

**Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Student Assistance Services
Student Experience Assessment
2019 - 2020**

Purpose of Assessment

Student Assistance Services is one of the units in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life. According to its website (<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/sas/>), Student Assistance Services (SAS) “seeks to connect Texas A&M University students with the appropriate guidance, resources, and support to address a variety of personal and academic matters.” Students are often referred to Student Assistance Services for a variety of reasons such as concerning behavior, student death, sexual violence, withdrawal from school, student welfare checks, and general consultation. Student Assistance Services wanted to gather feedback on the experience of students who meet with staff in their office. This is the second time this assessment project has been conducted.

Method and Sample

Two separate surveys were created to assess students’ experience working with Student Assistance Services. A pre-assessment was given to students as they came to the office for a meeting with a staff member and the post-assessment was sent electronically to students approximately one week after their appointment.

The pre-assessment survey was developed using Teleform®, a survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. This paper survey contained 10 questions: five were quantitative, four were qualitative and one was demographic. The survey was given to 361 students when they came in for an appointment with a staff member in Student Assistance Services. All 361 students completed the survey, for a 100% response rate.

The post-assessment survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The 18-question electronic survey contained 10 quantitative questions and eight qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw every question. The post-assessment was sent to students’ email addresses of those who met with a staff member from Student Assistance Services. Surveys were sent approximately once a week from September 3, 2019 through March 13, 2020, to 366 students; however, one email address was not valid and the survey invitation was not received. Up to two reminders were sent to non-respondents before the survey closed on June 23, 2020. Of the 365 students receiving the survey invitation, 87 completed some part of the survey, yielding a 24% response rate, which is 2% higher than last year.

The data from both surveys were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified some key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, Student Assistance Services staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the students they serve. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students’ experiences.

- Students were generally positive regarding their experience with Student Assistance Services. A majority (86%) of students from the post-assessment said they were likely to reach back out to SAS for help, which is up 3% from last year. Additionally, 83% reported they were likely to refer their friends or peers to Student Assistance Services, which is also up 3% from last year.
- Student Assistance Services often provides other campus and/or community resources for students. On the post-assessment, 76% self-reported they could identify at least one resource; however, this is a 9% decrease

from the previous year. Furthermore, students who reported utilizing a resource they learned about when meeting with SAS decreased by 7% from last year.

- Student Assistance Services might consider working with students during their meeting to develop an action plan of what the student agrees to do after leaving and that the student has the necessary resources to take this action. Additionally, SAS might develop a system to understand the actions students actually took.
- Almost all of the students on the pre-assessment (93%) indicated they had some level of stress when they were meeting with Student Assistance Services, with over half stating they were experiencing significant stress. Additionally, on the post-assessment, students referenced having mental health concerns and financial concerns/food insecurities.
 - Student Assistant Services might continue to explore available resources from Counseling and Psychological Services and possible Health Promotions that could be shared with students when they come in for a meeting.
 - The department may want to work with campus partners, such as Counseling and Psychological Services, Scholarships and Financial Aid, and 12th Can to enhance the collaborate with these areas o to see if more could be done to assist students or to identify students struggling earlier.

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, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending order for 2019-2020 mean or frequency percentages. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the entire list of responses can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to last year will be made where appropriate. This report is divided into three sections: Pre-Assessment, Post-Assessment, and Student Demographics.

Pre-Assessment

The pre-assessment gathered information to assist SAS in preparing for the meeting. The form asked students for their name, University Identification Number (UIN), and cell phone number. This information is not included in this report.

Students were asked if they were aware of what they were coming into the office for the day of their appointment. Of the 356 students responding, 89% said yes they were aware and 11% reported they were not aware. This is similar to last year when 88% said yes they were aware and 13% reported they were not aware.

