Residence Life - Academic Support Initiatives
Academic Peer Mentors Presentations
2017-2018

Background

Residence Life provides a variety of housing options for approximately 10,000 undergraduates, graduates, and members of the Corps of Cadets each year; 7,500 of these students live in traditional residence halls and apartments and 2,500 in the Corps of Cadets. According to its website (reslife.tamu.edu), the vision of the department is "to offer Texas A&M University students a world-class on-campus student living and learning experience." Academic Support Initiatives focuses on the learning experience for students by providing programs, facilities, and learning communities to contribute to students learning and succeeding on-campus. One way this is accomplished is with the Academic Peer Mentors (APMs). According to its website, (https://reslife.tamu.edu/living/academics/programs/) APMs are students who "live in the residence halls and apartments, and help other students succeed academically." The APMs offer various academic programs and events including academic check-ups, academic skill presentations, office hours, and peer panels.

Academic Peer Mentors offer weekly topic-based presentations related to study skills and techniques; there are ten different presentations offered throughout the year. Academic Support Initiatives wanted to assess the effectiveness of these academic skill presentations offered by the APMs. The results will be used to ensure the identified learning outcomes for each presentation are being met and improve the presentations in the future. This is the first time Student Life Studies worked with Academic Support Initiatives to assess these academic presentations.

Method and Sample

A total of ten electronic surveys were developed using Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases, and analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. Each survey had unique questions related to the learning outcomes for that presentation topic, as well as eight common quantitative questions on all surveys. Program attendees were sent electronic survey links approximately one week after the presentation; non-respondents were sent up to two reminders. Table 1 provides specifics for each survey.

Presentation Topic	Quantitative Questions	Qualitative Questions	Weeks Survey was Sent	Students Sent the Survey	Response Rate
Academic Networking	8	2	3	114	2%
Academic Rebounding	8	7	2	105	2%
Campus Resources	10	--	2	164	19%
Noteworthy	10	--	4	202	10%
Test Prep	9	--	3	252	10%
Time Management	9	1	5	277	10%
Transition and Transferring to TAMU	10	--	2	159	6%
Undergraduate Degree Planner	10	3	1	172	17%
VARK Learning Style	10	1	3	151	8%
Writing an A Paper	11	--	2	88	8%

Table 1—Description of Each Survey

Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviation (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 nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending mean or frequency order. Additionally, summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. This report is divided into 11 sections: one section for each of the ten presentation topics with the unique questions for that survey, and one section with the aggregate results for the eight common questions on all surveys. Please note that a different scale was used for the common questions on the Transition and Transferring to TAMU presentation; those results will be included in the section for this presentation topic.

Academic Networking

Students attending this workshop were first asked to identify two strategies Aggies could use to improve their networking skills. Two students responded with different answers, one mentioned classrooms and working with coworkers, while the other said to stay positive and be confident.

When asked to provide the elevator speech that was practiced during the presentation, one student shared that they were a freshman athletic training major currently working for Transportation Services, but hoped to be a high school athletic trainer after college. The second student did not respond to this question.

Academic Rebounding

Attendees were asked to identify personal and/or academic behaviors they thought were inhibiting their academic success. Two students responded and both indicated time management.

As part of the presentation, students learned about creating S.M.A.R.T. goals and the elements that make up this type of goals. Students were asked to name what each of these five elements is for a S.M.A.R.T. goal. Both students correctly indicated that the S stood for specific and that the M was for measurable. For A, both students gave similar responses with one student saying attainable and the other student correctly reporting achievable. One student correctly stated that R stood for realistic and the other student said it was results focused. Both students provided similar answers when sharing what T meant; one student correctly saying timeframe and the other answering with timely.

The final unique question for this presentation survey asked students to develop one S.M.A.R.T. goal to address the behavior shared in the first question that inhibited their academic success. One student reported reworking fluids homework and a task of mechanical analysis project. The other student spelled out the plan in the S.M.A.R.T. format. S was to stop getting distracted by watching TV, M was to watching shows on Netflix increases at a decreasing rate, A included unpinning Netflix from start bar, R would be to cut down by 25%, and T was getting it done by the end of the month.

Campus Resources

The first question on this survey asked students to rate their level of agreement or disagreement using a 5-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree for identifying two or more campus resources available at Texas A&M. Students were very positive related to their ability in identifying campus resources with 81% selecting strongly agree and 19% indicating they agreed (mean=4.81/5.00; sd=.40; n=31). Nobody reported neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree.

Students were provided a list of four resources: Tutor Zone, Academic Success Center, Student Assistance Services, and 4.0 & Go. They were then asked to select which of these resources was not on campus. Almost all (94%) correctly selected 4.0 & Go, while 7% picked Tutor Zone.

