

Housing Fair Volunteer Assessment Offices of the Dean of Student Life— Off-Campus Student Services Spring 2017

Background

Every spring Off-Campus Student Services (OCSS) in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life at Texas A&M University hosts the Housing Fair. According to OCSS website (<http://studentlife.tamu.edu/agoss.housingfair>), at Housing Fair “off campus properties present information about their properties to Texas A&M students, faculty and staff. Students can walk around and visit the various properties’ tables and gather informational materials, as well as pick up the latest copy of the Off-Campus Survival Manual.” Furthermore, the website reports that, “local community resources, such as the Bryan and College Station police departments, also sponsor booths to provide additional information pertinent to students living off campus.”

The 2017 Housing Fair was held on February 15th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in the Memorial Student Center. In order to host this large-scale event, Housing Fair recruits staff and student volunteers. These volunteers assist with checking students and volunteers in, handing out resources, helping off campus properties load and unload their booth, and many other jobs. While Student Life Studies has worked with OCSS to assess students’ satisfaction since 2002; this year the focus of the assessment was on the volunteers who help run this event. This is the first time the volunteers have been assessed.

Method and Sample

The survey was developed using Qualtrics[®], survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The 18-question electronic survey contained eight quantitative and 10 qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, respondents did not see all questions. The results were analyzed using SPSS[®], a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel[®].

An e-mail with the survey link was sent to the 53 staff volunteers on March 27, 2017. Non-respondents received up to three reminders to complete the survey before the survey closed on April 10, 2017. Of the 53 volunteers who were sent the survey, 29 responded to some part of it, yielding a 55% 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%. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are reported in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document.

The first question asked respondents about their role at Texas A&M. Table 1, on the following page, shows that almost two-thirds were staff members. Additionally, respondents were asked about the student organization or department they were affiliated with and a majority of the responses were Offices of the Dean of Student Life. Other responses included Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Student Activities, MSC FISH, Student Life Studies, and Instructional Media Services.

What best describes your role at Texas A&M?	Frequency Percentage
Staff Member	62%
Both staff member and student	24%
Student	14%

Table 1: Role at Texas A&M (n=29)

Using a select all that apply option, respondents were asked how they heard about volunteering for Housing Fair. Table 2 demonstrates that staff meeting for Offices of the Dean of Student Life and emails from Off-Campus Student Services were the most common ways staff and students learned about this volunteer opportunity. Those who selected the “other” response option wrote in that they learned about Housing Fair from their supervisor, being a past volunteer, and being a student employee.

How did you hear about volunteering for Housing Fair 2017? (select all that apply)	Frequency Percentage
Offices of the Dean of Student Life meeting	48%
Email from Off-Campus Student Services	45%
Other:	14%
Student Organization	10%
Division of Student Affairs Meeting	3%

Table 2: Marketing (n=29)

When asked how satisfied they were with their overall volunteer experience, 83% of volunteers reported being very satisfied. Additionally, 14% were somewhat satisfied and 3% were neutral. Nobody reported being somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. (mean=4.79; sd=.49; n=29) Volunteers were asked to provide context for their response about their overall experience. Many talked about the event being organized, fun activity, easy way to volunteer, convenient, and that they felt needed. Others enjoyed interacting with other staff and students and doing something different during the workday. Many provided positive comments for Keionna and the Off-Campus Student Services staff saying they were friendly, positive, and organized. A couple respondents stated that they appreciated breakfast and were well-fed; however, one person stated that lunch was not provided like it had been in previous years.

Volunteers were asked about their role or what they did during Housing Fair, using a select all that apply formatted question. Table 3, on the following page, illustrates that being a runner, swiping ID cards, and other duties were the most common. Those who selected the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write in their job. Those responses included being a judge, helping with set-up or loading/unloading, taking pictures, and breaking down boxes or taking trash out.

