

# Disability Services Student Survey Spring 2018

## **Background**

According to its website (<http://disability.tamu.edu/>), Disability Services “offers accommodations coordination, evaluation referral, disability-related information, assistive technology services, sign language interpreting and transcription services for academically related purposes.”

Every three years, Disability Services assesses the students registered with the department to understand their experience with the department and the services provided. In the 2018 spring semester, Disability Services served 2,882 students, an increase of 64% compared to the students registered in 2015 when the last survey was administered. This is the fourth time Disability Services has worked with Student Life Studies to assess the students registered with their office.

## **Method and Sample**

The 30-question survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The survey consisted of 19 quantitative questions and 11 qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all students saw all the questions. Additionally, student demographics were gathered through the university student database. The data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

The electronic survey was sent to 2,882 registered students on April 25, 2018, using students' university email address. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. There were seven email addresses that were returned and students did not receive the survey invitation. A total of 1,124 students took some part of the survey, yielding a response rate of 39%.

## **Results**

Results are 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%. Tables are in descending mean or frequency percentage order unless otherwise stated. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are included in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. The 2015 survey focused on different services than this year's survey; therefore comparisons to that year will not be made. The results are divided into five sections: Demographics, Testing Administration Center, Readers, Scribes, and Peer Notetakers.

## **Demographics**

Demographics for the population of registered students for spring 2018 and the survey respondents were gathered from the Texas A&M student database; the results for those with valid UIN can be found in Table 1, on the following page in descending order by the survey respondents. Most students registered with Disability Services and responding to the survey were white, female, freshmen in engineering. Demographics were fairly similar when comparing the survey respondents to the population, except for a slight difference in gender as more females responded to the survey compared to the population.

	<b>DS Student Population [N=2,844]</b>	<b>Survey Respondents [n=1,102]</b>
<b>Classification</b>		
Freshmen	68%	68%
Sophomore	14%	14%
Junior	9%	10%
Masters	4%	4%
Senior	2%	2%
Doctoral	1%	1%
Medical (all years combined) and Pharmacy	1%	<1%
Veterinary (all years combined)	<1%	<1%
ELI, non-degree, postbac	1%	1%
<b>College</b>		
Engineering	24%	23%
Agricultural & Life Sciences	13%	14%
Liberal Arts	12%	13%
General Studies	11%	11%
Mays Business School	9%	10%
Education & Human Development	10%	9%
Science	5%	6%
Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences	5%	5%
Architecture	4%	4%
Geosciences	2%	3%
Galveston, Qatar (combined)	2%	2%
English Language Institute	<1%	<1%
George Bush School of Government & Public Service	<1%	<1%
Medical, Nursing, Public Health, Pharmacy, Health Center (combined)	2%	1%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	52%	58%
Male	48%	42%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	71%	71%
Hispanic	17%	18%
Black/African American	5%	4%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	2%	3%
Asian	3%	2%
American Indian	<1%	1%
International	1%	1%
Unknown	<1%	1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
<b>First Generation</b>		
No	79%	80%
Yes	17%	17%
Unknown	4%	3%

Table 1—Demographics

## Testing Administration Center

When asked if they use the Testing Administration Center (TAC) for taking exams, 58% reported they did and 42% said they did not (n=1,112). Those who reported not using the TAC (n=467) were directed to the Peer Notetakers section of the survey, skipping the questions about readers and scribes.

Students who utilized the TAC (n=645) were asked two follow-up questions. Using a check all that apply format, students were asked who they approached if they had a question or concern in the TAC during an exam. Table 2 demonstrates that a majority of the students contact the staff in the Testing Administration Center. Those selecting the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write a comment, and 17 provided a response. Several said they have not had a question while taking an exam. Others said they contact their disabilities advisor, staff working at the desk, and their scribe.

Who do you approach if you have a question or concern in the TAC during an exam? (Select all that apply)	Frequency Percentage [n=618]
Testing Administration Center Staff	85%
Access Coordinator	22%
Instructor	11%
Other	3%

Table 2—Testing Administration Center

The second follow-up question asked students if they had ever used or referred to the TAC training video. Almost three-fourths (74%) said no and 26% reported they had (n=640). Students who indicated they had used or referred to the video (n=165) were also asked how often they referenced the TAC training video. A majority (80%) said rarely, once when they first registered, 12% said sometimes, a few times per year, 6% reported often, a couple times a semester, and 2% indicated always, refer to it regularly (n=164).

## Readers

Students were initially asked in this section of the survey if they used a test reader. A vast majority (96%) said they did not and 4% reported they did use a test reader (n=637). Those who did not utilize a test reader (n=610) were re-directed to the next section on scribes.

The 27 students who said they did use a test reader were asked several follow-up questions. They were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with their experience with a test reader. Table 3 illustrates that students mostly agreed with both statements; however, they felt slightly more positive about the reader(s) reading aloud, clearly, and with good pronunciation. There was a follow-up question for anyone selecting disagree or strongly disagree to explain their response; however, nobody received this question.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n=26]
In general, the test reader(s) read aloud, clearly, and with good pronunciation.	50%	42%	8%	--	--	4.42 (.64)
In general, the test reader(s) assigned to you worked comfortably and compatibly with you.	46%	39%	15%	--	--	4.31 (.74)

Table 3—Readers

When asked if the reader(s) had ever asked how they liked them to read the exam at the start of the exam, 69% of the students said yes and 31% said no (n=26). Students who said yes to this question were asked a follow-up question about how often they had been asked about their preference. Over one-third (39%) said always, 28% indicated often, 22% reported sometimes, and 11% said rarely (mean=2.94/4.00; sd=1.06; n=18).

