

Division of Student Affairs
Staff Development Committee
New Staff Orientation-Fall 2016

Background

The Staff Development Committee of the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) assists student affairs professionals in acquiring the skills, professional expertise and development needed to best serve their goals, the Division and the University. Their website (<http://dsastaff.tamu.edu/about>) indicates their mission is “to enhance the competences of professionals in Student Affairs by facilitating purposeful, innovative and engaging activities that educate, train and develop.” The Staff Development Committee develops and sponsors the New Staff Orientation in an effort to welcome new staff members to the DSA by providing the opportunity to introduce new staff to one another and to learn about the Division as a whole.

The DSA New Staff Orientation session was held on September 30th and was a half-day workshop. Topics included the history and culture of Student Affairs at Texas A&M, current strategic initiatives, scope of services and resources available through the DSA (<http://dsastaff.tamu.edu/NSO>). Participants were also provided information regarding how to get involved in networking opportunities within and outside of the Division. Student Life Studies (SLS) has assisted the Staff Development Committee before in assessing the New Staff Orientation, most recently in 2015.

Method and Sample

The DSA New Staff Orientation paper survey was produced using Teleform[®], survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. The survey asked seven questions; four were quantitative and three qualitative. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS[®], and the qualitative data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel[®]. As reported to Student Life Studies, 33 new staff attended and received a survey. Eighteen of those surveys were returned to SLS, yielding a 55% response rate, 26% lower than last year’s 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%. The table is in descending mean order for 2016. Summary themes are reported in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to previous years will be made where appropriate.

The participants were asked about their level of agreement regarding their experiences attending the DSA New Staff Orientation. Their response choices were 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree. Participants most positively agreed that the orientation provided them a better understanding of the history and culture of the Division of Student Affairs, similar to previous years. However, participants’ agreement about the opportunity to network with their colleagues and their understanding of the strategic initiatives in the DSA was lower than in previous years. Table 1, on the next page, presents the results.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2016 Mean (sd) n=18	2015 Mean (sd) n=21	2014 Mean (sd) n=23
I have a better understanding of the history and culture of the Division of Student Affairs at TAMU	72%	28%	--	--	--	4.72 (.46)	4.71 (.46)	4.70 (.47)
The resources provided were valuable	67%	33%	--	--	--	4.67 (.49)	4.67 (.48)	4.74 (.54)
I was able to network and connect with the other colleagues in the DSA	50%	39%	11%	--	--	4.39 (.70)	4.81 (.40)	4.70 (.56)
I understand the major strategic initiatives in the Division of Student Affairs (DSA)	33%	61%	6%	--	--	4.28 (.58)	4.52 (.60)	4.35 (.65)

Table 1: DSA Orientation Experiences

Participants described aspects of the orientation they found most and least effective. Respondents indicated that hearing from senior DSA administration was most effective, and their presentations, particularly those of Dr. Anne Reber and Tom Reber, were informative and valuable. Others mentioned the activities were enjoyable, as was getting to know other DSA colleagues. Those aspects of the orientation participants mentioned as least effective focused on the fire drill, use of jargon and acronyms that new employees do not know, the ice breaker activity and that the strategic plan presentation was difficult to follow.

For future orientations, participants were asked what additional information they would like to see included for new staff members. Most respondents suggested providing an increase of information regarding departments within the DSA, more info on “perks” to working at the University, more time for networking and more information on diversity issues and campus policies. Half those who commented did not recommend improvements, found the orientation comprehensive and appreciated learning about the traditions of Texas A&M University.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the New Staff Orientation was well received by the reporting participants. Attendees seemed to feel positive about the experience this year. However, fewer agreed than in previous years that they were able to network with other DSA colleagues, and some participants also mentioned that increasing

the information and interaction from the departments within the DSA would be helpful. The Staff Development New Staff Orientation committee may want to review whether the Resource Fair continues to be the best means to introduce the new staff to departments within the DSA and the University at large. Perhaps including more activities that encourage interaction between attendees, would assist them in the desire to network with others within the Division.

The Staff Development Team and New Staff Orientation committee may also want to review how the assessment is distributed and collected, as the response rate was quite a bit lower than the previous year. They are also encouraged to read through the participants' qualitative responses in effort to gain further insight into the needs of new staff within the division. It is also recommended these results be shared with other interested stakeholders within the DSA.

Prepared for: Heather Bennett, DSA NSO Committee Member

Prepared by: Susan Fox-Forrester, Student Life Studies

Prepared on: November 7, 2016

Data analyzed by: Rachael Hovey, Student Life Studies

Survey designed by: Barbara Schumacher, Student Life Studies

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