What was your volunteer role? (select all that apply)	Frequency Percentage
Runner	28%
Card Swiper	28%
Other:	28%
Off-Campus Survival Manual Distributer/Greeter	17%
Volunteer Check-in	14%
Floater	14%
Traffic Monitor	10%
Vendor Check-in	10%
Hospitality Room	7%
Day of Recruiter	3%

Table 3: Role at Housing Fair (n=29)

When asked if they attended the volunteer informational meeting on February 9th, 31% of volunteers said yes, and 69% reported they did not (n=29). Those who attended the information meeting (n=9) were asked two follow-up questions. Attendees were first asked if there was anything that would have made the informational meeting more beneficial. Several reported that the meeting was helpful, straight forward, and thorough. There were a couple suggestions including to provide a little information about what the event is, especially for new people and to have the important information at the top of the handout to find easily. The second follow-up question asked respondents to share any additional feedback pertaining to the meeting. Most reported that the meeting was thorough and helpful. One person appreciated the pictures being added to the presentation. One person said it informed volunteers the expected time lapse of the informational meeting.

Volunteers were asked if their volunteer role was communicated to them on the day of Housing Fair. Almost all (97%) said their role was communicated to them and 3% said it was not (n=29). Those reporting their role was not communicated to them (n=1) received a follow-up question to provide feedback about what would have made the check-in process better. The one volunteer said he/she was told to go to the vendor rest area and someone would give them a job; however, there were no jobs initially for this person.

When asked if they felt their role was necessary for the day of Housing Fair, 100% of the volunteers reported yes (n=29). There would have been two follow-up questions for respondents who reported their role was not necessary. Those would have given volunteers the opportunity to explain why their role was not needed and provide suggestions on how to restructure roles for the future.

Staff and student volunteers were asked if they would volunteer for Housing Fair again. All (100%) said that they would (n=29). A follow-up question would have been given to anyone reporting they would not volunteer for future Housing Fairs to explain their response.

Respondents were asked for suggestions on how to incentivize the volunteer opportunities at Housing Fair and there were a variety of responses. Many reported that the breakfast burritos and coffee were enough; however, others indicated food, lunch, or ice cream could be an incentive. Other suggestions included coffee mugs, gift cards, and a thank you email sent to volunteer and their supervisor. T-shirts were mentioned by a few people, but had different responses. Some felt that the T-shirts were a good incentive and others said it was not the reason they volunteered. One person also suggested having shifts that were shorter than three hours.

The final question asked volunteers for any feedback they had related to their volunteer experience at Housing Fair. Several people talked about the event being well organized and fun. There were a few suggestions including sending the call for volunteers earlier or a save the date in the fall semester, creating a map showing where the vendors are located, and providing a contact list. Furthermore, there were several suggestions related to the traffic volunteers' role. Several recommended providing vests and walkie talkies for the traffic volunteers, having cones outside to better direct the flow of traffic, and have the traffic volunteers also meet with Transportation Services.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The feedback received from volunteers about their experience at Housing Fair was positive overall. A majority felt the event was organized, they knew their volunteer role, felt their role was necessary, and would volunteer again in the future.

There were several suggestions that Housing Fair staff may want to consider. While food seemed to be the most popular way to incentivize the volunteer experience, there were some options that would not cost money such as sending out a save the date earlier, emailing a thank you to the volunteer and their supervisor, and creating shorter shifts to work. Additionally, there were several recommendations specifically focused on the traffic volunteers. Housing Fair staff may want to look into the feasibility of getting traffic cones, safety vests, and walkie talkies for those volunteers.

Off-Campus Student Services staff is encouraged to read all the comments for a deeper understanding. Furthermore, staff is also encouraged to share these assessment results and subsequent changes with volunteers and other stakeholders.

For future years, OCSS may want to consider doing this survey on a rotation every two or three years. Department staff could also look at the different aspects of the overall program to assess such as volunteers, vendors, and students. There could be a rotation between these different areas each year so data is collected, but not too much in any one year.

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