

Graduate and Professional Student Government

Grad Camp

Fall 2021

Purpose of Assessment

Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) sponsored one virtual session and one in-person session of Grad Camp held on August 18th and August 25th. An in-person session was scheduled for August 28th, but it was cancelled. GPSG worked with Student Life Studies since 2001 to assess the experiences of counselors and the campers who attend Grad Camp. The students were sent surveys after attending the camps to obtain feedback about their camp experiences.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, GPSG 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.

- The Grad Camp camper's Net Promoter Score (NPS) decreased by 7 points over the last year. NPS can range from -100 to +100; generally, a NPS below zero is an indicator of a low satisfaction level and a positive NPS (>0) is considered good.

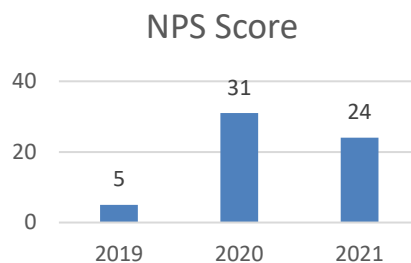


Figure 1: Net Promoter Score - Campers

- Campers enjoyed learning about campus traditions and resources.
- Counselors indicated they would recommend Grad Camp to campers at a higher rate than in both 2020 and 2019 sessions. Counselors were also more positive regarding the campus tour. However, counselors' ratings regarding email communications, website, and breakout sessions were lower than in 2020. Counselors also reported lower ratings regarding the communication about their role and expectations than in 2020.
- Two-thirds of the participants (campers) attended in person and one-third attended the virtual session. The campers rated email communications, tradition talks, website, and breakout sessions lower than in 2020. The ratings regarding the campus tour increased. However, some campers mentioned in the text response that Grad Camp could improve if they teach them how to use the Aggie Spirit buses and include East and West campuses in the campus tour.

- GPSG may want to continue offering a virtual option in addition to an in-person Grad Camp to increase its access to more students who are not local or have not moved to College Station. If continuing with a virtual option, adding ways for campers to interact with one another may improve camper satisfaction with the overall event. Student Life Studies (SLS) also recommends providing a schedule for the session ahead of time, so counselors and campers know what to expect.

Method and Sample

The counselors and camper surveys were developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. Responses were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. The counselor survey contained 11 questions; eight were quantitative and three were qualitative; due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The counselor survey was sent to 29 students on September 7, 2021, through an email invitation. Two reminders were sent to non-respondents before the survey was closed. Twelve responded to at least some part of the survey, resulting in a 41% response rate, lower than the 76% response rate of the 2020 counselors' survey and 70% of the 2019 survey.

A ten-question camper survey included seven quantitative and three qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The camper survey was sent through email to 333 participants, less than the 489 campers in 2020. The email invitation was sent immediately following the end of camp, either August 18th or August 25th, dependent on which date the student participated. The email for the attendees of the August 28th camp was not sent. Some students who were supposed to attend the August 28th session still received it because they were in the contact list for previous sessions. . Therefore, there are some responses from students sharing their frustrations regarding the cancelled event. Two additional reminders were sent before the survey was closed. Ninety-five campers completed at least some part of the survey, for a 29% response rate, which was higher than the 27% response rate last year and 18% response rate for the 2019 Grad Camp camper survey.

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, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Summary themes are included in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. This report contains two sections: Counselor Survey and Camper/Participant Survey. Camper demographics were pulled from the Student Information System database based on the Universal Identification Numbers (UINs) provided for those students. The counselors' UIN nor demographics were not provided by GPSG staff so could not be reported.

Counselor Survey

Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with various components of Grad Camp; the results are listed in Table 1, on the next page. There was a new question added to this year's survey regarding lunch options. Overall, counselors indicated satisfaction with all components. All counselors answered that they were satisfied or very satisfied with email communications, the website, and the campus tour. The counselors were more satisfied

with the campus tour compared to the previous two years. Counselors were most satisfied with email communications and campus tours and least satisfied with the breakout sessions.

