

Student Life Studies Client Focus Groups Summer 2019

Purpose of Assessment

One goal for Student Life Studies is to provide quality assessment services to facilitate client planning and decision-making. To measure this goal and associated outcomes, the department conducted focus groups with clients to understand the effectiveness and quality of the services offered. Student Life Studies conducts focus groups approximately every three years to learn about clients' experiences working with the department. Student Life Studies staff will use the data collected to improve services provided for Division of Student Affairs staff. The department has been conducting focus groups every three years since summer 2009.

Method and Sample

Student Life Studies staff designed the focus group protocol and questions; however, all three focus groups were facilitated by staff outside the department. Additionally, the facilitators digitally recorded each focus group and an outside company transcribed those recordings.

The first focus group was for division directors held on May 14, 2019; Katie Reed, College of Architecture and Cyn Olvera, University Risk and Compliance facilitated this focus group. Seventeen directors were invited to attend this focus group through an email calendar invitation. Five directors accepted this invitation; six actually attended.

Two focus groups were conducted for division staff who utilized services from Student Life Studies in the past one or two years. One focus group was held on May 16, 2019 and was facilitated by Stefanie Baker, Offices of the Dean of Student Life and Meredith Simpson, Office of the Commandant. The second focus group was facilitated by Stefanie Baker, Offices of the Dean of Student Life and Jennifer Boyle, Department of Student Activities and was on May 23, 2019. Thirty division staff members were solicited to participate in one of these two client focus groups through email calendar invitations. Of those invited, 13 staff members accepted their invitation; 12 actually attended.

Data were analyzed in a formal content analysis conducted in August and September 2019 by all five full-time Student Life Studies staff members at that time.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations that may take based on the results. These results and any changes based on the results will be shared with various stakeholders including the focus groups participants and facilitators, the Assessment Team, and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

- Generally, focus group participants were positive about their experience with Student Life Studies. Most staff utilized Student Life Studies for assessment expertise and consultation. Additionally, several participants expressed appreciation for what Student Life Studies contributes to their programs or services.

- Receiving summary reports from Student Life Studies was one area that clients indicated was beneficial. Additionally, clients found value in Student Life Studies offering recommendations and posting reports to the department website. Student Life Studies is encouraged to continue with these practices and to make sure the “Key Findings with Recommendations” includes recommendations and not only highlights of the data. While one client indicated that getting reports quicker had improved, several clients expressed frustration with how long it takes to complete and return reports. Staff in Student Life Studies should continue to focus on this by tracking the time to complete reports, begin writing the framework for reports before the analysis is completed, and spreading out report writing to Graduate Assistants and Student Assistants.
- From the focus groups in summer 2016, one frustration mentioned a couple of times was about clients not always knowing how long it will take to complete a certain aspect of the assessment project, and Student Life Studies not communicating as much with clients. After this focus group, department staff made a strong effort to communicate with clients. Communication was the most common theme for areas of satisfaction. Alternatively, there were suggestions from clients to receive communication about when to expect results after data collection is completed. Student Life Studies is encouraged to continue maintaining the communication with clients, especially as projects are being developed. However, staff are also encouraged to communicate more often and more specifically as to when clients can expect results back.
- Clients expressed frustration with the Assessment Questionnaire intake form to initiate a project. Many felt the form was repetitive in questions and with the summer planning process. Additionally, there were suggestions to add questions if a client needs a report and if so, when that report is needed. Student Life Studies should look at the current form and identify questions that are not necessary or useful for the department and eliminate those. Student Life Studies should also consider adding questions that may assist in prioritizing reports and having deadlines for completing projects. This would also enable the project manager to have conversations with clients to set realistic deadlines as well as when the client needs to return paper surveys in order to meet those agreed upon deadlines.
- There were some mixed comments related to the summer planning process. Some appreciated that the assessment questionnaire link was sent directly to them and that Student Life Studies reached out to staff with upcoming assessment projects. However, in doing this process, clients also felt that completing the assessment questionnaire was repetitive. The department may want to continue reaching out to clients but explaining more why the assessment questionnaire is needed. Additionally, the department could explain more in the summer the difference between the summer planning form and the assessment questionnaire form. It also may be worth considering what information is collected during the summer planning process so that is less repetitive to the assessment questionnaire form.
- Based on suggestions from focus group participants, Student Life Studies might want to revisit administering larger assessment projects. It would be important to consider carefully the topics for these projects and determine what would be beneficial for departments or the division as a whole. Additionally, it would be important to determine the best method for sharing information with the division and if that should be through typical reports, infographics, and Tableau dashboards.

