Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Student Media Non-Editor Assessment
Spring 2018

Background

According to its website (http://studentlife.tamu.edu/studentmedia) Student Media, a unit within the Offices of the Dean of Student Life,

> "Produces national award-winning publications, *The Battalion* newspaper, Aggieland yearbook, and the Campus Directory. All are written, edited and produced by students and offer excellent opportunities to gain valuable experience for journalistic and related careers. Participation is not limited to any course of study or classification, but rather is open to all interested students. Student editors, writers and other staff members receive salaries commensurate with their duties and responsibilities."

Student Media wanted to understand what students gained through their employment experience and worked with Student Life Studies to specifically assess the students who were not in an editor role. While Student Life Studies worked with Student Media last fall to assess the editors, this is the first time for this assessment.

Method and Sample

An electronic survey was developed in Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The survey contained 24 questions; 21 were quantitative questions and three were qualitative questions. Student Life Studies evaluated the results using SPSS®, a statistical software program and Microsoft Excel®.

The email invitation with survey link was initially sent on April 6, 2018 to 68 non-editors. The email invitation was sent to additional nine students on April 12, 2018. Non-responders from both lists received up to three reminders before the survey closed on April 20, 2018. Of the 77 students receiving the survey link, 56 completed some part of the survey, for a 73% response rate.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending mean or frequency percentage order. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are included in this report; the full list of comments can be found in a separate document.

Students were first asked what year and month they first started working at Student Media. Tables 1, below, and 2, on the following page, shows that a majority of students first started in Student Media in the fall semester of last year. No student selected any year response options prior to 2015 so they are not included in the table.

What year did you first begin working at Student Media?	Frequency Percentages
2017	81%
2016	13%
2015	6%

Table 1: Year First Started Working in Student Media (n=48)

What month did you first begin working at Student Media?	Frequency Percentages
October	17%
September	32%
February	17%
January	9%
June	7%
December	7%
March	4%
July	4%
August	2%
May	2%
April	--
November	--

Table 2: Month First Started Working in Student Media (n=54)

Using a check all that apply option, non-editors were asked which publication they worked with at Student Media. A majority of the students (85%) selected *The Battalion* and 19% said the Aggieland Yearbook (n=53). When asked about the average hours per week they worked for Student Media, 72% of the non-editors reported working 10 hours or less per week (41% said 0-5 hours and 32% said 6-10). Additionally, 13% reported working 11-15 hours, 4% indicated 16-20 hours, and 11% stated working more than 20 hours per week.

Students were asked to rate their skill level in a series of skills before joining Student Media and their current skill level. Non-editors were given the description listed below to define the levels for each skill. Table 3, in descending order by the current skill on the following page, demonstrates students reported growth in all six skill areas from when they first started their employment at Student Media to their current skill level. Additionally, editors reported confidence and time management as their highest current skill area. Alternatively, editors reported feeling the least positive about their current skill level in designing and photography. In comparing when they first started at Student Media to their current skill level, non-editors showed the largest growth in their confidence and editing.

Skill Area	Superior Level / Exceeds All Expectations (5)	High Level / Exceeds Most Expectations (4)	Moderate Level / Met Expectations (3)	Low Level Needs Work (2)	Beginner Level (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
Confidence (before)	4%	22%	47%	22%	6%	2.96 (.92) [51]
Confidence (current)	23%	48%	27%	2%	--	3.92 (.77) [48]
Time Management (before)	10%	26%	39%	20%	6%	3.14 (1.04) [51]
Time Management (current)	19%	50%	21%	10%	--	3.77 (.88) [48]
Writing (before)	2%	24%	52%	18%	4%	3.02 (.82) [50]
Writing (current)	11%	53%	26%	6%	4%	3.60 (.93) [47]
Editing (before)	2%	22%	36%	28%	12%	2.74 (1.01) [50]
Editing (current)	6%	53%	34%	4%	2%	3.57 (.77) [47]
Photography (before)	2%	18%	46%	12%	22%	2.66 (1.08) [50]
Photography (current)	13%	45%	23%	4%	15%	3.36 (1.22) [47]
Designing (before)	--	12%	38%	26%	24%	2.38 (.99) [50]
Designing (current)	2%	30%	32%	21%	15%	2.83 (1.09) [47]

