

# **Student Activities**

## **Block Party and Volunteer Opportunity Fair**

### **Fall 2020**

#### **Purpose of Assessment**

Each year during Howdy Week, the Department of Student Activities hosts Block Party, a large-scale program for students to learn about getting involved in student organizations. This year the department combined Block Party with the Volunteer Opportunity Fair, which helps students learn more about volunteering with local agencies. The virtual event was held on August 13, 2020, and included live interviews, videos, music, giveaways, question and answer sessions, and local agencies. Additionally, local food vendors collaborated with Student Activities to offer coupons for free or discounted food items. The Department of Student Activities wanted to understand students' experiences during the event. While Student Activities has worked with Student Life Studies on past assessment projects, including Volunteer Opportunity Fair, this was the first time to assess Block Party.

#### **Key Findings and Recommendations**

Student Life Studies identified some key findings and developed actionable recommendations Student Activities may take based on the results. However, staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the program and student organizations. Staff members and student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- Students learned about opportunities to get involved and about volunteer opportunities by attending either Block Party or Volunteer Opportunity Fair. However, students were slightly less likely to report that they found an organization of interest to them or that they would get involved or participate in volunteer opportunities.
  - Staff may want to explore how to help students actually get involved or volunteer with local organizations. Are students finding out about the opportunities as well as the details for how to participate? A follow-up email could be sent to students after the event that provides specifics of how to find a student organization, the general process for recruitment, and a resource to contact if they have questions.
- There was very strong support to host a larger event in the future that involves other departments and organizations.
  - Staff members are encouraged to work collaboratively with other departments, especially within the division as future planning begins. Students do not think about the university by departments so involving similar organizations would make it easier for students to learn about involvement throughout the university, not multiple events to learn only about opportunities within each department.
  - Students shared different ideas of what they would prefer in a future Block Party event including food, volunteer opportunities, student organizations, and music. Students also expressed wanting the event to be in-person.
- The majority of the students who attended Block Party and Volunteer Opportunity Fair were new students, either undergraduates, graduate students, or transfer students.
  - Event planners might explore the marketing to target and appeal to continuing students and how to brand the event as a program for all students.

## **Method and Sample**

The electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The 21-question survey contained 15 quantitative and six qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all the questions. Additionally, student demographics were gathered to understand program attendees better. Data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey link was sent via email on September 11, 2020, to 527 students who attended the virtual event. Due to a lower response rate, the survey deadline was extended from September 28 to October 9. Non-respondents received up to seven reminders before the survey closed on October 15, 2020. Of the 527 students receiving the survey link, 103 took some part of the survey, yielding a 20% response rate.

## **Results**

Results will be 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 listed in descending mean or frequency order. Summary themes of the qualitative questions are contained in this report; an entire list can be found in a separate document. This report is divided into three sections: Block Party, Volunteer Opportunity Fair, and Student Demographics.

Using a select all that apply question, students were initially asked to select which program they attending. Of the 103 responses, 84% indicated they attended Block Party and 44% reported attending the Volunteer Opportunity Fair. Students were asked questions only about the program(s) they attended.

### **Block Party**

Students who attended Block Party (n=86) were asked about their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements to determine if the program met its intended outcomes. Table 1, on the following page, reveals that a majority of students were in agreement with most statements. Students agreed most about learning of opportunities to get involved but were least in agreement that they found an organization of interest to them.

| <b>Statement</b>  | <b>Strongly Agree (5)</b> | <b>Agree (4)</b> | <b>Neutral (3)</b> | <b>Disagree (2)</b> | <b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b> | <b>Mean (sd) [n]</b> |
|---|---------------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>I learned about opportunities to get involved by attending Block Party.</b>                | 44%                       | 44%              | 9%                 | 3%                  | --                           | 4.29 (.77) [59]      |
| <b>I would recommend my peers attend Block Party as an event to attend during Howdy Week.</b> | 44%                       | 39%              | 14%                | 3%                  | --                           | 4.24 (.82) [59]      |
| <b>I would attend Block Party in the future.</b>  | 41%                       | 42%              | 14%                | 3%                  | --                           | 4.20 (.81) [59]      |
| <b>I met students representing one or more student organization.</b>                          | 36%                       | 48%              | 10%                | 6%                  | --                           | 4.12 (.85) [59]      |
| <b>I am likely to get involved after attending Block Party.</b>                               | 33%                       | 43%              | 21%                | 3%                  | --                           | 4.05 (.83) [58]      |
| <b>I found an organization that is of interest to me by attending Block Party.</b>            | 31%                       | 29%              | 28%                | 10%                 | 2%                           | 3.78 (1.06) [58]     |

Table 1: Block Party

Students were asked about the platform(s) they utilized, if any, prior to attending Block Party. Of the 63 responses, 52% reported using MaroonLink and 29% indicated they used StuAct Online prior to the program. Additionally, 33% selected that they did not use these two platforms.