- While many directors and clients saw Student Life Studies as knowledgeable about the division and campus assessment efforts, participants also discussed the department's role in communicating more about the vision for the Division of Student Affairs assessment priorities and specifically what the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (OVPSA) is looking for or preferred format of information. Student Life Studies is encouraged to continue working with the OVPSA on the division assessment priorities, then communicating this information to departments through the Assessment Team. Additionally, Student Life Studies might explore the possibility of Dr. Pugh attending an Assessment Team meeting to share division assessment priorities directly with departments. The Student Life Studies Director is encouraged to continue asking clarifying questions to the OVPSA and sharing that information with other division directors.
- There were a few comments about participants being unaware of services offered by Student Life Studies. Additionally, some clients were unsure when they should utilize the department for assessment services. Student Life Studies may want to create a marketing plan for communicating with division staff what is offered and how Student Life Studies can help departments. This could include enhancing information on the website, posting information on the department's Facebook account, sharing resources or services with clients in one-on-one meetings, submitting resources or services in the division update newsletter, and annually reminding the Assessment Team of Student Life Studies to share with their department.

Results

This report presents the qualitative themes developed from the analysis for each question asked in the protocol. Questions for the clients during the focus groups concentrated on services provided by Student Life Studies, experience working with the department, report format, department website, using assessment results, and assessment challenges in which Student Life Studies could help. The questions for directors focused on services provided by Student Life Studies, sharing assessment results within departments, topics of interest for departments, and assessment challenges in which Student Life Studies could help. Additionally, participant comments are included for some themes. Some participant comments were edited to clarify, shorten, or remove identifiable information. The complete interview transcripts can be found in separate documents. This report is divided into three sections: Director and Client Comments, Client Only Comments, and Director Only Comments

Director and Client Comments

Service Utilization

The first question asked directors and clients about services they or their department utilized. Most talked about assessment projects or what they have assessed. Additionally, many talked about different types of assessment methods such as surveys, focus groups, rubrics, and existing data.

- Assessment projects:
 - Create and administer surveys (7 responses)
 - Demographics (5 responses)
 - Program assessment (4 responses)
 - Assess student learning (3 responses)
 - Needs assessment (3 responses)
 - Student success metrics (3 responses)
 - Assess High Impact Practices (3 responses)
 - Providing information from the SERU (1 response)

- General projects or projects not specified (1 response)
- Facilitate focus groups (1 response)
- Research (1 response)
- Consulting on assessment projects or questions being asked (4 responses)
- Assessment planning (3 responses)
- Interface with the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs/Streamline reporting (2 responses)
- Training (2 responses)
- Assessment Team (1 response)

Beneficial Services

Focus group participants were asked about the services from Student Life Studies that were most beneficial. The reports provided by Student Life Studies and accessing student data were considered most beneficial.