Additionally, students were asked about how their appointment with Student Assistance Services (SAS) was scheduled. Almost half (44%), reported that someone else referred them to SAS for their appointment, 38% said they were contacted by SAS directly, and 18% indicated they found SAS on their own. Students who were referred to SAS by someone else (n=159) were asked to identify who referred them through a select all that apply formatted question. Table 1, on the following page, shows that approximately one-third of students referred to Student Assistance Service came from Counseling and Psychological Services. Those selecting “someone else” were provided the opportunity to specify who referred them and 44 wrote a comment. Almost one-third of the comments gave a name of someone specific. Other offices shared included Student Health Services, Helpline, areas within Offices of the Dean of Student Life, and friend/boyfriend.

If you were referred, who referred you?	2019-2020 Percentage
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)	32%
Faculty/Professor	21%
Advisor	19%
Someone Else	16%
Family Member	10%
Friend/Classmate	9%
12 th Can	2%
Disability Resources	2%
GLBT Resource Center	1%

Table 1: Referrals (n=209)

In two separate questions, students were asked about their current level of stress and comfort regarding their meeting with Student Assistance Services. Table 2 reveals that a majority of the students (93%) were experiencing some level of stress. Additionally, 83% reported being comfortable for their meeting. In looking at the data disaggregated by demographics, female, Asian, White, freshmen, junior, and senior students reported a higher level of stress. Alternatively, a higher percentage of male, International, Black, masters level, and sophomore students indicated not experiences any stress. A higher percentage of Hispanic, International, first generation, and junior students expressed feeling more uncomfortable about their meeting with Student Assistance Services.

	2019-2020 Percentage	2018-2019 Percentage
Please indicate your current stress level.	n=360	n=419
Experiencing significant stress	56%	54%
Experiencing some stress	37%	39%
Not experiencing any stress	6%	7%
Overall, how comfortable are you about meeting with Student Assistance Services?	n=360	n=416
Extremely comfortable	17%	15%
Comfortable	66%	67%
Uncomfortable	16%	15%
Extremely uncomfortable	2%	3%

Table 2: Stress and Comfort at Appointment

The final questions on the pre-assessment provided students the opportunity to share anything they would like their case manager from Student Assistance Services to know prior to their meeting. A wide range of responses was shared from the 128 students who wrote a comment. Several mentioned their mental state and that they had depression or anxiety, had seen a counselor, or just needed help. Others talked about increased stress for a variety of reasons such as a loss or death, financial concerns, and health issues. Some wrote about academic reasons including withdrawing from school, having poor grades, and struggling in classes.

Post-Assessment

On the follow-up survey, students were initially asked if they were able to identify at least one university and/or community resource that they could utilize after their meeting with Student Assistance Services. Of the 62 responses, 76% said yes they could identify a resource and 24% reported they could not. There was a decrease in students being able to identify a resource when 85% stated yes they could identify a resource last year. Those indicating they could identify a resource (n=47) were provided the opportunity to list that resource and 45 students shared a wide range of resources. Some resources students reported that they could utilize included Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Scholarship and Financial Aid, Student Health Services, Academic Success Center, and 12th Can.

When asked if they actually had utilized at least one resource that they learned about since meeting with Student Assistance Services, 63% of the 62 responses reported they had utilized a resource and 37% said they had not. This was a slight decrease when 70% of the students last year indicated they had utilized a resource.

Students reporting they had utilized at least one resource since the meeting with Student Assistance Services (n=39) were asked a follow-up question to share which resource they utilized. The most common resources shared from 37 students included Counseling and Psychological Services, the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, Scholarships and Financial Aid, Disability Resources, Student Health Services, and Swipe Out Hunger. Alternatively, students indicating they had not utilized a resource (n=23) were asked a follow-up question to share what had prevented them from utilizing a suggested resource(s). The two most common responses from 19 students were that they did not have enough time/schedule was too busy or they felt they did not need additional resources. A couple of students said it was due to the coronavirus or that they were no longer in town.

