

**Offices of the Dean of Student Life
New Student and Family Programs
Howdy Week Coordinators' Assessment 2020**

Purpose of Assessment

Howdy Week, a series of events held just before the fall semester to welcome primarily new students to campus, is coordinated by New Student and Family Programs (NSFP) in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life. Howdy Week 2020 were a combination of virtual events, hybrid virtual and in-person events. Coordinators of the events were surveyed for their feedback regarding various components of their experience and attendance at the programs they sponsored during the week.

Key Findings with Recommendations

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

- Event coordinators expressed appreciation for the efforts that NSFP staff put into planning and executing the primarily virtual Howdy Week this year. In the midst of the changes to Howdy Week due to the COVID-19 restrictions, most coordinators found its event submission process clear and the submission form easy to complete. Some suggestions to improve the submission process; however, included providing more clarity regarding the steps that student organizations who submit to host events need to follow, and calling for submissions to host events earlier. Nearly half of the responding coordinators indicated it would be helpful if NSFP held a Howdy Week event planner information session next year.
- Slightly more than two-thirds of the coordinators favored hosting hybrid virtual and in-person events next year, and about one-quarter indicated not knowing their plans yet for hosting Howdy Events next year. Coordinators would appreciate if NSFP staff could help figure out how best coordinate the pick-up of virtual event giveaways for those virtual events.
- New Student and Family Programs is also encouraged to share results with their stakeholders, such as all event coordinators, Aggie Orientation Leaders, Offices of the Dean of Student Life, and others.

Method and Sample

An electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. Results were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Excel®.

The ten-question Howdy Week Coordinators survey included four quantitative, and six qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The survey link was sent through email on August 24, 2020, to coordinators hosting events during Howdy Week. Before the survey closed on September 4, 2020, up to three reminders were sent to non-responders. Of the 41 coordinators who received the survey, 31 responded to some part of the survey, yielding a 76% response rate.

Results

Results are reported as frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. The summary themes are contained in this report, while the full listing can be found in a separate document.

Coordinators were asked to report their estimated attendance of different events they hosted. Based on the title of event or events hosted per coordinator as provided by NSFP, each respondent saw a separate, open response question requesting the number of attendees per event they hosted. Each respondent could be requested to report the number of attendees for up to four events. Attendance data for 34 separate events was reported by the number of views or interactions through various virtual platforms or by in-person attendance. Coordinators for five of the six featured events (all virtual) reported a total of 3053 virtual “attendees.” The details of attendance by event for all categories of events reported can be found in the attached document.

Coordinators were next asked two questions about their experience registering to host an event during Howdy Week. When asked if the instructions on how to submit an event for Howdy Week were clear to them, 90% of the 31 respondents indicated yes, 10% indicated somewhat and no one selected no as a response. When asked if the Howdy Week event submission form was easy to complete, 94% of 31 respondents said yes, 7% indicated somewhat and no one selected no as a response. Respondents were then asked for their input on how the Howdy Week event submission process could be improved, and 18 respondents provided comments. Some indicated no change was needed, that they found the submission process easy and appreciated the response of NSFP. Some suggested calling for events earlier, updating the submission form from a google sheet into a google form, and including some clarity regarding submission for events hosted by sponsored student organizations. Others provided general comments about Howdy Week events, like needing improvements surrounding the organization of virtual event giveaways and the desire to hold virtual or hybrid events during future Howdy Weeks.

Coordinators were asked if they would find a Howdy Week event planner information session, which would cover the event planning process, helpful if it were offered for next year. Of the 31 who responded, 45% indicated yes they would find it helpful, 32% indicated maybe and 23% indicated no.

In light of the large event gathering restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic this year, NSFP wanted to know whether coordinators saw the events they host during Howdy Week next year continuing as in-person events, virtual events or a hybrid of virtual and in-person events. Table 1 reveals that coordinators favor hosting a hybrid of virtual and in-person events next year over the other choices, although the next most frequently selected choice was “I don’t know yet.”

Next year, overall, do you see events you host during Howdy Week continuing as (pick all that apply):	Frequency Percentage
Hybrid of virtual and in-person events	68%
I don’t know yet	26%
In-person only events	19%
Virtual only events	3%

Table 1: Type of Events Planned for Next Year (n=31)

Coordinators were asked to share any suggestions or changes they had for Howdy Week 2021 especially if virtual, hybrid and in-person events are offered again next year. Fifteen responded, sharing comments on a variety of topics. About one-third indicated they planned to hold a hybrid of virtual and in-person events based on their experience this year. A few others noted they welcomed a return to in-person

events if possible next year and expressed appreciation for how well NSFP accommodated the changes that were necessary to hold Howdy Week 2020. Some provided suggestions, like having each in-person attended event spread out tables all over campus to prevent large numbers from gathering in one place and asking NSFP to figure out how best to enable students to pick up giveaways for virtually held events.

The contact list used to distribute the survey included data on the type and category of event or events coordinators hosted. Table 2 provides the frequency percentage of event type and category of those events hosted by all coordinators and those responding to the survey. Event type and category are listed in descending order by respondent percentage.

Howdy Week 2020 Events	Respondents [n=31]	Coordinators [n=41]
Type		
Virtual	84%	87%
In-Person	16%	12%
Category		
Academic Success	29%	29%
Community & Belonging	19%	20%
Featured Event	16%	15%
Transition to Texas A&M University & Bryan/College Station	13%	10%
Engagement & Involvement	10%	7%
Identity Development & Exploration	7%	7%
Leadership & Skill Development	3%	5%
Health, Wellness and Safety	3%	7%

Table 2: Howdy Week Event Types and Category

Background

Howdy Week is coordinated by New Student and Family Programs in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life and takes place just before the fall semester at Texas A&M University. Howdy Week is Aggieland's official Week of Welcome. This week is full of events and opportunities for new and returning students to become familiar or reacquainted with the Texas A&M University campus, fellow Aggies, and the Bryan/College Station community. Due to gathering restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the events held during the 2020 Howdy Week were virtual events. Howdy Week was held on August 10-18, 2020. This was the fourth time Howdy Week has formally assessed the experience of Howdy Week event coordinators through Student Life Studies.

Project Details

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, division staff 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://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/aqform/>.

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