- Summary reports (4 responses)
 - “The executive summaries that they give us back is probably the most helpful for me. It’s pretty much in a nutshell of that, what the bottom line it.”
 - “It’s really great to look over the years, all the data that they have for us. They have shown us exactly the surveys they have done years and years past. That’s really helpful.”
- Pulling student data (4 responses)
 - “The access to grades and demographic information, I would not be able to understand or have a picture of who is involved with what’s going on without them.”
- Consulting (2 responses)
 - “Some of the guidance we get from them about how to format questions or things like that to get the information that you want.”
 - “I think they sort of work out some of the stuff that can be background noise and create extra work.”
- Understanding the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (1 response)
 - “I think for us it’s been the consulting with Darby, regarding what the Vice President’s Office is requesting. I think she’s done a really nice job kind of mentoring us and giving us the language of how to explain our data, relative to the questions.”
- Assessment Team (1 response)
 - “The Assessment Committee is a great meeting venue to sort of share ideas across the division. They have done a great job of making that very efficient. I sat on that for four years and they would modify it, they would take input. They would tweak it and change it. So it continually got better and better.”
- Assessment plans (1 response)
 - “Just helping guide us through the assessment process, and what is going to satisfy the university requirements. Helping us determine, is this appropriate to put in there, and how should it be worked.”
- Comprehension (1 response)
 - “Also helping me digest the large amounts of data. Being able to have them to help me digest it, and then make sure that I’m interpreting or making sure that I’m looking at it and comparing it accurately.”

Areas for Improvement

Alternatively, participants were asked about what Student Life Studies could do to improve or help departments more. Clients and directors made comments on various topics such as timeliness, project requests, the Assessment Team, and Comprehensive Program Review. For some of the areas a recommendation were also shared.

- Timeliness (8 responses)
 - "I think one area that we are challenged with is if SLS is running the assessment, the time it takes to get the information back is almost a year at times. It's a very long time."
 - "I feel like sometimes their workload is such that our reports are slower coming than we would like them. I've never had an issue with the quality, it's just time limits sometimes, it takes a little longer to get back than we would like."
 - "I do believe it would be beneficial for them to tell you how long, ideally it would take for them to gather results."
 - "When you fill out that request form, I wonder if it would be helpful for them to add something where they ask you when you would need the results back."
 - "We don't necessarily need a write up on everything. They kind of just do it out of default, but maybe that would be a thing on the intake [form]. 'Do you want a report at the end'"
- Comprehensive Program Review (8 responses)
 - "Let's talk about CPR; we have a one-size fits all with a couple of minor exceptions."
 - "They [External Review Team] told us basically what we already knew."
 - "Across the division there would be a consensus that the return on investment is very, very poor."
- Assessment questionnaire and assessment plan redundancy (5 responses)
 - "Sometimes requesting something from them seems a little cumbersome. It's on our list of things that we turn in every year, but we still have to go and fill out that form online."
 - "We still have to do the intake form for every single project. In some cases, especially if you have a well thought out plan, and you know what you want to do, and things have already been approved, it feels like a double approval process."
- Assessment Team (4 responses)
 - "I feel like sometimes the committee meets and does some good. And I feel like sometimes it is a calendar thing. It meets because it is supposed to meet. It is hard to say how many times is correct, because sometimes information comes down that we all need to get. You don't necessarily want to wait an extra month to get that."
 - "I love having the liaison. I can almost say, instead of the assessment committee, more meetings with the liaison, rather than meeting with the entire group"
- Communication (3 responses)
 - "I don't really know how long it should take to do that. You know, probably I think it should be back more quickly, but yeah, I don't know what the factors are, and involved with that. Let me know when it is going to be back. We should have it three weeks after the closure, or six weeks, or whatever."
- Data sharing (3 responses)
 - "I also feel like maybe they could help be a little bit more innovative in how data is shared. They tend to just do those reports. I don't necessarily know if that is as relevant anymore, to the decision makers in the division, and how it would bubble up farther. It would be great for just the person requesting the project."

