How Student Life Studies Can Help You

Thank you for joining the Student Life Studies assessment podcast. Our goal is to educate people about assessment resources and topics, so they can more easily incorporate assessment into their daily lives. Feel free to contact Student Life Studies by calling 979-862-5624, emailing sls@tamu.edu, or come by 222 John J. Koldus Building. Let’s get on with today’s podcast.

This podcast will give you an overview of assessment services provided by Student Life Studies. The Department of Student Life Studies at Texas A&M University exists to help departments in the Division of Student Affairs and recognized student organizations with all of their planning, assessment, and evaluation needs. So, what does that mean? Basically, Student Life Studies is a consulting group that can assist organizations in answering questions they have in order to improve their programs and services. We can help you assess satisfaction, needs, learning, climate, retention, and more. We also have the ability to access student demographics. Depending on the purpose, method, and audience of your project, we may be able to help you understand which groups are or are not accessing your programs and services, if there are any group differences in how people are responding, their retention and persistence, and their graduation rates.

 Most frequently, people come to us to evaluate a particular program, service, or experience. This can take the format of survey design, focus group, rubric, etc. We help people from beginning to end, using a partnership model. You are the content expert—you are going to know the most about what you are working on. Student Life Studies staff are the process experts—we have lots of experience in assessment methods, question design, data collection, and data analysis. Because we also have information about the students based on national surveys or larger campus-wide projects, you may not need to do additional data collection.

So, staff may come to us with an idea or a question to answer, but not really know the specific questions they should ask. We help clients focus on what they really need to know, not just what is interesting to know. Based on that information, we advise people on the best methodology. The survey is not always the best data collection method, and we can help you with the alternatives. If the survey is the most appropriate method, Student Life Studies can design the survey on line or on paper. Online surveys are good if you have a known group of people who you may not see in person. You might also want to gather information from a random sample of students. The paper survey is a great option if you have a captive audience and have time to collect data at one point. Either way, our staff can take care of the technology to get you the survey that best suits your needs.

If another method might be appropriate, we can also help you with that. For example, we can help with the development and implementation of focus groups, creating rubrics to evaluate performance, designing one minute reflections, or something else.

Once the instrument is designed, we assist you with data collection. If you use an electronic survey, for example, we can send it out for you, coordinate reminders, and set deadlines. If it is a paper survey, we give you the final version for you to make copies and distribute. Depending on time, we may be able to facilitate focus groups for you.

After the data is collected, we analyze the data for you, determining results, trends, and/or comparisons. We also will write a summary report for you that describes the project, the process, the results, and recommendations for practice. We can also help you reflect on the results, so you can fully understand the data, as well as the context in which you operate. This helps you make any improvements to your programs or services.

 One of the best things about Student Life Studies is that our services are free thanks to University Advancement Fee funding. Plus, you get to work with a great group of experts who are here to serve you and your organization.

That’s a quick overview of how Student Life Studies can assist you. Don’t be shy about reaching out to us with a project or a question about assessment or the student experience.

Thanks for listening to today’s podcast. Please let us know if this was helpful or if you have additional questions. You can contact us by calling 979-862-5624, emailing sls@tamu.edu, or come by 222 John J. Koldus Building. Check out our website at studentlifestudies.tamu.edu for more resources and information. We hope to hear from you.