When asked what they enjoyed most, 30 students provided a variety of responses. Almost half of all comments included enjoying the opportunity to learn about student organizations. Students also enjoyed learning how to get involved, meeting new people, listening to music, and receiving goodies. Some students described the program as fun, informative, and enlightening. Alternatively, students were asked what they enjoyed least about Block Party, and 30 responses were provided. Students stated they least enjoyed the online or virtual format and the technical issues during the program. Additional things that were least enjoyed included the program being long, not being interactive, not talking to organizations, that it was difficult to hear, there was too much focus on Freshmen Leadership Organizations (FLO) and Greek life, the program was unorganized, and there was a lack of communication.

To help plan future programs, students were asked various questions about their preferences for this event. They were first asked if they would participate in a Block Party in collaboration with other organizations and departments to host a larger event. Almost all students stated that they would, 55% said yes they would love that and 36% indicated yes, that would be fine. Additionally, 6% reported that they did not care and 4% indicated that they prefer Block Party the way it is.

Using a select all that apply question, students were asked which components they would like to see during Block Party in the future. Table 2, on the following page, shows that students would most prefer food vendors and volunteer opportunities at Block Party. Students selected artists and bands the least.

| Components              | Frequency<br>Percentage<br>[n=52] |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Food Vendors            | 92%                               |
| Volunteer Opportunities | 73%                               |
| Performances            | 48%                               |
| Campus Partners         | 48%                               |
| Live DJ                 | 44%                               |
| Bands                   | 37%                               |
| Artists                 | 27%                               |
| Other                   | --                                |

Table 2: Block Party Components

When asked what giveaway items they would most like to see at Block Party, 29 students shared their thoughts. Over half the students mentioned a T-shirt for a giveaway item. Other suggestions included gift cards, Nintendo Switch, AirPods, school supplies (pens, notecards, etc.), water bottles, food, Texas A&M merchandise, and scholarships. Furthermore, students were asked about the type of entertainment they would like to see at Block Party in the future and 26 students offered an opinion. Music was the most common response, some indicated DJ, live music, or a specific genre of music. More than one person also mentioned food, student organization performances, and artists. Other suggestions included a game show, motivational speaker, Silent Disco, karaoke, and dance performance.

The final question related to Block Party asked for any other recommendation students had for the event and 10 provided a response. Almost one-third of the comments were about the event being in person in the future and another one-third did not have a specific recommendation. Other ideas included having food trucks, being interactive, offering a lucky drawing, and scheduling the event over multiple days if done virtually.

### Volunteer Opportunity Fair

Students who attended the Volunteer Opportunity Fair (n=45) were asked about their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements to determine if the program met its intended outcomes. Table 3 indicate that students learned about volunteer opportunities, would like to see more service organizations, and would attend the event in the spring. Students were less sure about their plans to participate in volunteer opportunities.

| Statements  | Strongly<br>Agree<br>(5) | Agree<br>(4) | Neutral<br>(3) | Disagree<br>(2) | Strongly<br>Disagree<br>(1) | Mean<br>(sd)<br>[n]   |
|---|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| I learned about volunteer opportunities in the community by attending the Volunteer Opportunity Fair.         | 44%                      | 39%          | 14%            | 3%              | --                          | 4.25<br>(.81)<br>[36] |
| I would like to see more service student organizations highlighted at the Volunteer Opportunity Fair.         | 36%                      | 50%          | 25%            | --              | --                          | 4.22<br>(.68)<br>[36] |
| I would attend the Volunteer Opportunity Fair in the spring semester.   | 36%                      | 47%          | 14%            | 3%              | --                          | 4.17<br>(.78)<br>[36] |
| I plan to participate in one or more volunteer opportunity I learned about at the Volunteer Opportunity Fair. | 31%                      | 28%          | 39%            | 3%              | --                          | 3.86<br>(.90)<br>[36] |

Table 3: Volunteer Opportunity Fair

When asked if they attended the Volunteer Opportunity Fair in previous semesters, 78% said no, that they were a new student. Additionally, 17% said no, they had not attended previously and 6% reported that they had attended the event before.

