

# **Department of Student Activities Student Organization Services Survey Spring 2021**

## **Purpose of Assessment**

Student Life Studies assisted the Department of Student Activities Student Organization Finance Center (SOFC) and the Student Organization Development Administration (SODA) in assessing Texas A&M University student organizations' student leaders' and student advisors' experiences interfacing with their organizations. In spring 2021, a survey was sent to both student leaders and advisors to provide SOFC and SODA feedback regarding the quality of their services and offered resources.

## **Method and Sample**

The survey was produced using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The survey contained 52 questions, of which 44 were quantitative and eight were qualitative; due to branching technology, not all questions were displayed to all respondents. Data for the survey were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Microsoft Excel® and Microsoft Word®.

The survey was distributed successfully via email to 3,048 student organization leaders and advisors. The survey began distribution on April 8, 2021; three reminders were sent to non-responders, and the survey closed on April 30, 2021. Of the 3,048 students and advisors who received the survey, 512 answered at least one question, resulting in a 17% response rate.

## **Key Findings with Recommendations**

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

- On average, advisors and student leaders rated the services and resources offered by Student Organization Finance Center (SOFC) and the Student Organization Development Administration (SODA) somewhat helpful to helpful. They reported SODA direct staff support, advisor support and the resource StuAct online as most helpful. Respondents rated the event form submission and review, and MaroonLink as the least helpful SODA service and resource due to their complexity and extended length of time for review. Respondents also rated eForms and the Night Depository as those SOFC resources and services most helpful and reimbursements, \$25K audit, and audit research the least helpful, due to the length of time and complexity of these processes.
- COVID-19 and the pandemic restrictions were the roadblock or obstacle most frequently mentioned by the student leaders, as it prevented their organizations from meeting, recruiting new members, and offering events, and it affected their perceptions of interacting with both SODA and SOFC. However, respondents expressed appreciation for communications from SODA and the adapted processes offered through SOFC (Docu-sign, eForms).
  - Respondents indicated they would like more online, electronic service and resource offerings from SOFC, along with keeping the processes like eForms and Docu-sign added last year. Primarily, they mentioned wanting the financial account and statements accessible online, to be able to monitor in real-time.

- Respondents preferred online modules to virtual (Zoom) or in-person workshops as the method for taking annual trainings. However, many commented that the current modules needed updating and improvements to be easily referenced afterward.
  - Updating the Student Activities website, along with additional types of references such as manuals, and assigning specific SODA or SOFC staff as points of contact to answer questions may also be helpful to both advisors and student leaders.
- SODA and SOFC staff may also consider deeper analysis into some if not all of the Likert scale quantitative responses, as variance from the mean was often one standard deviation or above. Cross-tabulating responses by role (advisor, chief student leader, or treasurer), organizational category, or student leader demographics may reveal differences in experience between varied groups of students and advisors. Contact Student Life Studies to complete this additional analysis of data.

## **Results**

Results will be reported as frequency percentages, means, and standard deviation (s.d.) 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. Demographic frequencies are based on students' Unique Identifying Number (UIN) and ascertained from official student records or those provided by Student Activities.

The survey opened by asking the responder to indicate their position with the organization. Of the 512 respondents, 40% chose advisor, 38% chose chief student leader, 22% chose treasurer and 1% chose other. Those who chose other could provide their response and two responded; one indicated vice-president and the other noted social chair.

Those who selected that their position as an advisor in the opening question were asked how long they had served as a student organization advisor. Of the 204 respondents, 37% indicated more than five years, 32% indicated less than two years, and 31% indicated they had served as a student organization advisor for two to five years. Respondents who did not choose advisor as their position in the opening question were asked how long they had served as a student leader. Of the 304 who responded, 54% indicated they had served one to two semesters, 35% noted they had served three or more semesters and 11% indicated serving less than one semester.

Next, all respondents were asked to rate the level of helpfulness or unhelpfulness they had experienced when interacting with each of the listed student organization support services. Presented in Table 1 on the next page, respondents indicated that advisor support was the most helpful service and event form submission/review was rated the least helpful service, although still in the somewhat helpful range.

