Student Activities
Freshman Leadership Organizations
Student Experience - Fall 2020

Purpose of Assessment

The Department of Student Activities wanted to understand the recruitment and motivation of students applying for one of the Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLOs) in the 2020-2021 academic year. Specifically, Student Activities wanted to find out what impact, if any, COVID-19 had on students' motivation to apply and to look at students' reasons for applying to a FLO. Student Life Studies worked with Student Activities for the past two academic years to assess students' experience in Freshman Leadership Organizations. In the past two years, the assessment was in the spring semester; however, for this academic year, the survey content was separated with a fall survey to focus specifically on the recruitment process and a future spring survey to assess students' experience in their FLO.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified some key findings and developed actionable recommendations Student Activities and the Freshman Leadership Advisory Council (FLAC) may take based on the results. However, staff and student leaders may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the FLO community and recruitment processes. Staff members and student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- There were numerous reasons students applied for a Freshmen Leadership Organization, specifically for making friends, getting involved on campus, and having fun. It also seems that the COVID-19 pandemic increased why students applied to be in a FLO, especially to meet other people. Similarly, these reasons have remained consistent for the past two years.

- Students who were selected for a FLO and students who were not selected for one of the organizations shared that it was not easy to learn about the individual organizations and that all organizations seemed alike. Similarly, in the spring 2020 assessment students also reported not always feeling like they were a good match for their FLO or that their FLO was not what they expected based on what they heard during recruitment.

    o FLAC might consider working with the individual FLOs to create a document to highlight differences between each FLO. It might show which FLOs are connected to academic colleges or not, FLOs associated with departments, the main goals of organizations (service, leadership, social), etc.
    o FLAC might examine the website and how to share information, keeping new freshmen in mind, making it easy to navigate and quickly find information about all the FLOs, without going to each organizations' website.
    o FLAC might work with individual FLOs about being transparent during recruitment to find students that are a better fit for their organization.

- This was the first year Student Activities and FLAC looked at the recruitment process specifically. Students were mostly positive about the process to get information, apply for FLOs, and the interviews. Many expressed strong preferences for wanting the process to be in-person, yet also understood why it was structured virtually. The two areas students expressed the most frustration or commented about were getting information or answers and the interviews.

- FLAC could develop a bank of quality interview questions to share with individual FLOs focused on questions that relate to leadership, why students are applying, and what they might bring to the organization. It might be possible to collaborate with the Management Department in Mays Business School for developing interview questions. Additionally, FLAC could consider training FLO leadership in conducting interviews.
- FLAC may also want to explore how to answer questions for freshmen, including some technical support and how to rank FLO preferences. Maybe that is having live chats, frequently asked questions on the website, or a place to submit questions that are responded to within 24-hours.

- FLAC might want to consider disaggregating some of the results by demographics to see if the students' experiences are the same for all students. This might be most helpful for the questions about recruitment.

- Finally, FLAC is strongly encouraged to share these results with student leaders and advisors for all individual organizations and other stakeholders.

Method and Sample
The electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The 11-question survey contained eight quantitative and three qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all the questions. Additionally, student demographics were gathered to understand organizational membership. Data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey link was sent via email on October 8, 2020, to 1,963 students who applied for one of the Freshman Leadership Organizations. After extending the original due date, non-respondents received up to five reminders before the survey closed on October 24, 2020. Of the 1,963 students receiving the survey link, 732 took some part of the survey, yielding a 37% 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 for Fall 2020 unless otherwise stated. Summary themes of the qualitative questions are contained in this report; an entire list can be found in a separate document. The survey was mostly comprised of new questions about marketing and recruitment; however, comparisons to previous years will be made where applicable.

Using a select all that apply formatted question, students were asked how they learned about the FLO application process. Table 1, on the following page, indicates that friends and peers were the most common way students learned about the FLO application process. Facebook was the least common way students found about the application process. Students selecting the "other" response option were provided the opportunity to write a comment. Of the 28 responses, several reported learning about recruitment through signs on campus or a family member. Others said from Impact Camp, a campus tour, email, YouTube page, a professor, and from word of mouth.

How did you learn about the FLO application process? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 Percentage [n=727]
Friend/Peer	76%
FLO Informational	39%
Fish Camp	33%
Instagram	29%
FLO YouTube Livestream	18%
MSC Open House	14%
Website	12%
New Student Conference	10%
Post Livestream Meet & Greets	6%
Other	4%
Facebook	1%

Table 1: Marketing

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about applying to one or more FLO. Table 2 illustrates that students agreed most about being treated with respect during interviews. Students least agreed that it was easy to learn about the individual FLOs.

Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
I was treated with respect during my FLO interview(s).	67%	24%	7%	2%	1%	4.55 (.74) [586]
The online FLO interview process was easy to navigate.	47%	42%	8%	3%	1%	4.31 (.80) [583]
There was a variety of methods to learn about the FLO application process.	46%	42%	9%	2%	1%	4.31 (.77) [586]
The FLO application(s) were easy to complete.	41%	45%	11%	2%	1%	4.23 (.79) [585]
There were places I could go to have my questions answered related to applying to a FLO.	36%	42%	17%	5%	1%	4.09 (.87) [585]
It was easy to learn about the individual FLOs.	34%	48%	17%	9%	2%	3.95 (1.00) [585]

Table 2: FLO Recruitment

Students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the statements above were provided the opportunity to explain why they disagreed and 60 wrote a response. Students who both were and were not selected for a FLO indicated that it was difficult to understand the differences between each organization, that it was hard to find information or where to get answers, and that it was not easy to navigate the website or overall process. Students who were selected for a FLO shared that there were technical challenges with the application process, but also had

positive experiences in the interviews. Students not selected for one of the FLOs reported frustration with the interview process: the group interviews were unfair, the interview questions were not about leadership, and that the interviews were rushed, biased, and impersonal. Additionally, those not selected for an interview felt there was poor communication, they did not hear back from organizations, and they did not feel wanted by the organizations.

All students were asked to describe how COVID-19 played a role, if at all, in their decision to want to join a FLO. Many of the 381 comments indicated that due to COVID-19 most of their classes are online and that it has been difficult to meet friends, and this made them want to apply for a FLO more. For many others, COVID-19 did not play a role in them wanting to join a FLO. A smaller number of students indicated that COVID-19 caused them consider if they should apply because they did not know if there would be in-person activities or if it would be the same as previous years.

When asked to share any other feedback or suggestions to improve the FLO recruitment or selection process, 170 students responded. Those who were both selected and not selected for one of the organizations suggested not doing group interviews, making it easier to understand the process for ranking FLOs, having interviews be in-person, and sharing what FLOs are looking for in applicants. Additionally, students felt that it is difficult to get to know applicants based on the interview questions and recommended asking more questions and having questions with more substance and not icebreaker questions. Both students who were selected and not selected expressed positive feelings about the entire process; however, more positive comments were by students who were selected. Students who were not selected for one of the FLOs reported that the organizations were not diverse or inclusive for all students, that it was a popularity process, and that it was too competitive or that there needed to be more organizations to accept more freshmen.

Using a select all that apply formatted question, students were asked to indicate the reasons they wanted to join a FLO from a provided list. In previous years, this question was asked to students in the spring to indicate their expectations of their FLO when they were initially selected. Table 3, on the following page, demonstrates that almost all students joined a FLO to make friends and get involved. This was similar to the results from the past two academic years. Based on the provided list, students least selected that they felt like everyone was joining a FLO or thought they had to be in a FLO to be successful at Texas A&M. Additionally, both of these options decreased from the previous two years. Many of the reasons students wanted to join a FLO this year were similar to what students expected from their FLO experience the last two academic years. Three reasons decreased from previous years by more than 10%: thought it would be cool to be in a FLO, learn new things about myself, and felt like everyone was joining a FLO.

Students selecting the "other" response option were given the opportunity to write a comment. Four students provided different comments for why they wanted to join a FLO, including that it looked good on a resume, wanting to be involved with specific programs, heard great things about being in a FLO, and one student reported they were forced to apply.

What reasons did you have for wanting to join a FLO? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=579]	Spring 2020 [n=520]	Spring 2019 [n=496]
Make friends	97%	97%	95%
Get involved on campus	96%	96%	92%
Have fun	82%	88%	82%
Network with other students	76%	75%	66%
Build leadership skills	75%	77%	78%
Attend social events on-campus	73%	76%	65%
Participate in service events	72%	77%	69%
Attend social events off-campus	68%	60%	52%
Join a group of similar people	64%	64%	62%
Thought it would be cool to be in a FLO	60%	72%	66%
Network with former students/professionals	40%	31%	32%
Learn new things about myself	39%	55%	52%
Organization was connected to things I believed in	34%	43%	36%
Form study groups with students in my major	30%	30%	27%
Felt like everyone was joining a FLO	9%	26%	23%
Thought I needed to be in a FLO to be successful at A&M	7%	14%	11%
Other	1%	<1%	1%
I did not have any expectations	<1%	<1%	<1%

