

Texas A&M University Police Department

Student and Citizen Survey

Spring 2020

Purpose of Assessment

The Texas A&M University Police Department (UPD) is required to survey “citizens” as a part of national accreditation requirements with International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). UPD surveys the campus community on a regular basis to gather input from the community, identify and improve practices, and address attitudes that might contribute to tension and grievances. The process for gathering that information can be determined by the department. The broad description of the assessment content includes:

- Overall departmental performance
- Overall competence of department employees
- Officers’ attitudes and behavior toward citizens
- Concern over safety and security within the department’s service area as a whole
- Recommendations and suggestions for improvement

Student Life Studies initially worked with UPD in 2010 to address specifically the accreditation requirements and topics using a campus-wide survey of students, faculty, and staff. UPD has collaborated with Student Life Studies to conduct this assessment in 2010, 2013, 2016, 2018 and 2020.

Method and Sample

The 16-question survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The electronic survey consisted of 13 quantitative and three qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all of the questions. The data was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey was sent to a representative random sample of 2,500 students on February 24, 2020. Non-respondents received up to three reminder emails before the survey closed on March 16, 2020. Five student email addresses bounced and those students did not receive the email invitation. Of the 2,495 students who received the survey, 276 responded to some part of the survey, yielding an 11% response rate (an 8% decrease from 2018).

Additionally, the survey was sent to a random sample of 500 faculty members and 600 staff members on February 24, 2020. Up to three reminders were sent to non-respondents before closing the survey on March 16, 2020. Four email addresses for faculty members were not valid and did not receive the survey links. Of the 496 faculty members who received the survey, 130 responded to at least some part of the survey, a 26% response rate (a 3% decrease from 2018). Of the 600 staff members receiving the survey, 232 responded to some part of it, creating a 39% response rate (a 9% increase from 2018).

Key Finding with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, UPD staff and administrators may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. UPD is strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of community members’ experiences.

- Overall, students, faculty, and staff had a positive view of the Texas A&M University Police Department. Additionally, all three populations generally felt safe on campus; however, more community members reported feeling safer during the day than at night. Females and multi-racial students reported feeling the least safe at night. Safety on campus at night has remained consistent since 2016. The department might decide what level they would like community members to report. Should it be the same as during the day? If not, what should it be? If the department is not reaching the level they would like, they need to look at what could be changed? Based on the last three years of administering this assessment, there will probably not be a difference from community members unless the department makes changes. Those changes should be recorded to know if they were effective based on the assessment results when the survey is implemented next.
- Faculty/staff were slightly more positive than students in terms of UPD staff being competent and UPD's performance and attitudes; however, overall the campus community rated UPD staff between excellent and good. While community members provided positive feedback in their comments, some survey respondents expressed negative experiences and perceptions in their interactions with UPD.
- Both students and faculty/staff reported concerns over areas of campus that are not well lit and they expressed a desire to see more officers on campus, especially at night. Pedestrian, cyclist, and vehicle traffic safety were also identified as concerns, specifically pedestrians watching where they are walking more than their phone, cyclist following traffic rules, and drivers not being distracted. Furthermore, certain intersections were mentioned as being unsafe with pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles at the same time. University Police Department is encouraged to look at the recommendations and create possible short-term and long-term solutions. This could include working with other campus entities to conduct campus walks at night to prioritize areas needing additional lighting. UPD might explore options to increase a presence on campus, especially at night by looking at staffing and having officers walking or biking on campus in addition to driving. UPD could promote pedestrians and drivers not being distracted as well as informing cyclists traffic rules when on bikes through a marketing campaign during the academic year, videos or presentation at Fish Camp or during Howdy Week, and increased signage throughout campus. Lastly, UPD could consider working with appropriate campus departments to make some intersections safer with increased signage, designated bike lanes, or added signals or crosswalks.
- There are difference in how community members feel about the safety and security on campus compared to their level of concern about safety and security on campus. UPD might consider providing more education to the campus community about the services offered by the department and the work of UPD. This might provide a more holistic perspective for community members, especially if the only communication receive are emails associated with the Cleary Act situations.
- The department is encouraged to share results from this survey with various stakeholders as well as highlight any changes that are made as a result of the findings from this assessment.