	Very satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very dissatisfied (1)	2021 Mean (sd) n=12	2020 Mean (sd) n=12	2019 Mean (sd) n=14
Email Communication	67%	33%	--	--	3.67 (.49)	3.83 (.39)	3.29 (.73)
Campus Tour	67%	33%	--	--	3.67 (.49)	3.50 (.52)	3.29 (.61)
Lunch Options	42%	50%	8%	--	3.33 (.65)	*	*
Website	25%	75%	--	--	3.25 (.45)	3.42 (.67)	3.29 (.61)
Break-out Sessions	25%	58%	17%	--	3.08 (.67)	3.50 (.67)	*

Table 1: Counselor Satisfaction

*Not Asked

Counselors who indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with any of the components were given an opportunity to explain why they were not satisfied. Two counselors responded. The counselor who was dissatisfied with the lunch options mentioned that they were disappointed because they had MSC passes to eat, but everything was closed on Saturdays. The counselor who was dissatisfied with the breakout sessions said that making the first part of the session more consistent among the counselors by adding PowerPoint slides that talked about the Aggie core values would be helpful.

The counselors were then asked for their level of agreement or disagreement with recommending new graduate students to attend Grad Camp. Table 2 shows that all counselors agreed or strongly agreed to recommend new graduate students to attend and at a higher rate than both last year and 2019.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [12]	2020 Mean (sd) n=11	2019 Mean (sd) n=14
I would recommend that new grad students attend Grad Camp	75%	25%	--	--	--	4.75 (.45)	4.64 (.51)	4.43 (.51)

Table 2: Recommending Grad Camp

The counselors were then asked how Grad Camp could be improved to provide a better experience for the campers. Two counselors responded, one respondent shared that the campers should be given the chance to introduce themselves among all the participants, and another respondent said that discussing how difficult grad school is might be helpful.

The next set of questions asked counselors to rate how well Grad Camp met their expectations. The results are displayed in Table 3. Over 90% of the counselors reported that the amount of training provided met, exceeded, or far exceeded their expectations. This year, the counselors rated the communications about their role and expectations lower than in 2020.

	Far exceeded expectations (5)	Exceeded expectations	Met expectations (3)	Fell short of meeting expectations (2)	Fell far short of meeting expectations (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [1n]
Amount of training provided to me as a counselor	25%	59%	8%	8%	--	4.00 (.85) [12]	4.00 (.85) [12]	3.07 (.83) [14]
Communication about my role and expectations	33%	33%	17%	17%	--	3.83 (1.12) [12]	4.00 (.89) [11]	3.29 (.91) [14]

Table 3: Expectations about Grad Camp

The next question asked the counselors what would improve their experience as a counselor at Grad Camp. Four counselors responded to the question and responses varied. One counselor shared that providing better counselor training and planning, so that the campers' experiences do not differ greatly because of the counselor assigned to their group. Other responses suggested maintaining a social environment between the counselors and receiving information about their duties and partner assignment in advance.

Camper/Participant Survey

Demographics for campers/participants and survey respondents are displayed in Table 4 on the next page in descending order by the respondent column for each category. Males, master's students, international students, and students from the College of Engineering were the largest demographics represented in the in-person and virtual groups.

Demographics	Respondents [n=95]	Campers [n=333]
Sex		
Male	52%	50%
Female	48%	50%
Ethnic Origin		
International	44%	46%
White	27%	28%
Asian	12%	7%
Hispanic or Latino	4%	8%
Black or multi-racial with Black	4%	5%
Unknown/Not Reported	4%	4%
Multi-racial excluding Black	3%	2%
American Indian	1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	--	--
Classification		
Masters	86%	87%
Doctoral	13%	11%
Post Bac- Non-degree	1%	1%
School of Law	--	<1%
Academic College		
Engineering	50%	44%
Education	8%	6%
Agriculture	7%	8%
Bush	6%	3%
Public Health	6%	5%
Liberal Arts	5%	8%
Business	4%	7%
Law	4%	3%
Science	3%	4%
Architecture	2%	6%
Medicine	2%	2%
Veterinary Medicine	1%	2%
Geosciences	--	2%

Table4: Camper/Participant Demographics

The first question asked respondents how likely they were to recommend Grad Camp to incoming graduate students. This question used the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a customer loyalty metric that gauges how willing a customer is to recommend a product or service, using a 0 to 10 scale. The resulting NPS was 24; NPS was calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors (response ratings of 0 to 6) from the percentage of promoters (response ratings 9-10). A positive NPS (>0) is

generally considered good, with the highest performers usually between 50 and 80. The breakdown of the NPS is noted in Table 5. In comparison to previous years, the Net Promoter Score decreased by 7 points over the 2020 NPS (31) and but remained 19 points higher than the 2019 NPS (5).