Table 3: FLO Expectations

Student Activities provided a list of students' University Identification Number (UIN) who applied for a FLO as well as who was selected for one of the FLOs and which FLO they joined. Demographics were gathered through the student information system, based on the UINs for the Fall 2020 semester. Table 4, on the following page, displays this information in descending order for each category by the Fall 2020 survey respondents. The majority of the respondents were female, white, freshmen, students in the College of Engineering, and students who were not first generation. The survey respondents were representative of the FLO membership, except for a slight overrepresentation of female students. Additionally, Table 5, on page 7 in descending order by the Fall 2020 survey respondents, shows the Freshman Leadership Organizations by the full FLO membership and the survey respondents. Similar to previous years, survey respondents were representative of the FLO membership.

	Fall 2020 FLO Members [n=1,963]	Fall 2020 Survey Respondents [n=732]	Spring 2020 FLO Members [n=1,030]	Spring 2020 Survey Respondents [n=520]	Spring 2019 FLO Members [n=1,080]	Spring 2019 Survey Respondents [n=494]
Classification						
Freshman	87%	86%	45%	42%	54%	53%
Sophomore	12%	12%	52%	55%	44%	45%
Junior	1%	1%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Undergrad Non-degree	<1%	<1%	--	--	--	--
Senior	--	--	<1%	--	<1%	<1%
College						
Engineering	29%	28%	30%	29%	28%	26%
Mays Business School	18%	18%	17%	15%	15%	13%
Liberal Arts	11%	11%	13%	12%	13%	13%
Education & Human Development	8%	10%	9%	11%	9%	11%
General Studies	9%	9%	11%	11%	11%	9%
Veterinary Medicine	8%	9%	7%	8%	7%	7%
Science	7%	7%	5%	7%	5%	6%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	6%	6%	5%	5%	9%	11%
Public Health	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Architecture	2%	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Geosciences	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Sex						
Female	61%	68%	53%	60%	53%	59%
Male	39%	32%	47%	40%	47%	42%
Ethnicity						
White	68%	68%	64%	66%	71%	74%
Hispanic or Latino	17%	16%	18%	16%	16%	14%
Asian	10%	11%	10%	9%	7%	7%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	3%	3%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Black only or Multi-Racial with Black	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	2%
American Indian	<1%	<1%	1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
International	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	--
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	--	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Unknown or Not Reported	<1%	--	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
First Generation						
No	90%	91%	81%	80%	88%	89%
Yes	9%	9%	13%	14%	11%	11%
Unknown	<1%	1%	6%	7%	1%	<1%

Table 4: Student Demographics

	Fall 2020 FLO Members [n=1,158]	Fall 2020 Survey Respondents [n=503]	Spring 2020 FLO Members [n=1,035]	Spring 2020 Survey Respondents [n=520]	Spring 2019 FLO Members [n=1,086]	Spring 2019 Survey Respondents [n=496]
Freshmen Leaders Advancing in Service & Honor (FLASH)	8%	9%	--	--	--	--
Freshman Leaders in Education and Human Development (FLED)	5%	7%	6%	6%	6%	4%
MSC Aggie Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT)	6%	7%	10%	9%	9%	8%
Freshman Leaders Establishing Excellence (FLEX)	6%	6%	7%	9%	7%	6%
Freshmen Organizing and Running Mixed Events (FORME)	5%	6%	5%	5%	5%	6%
Freshmen Reaching Excellence in Engineering (FREE)	7%	6%	8%	8%	6%	8%
Aggie Fish Club (AFC)	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	5%
Aggies Selflessly Serving in Shaping Tomorrow (ASSIST)	4%	5%	5%	7%	4%	4%
Freshman Leaders On Campus (FLOC)	4%	5%	4%	4%	5%	6%
Freshmen Leaders in Progress (FLiP)	5%	5%	5%	6%	5%	8%
MSC Freshmen in Service and Hosting (FISH)	6%	5%	9%	9%	8%	7%
Progressively Reaching Excellence in Professionalism (PREP)	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Fish Aides	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Fish Council	5%	4%	6%	7%	5%	4%
Freshmen Aggies Spreading Tradition (FAST)	5%	4%	5%	4%	5%	5%
Freshmen Exemplifying Aggie Spirit Together (FEAST)	5%	4%	--	--	--	--
Freshmen in Engineering, Science, & Technology (FEST)	3%	4%	--	--	--	--
Freshmen Leaders In Christ (FLIC)	6%	4%	6%	5%	6%	7%
Freshmen Liberal Arts Reaching Excellence (FLARE)	4%	3%	5%	3%	5%	4%
MSC Freshman Leadership International (FLI)	3%	3%	6%	4%	5%	4%