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 order for 2020 overall results unless otherwise specified. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are included in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to previous results are made where applicable. Additionally, demographic information was collected from the university information system when the samples were pulled and reported.

Respondents were asked three questions about safety and security, using a scale of 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree. Table 1 illustrates that the campus community generally feels safe, but also that respondents feel safer during the day than at night. This pattern was similar for students and faculty/staff; however, students reported feeling slightly less safe than faculty/staff at night. Overall, 95% agreed or strongly agreed to the statement about feeling safe during the day compared to 73% at night. This has remained consistent for the last few years. A new question this year ask respondents if they were concerned about safety and security on campus. One note in looking at the results, the higher the mean indicates respondents' agreement with the statement and a higher level of concern. Just over one-quarter (29%) agreed or strongly agreed to being concerned about safety and security on campus. Students were slightly more concerned about safety on campus compared to faculty/staff.

Statement	2016 Overall Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Overall Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Overall Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Student Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Faculty/Staff Mean (sd) [n]
I feel safe and secure on campus during the day.	4.65 (.57) [860]	4.61 (.60) [731]	4.62 (.66) [547]	4.62 (.74) [230]	4.63 (.60) [317]
I feel safe and secure on campus at night.	3.90 (.86) [854]	3.86 (.87) [723]	3.92 (.94) [546]	3.86 (.99) [230]	3.96 (.90) [316]
I am concerned about safety and security on campus.	↓	↓	2.77 (1.19) [544]	2.61 (1.18) [230]	2.89 (1.18) [314]

Table 1—Campus Safety
(↓ Question not asked)

Furthermore, there are differences in feelings of safety and security on campus when specifically looking at gender and ethnicity, as shown on Table 2 and Table 3 on the following page. Note that gender includes students, faculty and staff members responding to the survey; however, ethnicity only includes students, as that data is not available for faculty and staff. Males and females are similar in how they felt about campus safety during the day; however, there is a notable difference in females feeling less safe and secure on campus at night. Multi-racial students reported feeling the safest on campus during the day; however, they also reported feeling the least safe on campus at night. Additionally, multi-racial students were the least concerned about safety on campus. Furthermore, Asian students were the most concerned about safety on campus; however, their responses were more dispersed compared to Black and multi-racial students.

Statement	2020 Female Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Male Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Overall Mean (sd) [n]
I feel safe and secure on campus during the day.	4.61 (.62) [303]	4.64 (.71) [244]	4.62 (.66) [547]
I feel safe and secure on campus at night.	3.63 (.94) [302]	4.28 (.81) [244]	3.92 (.94) [546]
I am concerned about safety and security on campus.	2.83 (1.12) [301]	2.69 (1.27) [243]	2.77 (1.19) [544]

Table 2—Campus Safety by Gender

Statement	2020 Asian Mean (sd) [n=18]	2020 Black Mean (sd) [n=8]	2020 Hispanic Mean (sd) [n=39]	2020 International Mean (sd) [n=25]	2020 Multi- Racial Mean (sd) [n=8]	2020 White Mean (sd) [n=129]	2020 Overall Mean (sd) [n]
I feel safe and secure on campus during the day.	4.44 (.98)	4.38 (.74)	4.62 (.82)	4.72 (.54)	4.75 (.46)	4.58 (.73)	4.62 (.66) [547]
I feel safe and secure on campus at night.	3.67 (1.24)	3.88 (.99)	3.87 (1.01)	4.28 (.68)	3.63 (1.06)	3.79 (.98)	3.92 (.94) [546]
I am concerned about safety and security on campus.	2.94 (1.31)	2.75 (.89)	2.77 (1.37)	2.48 (1.16)	2.00 (.76)	2.73 (1.14)	2.77 (1.19) [544]

Table 3—Campus Safety by Ethnicity

(American Indian and Unknown/Not Reported not Included in Table)

Survey respondents were provided the opportunity to share any concerns they had regarding safety and security on campus and 287 individuals wrote a response. The lack of lighting in some areas of campus and pedestrian safety were the most common concerns for students and faculty/staff. Additionally, students and faculty/staff expressed concerns over the concealed carry law allowing guns on campus, there being an active shooter, thefts on campus, and generally being on campus at night. Students specifically were more likely to mention wanting more police presence on campus, being concerned to walk alone on campus, and having concern for the overall safety of females.

