 1%                                     | 8%                                     |
| <b>Caucasian/White</b>                       | 61%                                   | 61%                                    | 69%                                    | 65%                                    |
| <b>Hispanic/Latino</b>                       | 24%                                   | 23%                                    | 17%                                    | 19%                                    |
| <b>Multiracial/Biracial</b>                  | --                                    | --                                     | 3%                                     | 2%                                     |
| <b>Native American/American Indian</b>       | --                                    | 1%                                     | 1%                                     | --                                     |
| <b>Other</b>                                 | 8%                                    | --                                     | 2%                                     | 2%                                     |
| <b>Prefer Not To Answer</b>                  | --                                    | 1%                                     | 3%                                     | 2%                                     |
| <b>Years Lived Off Campus</b>                |                                       |  |  |  |
| <b>0-1 year</b>                              | 21%                                   | 18%                                    | 19%                                    | 12%                                    |
| <b>1-2 years</b>                             | 36%                                   | 26%                                    | 30%                                    | 33%                                    |
| <b>2-3 years</b>                             | 19%                                   | 29%                                    | 23%                                    | 33%                                    |
| <b>3-4 years</b>                             | 23%                                   | 17%                                    | 23%                                    | 12%                                    |
| <b>4+ years</b>                              | 2%                                    | 7%                                     | 7%                                     | 10%                                    |
| <b>Housing Arrangements</b>                  |                                       |  |  |  |
| <b>Apartment Complex</b>                     | 43%                                   | 28%                                    | 33%                                    | 36%                                    |
| <b>Duplex/Fourplex</b>                       | 6%                                    | 9%                                     | 9%                                     | 9%                                     |
| <b>House</b>                                 | 45%                                   | 52%                                    | 46%                                    | 45%                                    |
| <b>Mobile Home</b>                           | --                                    | --                                     | --                                     | --                                     |
| <b>Townhome/Condo</b>                        | 6%                                    | 9%                                     | 14%                                    | 9%                                     |

Table 2 – Demographics

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Similar to previous years, the Noise Abatement course continues to be successful in educating students on the four learning outcomes. Students articulated steps to improve relationships with their neighbor, learned about city ordinances, identified one or more smart party steps, and compared lifestyle differences they have with their neighbor.

While the workshop participants were positive about the facilitators and reported the course to be engaging, they did offer a few suggestions. Off-Campus Student Services staff may also want to look into a new time to hold the course that could be more convenient for participants.

If possible OCSS may want to track participants for any additional violations of the College Station noise ordinance. Do students who attend this course have repeat violations? If there are students who have violations after attending this course, maybe OCSS could assess those students to understand if there could be changes made to the course.

The OCSS staff is strongly encouraged to read all the qualitative comments to gain a full understanding of the themes in this report.

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