

Division of Student Affairs Awards Committee Awards Nomination Experience Assessment Fall 2022

Purpose of Assessment

The Division of Student Affairs Awards Committee wanted to understand how the DSA Awards nomination process was perceived by DSA staff in an effort to increase the number of award nominations. Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) assisted the committee in developing a survey to assess the DSA staff about the nomination process; SAPAR has assisted the DSA Awards committee with other assessments, but this was the first time for this specific survey.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, DSA Awards committee members may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. Committee members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of staff experiences.

- Over two-thirds of respondents indicated that the DSA awards were very important or important, but slightly more than one-quarter were neutral regarding the importance of the awards. Three-quarters of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the award nomination guidelines were clearly defined.
- Although over half of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the awards nomination process has been advertised sufficiently and the process seemed user friendly, approximately one-third were also neutral about those components of the process. Comments from respondents included that marketing regarding the nominations was not early nor frequent enough, did not include information about each award's criteria. Respondents also indicated in their comments that they found the process cumbersome and too time consuming.
 - Respondents provided many suggestions to improve the marketing of the awards nomination process and to streamline the process. Suggestions the awards committee may want to consider include providing completed nomination examples, marketing the awards through various channels throughout the year and include stories of previous award winners. Suggestions for streamlining the process included broadening the criteria, shortening the form, reducing the need for recommendation letters and photos with the nominations.
 - Respondents also commented that department leadership could be more supportive of the award nomination process, including reminding staff about the awards during meetings and initiating nominations themselves when appropriate. A few respondents commented that they and their supervisors perceived the award process biased towards staff who specifically work with students, thus do not bother with award nominations. In highlighting previous award winners, the Awards Committee can be sure to include non-student-facing winners.

Method and Sample

The survey was developed and distributed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The survey contained five quantitative questions and two qualitative questions. Responses were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Microsoft Word® and Excel®. Qualitative responses were analyzed using formal content analyses conducted with two members of the DSA Awards committee and one staff member of Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research. Content analysis identified and categorized main themes from responses of staff to the two qualitative questions.

The survey was sent to 425 staff members who were staff within the DSA as of October 1, 2022. The survey began distribution on October 3, 2022, with two reminders distributed before closing on October 14, 2022. One hundred ninety-nine staff responded to the survey for a response rate of 47%.

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 nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending mean or frequency order, unless otherwise specified. Qualitative coded summary themes are contained in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document.

The survey opened by asking staff how long they had been a staff member within the Texas A&M University (TAMU) Division of Student Affairs. As noted in Table 1, more than half indicated being a staff member for 5 plus years.

	Percent n=56
5 plus years	55%
1 to 5 years	24%
0 to 6 months	17%
7 months to 1 year	5%

Table 1: Length of TAMU DSA Service (n=197)

Next, respondents were asked to indicate their perception regarding the level of importance of DSA awards using a five-point scale. As shown in Figure 1, slightly more than two-thirds indicated they perceived the awards as very important or important (Mean=3.86, sd=.92)

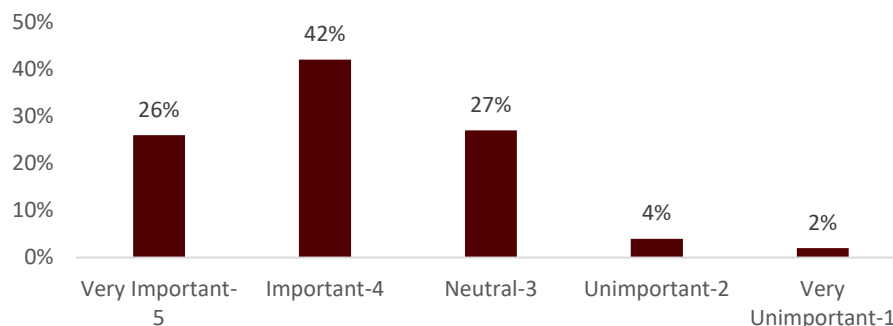


Figure 1: Importance of DSA Awards (n=196)