Students were asked if their expectations of the test reader(s) were met, and 100% said yes (n=26). If someone would have said no, they would have been asked to explain their response; however, nobody received this question. Students were asked what areas the reader(s) did well, and five wrote a response. Students indicated that readers read aloud, went slow, were articulate, and helped students understand the question. Readers were also described as being nice and helping to make the student feel calm. One student reported using a program to have exams read to him/her, and that having a person reading the exam would make him/her feel rushed and uncomfortable. Alternatively, students were asked about areas the reader(s) could improve and eight shared a thought. Students suggested avoiding reader(s) with an accent, reader(s) lacking an understanding of the subject, pacing in the exam, and not asking about specifics of the questions.

### Scribes

In this section, students were first asked if they used a test scribe. Almost all of the students (99%) said no and 1% said they did (n=636). Those who did not utilize a scribe (n=628) went to the next section of the survey about peer notetakers. The remaining eight students who had used a test scribe were asked several follow-up questions about their experience. Please note that for these follow-up questions, one respondent can represent 13% due to the number of students responding to the questions.

These students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement about their experience with a scribe(s). Table 4 reveals that students agreed with both statements and had positive experiences with a scribe(s). Since nobody disagreed with the follow-up question to explain their response was not received by anyone taking the survey.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n=7]
In general, the scribe(s) wrote only what you dictated.	57%	43%	--	--	--	4.57 (.54)
In general, the scribe(s) assigned to you worked comfortably and compatibly with you.	57%	43%	--	--	--	4.57 (.54)

Table 4—Scribes

Almost two-thirds (63%) of the students report that their scribe(s) asked how they would like the exam scribed at the start of the exam, and 38% said this did not happen (n=8). Students who had been asked about their preference (n=5) were asked a follow-up question about how often this occurred. Over half (60%) said it happened often, 20% said always, and 20% said sometimes. Nobody selected the “rarely” option provided.

When asked if their expectation of the test scribe was met, 88% of the students said it had been met and 13% said it had not been met (n=8). The one student who said his/her expectation had not been met was provided the opportunity to explain their response. This student reported that the scribe did not show up. When asked what the test scribe(s) did well, two students wrote a response. One said the scribes were friendly and let him/her double check their work and the other said everything was done well. Additionally, two students wrote a response when asked about areas the test scribe(s) could improve, and both said nothing.

### Peer Notetakers

All students taking the survey were asked if they used a peer notetaker as an accommodation. A majority of the respondents (85%) said they did not use a peer notetaker and 15% said they used this accommodation (n=1,101). Students utilizing a peer notetaker (n=167) were asked several follow-up questions; students who did not use this accommodation were directed to the end of the survey.

When asked if they felt that this accommodation had been helpful, 88% of the students said yes, and 12% reported no (n=165). Those who did not view this service as helpful (n=20) were asked what could have been done to

improve their experience. Of the 17 responses, many mentioned the notetakers did not upload notes consistently or finish the entire semester. Others felt that their notes were actually better than those from the peer notetaker.

Students were asked if they experienced any difficulties throughout the process. Almost two-thirds (62%) said no while 38% reported having difficulties (n=165). Students who had experienced a difficulty (n=62) were provided the opportunity to explain their experience, and 55 students wrote a response. Many students reported that notetakers were not consistent in posting notes throughout the semester, if at all, or that they stopped posting completely by the end of the semester. Others stated having classes where nobody volunteered to be the peer notetaker, so the students did not receive notes. A few students commented on some notes being difficult to understand. There were a couple of examples of specific faculty members and students' experiences with them.

The final question asked students to share any other feedback or suggestions that could help improve the current process for notetaking and 27 students provided a response. Suggestions about improving the peer notetaking system included Disability Services checking in with students with this accommodation throughout the semester to see how it is going and to encourage the peer notetakers during the semester to continue to post the notes all semester. A few students also recommended having the instructors provide notes for the class. Additionally, there were suggestions about areas outside of peer notetaking services including moving the office to a more convenient location, staying open later in the evening, and improving the noise control in the Testing Administration Center.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The students responding to this survey appeared to have positive experiences with Testing Administration Center, readers, scribes, and peer notetakers provided by Disability Services. Additionally, students generally appreciate what Disability Services does to assist students.

Students who use the Testing Administration Center reported watching the training video infrequently. If this is something students should view more often, Disability Services may want to remind students each semester to do this. Many watched it once when they first registered with the department, but not as much after that.

The peer notetakers seemed to be the service that students had the most difficulties with, and they offered some suggestions for addressing some of those concerns. The department may want to continue to explore this accommodation. If not already doing so, maybe a training could be offered to the peer notetakers to ensure they understand the importance of taking notes and any logistics of loading notes. It is worth noting that the department made changes to this service a couple of years ago, and overall, students seem to be more satisfied with the new structure. The department may also want to talk with other institutions and their processes used for notetaking to see if there are other ideas that could be implemented here.

It is recommended that Disability Services staff read all the comments provided in a separate document to have a fuller understanding of students' experiences. Additionally, staff is encouraged to share the results with various stakeholders. If changes are made based on the feedback from this survey, Disability Services could highlight that change being made was based on student feedback. This might encourage students to respond to surveys in the future if they feel that the department will use that feedback.

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