

# **Department of Recreational Sports**

## **HIP Student Employee Learning Assessment**

### **Spring 2021**

#### **Purpose of Assessment**

The Department of Recreational Sports(Rec Sports) wanted to capture and understand the impact of student leadership roles in the department. An electronic survey was sent to student employees in certain positions that have been identified as being High Impact Practice positions late the in spring 2021 semester. This is the second time Department of Recreational Sports student employees completed this survey with Student Life Studies.

#### **Method and Sample**

The survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program for creating web-based surveys. Student Life Studies evaluated the results using Microsoft Excel®, a data preparation software. The survey consisted of ten questions: six quantitative and four qualitative questions. An invitation to take the survey was sent via email on April 16, 2021, to 105 student employees, and up to two reminders were sent to non-respondents until the survey closed on April 26, 2021. Of the 105 participants, 43 responded to at least one question, for a 41% response rate, an 8% increase from last year's administration.

#### **Key Findings with Recommendations**

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

- Students overall reported improving in each of the six learning outcomes. Communication was rated as the skill improved upon the most, and emotional intelligence the least improved. The difference between the highest and lowest average scores was less than 0.3.
- When providing qualitative feedback on skills, students reported specific skills one would expect young employees to learn in their early career – time management, conflict resolution, and work ethic.
- While giving overall feedback on the Department of Recreational Sports, most students reported positive feelings about their time in the department.
- Future plans: The Department of Rec Sports might want to consider a mechanism of assessing student learning using more direct assessment either through an annual review process or other means of observing student workers demonstrating skills.

## Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviation (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 unless otherwise specified. Summary themes are contained in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document.

The first block of questions posed to student employees was the degree to which they felt a list of six skills were improved through their student employee position. As displayed in Table 1 below, all six skills scored on average “somewhat better” (4) or above, with Communication and Teamwork being the two skills with the most self-assessed improvement. The lowest scored skills, time management, had the least students responding their skills were “much better.”

**Through your work with the Department of Rec Sports during the 2020-2021 school year, please indicate the degree to which you feel you have improved your skill or knowledge in the following areas:**

	<i>Much better</i> (5)	<i>Somewhat better</i> (4)	<i>About the same</i> (3)	<i>Somewhat worse</i> (2)	<i>Much Worse</i> (1)	2021 Mean (s.d.) [n]	2020 Mean (s.d.) [n]
<i>Communication</i>	60%	33%	7%	--	--	4.53 (.62) [43]	4.45 (.64) [233]
<i>Teamwork</i>	63%	26%	12%	--	--	4.51 (.69) [43]	4.40 (.66) [231]
<i>Initiative</i>	65%	21%	12%	2%	--	4.49 (.79) [43]	4.27 (.71) [231]
<i>Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving</i>	56%	33%	9%	--	2%	4.40 (.84) [43]	4.25 (.76) [230]
<i>Emotional Intelligence</i>	58%	16%	26%	--	--	4.33 (.86) [43]	4.22 (.72) [232]
<i>Time Management</i>	44%	37%	16%	2%	--	4.23 (.80) [43]	4.03 (.76) [228]

Table 1: Improved Skills

The qualitative section of the survey asked for student employee feedback on how their work experience is connecting to their larger academic and career preparation, followed by a question soliciting general feedback on the department.

The first two open-ended questions asked students to connect what they learned at work that is helping with their academic experience and to connect their student employment experience with their chosen profession. Most of the responses followed the same themes. Some of the themes discussed included time management, leadership, communication, work ethic, interacting with diverse people, conflict management, and patience. Three quotes that capture most of these themes are displayed below.

*One thing that I've learned from work that has helped me in school is how to make efficient, informed decisions. From coordinating tasks and managing staff I have had a number of experiences that have developed this skill.*

*(White, Female, Junior, Engineering)*

*I've learned from school the importance of personal responsibility. Time management goes along with this and is something I consistently put to practice at work.*

*(White, Female, Junior, Business)*

*School has helped me mostly in a cultural sense at work, by being exposed and expanding my knowledge of humans and how they interact. Along with management and service courses which worked on assessing the needs of customers, which has been very useful while working at the natatorium.*

*(White, Female, Masters Agriculture)*

The next question asks students to give specific examples of work that will help them in their chosen profession. The level of detail in the examples varied, but the general themes included comments about leadership, professionalism, public speaking, attention to detail, work ethic, interpersonal skills, teaching others, and managing conflict. Two quotes that capture most of these themes are displayed below and on the next page.