	2021 Percent n=99	2020 Percent n=131	2019 Percent n=17
Promoter	50%	49%	29%
Passive	25%	34%	47%
Detractor	25%	18%	24%

Table 5: Recommend Grad Camp

Respondents were given the opportunity to explain their rating for recommending Grad Camp. Sixty-eight students responded; those that were promoters stated they found Grad camp very informative. They specifically mentioned learning about traditions, how to navigate through campus, historical facts about the university, programs, and resources. They also mentioned that they found camp well organized and engaging. The responses of those who were categorized as passive varied. Some indicated that they enjoyed meeting new people and making friends. Others shared that they received important information. One respondent said that they wished the campus tour included learning how to ride the Aggie Spirit bus. Another respondent shared that implementing games and activities would have made Grad Camp more interactive. Many respondents categorized as detractors (ratings 0 to 6) also indicated they appreciated the information. However, some said that the information was too redundant and was similar to the information they were provided at orientation. Some indicated that more interactive activities would make camp more engaging. The lowest ratings were given by students who were registered to the session that was cancelled. They shared that they found it inconvenient that they did not receive a refund or were told when it would be rescheduled.

Students were then asked to rate their level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with components of Grad Camp. The campers reported they were most satisfied with the email communication and traditions talk and were least satisfied with the campus tours. The full breakdown of the campers' responses is displayed in Table 6, on the next page.

Please rate your level of satisfaction with each of the following components of Grad Camp 2021:	Very Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very Dissatisfied (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2020 Mean (sd) [n]	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
Traditions Talks	49%	41%	7%	3%	3.36 (.75) [92]	3.43 (.74) [129]	3.29 (.60) [17]
Lunch Options	53%	34%	8%	5%	3.36 (.82) [64]	--	--
Website	34%	59%	5%	1%	3.27 (.61) [93]	3.37 (.65) [129]	3.12 (.70) [17]
Email Communications	39%	50%	7%	3%	3.26 (.73) [94]	3.54 (.62) [130]	3.06 (.85) [16]
Campus Tour	39%	47%	10%	4%	3.20 (.79) [93]	3.10 (.78) [127]	3.29 (.59) [17]
Breakout Sessions	39%	47%	8%	7%	3.18 (.83) [93]	3.29 (.79) [129]	--

Table 6: Camper/Participant Satisfaction with Camp Components
*Question not asked

Campers who selected the dissatisfied or very dissatisfied response option were given an opportunity to explain their response. Explanations from the 19 campers that chose to answer included comments indicating that there were not many food options, many said that an agenda for camp would have been helpful, and some complained about their session being cancelled and not rescheduled.

The final question asked the students to explain how Grad Camp could be improved for future participants. Thirty-eight students responded with suggestions for improvement such as providing a schedule or timeline of the activities, making it feel like camp and not orientation, and putting students into groups with people who are in similar programs. Others suggested that teaching them how to ride the Aggie Spirit bus and providing a tour of West and East campuses would be helpful.

Program Background

Grad Camp is an extended orientation event hosted by the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) each August that claims to help new graduate students “make the most of your time at this great university by helping you connect with people and resources and by introducing you to our culture. Grad Camp brings new graduate and professional students together for a once in a lifetime learning and networking experience in Aggieland” (<https://gradcamp.tamu.edu>). Begun in 2009 as a multi-day, offsite camp, Grad Camp has evolved into a single day, on-campus event,

providing informative, interactive activities and presentations led by peers and faculty, developed especially for incoming graduate students. Initially three Grad Camp sessions were planned to take place, two in-person and one virtual session. The August 28th session, in-person, was cancelled.

During Grad Camp, current graduate students served as counselors. Virtual activities included meeting in small groups through Zoom break-out sessions, listening to short presentations and videos detailing campus resources from services offered on and off campus, as well as a video campus tour. The in-person session activities included meetings in small groups, presentations about campus resources, and a campus tour. GPSG has collaborated with Student Life Studies since 2009 to assess Grad Camp.

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

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