Table 3: Skill Level for Student Non-Editors

Non-editors were asked to explain what in their time at Student Media most developed their journalistic skills and 37 wrote a variety of responses. The most common responses mentioned included working with their editor, going through the process of critiquing writing, interviewing professionals for a story, and getting experience in the field. Additionally, a few students indicated getting advice from others, transitioning from a high school journalism program to a college level program, attending different events that they would not normally attend, and working collaboratively for a strong story.

When asked what in their time with Student Media most developed their ability to work with others, 38 editors shared several ideas. Students most commonly talked about attending regular meetings, production nights, having deadlines, and keeping strong communication with others. Several talked about different aspects of just having to be part of the team at Student Media to successfully complete the publication.

In a series of statements, students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement related to employment in Student Media. Table 4 demonstrates that students were most positive about their editors or superiors doing a good job in communicating expectations and assignments. Students were least positive about the training sessions/talks with professionals being helpful and the training of new employees.

Statements	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
My editors/superiors did a good job of communicating expectations and assignments.	47%	41%	10%	2%	--	4.33 (.75) [49]
I had a clear understanding of what was expected of me from my assignments.	39%	39%	22%	--	--	4.16 (.77) [49]
I feel part of a team with my job at Student Media.	33%	45%	22%	--	--	4.10 (.74) [49]
Training sessions/talks with professional journalists were helpful.	31%	38%	29%	2%	--	3.98 (.84) [48]
Student Media does a good job of training new employees.	16%	57%	25%	2%	--	3.88 (.70) [49]

Table 4: Employment in Student Media

The final question asked student non-editors to share what they would change, if anything, about how Student Media operates, and 28 students provided a suggestion. A few students mentioned changing how students are trained, specifically with AP style, social media, and writing. Others talked about having a professional environment and increasing the communication between individuals or desks. Other comments provided but not as common included increasing institution support, having more information before going to events, decreasing the last minute requests, especially for photos, lowering the load for writers, and having more media passes. Additionally, there were a few comments associated with pay and either to pay everyone or to increase the pay.

The initial list of 68 students employed by Student Media included the students' position. Analysis was done on these positions for the full list and those who responded to the survey. Table 5, in descending order for the population of the initial list on the following page, illustrates that the respondents closely match the population.

Position	Frequency Percentages Respondents [n=48]	Frequency Percentages Population [n=68]
Photo	21%	23%
Aggieland Staff	16%	17%
Life & Arts	15%	17%
Sports	15%	17%
Multimedia	6%	8%
Social Media	10%	6%
News/Sci/Tech	9%	6%
Designers	4%	2%
Aggieland Staff & Designers	2%	2%
Aggieland Staff & News/Sci-Tech	2%	2%
Aggieland Staff & Photo	2%	--

Table 5: Student Positions

Conclusions and Recommendations

Non-editors were generally positive about their experiences and reported growth in all six skill areas from when they first started working with Student Media. With a majority of the students (81%) having worked at Student Media for just about a year or less, Student Media is providing strong hands-on experiences for students to develop and improve their skills. Working with the editors or having their writing critiqued by their editor was one of the most common ways students reported they grew in their journalism skills. Additionally, several students talked about improving their writing skills as a result of working for Student Media.

While students reported their current skill levels were higher than when they started, just over one-third (36%) reported their current skill level for designing at beginning or needing improvement. This may be areas Student Media wants to provide additional training or look at resources for those areas. Furthermore, staff may want to explore the suggestions provided to determine feasibility, especially related to training and communication since those were the most common ideas provided.

The professional staff in Student Media is encouraged to read all the results from the qualitative questions to fully understand the comments and themes included in this report. Additionally, staff is encouraged to share results with their stakeholders. This could be sharing information with Student Media student staff and Offices of the Dean of Student Life staff.