When asked if they wanted from someone in Student Assistance Services to follow-up with them, 63% of the 57 students said no and 37% indicated they did want a follow-up. Additionally, students were asked if they received a follow-up from someone in Student Assistance Services. Just over half (56%) of the 61 students reported they had received a follow-up and 44% said they did not receive a follow-up. Those reporting someone from SAS followed-up with them (n=34) were asked if that follow-up was timely and almost all (97%) said yes it was timely. Those who said the follow-up from Student Assistance Services was not timely (n=1) was asked what would have helped with their follow-up. This individual stated that nothing would have helped and that it went well.

Students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with their experience with Student Assistance Services. Table 3 demonstrates that students generally agreed with both statements. This is similar to last year. A higher percentage of male, Asian, Hispanic, first generation, freshmen and senior students disagreed they were able to make more informed decisions to navigate their current situation. Furthermore, male, Hispanic, White, junior, and senior students disagreed at a higher percentage in terms of being satisfied with their experience.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	19-20 Mean (sd) [n=58]	18-19 Mean (sd) [n=114]
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with Student Assistance Services.	64%	21%	7%	5%	3%	4.36 (1.06)	4.38 (.93)
After meeting with Student Assistance Services, I was able to make more informed decisions on how to navigate my current situation.	45%	35%	14%	3%	3%	4.14 (1.02)	4.25 (.97)

Table 3: Student Experience

There were two different follow-up questions based on how students responded to the two statements above. Students reporting that they agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to make more informed decisions to navigate their situation (n=46) were asked what they had done to navigate their situation. Several response options were shared from the 27 students who wrote a comment. Students reported they had talked with faculty members, scheduled follow-up appointments, completed paperwork, developed an action plan, made better life choices, created a budget, and focused on school. The second follow up question asked students who disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were satisfied with their experience (n=5) what would have improved their experience. All five students wrote a response. Three talked about their meeting with SAS and that it was rushed, the person was combative, and they wanted a response to help their issue. One shared that the process to change their class schedule was still happening and took longer than expected. The last comment was a student who expressed frustration in receiving follow-up emails and this survey.

When asked if Student Assistance Services helped them continue their enrollment at Texas A&M University, 81% of the 57 respondents said yes and 19% reported no. This was similar to last year when 79% stated yes and 21% said no. All students were provided the opportunity to explain their response and 31 wrote a comment. Those who said Student Assistance Services helped them continue their enrollment shared positive comments about the office and individual staff members. They also shared that SAS helped them improve their financial situation or access food, which lowered their stress to focus on school. Others mentioned that they felt motivated, confident, and encouraged to focus on their academics. Several of those who said Student Assistance Services did not help them continue their enrollment indicated that they never planned to leave school, that their enrollment was not in danger, or that they would graduate that semester. One person shared that they felt uncomfortable.

Students were asked about their likelihood or unlikelihood to contact Student Assistance Services in the future and to refer friends to Student Assistance Services. Table 4 indicates that similar to last year, students reported a likelihood for both referring a friend to Student Assistance Services and going back to SAS. In looking at the data disaggregated by demographics, female, Hispanic, first generation, and senior students were less likely to reach out to SAS for help in the future. Additionally, female, Hispanic, White, not first generation, and junior students were less likely to refer their friends/peers to Student Assistance Services.

	Very Likely (5)	Likely (4)	Neutral (3)	Unlikely (2)	Very Unlikely (1)	19-20 Mean (sd) [n=58]	18-19 Mean (sd) [n=110]
How likely are you to refer your friends/peers to Student Assistance Service?	62%	21%	7%	7%	3%	4.31 (1.10)	4.31 (.98)
How likely are you to reach out to Student Assistance Services for help with issues that may arise during your time at A&M?	57%	29%	3%	5%	5%	4.28 (1.11)	4.26 (1.05)

Table 4: Student Referrals

Students stating they were unlikely or very unlikely to reach out to Student Assistance Services for help with issues that may arise (n=6) were asked a follow-up question about what would prevent them from contacting Student Assistance Services. Of the five comments, a couple indicated that meeting with SAS did not help their situation or was not effective. One person indicated they wanted a real therapist.