*There was one time when I was supervising that I had to sign people in for their games, take down the scores for the other games, and conduct an evaluation on one of the three flag football fields. Therefore, I had to prioritize and conduct things one at a time until I completed everything. Thus, these types of situations will help later on in my profession when I have multiple projects and deadlines. I just need to prioritize and conduct them one at a time until they are all completed.*

*(Hispanic, Male, Senior, Engineering)*

*I was able to be a part of some hiring panels for new employees and that has helped me prepare for future job interviews. Writing SOP's is something I will likely do at my job in the future and I have had the chance to write some here at the Rec.*

*(White, Male, Senior Engineering)*

The final question was about general feedback on their student employment experience, positive or negative. Based on the tone and message of responses, comments were themed into positive and negative groups.

Some of the positive themes were about their coworkers and boss, mentorship, appreciating being challenged, and saw their employment as an impactful learning experience in college. The positive comments outnumbered the negative comments, but some of the negative themes included scheduling, inconsistent communication from professional staff, being asked to keep up with communication platforms while not being paid, and a request for more frequent check-ins. Two quotes that capture the positive and negative sentiments of these themes are displayed below.

*Working at Outdoor Adventures has been the primary learning I've done at TAMU. I developed leadership skills and thorough critical thinking skills that are far more useful than many classes I have taken.*

*(White, Male, Senior, Agriculture)*

*I think our use of communication platforms needs some rethinking, at least from a perspective of someone who doesn't work frequently (I am a task worker, so). Things like Microsoft teams and slack take a good chunk of my time when I am not getting paid. Payment is not the only reason to work, but it is frustrating sometimes when you are not an hourly employee and you have little things to read and memos coming at you constantly in one of these platforms that you are not getting paid for.*

*(White, Male, Doctoral, Agriculture)*

Rec Sports student employee and survey respondents' demographics were gathered through official student records (spring 2021) as their Unique Identification Number was provided by Rec Sports. Table 2, on the next page, shows the survey respondents are largely reflective of the student worker population and consistent with last year's group of participants. One notable difference between the survey respondents and sample population is the response rate of seniors. They represent 71% of the population, but only 49% of the respondents. To a lesser degree, there is also a notable difference between the population and respondents from the College of Engineering, and Males. The table is in descending order by the 2021 Student Worker column for each category.

		2021		2020	
		Respondent percentage [n=43]	Student Worker percentage [n=105]	Respondent percentage [n=233]	Student Worker percentage [n=698]
<i>Classification</i>					
	Senior	49%	71%	41%	43%
	Junior	35%	10%	27%	24%
	Masters	2%	9%	6%	5%
	Unknown	--	6%	2%	5%
	Sophomore	9%	2%	19%	17%
	Doctoral	5%	2%	1%	<1%
	Freshman	--	--	5%	5%
<i>Student's Primary College</i>					
	Engineering	42%	34%	25%	26%
	Education	16%	18%	23%	19%
	Liberal Arts	9%	13%	9%	13%
	Agriculture	16%	10%	9%	9%
	Unknown	--	6%	2%	5%
	Business	7%	5%	15%	11%
	Veterinary Medicine	5%	3%	6%	4%
	Science	2%	3%	2%	3%
	Architecture	--	3%	3%	4%
	Public Health	--	3%	2%	1%
	Geosciences	2%	2%	2%	2%
	General Studies	--	--	3%	2%
	Bush	--	--	--	<1%
	Nursing	--	--	--	<1%
<i>Ethnic Origin</i>					
	White	67%	66%	60%	57%
	Hispanic or Latino of any Race	26%	22%	25%	24%
	Unknown	--	6%	2%	5%
	Asian	5%	4%	3%	3%
	Black or multi-racial with Black	--	2%	4%	5%
	American Indian	2%	1%	1%	1%
	International	--	--	4%	3%
	Multi-racial excluding Black	--	--	2%	2%
<i>First Generation Student</i>					
	Not First Generation	84%	80%	75%	72%
	First Generation	16%	14%	20%	19%
	Unknown	--	6%	2%	5%
<i>Sex</i>					
	Male	56%	49%	49%	52%
	Female	44%	46%	49%	43%
	Unknown	--	6%	2%	5%

Table 2: Demographics

## **Department or Organization Background**

According to its website (<https://recsports.tamu.edu/about-us-2/>) the mission of the Department of Recreational Sports is to “promote activity, wellness and development by providing high quality, inclusive experiences and facilities for students and community of Texas A&M University.” Developing and maintaining relationships with former Rec Sports student employees, participants and friends of Rec Sports is also important, and to do so Rec Sports offers reunions, tailgates and other events, specifically inviting these populations to join them throughout the academic year.

## **Project Details**

One limitation of the assessment is using a self-rated system, which is a great way to get a quick pulse on students’ impression of their work. This data should not be confused as a measure of learning.

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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