Noteworthy
Program attendees were asked to select from a list of four options, which was not the primary notetaking method discussed in the presentation. Over three-fourths of the students (83%) correctly said sectional, 11% selected charting, and 6% reported mapping. None of the respondents selected Cornell.

Students were given the following description and asked to choose the appropriate notetaking method based on the type of class and preferred learning style. Over half (59%) accurately said Cornell, 29% indicated charting, and 12% said mapping.

> *In a lecture-based, history course at Texas A&M, a student has a difficult time recalling information when they are studying for exams. Which notetaking method would be beneficial for the student?*

Test Prep
Participants were asked to select the correct depiction of R.A.P.P.R. Table 2 shows that just over three-fourths (79%) could identify the correct response, which was Recall, Assess, Prepare, Plan, and Review. The remaining students selected the option with "Attain" rather than "Assess."

Which is the correct depiction of R.A.P.P.R.?	Frequency Percentage
Recall, Assess, Prepare, Plan, Review	79%
Recall, Attain, Prepare, Plan, Review	20%
Recall, Assess, Prepare, Planner, Recite	--
Recall, Attain, Prepare, Plan, Rotate	--

Table 2: Learning Outcome for Test Prep (n=24)

Time Management
To begin the survey, students were asked to share their biggest barrier for effective time management. There were a range of options from the 26 students who wrote a response. Several mentioned procrastination and others talked about scheduling, either not keeping a consistent schedule or managing their schedule. A few students mentioned prioritizing their academics over Netflix and time with friends. Other barriers mentioned included being too involved, staying focused, being organized, and getting started on projects.

During the presentation, students learned about the Eisenhower Box as a technique for time management. On the survey, students were asked about the labels for the box and if the x-axis was importance and the y-axis was urgency. Using a true or false response option, students were split on their answer. Just over half (52%) selected the correct answer, which was that this was a true statement, and 48% said it was false.

Transition and Transferring to TAMU
Students were asked about how they felt their experience transitioning and/or transferring to Texas A&M was compared to their peers. Over half (57%) felt their transition was about the same as an average student, while 43% felt it was easier than the average student. Nobody selected the option that their transition was harder than the average student.

When asked if as part of the presentation they were able to assemble a super syllabus as a tool to aid with their academic transition, all students (100%) reported they were able to do this task.

Some of the common questions for this survey had a slightly different scale than the other nine surveys, and therefore these are not reported in the aggregate with the other surveys. Students were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with statements about the Academic Peer Mentor presenting the workshop. Table 3, on the following page, shows that students were positive about all statements related to the APMs.

Statement	Strongly Agree (7)	Agree (6)	Somewhat Agree (5)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd)
The APM delivered the material in a clear and structured manner.	100%	--	--	--	--	--	--	7.00 (.00)
The APM was knowledgeable about the topic and any related issues.	100%	--	--	--	--	--	--	7.00 (.00)
The APM maintained my interest during the entire presentation.	71%	29%	--	--	--	--	--	6.71 (.49)
The APM was well organized and prepared.	100%	--	--	--	--	--	--	7.00 (.00)

Table 3: Academic Peer Mentors for Transition and Transferring to TAMU Presentation (n=7)

When asked about their level of agreement or disagreement with statements related to the presentation, all respondents were positive about each of the three statements, as seen in Table 4.

Statement	Agree (3)	Neutral (2)	Disagree (1)	Mean (sd)
The presentation was concise and informative.	100%	--	--	3.00 (.00)
The presentation contained practical examples and useful techniques that applied to current work.	100%	--	--	3.00 (.00)
The visual aids were effective (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.).	100%	--	--	3.00 (.00)

Table 4: Effectiveness of Transition and Transferring to TAMU Presentation (n=7)

The final question asked how students would rate the presentation overall. All students (100%) reported they would rate the presentation as excellent (mean=5.00/5.00; sd=.00; n=7). Nobody selected the options for very good, good, fair, or poor.

Undergraduate Degree Planner
Respondents were initially asked to rate the level of agreement or disagreement on two statements related to the Undergraduate Degree Planner. Table 5 reveals that students mostly agreed with both statements. Specifically, students felt more positive about understanding the purpose of the planner but reported being slightly less familiar with it.

Statement	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd)
I understand the purpose of the Undergraduate Degree Planner.	72%	24%	--	--	3%	4.62 (.82)
I am familiar with the Undergraduate Degree Planner.	55%	35%	7%	--	3%	4.38 (.90)

Table 5: Undergraduate Degree Planner (n=29)

When asked what website address allows them to access the Undergraduate Degree Planner, all of the 26 students who wrote in a response correctly reported being able to find the planner on the Howdy Portal. Furthermore, students were asked what the due date is for academic departments to approve the Undergraduate Degree Planner for required students. Most of the 22 students who wrote in a response said September 30 or a date in September, several said during the sophomore year, a couple students said it depended on the department or your major, and one student said during the first semester.