When asked for recommendations or suggestions to improve safety and security on campus, 247 respondents shared a variety of ideas. Increasing lighting or having brighter lights on campus and having more officers with a presence on campus were the most common suggestions by students and faculty/staff. Additionally, there were several recommendations for more cameras, signage, and emergency boxes throughout campus.

When asked if they have had an encounter with UPD while at Texas A&M University, 28% of all respondents said yes (20% of students and 33% of faculty/staff). The overall response is 4% higher compared to 2018. Those who indicated that they had an encounter with UPD (n=152) were asked to describe the type of encounter. Using a

check-all-that-apply question, Table 4 reveals, similarly to the previous years, that enforcement was the most common type of encounter overall. Those selecting the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write a response and 49 shared a comment. Faculty/staff mentioned UPD responding to car accidents, making traffic stops, helping with something, and responding to a situation or alarms in a building. Students reported encounters with UPD through receiving a ticket, having property engraved, and interacting with officers at events. Compared to 2018, there was an increase in all methods respondents had encounters with UPD.

Which describes the type of encounter you had with UPD? (check all that apply)	2016 Overall [n=204]	2018 Overall [n=173]	2020 Overall [n=152]	2020 Student [n=45]	2020 Faculty/Staff [n=107]
Enforcement	35%	38%	39%	42%	37%
Other	33%	35%	39%	36%	40%
Community Policing/Crime Prevention Program	23%	20%	23%	20%	24%
Witness	14%	16%	17%	18%	17%
Victim	15%	8%	11%	9%	12%

Table 4—Encounter with UPD

All respondents were asked to rate UPD employees in terms of their competence, attitude, and performance using a scale of 4=Excellent, 3=Good, 2=Fair, and 1=Poor. Additionally, respondents could select no opinion, which was removed from the analysis. Table 5 demonstrates that overall, the campus community rated UPD between excellent and good in all three areas. This is similar when compared to 2016 and 2018, although slightly lower for two statements. Additionally, faculty/staff rated UPD more positively in all areas compared to students. In further analysis, overall respondents who had an encounter with UPD rated employees slightly higher on all three statements compared to those who did not have an encounter with UPD.

I would rate UPD employees’...	2020 Overall				2016	2018	2020	2020	2020
	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)	Overall Mean (sd) [n]	Overall Mean (sd) [n]	Overall Mean (sd) [n]	Student Mean (sd) [n]	Faculty/Staff Mean (sd) [n]
Level of competence in performing their job as:	45%	42%	12%	2%	3.33 (.63) [629]	3.31 (.69) [550]	3.29 (.74) [416]	3.09 (.80) [170]	3.43 (.66) [246]
Overall performance as:	41%	46%	11%	2%	3.30 (.65) [651]	3.29 (.69) [571]	3.26 (.74) [428]	3.05 (.76) [177]	3.41 (.68) [251]
Attitude and behavior as:	43%	43%	11%	4%	3.28 (.72) [612]	3.24 (.78) [542]	3.23 (.81) [419]	2.98 (.86) [171]	3.40 (.73) [248]

Table 5—UPD Employees

When respondents were asked to share any recommendations or suggestions for improvement with UPD, 138 wrote a response sharing a variety of comments. Some students and faculty/staff expressed their positive interactions or that they had not had any encounter with UPD; however, there were also students and faculty/staff who shared about officers being rude, not friendly, or discriminatory. Students suggested officers be more visible throughout campus. Faculty/staff recommended UPD facilitate more trainings or presentations for student groups and that officers go through diversity training.

A series of questions asked respondents about methods they used to find out information about UPD. Table 6 indicates that the UPD Twitter Account was the most common method of the ones listed; however, approximately three-fourths of the respondents selected “never” for each method. Students reported using the UPD Twitter Account and Facebook Page at higher rates than faculty/staff; however, students reported lower rates compared to faculty/staff for using the website or attending a presentation or training.