Respondents were then shown three statements regarding the awards nomination process for which they were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements using a five-point scale. As noted in Table 2, three-quarter of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that nomination guidelines were clearly defined. Respondents least agreed that the nomination process seemed user friendly.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
The Division awards nomination guidelines are clearly defined	14%	61%	20%	4%	1%	3.83 (.76) [183]
The Division awards nomination process has been/is advertised sufficiently	11%	49%	28%	10%	2%	3.56 (.90) [182]
The Division awards nomination process seems user friendly	8%	48%	36%	8%	1%	3.53 (.79) [183]

Table 2: DSA Nomination Process

Respondents were asked to share how they felt the DSA could improve its nomination process. Table 3 below highlights the themed categories of the 44 responses. Many of the improvements highlighted by respondents recommended the DSA streamlining the nomination process that they noted as “cumbersome.” As one respondent put it, “Definitely should be more user friendly and less cumbersome so people feel like nominating will not take up too much of their time.” Responses may have categorized under more than one theme.

Themes	Number of responses
Current process cumbersome/streamline	16
Improve/Increase marketing	10
Department policies surrounding nomination	7
Happy – no changes	6
Broaden award criteria/categories	5
Provide a sample of a nomination	4
Don’t know	3

Table 3: How DSA Can Improve the Nomination Process (n=55)

The second most populous theme regarding respondents’ recommendations in improving the nomination process was improving and increasing marketing. Suggestions included reminders going out to staff throughout the year, encouragement and emphasis of nominating coming from unit leaders and more marketing of current and past winners. A few also suggested highlighting criteria in the marketing, and reasons past winners were awarded to clarify that all types of positions within the DSA can be and are considered for awards.

The final question to respondents explained that in the last few years the DSA had experienced a drop in nominations for DSA awards and asked what the awards committee could do to entice and encourage DSA staff to nominate fellow staff for the awards. Ninety-five respondents provided comments and as shown in Table 4, the most common themed responses were, like above, improve and increasing marketing and streamline the current nomination process. Some of the suggestions surrounding marketing improvements included providing how-to videos showing the nomination process including examples of completed nomination forms, more marketing about how the award winners are selected, and advertising earlier and more often (through-out the year).

Themes	Number of responses
Improve/Increase marketing	30
Streamline current cumbersome nomination process	21
Department leadership encourage/support nominations	11
Miscellaneous improvement suggestions	11
Don't know/ no improvements needed	9
Recognize the nominator	7
Department policies surrounding nomination	6
Provide a template or sample of a nomination	5
Caused by pandemic/staff turnover	4

Table 4: Encouraging DSA Staff to Nominate Fellow Staff (n=103)

Those whose suggestions were categorized as streamline the current process suggested condensing the write-up process, remove the supervisor approval requirement, reducing the number of reference support letters needed, and making the nomination package more accessible. Some suggested adding an initial nomination process that was a short overview of the nominee, then after review and selection of top nominees request more detail. As one respondent shared “I think the nomination process needs to be advertised more and, also the nominations need to be simpler. Multiple letters of reference, essays and forms are cumbersome.” However, another recognized the changes already made to streamline the process, saying, “Continuing to streamline the process for nominating a staff member is the best option. In years past, the amount of time required to submit an award nomination, coupled with trying to track down people to finish support letters, was burdensome. This past year’s process was much more efficient.”

Respondents also thought the process needed more vocal support from department leadership to encourage nominations. One respondent noted that “The directors must increase their involvement in the process”, and another noted, “Have directors give a verbal reminder during a staff meeting. Lots of people just quickly glance at their emails.” A few respondents also indicated that it seemed their supervisors either did not value the awards or felt that their department stopped nominating people because they (their department staff) would not be recognized. One respondent said, “I had the same boss for 10 years and he never nominated any of the staff in the office for any awards or recognition and it was disheartening to some.”

Department Background

Every year the Division of Student Affairs' (DSA) staff nominates people in various departments for awards within the division. According the DSA Awards website

<https://studentaffairs.tamu.edu/awards/>), the awards "recognize outstanding contributions within the Division or the University". The DSA awards ceremony invites all Texas A&M University faculty, staff, and guests to attend to honor the recipients that have been selected for the awards.

Project Details

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) 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 (SAPAR) 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 (SAPAR) can be found at <https://sapar.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, anyone can follow Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research on Facebook.

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

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