The final question gave students the opportunity to write anything else they would like to share with Student Assistance Services to help improve the student experience. Just over half of the 20 comments were praises for Student Assistance Services and staff who worked with them. There were a few suggestions or things students indicated they would like including for SAS to take action quicker, share their services so more students know about their office, to help in the relationship with the Department of Civil Rights and Equity Investigation (CREI) to decrease the run around, and to not debate with students.

Student Demographics

The pre-assessment asked students for their name and University Identification Number (UIN). Additionally, Student Assistance Services provided the UINs of students who were sent the post-assessment. The UINs were used to gather demographic information from the university student database. Based on accurate UINs, the demographics of students attending their meeting with SAS, are listed with the pre-assessment respondents, all students sent the post-assessment, and the respondents to the post-assessment. The post-assessment was sent to 366 students who interacted with SAS over the academic year; however, there were 344 unique UINs. The survey was sent to the same student each time they met with Student Assistance Services.

The demographic information can be found in Table 5, on the following page in descending order for the pre-assessment for each area. The demographics based on the pre-assessment closely match those of students sent the post-assessment, with a slight difference for the classification. There were 5% or more females, seniors, top 10%, and Agricultural students responding to the post-assessment compared to those who were sent the post-assessment. Alternatively, there were at least 5% fewer males, Whites, not top 10%, General Studies, and freshmen responding to the survey compared to those who received the post-assessment.

The pre-assessment gave students the opportunity to select the gender pronouns they identify with based on a list provided. Just over half (55%) reported identifying with she; her; hers; herself, 42% identified with he; him; his; himself, and 2% selected they; them, their, theirs, themselves. In addition, 1% indicated their preferred identity was not listed and 1% said they preferred not to answer.

	Pre- Assessment Respondents [n=324]	Post- Assessment Population [n=343]	Post- Assessment Respondents [n=83]
Classification			
Senior	39%	43%	49%
Junior	21%	20%	16%
Sophomore	17%	17%	16%
Freshman	14%	11%	6%
Masters	4%	4%	7%
Doctoral	4%	4%	6%
Pharmacy	<1%	<1%	--
Postbaccalaureate	--	<1%	--
College			
Engineering	25%	25%	29%
Liberal Arts	19%	18%	21%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	11%	10%	15%
Education and Human Development	10%	11%	15%
Mays Business School	8%	8%	5%
General Studies	6%	7%	1%
Science	5%	4%	--
Architecture	5%	5%	2%
Geosciences	5%	5%	4%
Veterinary Medicine	4%	4%	5%
Nursing/Pharmacy/Public Health	2%	2%	1%
Bush School of Government	1%	<1%	1%
Exchange	<1%	<1%	1%
Sex			
Female	56%	55%	66%
Male	44%	45%	34%
Ethnicity			
White	42%	43%	36%
Hispanic or Latino	31%	31%	33%
Asian	12%	12%	11%
International	6%	6%	10%
Black or Multi-Racial with Black	5%	6%	7%
Multi-Racial (excluding Black)	3%	2%	2%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%	--
Unknown or Not Reported	<1%	1%	1%
First Generation			
No	64%	63%	59%
Yes	29%	30%	31%
Unknown	7%	7%	10%
Top 10 Percent			
No	58%	57%	51%
Yes	42%	43%	49%

Table 5: Student Demographics

Department Background

According to its website (<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/>), the Offices of the Dean of Student Life “strive to enhance your opportunities as a student to participate fully in the University experience.” The department does this through sharing information, services, programs, and involvement opportunities. Student Assistance Services is one of several program areas in the department. While each area has a specific mission and function, they all have the common goal to provide education, outreach, and support to students.

Student Life Studies and Project Details

The number of pre- and post-assessments administered decreased after classes and most in-person university services, including face to face meetings with Student Assistance Services, were suspended in mid-March and moved to online delivery caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This change also could have affected the response rate and the feedback provided on the post-assessment.

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 and students 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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