

**Recreational Sports
Outdoor Adventures
Climbing Wall Focus Group
Spring 2022**

Purpose of Assessment

The department of Recreational Sports (Rec Sports or the Rec) strives to serve all Texas A&M students. The Outdoor Adventures staff recognized that they did not have female students use the climbing wall at the same level as male students. They wanted to understand why female students did not use the climbing wall and what staff could do to encourage more female students to utilize the facilities. To understand the experiences of female students, a focus group was conducted with female students who regularly utilized the Rec Center but did not use the climbing wall regularly. While Outdoor Adventures has worked with Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) before, this was the first time for this specific project.

Method and Sample

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research staff and Outdoor Adventures staff worked together to design the focus group protocol and questions; however, the focus group was facilitated by SAPAR staff. Outdoor Adventure staff recruited female students to participate in the focus group. The focus group was held on Zoom on April 21, 2022. Additionally, the focus group was recorded in Zoom. It is not known how many students were invited to participate in the focus group; however, three students attended.

Data were analyzed and themes were developed by Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research staff.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations that Outdoor Adventures may take based on the results.

- Students were mostly positive about the climbing facilities currently but did express interest in there being female-only hours or times for the climbing facilities as well as female climbing skill-building opportunities.
 - Outdoor Adventures is encouraged to try offering some female-only programming and hours. Maybe utilizing female climbing wall student staff in planning and facilitating these efforts. Also, Outdoor Adventure staff could get informal feedback from female students about their satisfaction with female-only offerings.
 - While students would be interested in additional hours for the climbing facilities to be open, they did not fully agree on the time. Outdoor Adventures may want to gather feedback from all students who use the climbing wall and track the number of students using the wall on different days of the week and at various times.
- Outdoor Adventures is encouraged to share the results and any changes being made with various stakeholders such as students regularly using the Rec Center, climbing wall student staff, and Rec Sports staff.

Results

This report presents the qualitative themes developed from the analysis for each question asked in the protocol. Questions during the focus groups concentrated on students' past engagement in climbing, experience at the Rec Center, and thoughts on specific programs for female students.

The first question asked students about their level of participation in climbing. One student went recently to climb recreationally at the climbing wall at the Rec Center. Another student took a class offered at the Rec this semester. The final student reported previously taking a climbing wall class. All three students had climbed at the Rec Center, but no other places. Students were also asked if they had ever tried to climb at the Rec Center but were not able to for any reason; however, all students indicated they were able to climb when they tried to go.

Students were asked about reasons they do not climb regularly. One student discovered that she did not like to climb while taking a climbing wall class. Another student comes to the Rec for exercise and did not feel that rock climbing was an efficient form of exercise. The last student felt she did not have the skills to do it well.

When asked what would increase their likeliness to utilize the climbing facilities at the Rec Center, each student had a different reason. One student usually comes to the Rec Center in the morning, but the climbing wall is not open then. Another student felt that rock climbing was an activity you do with someone else, and she did not have anyone to climb with. The last student felt that it was not worth buying a membership since most of the semester was already over.

Students were asked their thoughts on some specific programs or changes to increase female students using the climbing facilities. First, students were asked about female-specific hours for climbing. One student would like to have female-only hours and two students did not care either way. The next idea was female-only programming such as a female orientation class or a female meet and greet. The students all thought that would be a good idea. One student liked the idea of attending a female-only class or skill-building opportunity. One student suggested having a club for female climbers. Another thought was to have more female staff working at the climbing facilities; however, all three students felt that they already saw female staff at the climbing wall often.

Students were also asked their thoughts about the climbing wall in general, not specific female-only initiatives. The first was about reducing the cost of using the climbing facilities. They felt that the \$5.00 for a one-time use was reasonable and that it would be more expensive at a private gym. One student would like there to be an option to purchase a semester membership during the middle of the semester for less money. The second question was about the hours the climbing facilities are open. One student felt that evenings would be better hours, and two students preferred morning hours. One said that it was because that is when she is at the Rec Center most often.

When asked if they had any thoughts in general about the climbing facilities, they talked a little about how the culture is very male-focused but that was throughout the Rec Center, not just the climbing wall. When asked to clarify what male focus meant to them, they described it as tough, sweaty, strong, and showing off. However, one student thought that having a female club or student organization would help change that culture. Another student indicated again that she would like a female-only beginners' class to learn how to climb properly and gain skills.

Department Background

According to its website (<https://recsports.tamu.edu/>), Rec Sports' mission is to "promote activity, wellness, and development by providing high quality, inclusive experiences, and facilities for the students and community of Texas A&M University." The Rec Center consists of three indoor facilities with more than 500,000 square feet of recreation space, almost 50 acres of outdoor space, and five swimming pools. Inside the Student Rec Center, the main indoor facility is the indoor climbing facility is approximately 44 feet high and provides about 3,500 square feet of climbing area. The indoor climbing facility includes rock and moveable hand and foot holds as well as 10 top ropes. Instructional courses are offered for beginning and advanced skill levels.

Project Details

The Department of Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research 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 Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research can be found at <https://sapar.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, those interested can follow Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research on Facebook.

To work with Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://sapar.tamu.edu/aqform/>.

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Report Prepared on: September 6, 2022