- Data (3 responses)
 - “We have a lot of student workers, and we want to see what the impact of working in our department has on their graduation rates and how long did they work for us. That is something that you have to get out of business objects, which it seems like they don't really do anything with business objects. Sometimes I'm told ‘We can't get that data.’ I think they can because of my work in a previous place. [I'm] pretty sure this is an academic reason when we're asking for it, but I'm not going to argue with them.”
 - “Sometimes when the data comes back it's very different, it has to be re-run again. For one of our projects, we had to go back four or five times because the way they were sending it over. We don't have an understanding of the Compass or the Banner database or really understand how this VLOOKUP integration worked or what is really meant.”
- Direction from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (2 responses)
 - “Sometimes we want to know, what the vice president wants? What do the AVPs want? Not to blame Student Life Studies, because I feel like sometimes they are in the dark too. They are giving us their best guess, rather than something solid. Here's your format, here is exactly how you need to present.”
- Knowledge sharing (1 response)
 - “It is dependent who you're working with, and what kind of project you're working on. They may or may not bring up something you didn't know they could also do in the office. When there might be a tool or a way of doing the assessment that might be more beneficial, but unless we knew to bring it up, it might not put on the table. I feel like with a lot of the assessments that we are doing or getting access to, for the results, it's really just showing increases, decreases, means, modes, etc. We are not really seeing if it's significant. Especially if we are doing some of these programs year after year, it would be nice to link in those aspects of ‘well, it this year significant compared to other years, etc.’ That's one of those things depending on the project, may or may not have been brought up.”
- Meaningful Assessment (1 response)
 - “There is a little more hesitancy to do like division-wide assessment, or larger projects that I think would take a longer time to do, but I think would be something that would be meaningful for everyone in the division.”

Assessment Challenges

The focus group facilitators asked clients and directors about the primary assessment challenges they faced that Student Life Studies could address. There were several themes discussed in the focus group, especially with the clients.

- Student learning included in assessment plans (3 responses)
 - “They're going to require, again, in our AEFIS assessment plans, that we have a student learning component in there. And for our department, in particular, that is difficult. So it falls back to our student employees.”
 - “I wondered if there could be more of a differentiation between departments and units. I do think they, I don't know if it is they being Student Life Studies or they being the Vice President's Office, but I do hear that a lot, where there is just a rule that comes out, but it doesn't really apply all the way down. I wonder if there could be categories or types, there is service-based departments versus programming and events based groups. They could maybe have some differentiation in how they are treated, or what the expectations are. I can give you something; I can change some words, to make it fit for you. But, is it meaningful enough to put in an assessment plan? I don't know.”

- Survey fatigue (1 response)
 - “One of the challenges is just that whole survey fatigue that everybody has. It’s like we try to gather so much information, and then it’s like the students are ‘oh my gosh, not again.’”
- Time (1 response)
 - “I had hoped to do more with my results, but I think we all have so many demands on our time that I’ve not been able to do as much with what I got back as results as I had hoped.”
- When to use Student Life Studies (1 response)
 - “I know one of the challenges I faced personally is knowing when to use them and know when to just do it myself or do it in house and like the time it might take.”
- Implementation of assessment (1 response)
 - “I don’t really know how to implement it [my assessment project] and I would like more feedback on how to implement it. More help with implementation instead of on the back end.”
- Access to or knowledge of university data (1 response)
 - “One of the really cool things, just to give them a little more credit, when I was doing an assessment in August and September, they actually came to the table with, ‘Have you actually considered these partners on this data?’ Let me contact so not myself, them at SLS to contact those other partners to get UIN’s to better understand the flow of a student experience through what we were assessing, which was actually extremely helpful. I think there is a lot of untapped potential there.”
- Changing and being flexible (1 response)
 - “It’s challenging to remain agile to the fact that the work that you may be doing now is very poignant to what people have asked you in the past, but you are one position change or one issue, or one concern, or one person’s opinion away from potentially having to go off in this completely new direction. Fortunately, SLS is pretty good with working with us to do that. I think that is one of the big challenges that we face and some of the people that coordinate some of this. That fact is that we can have a great plan that may need to be altered on a moment’s notice because they decided they aren’t as concerned about that anymore.”
- Data visualization (1 response)
 - “I have done assessments over the last two years that I’ve had to immediately turn to our marketing efforts to say ‘Okay, in order to show this to others at the university, they only want to see it as an infographic.’ I almost think it would be worthwhile for there to be some sort of access, especially as they move towards using Tableau and other things to kind of generate some of that data very quickly in a visual displaying matter to see if there’s any kind of opportunities like that.”

