

**Aggie Up! Noise Abatement Course
Off-Campus Student Services
Offices of the Dean of Student Life
2016-2017**

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 Conduct Office 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 include:

- 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.

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

Method and Sample

This year only a follow-up survey was administered to students approximately six weeks after the course was completed. This electronic survey was created using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. Of the eight questions, one was quantitative and seven were qualitative. Due to branching technology, not all respondents say all the questions. All 79 students who completed the Noise Abatement Class were emailed the survey link. Of these 79 students, 40 opened the link; however, only 22 students responded to any of the questions, providing a 28% response rate.

The quantitative question was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package. Microsoft Excel® was used for the qualitative data.

Results

Results for the quantitative question will be reported as 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%. Summary themes are reported for the qualitative questions in this report; however, the entire list can be found in a separate document.

When asked if they had taken any steps since the class to improve neighbor relations, 64% of the students said yes and 36% said no. Those who had taken steps to improve neighbor relations (n=14) were asked about the steps taken. Of the 12 responses, seven mentioned talking with their neighbors, introducing themselves, exchanging phone numbers, and baking food for their neighbors. Others indicated they avoided having large parties, gave neighbors warning prior to hosting a party, being more considerate of their neighbors, keeping the noise down, and taking their trash can off the street after pick-up. Alternatively, of the eight students who reported they had not taken any steps to improve relations with their neighbors, three wrote in a response when asked what they could do to improve neighbor relations. Those included introducing themselves, contacting their neighbors more frequently, and not having loud parties.

All respondents were asked to list a city code violation that applies to off-campus students. Just over half of the 15 responses were about cleaning their yard, picking up trash, or removing their trash can from the street. Several talked about parking and not blocking the street address, not parking against the flow of traffic, or not parking on the grass. A couple students mentioned keeping their yard mowed or not having the grass be more than 12 inches and others indicated not playing loud music.

When asked to list one party smart skill they could use before, during, or after a party, 15 students wrote in a response. Talking to neighbors before the party and having a sober host were the most common responses. Other students mentioned knowing who is coming in and out, watching the noise level, having sober drivers after the party, and picking up trash.

Class participants were asked about the materials they used from their Aggie Up bag. The party tips, coaster, community guideline, magnet, pen, cup, and sharpie were all mentioned. A few students indicated they had not used any of the materials.

Students were asked what information they learned from the class that was most significant to them. Many students talked about understanding city ordinances such as trash procedures, noise rules, keeping grass shorter than 12 inches, etc. Others felt that the neighbor relations and being able to ask questions to the Police Officer during the class were most significant.

The last question on the survey asked students how they had used the information learned from the class. Several students talked about different city ordinances they have been more aware of and tried to follow such as keeping the grass cut, watching the noise level, and picking up trash. Some reported they have been a better neighbor and one person stated they had not hosted a large party. Some students said yes they had used it, but did not indicate how or what they have done.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Similar to previous years, the Noise Abatement course continues to be successful in educating students on the learning outcomes. Students retained information several weeks after the class and could then articulated steps to improve relationships with their neighbor, learned about city ordinances, and identified smart party steps.

The content of the Noise Abatement Class seems to be valuable to students attending the class. OCSS may look at ways to share some of that information in general with all students on campus. Methods to share this content could be through their website, at Housing Fair, using social media, talking with large student organizations, or making flyers or informative on magnets that are distributed to student. Maybe students learning the information before receiving a ticket could decrease the number of students getting violations.

OCSS could explore options 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 encouraged to read all the qualitative comments to gain a full understanding of the themes included in this report.

Report prepared for: Sarah Jaks, Off-Campus Student Services—Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Report prepared by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies
Report prepared on: September 16, 2017
Analysis prepared by: Sabrina Yao, Student Life Studies
Surveys created by: Dan Yin, Student Life Studies

***Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee.
Find Student Life Studies on Facebook!***