Share how often you utilize these methods to find out information about UPD.	Daily (5)	Weekly (4)	2020 Overall			2018 Overall Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Overall Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Student Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Faculty/ Staff Mean (sd) [n]
			Once or Twice a Month (3)	Once or Twice a Semester (2)	Never (1)				
UPD Twitter Account	2%	4%	10%	8%	77%	1.50 (1.03) [707]	1.46 (.94) [516]	1.65 (1.01) [216]	1.32 (.85) [300]
UPD Website	<1%	1%	6%	18%	74%	1.26 (.59) [707]	1.35 (.67) [520]	1.30 (.65) [217]	1.38 (.68) [303]
UPD Facebook Page	1%	1%	6%	6%	86%	1.18 (.58) [705]	1.24 (.67) [519]	1.31 (.76) [215]	1.19 (.60) [304]
Attend Presentation/Training	<1%	<1%	2%	20%	79%	1.18 (.41) [701]	1.24 (.52) [518]	1.14 (.42) [217]	1.32 (.58) [301]

Table 6—Marketing Methods

The final question asked respondents if they ever had property engraved by UPD. A majority (96%) of the overall respondents said no (93% of students and 97% of faculty/staff). This was an increase of 3% compared to the overall in 2018.

The survey sample consisted of 69% students, 17% staff members, and 14% faculty members. However, when looking at the makeup of the respondents, 43% were students, 36% were staff members, and 20% were faculty members. Furthermore, the overall sample was made up of 52% male and 49% female; however, this gender make-up reversed when looking at the survey respondents, which consisted of 45% male and 56% female.

Table 7, on the following page, shows additional student characteristics from the survey sample and respondents. The table is in descending order by the survey respondents for each category. Respondents were representative of the sample on most variables. However, slightly more students responding to the survey identified as doctoral students, International, and White. The biggest difference between the sample and survey respondents was gender with male respondents being underrepresented and female respondents being overrepresented.

	Survey Sample (n=2,500)	Survey Respondents (n=276)
Classification		
Senior	33%	32%
Junior	20%	19%
Sophomore	20%	17%
Doctoral	7%	12%
Masters	11%	10%
Freshmen	8%	8%
Vet Student	1%	1%
Post Baccalaureate Degree / Non-Degree	<1%	1%
Pharmacy Student	1%	<1%
First Generation		
No	68%	69%
Yes	22%	18%
Unknown	10%	13%
College		
Engineering	27%	29%
Liberal Arts	15%	15%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	11%	12%
Education and Human Development	10%	10%
Mays Business School	10%	8%
General Studies	4%	5%
Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences	6%	5%
Science	5%	4%
Architecture	6%	3%
Geosciences	2%	3%
Bush School of Government	1%	1%
Public Health	2%	1%
Medicine/Nursing/Pharmacy	1%	<1%
Exchange	<1%	<1%
Ethnicity		
White	56%	58%
Hispanic/Latino	20%	16%
International	7%	11%
Asian	10%	8%
Multiracial excluding Black	3%	4%
Black or Multi-Racial with Black	4%	3%
Unknown	<1%	1%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	--
Sex		
Female	48%	55%
Male	52%	45%

Table 7—Student Demographics

Department Background

According to its website (<https://upd.tamu.edu/Pages/About-Us.aspx>), the mission of the Texas A&M University Police Department is to provide “a safe and secure environment through education, the cooperative spirit of all university community members and the enforcement of laws and regulations.” Additionally, “service” is the motto for the department: **S**ervice, **E**thics, **R**espect, **V**alues, **I**ntegrity, **C**ourtesy, and **E**xcellence.

The department is comprised of 156 positions including 74 state certified Police Officers, 54 Security Officers, 13 Communications Officers, nine administrative support personnel, and six Records Technicians. UPD has an investigations division, a crime prevention unit, a recruiting unit, a training division, a victim advocate, and an emergency communications center.

Project Details

Some caution should be used when generalizing the results from this survey as students responding to the survey were underrepresented, while staff members and faculty were overrepresented.

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. 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, students and staff can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

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

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