Magic Wand

Clients were told they had a magic wand, and then asked what would be their dream thing they could go to Student Life Studies for and get, have support for, have training on, etc. Clients share several ideas of their ideal dream related to assessment or working with Student Life Studies. A couple of clients also expressed appreciation for what the department does currently.

- Data access (5 responses)
 - “If I had a magic wand, I would have access to all of those things and be able to pull some data myself.”
 - “I’ve only seen the results we’re getting, so I think the ability to manipulate that data might beg more questions or better questions.”

- “I think potentially setting up a dashboard for each department, so that they can run that information.”
- Division-wide projects (2 responses)
 - “I think the other magic wand, is going back and hitting my drum a little bit more, but some sort of more meaningful division-wide work. Whether it be partnerships with a faculty member that help with doing some sort of research on the division, it just be a bigger project.”
- Time to consult (1 response)
 - “The magic wand I would go back to is a little more time from the liaisons, maybe a little more time in our particular area. I also understand that we’re already complaining about the fact that we’re not getting our reports as fast as we want. And if they’re going to spend more time in my office, it is going to make it that much more difficult for them for what’s done on a timely basis. So that’s where the magic wand is: give them a little more time where they can come, spend a little more time with us.”
- Someone else to do assessment work (1 response)
 - “An assessment person in our office so we didn’t have to walk over here. That’s just being lazy though.”

Other Comments

Each focus group ended by offering participants the opportunity to ask any questions or provide any final comments. Many expressed satisfaction or some praise with aspects of the department.

- Positive (10 responses)
 - Maintain a positive attitude
 - Flexible
 - Willing to help
 - User-friendly resource
 - Do a great job
- Help understand results (1 response)
 - “You gather a lot of information, then it’s like, how is it used?”
- Adds value (1 response)
 - “I think the theme would be to whatever the assessment, that it adds value and meaning to the people that are completing it.”
- Concern with AEFIS (1 response)
 - “There is just a great concern with this window for our school year closing, and I’ve got AEFIS writers now that are coming and going. Apparently we will be getting trained, but we desperately need to get that training going if they really want us to do that.”
- Assessment plan feedback (1 response)
 - “Having them pre-read things like our assessment reports that go in the AEFIS, that’s a big help, because they know more what the university level is looking for than we do. That provides a lot.”

Client Only Comments

Level of Satisfaction with Services

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the services from Student Life Studies, clients were mostly positive. Some reported being satisfied in general and others talked about specific aspects with which they were satisfied.

- Communication (7 responses)
 - “I’ve always found them very communicative. They’re always on top of making sure that we know where things are in the process.”
 - “For me, they exceeded my expectations. If I would send an email, I’d get one right back with information.”
- Guidance (5 responses)
 - “Just their staff helping. I may ask a question, but they question me ‘What are you actually trying to get here?’ To help me achieve the developing of the question and to help in getting an answer of what I really need for the office.”
- Timeliness (3 responses)
 - “My students that come over and ask for help, they [Student Life Studies] are always responsive. They do a great job getting surveys done on time so we can then administer them and get them back. They used to have trouble getting the reports back to us, but I’ve already noticed that they have sped up the return time on those reports.”
- Data sharing process (2 responses)
 - “As soon as they’re able to crunch the hard data, they send it. That has been huge because I get it a couple of weeks after the event. But then seems like it was a couple of months before they could get a report back.”
- Assessment plan process (1 response)
 - “They’ve also been really good about if you tell them this certain date and time that you’re going to be running something, they actually reach out. It helps remind me, that oh yeah I did say that.”
- Department existing (1 response)
 - “We talk to many people in our conferences that don’t have a Student Life Studies, and so any of the number crunching, data crunching, or surveys they basically have to do it on their own.”