<b>Student Organization Support Service:</b>	<b>Very Helpful (5)</b>	<b>Helpful (4)</b>	<b>Somewhat Helpful (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Unhelpful (2)</b>	<b>Unhelpful (1)</b>	<b>Mean (sd) [n]</b>
Advisor Support	37%	42%	14%	4%	3%	4.05 (.99) [328]
Direct Staff Support (email, phone, in-person)	26%	47%	18%	4%	5%	3.85 (1.02) [325]
New Student Organization Recognition	19%	48%	24%	3%	5%	3.73 (.99) [224]
Student Organization Accountability	18%	52%	22%	3%	6%	3.72 (.98) [227]
Organization Email Updates/Newsletters	19%	44%	27%	6%	3%	3.71 (.95) [300]
Existing Organization Recognition Renewal/Troubleshooting	17%	49%	25%	5%	5%	3.68 (.98) [331]
Student Organization Awards	18%	45%	24%	8%	4%	3.65 (1.01) [169]
Contract Review	17%	46%	26%	6%	5%	3.64 (1.01) [191]
Constitution Assistance	17%	44%	27%	6%	7%	3.57 (1.06) [214]
Event Form Submission/Review	16%	42%	24%	8%	10%	3.47 (1.16) [293]

Table 1: Student Organization Support Services

Those who selected very helpful in response to the above questions were asked to explain why they rated the student organization support service or services very helpful. Thirty-nine advisors and 53 student leaders provided a response. Advisors mentioned that they found the staff very responsive, supportive, patient, and eager to help. Others expressed appreciation for the frequent communication via email and newsletters, especially during the pandemic. The student leaders' responses were similarly appreciative of the SODA staff, indicating they were helpful and responsive. Some noted experiencing difficulty with the existing organization recognition renewal process and appreciated the assistance from SODA staff in troubleshooting that challenge. Student leaders also referred to the fine support they receive from their organizations' advisors, some naming specific advisors and expressing appreciation for them.

Those who rated any of the student organization support services unhelpful in response to the above question were also asked to explain that rating. Seven advisors and 26 student leaders provided a response. The advisors referred to receiving emails from Student Activities as unhelpful, thinking that the online trainings were too time consuming, and feeling that they and their organizations were not supported. Many of the student leaders' responses focused on the complexity of the event form and the extended length of time of the subsequent

submission review. Others mentioned trying to contact either SODA or SOFC, either through phone calls or emails and not receiving any response or receiving incorrect information from student workers within the department.

Respondents were also asked to rate the level of helpfulness or unhelpfulness they had experienced when interacting with each of the listed student organization support resources. Noted in Table 2, respondents indicated StuAct Online as the support resource most helpful and MaroonLink as the resource rated lowest.

<b>Student Organization Support Resources:</b>	<b>Very Helpful (5)</b>	<b>Helpful (4)</b>	<b>Somewhat Helpful (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Unhelpful (2)</b>	<b>Unhelpful (1)</b>	<b>Mean (sd) [n]</b>
StuAct Online	18%	48%	23%	7%	4%	3.68 (.99) [396]
Student Activities Website Resources	15%	46%	28%	6%	5%	3.60 (.98) [346]
Online Training Modules	13%	46%	29%	5%	6%	3.57 (1.00) [328]
Student Organization Manual	11%	48%	31%	4%	6%	3.53 (.96) [300]
Concession Permits	11%	48%	28%	8%	5%	3.52 (.98) [158]
Travel Information Form	11%	48%	30%	6%	5%	3.52 (.95) [189]
Special Event Insurance	13%	44%	30%	6%	7%	3.50 (1.03) [129]
MaroonLink	12%	38%	30%	10%	11%	3.31 (1.14) [313]

Table 2: Student Organization Support Resources

Those who selected very helpful in response to the above questions were asked to explain why they rated the student organization support resource or resources as very helpful. Ten advisors and 25 student leaders responded. Advisors indicated that resources were thorough, and materials were professional and that StuAct Online was easy to understand and use. The student leaders referenced StuAct Online as well, finding it clear, useful and informative. Others mentioned that they found the online training modules helped prepare them for completing paperwork for their organizations, were a good resource, and generally helpful.

Those who rated any of the student organization support resources unhelpful were also asked to explain that rating. Eleven advisors and 27 student leaders provided a response. Advisors complained about MaroonLink, noting its changed format was difficult and confusing for students to navigate. Advisors also noted that the training modules provided outdated information and took too long. Others mentioned finding the Student Activities website confusing and unhelpful. The student leaders also complained about MaroonLink indicating it was difficult to use, not updated, and did not have features that a website could provide a student organization. Others

commented that Student Activities and its website were difficult to use, not up to date and not in-sync with how current student organizations need to operate.

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of options that best described how often they interacted with Student Organization Development and Administration (SODA) staff or support services. Of the 427 who responded, 37% indicated they interacted with SODA once a semester, 27% indicated monthly, and 12% noted interacting once per year. Additionally, 11% indicated never interacting with SODA staff or support services, 10% interacted weekly, 3% several times a week and less than 1% indicated daily interaction.

Next, all respondents were asked to rate the level of helpfulness or unhelpfulness of support they had experienced when using each of the listed student organization financial services. As shown in Table 3, respondents rated the night depository as the most helpful service, but it also received the fewest rated responses.