The final question asked students to describe any previous exposure they have had to community service agencies or non-profit organizations. Many of the nine comments talked about volunteering during high school or through their church. Some of the places mentioned included food banks, Animal Defense League, 4-H, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, Feast of Sharing for Thanksgiving, Weslaco Wildlife Refuge, Meals on Wheels, Habitat for Humanity, and The Big Event.

### **Student Demographics**

Demographics were gathered through the student information system, based on the University Identification Number (UIN) Student Activities provided for those who attended the event. Table 4, on the following page in descending order by the survey respondents for each category, shows the demographics for all students who attended and the survey respondents. A majority of the respondents were first-time, female, White, freshmen, students in the College of Engineering, Top 10%, and not first generation.

| <b>Demographics</b>                   | <b>Program Attendees</b> | <b>Survey Respondents</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Classification</b>                 | <b>[n=522]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| Freshman                              | 66%                      | 56%                       |
| Sophomore                             | 19%                      | 25%                       |
| Junior                                | 7%                       | 12%                       |
| Senior                                | 5%                       | 4%                        |
| Doctoral                              | 1%                       | 3%                        |
| Masters                               | 2%                       | --                        |
| Undergraduate Nondegree               | <1%                      | --                        |
| <b>College</b>                        | <b>[n=518]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| Engineering                           | 34%                      | 34%                       |
| Science                               | 11%                      | 16%                       |
| Liberal Arts                          | 10%                      | 14%                       |
| Agriculture and Life Sciences         | 12%                      | 13%                       |
| Education & Human Development         | 8%                       | 7%                        |
| Veterinary Medicine                   | 8%                       | 7%                        |
| Mays Business School                  | 9%                       | 5%                        |
| General Studies                       | 4%                       | 3%                        |
| Public Health                         | 2%                       | 2%                        |
| Architecture                          | 3%                       | 2%                        |
| Geosciences                           | 1%                       | --                        |
| <b>Sex</b>                            | <b>[n=522]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| Female                                | 72%                      | 75%                       |
| Male                                  | 28%                      | 25%                       |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                      | <b>[n=522]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| White                                 | 48%                      | 44%                       |
| Hispanic or Latino                    | 25%                      | 23%                       |
| Asian                                 | 16%                      | 16%                       |
| Black only or Multi-Racial with Black | 5%                       | 9%                        |
| Multi-Racial excluding Black          | 3%                       | 4%                        |
| International                         | 2%                       | 4%                        |
| American Indian                       | <1%                      | 1%                        |
| Unknown or Not Reported               | <1%                      | --                        |
| <b>First Generation</b>               | <b>[n=518]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| No                                    | 80%                      | 78%                       |
| Yes                                   | 17%                      | 18%                       |
| Unknown                               | 4%                       | 5%                        |
| <b>Top 10%</b>                        | <b>[n=522]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| Yes                                   | 58%                      | 61%                       |
| No                                    | 42%                      | 39%                       |
| <b>Entry Status</b>                   | <b>[n=522]</b>           | <b>[n=103]</b>            |
| First-Time Undergraduate              | 80%                      | 75%                       |
| Continuing                            | 14%                      | 18%                       |
| First-Time Transfer                   | 5%                       | 7%                        |
| First-Time Graduate                   | 1%                       | 1%                        |

Table 4: Student Demographics

## **Department and Organization Background**

According to its website (<https://studentactivities.tamu.edu/about-us/>), the Department of Student Activities “fosters and supports leadership, learning, and involvement opportunities that enhance the growth and development of students and recognized student organizations. As members of the university community, we are committed to a philosophy of shared responsibility that develops leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good, and we subscribe to the Texas A&M core values of Respect, Excellence, Leadership, Loyalty, Integrity, and Selfless Service.”

## **Student Life Studies**

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, anyone 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/>.

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Report Prepared on: October 20, 2020