Table 5: Freshman Leadership Organizations

Selection decisions were made by the individual organizations before the survey was administered. Of the 732 students who applied for a FLO and responded to this survey, 69% were selected for a FLO (n=503) and 31% were not selected (n=229). Table 6, in descending order by those selected for a FLO, shows students' perspective of the recruitment process based on if they were selected for a FLO or not. Students not selected for a FLO reported less agreement with all statements. Those not selected for a FLO agreed most that there was a variety of methods to learn about the application process. Both students selected or not selected agreed the least that it was easy to learn about individual FLOs.

Rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
I was treated with respect during my FLO interview(s). (selected for a FLO)	79%	19%	2%	<1%	--	4.77 (.48) [447]
I was treated with respect during my FLO interview(s). (not selected for a FLO)	27%	42%	22%	7%	2%	3.84 (.97) [139]
The online FLO interview process was easy to navigate. (selected for a FLO)	55%	40%	3%	1%	--	4.50 (.62) [444]
The online FLO interview process was easy to navigate. (not selected for a FLO)	21%	47%	21%	7%	4%	3.73 (1.01) [139]
There was a variety of methods to learn about the FLO application process. (selected for a FLO)	51%	41%	6%	2%	--	4.41 (.69) [447]
There was a variety of methods to learn about the FLO application process. (not selected for a FLO)	30%	45%	19%	3%	2%	3.99 (.91) [139]
The FLO application(s) were easy to complete. (selected for a FLO)	47%	43%	9%	2%	<1%	4.35 (.72) [446]
The FLO application(s) were easy to complete. (not selected for a FLO)	22%	50%	20%	5%	2%	3.86 (.90) [139]
There were places I could go to have my questions answered related to applying to a FLO. (selected for a FLO)	42%	40%	15%	4%	--	4.20 (.82) [446]
There were places I could go to have my questions answered related to applying to a FLO. (not selected for a FLO)	19%	48%	24%	7%	2%	3.74 (.92) [139]
It was easy to learn about the individual FLOs. (selected for a FLO)	39%	37%	17%	7%	1%	4.05 (.96) [446]
It was easy to learn about the individual FLOs. (not selected for a FLO)	20%	42%	19%	15%	3%	3.62 (1.06) [139]

Table 6: FLO Recruitment By Selected or Not Selected

Table 7, in descending order by the selected for a FLO column, reveals that students had several similar reasons for joining a FLO if they were selected or not. The top three reasons were the same: make friends, get involved on campus, and have fun.

What reasons did you have for wanting to join a FLO? (select all that apply)	Selected for a FLO [n=444]	Not Selected for a FLO [n=135]
Make friends	98%	96%
Get involved on campus	96%	94%
Have fun	83%	79%
Network with other students	79%	64%
Build leadership skills	78%	68%
Participate in service events	75%	63%
Attend social events on-campus	74%	70%
Attend social events off-campus	70%	62%
Join a group of similar people	64%	64%
Thought it would be cool to be in a FLO	63%	51%
Network with former students/professionals	44%	28%
Learn new things about myself	40%	35%
Organization was connected to things I believed in	35%	27%
Form study groups with students in my major	30%	30%
Felt like everyone was joining a FLO	9%	9%
Thought I needed to be in a FLO to be successful at A&M	8%	7%
Other	1%	1%
I did not have any expectations	<1%	--

Table 7: FLO Expectations by Selected or Not Selected

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." Furthermore, based on its website (https://flac.tamu.edu/about/), the Freshman Leadership Advisory Council (FLAC) serves as "the over-arching body of the 18 official FLOs. Since FLOs are members of FLAC, we coordinate recruitment between them, create events, establish rules, and uphold standards to ensure every FLO provides a quality experience. FLAC is not a FLO." Starting this academic year, there were 20 Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLO) at Texas A&M University that students joined.

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/.