<b>Student Organization Financial Services:</b>	<b>Very Helpful (5)</b>	<b>Helpful (4)</b>	<b>Somewhat Helpful (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Unhelpful (2)</b>	<b>Unhelpful (1)</b>	<b>Mean (sd) [n]</b>
Night Depository	14%	56%	22%	2%	6%	3.70 (.94) [87]
Deposits	19%	50%	17%	6%	7%	3.67 (1.08) [249]
Credit Card Terminal Checkout	14%	51%	27%	4%	4%	3.66 (.92) [94]
Marketplace	18%	48%	19%	7%	7%	3.63 (1.09) [192]
Credit Card Payments	19%	47%	20%	4%	10%	3.61 (1.14) [186]
Vendor Payments (Checks or Direct Deposit)	19%	45%	21%	6%	9%	3.58 (1.14) [223]
On-Campus Approvals to Charge	16%	48%	23%	5%	8%	3.58 (1.08) [157]
Cash Advances	12%	52%	24%	5%	7%	3.58 (1.00) [130]
Reimbursements (Checks or Direct Deposit)	17%	45%	19%	10%	9%	3.51 (1.16) [259]
\$25K Audit	15%	37%	32%	8%	9%	3.42 (1.12) [92]

Table 3: Student Organization Financial Services

Respondents were next asked to rate the level of helpfulness or unhelpfulness of support they had experienced when using each of the listed student organization financial resources. As shown in Table 4, respondents indicated

that the eForms was the resource that had been the most helpful, and account research was the resource for which support was rated lowest.

<b>Student Organization Financial Resources:</b>	<b>Very Helpful (5)</b>	<b>Helpful (4)</b>	<b>Somewhat Helpful (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Unhelpful (2)</b>	<b>Unhelpful (1)</b>	<b>Mean (sd) [n]</b>
eForms	42%	38%	14%	2%	3%	4.13 (.97) [248]
Special Funding	23%	41%	26%	8%	1%	3.77 (.95) [73]
Virtual Office Hours	22%	43%	24%	8%	2%	3.76 (.96) [90]
On-line Training Modules or On-Demand Video Training (other than required)	20%	43%	29%	4%	4%	3.70 (.98) [230]
In-person Financial Coaching	17%	45%	26%	10%	1%	3.67 (.93) [69]
On-Campus Banking Exemption	16%	49%	20%	9%	5%	3.61 (1.04) [75]
Account Research	16%	46%	25%	7%	7%	3.58 (1.06) [118]

Table 4: Student Organization Financial Resources

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of options that best described how often they conduct business with the Student Organization Financial Center (SOFC). Of the 390 who responded, 33% indicated they conduct business with SOFC monthly, 18% indicated once per semester, and 12% noted once per year. Additionally, 15% indicated never conducting business with SOFC, 14% indicated weekly, 8% several times a week and less than 1% indicated conducting business daily with SOFC.

Respondents were next requested to report if someone in their organization balanced or reconciled their organization's accounts with the statements monthly. Of the 393 who responded, 60% indicated yes, 22% chose the response "I don't know," and 18% indicated no.

When asked about what financial services they would like the Student Organization Financial Center (SOFC) to offer, 91 respondents provided comments. Advisors and student leaders often mentioned they would like SOFC to offer online, real-time access to their accounts, to be able to check balances more than just through the monthly statement, and enable mobile deposits. Many indicated they liked the changes that were made to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions, like electronic signature availability (Docu-sign) and digital approvals and expressed the desire for those to continue. Some mentioned that reimbursement speed needs improvement, and more options to allow for advisors or student leaders to pay via card more easily. Quite a few indicated SOFC should offer VENMO or a similar type system to enable student organizations to more easily collect revenue when selling, and the Marketplace needed improvements or replacing.

Other services that respondents would like SOFC to offer focused on more customer services and training aspects of their services. Both advisors and students would like expanded hours offered and more responsive customer service from SOFC, indicating encounters with staff were brusque and unpleasant, and inquiries through email not answered or answered incorrectly. Some noted the online modules needed updating and a few treasurers indicated that they would appreciate budget assistance and training offered by SOFC. Many of the comments provided were detailed and specific; SOFC staff should review those comments in the attached documents.

Student leader respondents were asked what roadblocks or obstacles they had faced in their student organization leadership experience and 125 provided a response. Most frequently the student leaders expressed that COVID-19 and challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions were the roadblock or obstacles they faced, including recruiting and motivating members, delayed or canceled events and holding meetings and doing everything virtually. About one-fifth mentioned SOFC processes, such as form completion, lack of access to online balance statements, delayed reimbursements, and staff responsiveness as the obstacles they faced. Similarly, the student leaders noted leadership transition as an obstacle as well, as little communication was passed on by previous leaders or their advisors. More than 10% indicated obstacles involving SODA processes, such as event submission (MaroonLink), training officers, and organizational recognition.