Assessment Reports

Student Life Studies changed the format of assessment reports in fall 2018 and asked clients for feedback on the changes and the new format. While several indicated they had not yet received a report with the new format, others shared what they found useful in the reports.

- Recommendations (2 responses)
 - “I really like have the data, but I also really like the suggestions that they make, because sometimes I find myself or my students are so close to the project that we are trying to assess, that sometimes we have a hard time seeing things from the outside, and so sometimes they have perspective and make suggestions. That’s very helpful.”
- Trends (1 response)
 - “I appreciate if we’ve done something more than once; they do a good job at putting in the 2015 comparison to 2016, 2017, and 2018. You can see trends, which I think really makes it helpful, to put it in one place. That comparative analysis I think really helps our decision making.”

- Data insight (1 response)
 - “When we are getting like 10,000 data points, there might be some meaningful voices that aren’t being fully heard, because they are hearing all this positive, but the other things are definitely resonating, but they’re sporadic. Having them [Student Life Studies] put in those suggestions have definitely been helpful as to pulling out and giving more voice to something that is on the table.”
- Responsive (1 response)
 - “One time they pulled some data out of the SERU on my students. They gave me some data in a pie chart. To me, it just wasn’t portraying what it needed to portray so I asked if they could break it out into a bar chart that could easily show the different levels. They did that and I appreciated that they were amenable to changing the presentation of the data so it would suit what we were trying to show people.”
- Balanced format (1 response)
 - “I really like the report format, because it’s not just all paragraphs or all charts. It’s got a nice balance and it’s easy to scan for what I need to know at that moment.”

Department Website

Clients were asked about what, if anything, they found useful on the department’s website. There were follow-up discussion about the department’s social media account as part of this discussion. Almost half of those attending the focus groups had not been to the website. Some discussed that the Assessment Questionnaire link is the only reason they would go to the website and that it is emailed to them, so they go straight to the form and not really the website.

- Resources (4 responses)
 - “It’s got lots of tools and resources, and it’s not hard to find what you need.”
 - “I’ve seen their Facebook posts. So usually, it’s just interesting information. I like the fact that sometimes it asks questions about like why you need to be assessing these things and do you need to assess the things? I like the variety of information they put out there.”
- Reports (2 responses)
 - “I really like the report repository that’s public, because it gives you ideas of ways you can approach differently. I’ve used that a few times when I’m trying to design a study or an assessment.”
 - “I predominately will look through the reports that they post involving other things on campus that they’ve worked on, and sometimes I’ll just browse to see if there’s anything relevant to me.”
- Suggestions (2 responses)
 - “I would love to see kind of an accountability.tamu.edu site, where there are dashboards of some interesting, interactive data that would be relevant to the division. I would like to see them more in the game of division-wide projects that will be meaningful, and I think that some sort of Tableau dashboard, or interactiveness on the site, could drive traffic, and would be a very interesting showcase.”
- Easy to Navigate (1 response)
 - “I feel like the website is very functional.”

Using Assessment Results

When asked about how they used results when working with Student Life Studies on their projects, clients shared various ways they have utilized their data.