When asked what questions they had for their next meeting with their academic advisor, 14 students provided a wide range of questions. Students talked about asking their advisor about selecting classes in general and specifically for the next semester, transferring credits from community college course or testing out of a class, declaring a minor, and requirements for their major.

VARK Learning Style
Respondents were asked to share their VARK learning style. Almost half (46%) said their style was read/write, 27% reported visual, 18% stated kinesthetic, and 9% indicated they were multimodal or had more than one style. Respondents were also asked how knowing their learning style helps them and to discuss how they could incorporate their learning style in a classroom or their studies. Several students indicated that knowing their learning style helped them study more effectively and retain information. One respondent talked about now understanding why he/she needs to be active while studying or being in class to help filter out distractions.

The last unique question for this presentation topic asked students to identify which option from a list of four was not a type of learning style. Almost three-fourths (73%) accurately said secondary and 27% selected global. Nobody picked the options sequential or aural.

Writing an A Paper
Students were asked two true/false questions about the University Writing Center. The first statement was if the University Writing Center could help students with public speaking assignments, and all seven students (100%) correctly indicated that this statement was true. The next statement was if the University Writing Center could review papers online or in-person, and again all seven students (100%) correctly selected the response as being true.

Program attendees were asked to select the one example from a list of seven options that was not considered plagiarism. All students (100%) correctly identified utilizing a test bank from the list. Those options not selected included: turning in someone else's work as your own, copying words or ideas from someone else without giving credit, failing to put a quotation in quotation marks, giving incorrect information about the source of a quotation, changing words but copying the sentence structure of a source without giving credit, and copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.

Aggregate Results for Common Assessment Questions
On all surveys, students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on statements related to the Academic Peer Mentors (APMs) presenting the workshop. The aggregate results are shown in Table 6, on the following page, which illustrates students were mostly positive about the APMs on all statements, especially related to delivering the content.

Statement	Strongly Agree (7)	Agree (6)	Somewhat Agree (5)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (4)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
The APM delivered the material in a clear and structured manner.	74%	22%	4%	1%	--	--	--	6.68 (.59) [147]
The APM was knowledgeable about the topic and any related issues.	69%	26%	6%	--	--	--	--	6.63 (.59) [145]
The APM was well organized and prepared.	68%	25%	5%	1%	1%	--	--	6.58 (.74) [145]
The APM maintained my interest during the entire presentation.	70%	17%	10%	2%	1%	--	--	6.53 (.82) [146]

Table 6: Academic Peer Mentors

When asked about their agreement with statements related to the workshop presentation, as seen in Table 7, respondents were overall positive about each of the three statements.

Statement	Yes	No
The presentation was concise and informative.	97%	3%
The presentation contained practical examples and useful techniques that applied to current work.	97%	3%
The visual aids were effective (PowerPoint, handouts, etc.).	93%	7%

Table 7: Effectiveness of Presentation (n=148)

The last common question asked participants how they would rate the presentation overall. Almost two-thirds (66%) said the presentation was excellent and 24% reported it as very good. Furthermore, 8% rated the presentation as good, 1% indicated it was fair, and 1% felt that is was poor (mean=4.53/5.00; sd=.76; n=148).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, residents were mostly positive regarding the academic presentations and the Academic Peer Mentors presenting these sessions. Additionally, students seemed to retain information from the presentations when asked about it on the survey approximately a week later. However, students did seem a little more confused about the labels for the Eisenhower Box. While students understood the elements for writing a S.M.A.R.T. goal, they did not apply that when they wrote a goal for themselves. Academic Support Initiatives may want to look at these two presentations and how the information is planned to be presented.

Academic Support Initiatives may want to look at how often the surveys are distributed or if surveys need to go to every participant every week. There may be ways to incorporate activities in the presentations that could be used to assess the learning outcomes for the presentation. If a survey was needed for the remaining sections, the surveys would be shorter, or maybe not need to be done every week to still gather feedback on the quality of the presenters and topics.

While this report provides summary themes of the qualitative results, Academic Support Initiatives staff is strongly encouraged to read all qualitative responses to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences. Staff is also encouraged to share this information with the Department of Residence Life and other identified stakeholders to improve the overall academic support provided for students. Furthermore, if changes are made based on the feedback from this survey, Residence Life could also highlight that changes were made based on student feedback to show that students' feedback is used to make improvements. This might encourage students to respond to surveys in the future feeling that the Department will use that feedback.