All respondents were asked to share what gaps exist in student organization support services. One-hundred sixteen (116) provided a response and one-quarter of those responses indicated nothing, NA, or that the respondent did not know. Those sharing specific information about gaps they thought existed were varied. Most commonly, both advisors and student leaders suggested that lack of knowledge of SODA and SOFC processes or expectations of student organization leaders and advisors, especially when new, was a gap that could be filled in various ways, either through affinity groups, manuals, or updated online or in-person trainings. Others mentioned that improving the responsiveness of student organization support services to those they serve would help close gaps perceived by student leaders and advisors.

Respondents were presented with three options to take annual trainings and were asked to select their preferred method for those trainings. The question was intended to work as a select all that apply question; but was initially offered in the survey as a select one, multiple-choice response question. After one week of survey distribution, the response choice was corrected to the select- all- that- apply choice response as initially intended; during the remaining two weeks that the survey was open, new respondents could select multiple responses. Two hundred sixty-eight (268) responded to the question in the first week (select one choice response), and 68% selected online modules as their preferred method, 19% selected virtual (Zoom) workshops and 13% selected in-person workshops as their preferred method. Of the 115 who responded after the question was changed to select- all- that- apply for the latter two weeks of the survey, 84% selected online modules, 23% selected virtual (Zoom) workshops and 17% selected in-person workshops as their preferred method to take the trainings.

The last question of the survey asked respondents if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up focus group to further discuss student organization support services. Of the 385 who responded, 85% said no and 15% indicated yes. Those who selected yes they would be willing to participate were asked to provide their email address. Those 49 addresses can be found in the attached qualitative comment document.

Table 5 highlights the students' demographic comparison of respondents to the survey and those student leaders included in the distribution of the survey. Frequencies are displayed in descending order of student respondents by each category. Table 6, also on the following page, shows frequency percentage of responding advisors and those included in the survey distribution by organizational category.

<b>Student Demographic:</b>	<b>Respondents (n=308)</b>	<b>Contact List (n=2290)</b>
Organizational Category		

<b>Student Demographic:</b>	<b>Respondents (n=308)</b>	<b>Contact List (n=2290)</b>
Registered	68%	63%
Affiliated	28%	34%
Sponsored	4%	3%
<b>Organizational Role</b>		
Chief Student Leader (CSL)	62%	50%
Treasurer	38%	50%
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>		
White	66%	56%
Hispanic or Latino of any Race	12%	21%
Asian	9%	10%
International	6%	6%
Black	4%	4%
Multiracial excluding Black	3%	3%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Unknown or not reported	--	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	--	<1%
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	61%	52%
Male	39%	48%
<b>First Generation Status</b>		
Not First Generation	72%	69%
First Generation	17%	18%
Unknown	11%	12%
<b>Spring 2021 Classification</b>		
Senior	57%	59%
Junior	16%	13%
Doctoral	10%	8%
Masters	7%	8%
Sophomore	4%	4%
Veterinary School (all years)	3%	3%
Freshman	1%	1%
School of Law (all years)	1%	3%
Pharmacy (all years)	1%	1%
Medicine (all years)	1%	1%
Dentistry (all years)	--	<1%
Post-baccalaureate Undergraduate (Post-Bac UG)	--	1%

Table 5: Student Demographics

<b>Advisor Demographic</b>	<b>Respondents (n=204)</b>	<b>Contact List (n=1183)</b>
<b>Organizational Category</b>		
Registered	66%	63%
Affiliated	27%	34%
Sponsored	7%	3%

Table 6: Advisor Organizational Category

## **Background**

Per its website <https://studentactivities.tamu.edu/about-us/>, the Department of Student Activities Student recognizes more than 1,100 student organizations at Texas A&M University, and the Student Organization Development and Administration (SODA) area oversees recognition and risk management, consults and offers education to help organizations be successful. The Student Organization Financial Center within the Department of Student Activities also supports student organizations by providing banking and financial services for organizations' activities and programming.

## **Project Details**

Advisors and student leaders of student organizations who advise or lead more than one organization were sent one survey as the survey software allows for only one survey distribution per email address. This accounted for 324 duplicate advisor emails and 100 duplicate student leader emails not delivered. Although survey questions regarding the advisors' and student leaders' experiences were generic (not specifically referencing any one organization or category of the organization represented) the responses from advisors and student leaders of multiple organizations may not fully represent their experience with all organizations they advise or lead as appropriate.

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://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

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