- Make improvements (6 responses)
 - “I share with students that run the program, so the student is new to running a program and I give them the feedback so they can give it out to their committee and see what things they can improve on.”
 - “Improving training for supervisors for student development and employment positions.”
- Share with stakeholders (5 responses)
 - “I share with my students.”
 - “We’ve turned a few things into infographics.”
- Student learning (3 responses)
 - “I shared with my students; we [student leader and advisor] sat and brainstormed how we can make this better for students. I thought that was a really good learning experience for him [student leader] coming into this position. Be able to see that maybe we’re not doing as good in this area as we need to. Students come with a thousand ideas about what to change, but if you can point them to some quantitative data saying these are doing great, but these may need a little improvement, it helps to direct their idea formulation a little bit.”
 - “It’s counterintuitive to the assessment cycle, but we’ve used assessments to create learning outcomes. Then ironically enough then assessed those outcomes with assessments.”
- Fundraising/Grants (2 responses)
 - “When I do some development work and I’m meeting with people who have some money that maybe I would like to have. Sometimes, I use assessment results to talk about the value of the work that we do in the centers.”
 - “We’ve used some of the findings and results to help us with grant applications for needs.”
- Publications (1 response)
 - “I think two or three of the reports also have been turned into publications from our research team.”
- In one of the focus groups, clients were asked a follow-up question to find out if there was anything Student Life Studies could do to strengthen the way they are using their results. (3 responses)
 - “It seems like it’s a different format every time we get it. If it’s something that’s being run over and over, if it could kind of look the same it would be helpful.”
 - “I’ll go back to the piece of communication from the Vice President’s Office. When we want to provide them with the information they need, we need to better identify what that information is that they want from us.”
 - “It would be interesting to do some more innovation based assessment. I think it would be interesting to maybe have a research element in the department so people could publish.”

Director Only Comments

Assessment Expectations

Directors were asked about their expectations for their department staff as it relates to assessing their programs, activities, and services. Several talked about why they expected staff to assess programs.

- Assess programs
 - For improvement (3 responses)
 - Address student needs and promote student success (2 responses)
 - To show value or secure funding (1 response)
- Use data for decision making (1 response)
- Benchmark comparison (1 response)

Sharing Assessment Results

The next question shifted direction and asked directors about the process for sharing assessment results within their department. Many shared that various meetings were the most common method of sharing results within their department.

- Group meetings (6 responses)
 - "Within our department, we have an ongoing, national level satisfaction assessment. We share the cumulative scores of those with our staff."
 - "We do at staff meetings, staff training, and retreats"
- Individually (3 responses)
 - "We do a bigger client satisfaction survey; when we're breaking it down by provider it is a little more sensitive and is shared individually"
- Marketing tool (2 responses)
 - "They do social media, newsletters...anyway we can get it out there."

Over-Arching Topics or Division Interest

Directors were asked about larger scale assessment interests. There were several who talked about topics specifically to their area and not necessarily over-arching topics. Additionally, there was some conversation about other departments within the division.

- Student success (3 responses)
 - "We are diverse; I think for a common core, student success is one."
 - "I think the more recent focus we have had, in terms of discussions is about student success metrics, and how we can all contribute to them."

Expectations from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

Directors were asked how Student Life Studies could assist them in meeting information expectations from the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (OVPSA).

- Clarity for the Annual Reports (4 responses)
 - "When we say annual report, every one of the directors comes up with a different picture of what that product looks like in their own mind. We never got real clarity on who the leadership, and the division's target audience was, and why are we doing them. It's what I think would add to that."
 - "I don't think they have control over because if the VP isn't clear in what they want or what they expect, they [Student Life Studies] can only communicate what they know. I think they

try and do the best they can with sometimes very limited knowledge or understanding exactly what the end result is supposed to be.”

- Consulting (1 response)
 - “I think consulting was really helpful. I think she [Darby] was even in my meeting where it kept coming up about having the data to support graduation and retention. By definition, the people that are coming to see us are struggling. The measurement doesn’t fit us. Darby was great and talked to our leadership team and she did a nice job.”

Department Background

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. According to its website (<http://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/about>), Student Life Studies “provides leadership in assessment and planning to the Division of Student Affairs and to student organizations, maximizing program effectiveness and emphasizing student learning.” Furthermore, the vision of the department is to “create a Student Affairs culture that values meaningful assessment, uses results to guide improvement, and articulates contributions to student success.” Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, those interested can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

To work with Student Life Studies for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

Report Prepared for: Student Life Studies
Report Prepared by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies
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