

**Offices of the Dean of Student Life
Off-Campus Student Services
Aggie Up! Noise Abatement Course
Fall 2017**

Background

In 2008-2009, Off-Campus Student Services (OCSS) in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life created a three-hour class for off-campus Texas A&M students who have been found in violation of College Station's noise ordinances. The course was developed in conjunction with the police department, OCSS, Student Conduct Office in Student Life, the Texas A&M Student Government Association, and the municipal court. A College Station judge can assign the course as an option for first-time violators. Students pay to enroll in the class, and if they successfully complete it, the judge will reduce their sanction.

The workshop curriculum includes discussion of the city codes, seeing the issues from another's perspective, being a good neighbor, conflict management, and party planning skills. Several goals and learning outcomes were established as a foundation of the curriculum. The goals focused on educating students about their rights and responsibilities as community members and providing expectations about appropriate behavior. The learning outcomes include:

- Students will be able to translate course content into action steps that can be applied to current neighborhood relations.
- Students will be able to list applicable city codes as they relate to off-campus living.
- Students will be able to list ways to have a safe and responsible party.

Student Life Studies has worked with OCSS on assessing this course since 2009.

Method and Sample

A follow-up survey was administered to students approximately six weeks after the course was completed during the Fall 2017 semester. This electronic survey was created using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. All six questions were qualitative in nature, which were analyzed using Microsoft Word®. All 27 students who completed the Noise Abatement Class were sent the survey link through their Texas A&M email address. Of these 27 students, six responded to some part of the survey, providing a 22% response rate.

Results

Summary themes are reported for the qualitative questions in this report; however, the entire list can be found in a separate document.

Students were asked about a step they can take to improve their neighbor relations and four wrote a response. Three of the students talked about communicating with their neighbors and meeting them. This was a similar theme when the survey was conducted during the 2016-2017 academic year. One student did not respond to the actual question, but rather expressed frustration with the course and that it had nothing to do with noise abatement.

All respondents were asked to list a city code violation that applies to off-campus students. All three students provided a different response including noise violation, parking in the yard, and trash. Last year students talked most about parking, trash, and the appearance of their front yard.

When asked to list one party smart skill they could use before, during, or after a party, three students wrote a response. Students mentioned regulating the noise, checking the noise level by walking outside, checking the noise level with neighbors, and inviting fewer people. Talking to neighbors before the party and having a sober host were the most common responses last year.

Class participants were asked about the materials they used from their Aggie Up bag. The cup, information, phone numbers, and cozy were all mentioned. Last year students said additional items including a coaster, magnet, and pen.

Students were asked what information they learned from the class that was most significant to them. Students commented on understanding party violations and that if a house gets more than five violations, it can no longer be rented. One student felt that being able to ask questions to the Police Officer during the class was most significant. Understanding city ordinances were mentioned most last year.

The last question on the survey asked students how they had used the information learned from the class. One student indicated not playing music as loud since the incident and another student reported sharing the information with their roommate. One person said they had used the information but did not explain how that information had been applied. These responses were similar to the previous year.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Similar to previous years, the Noise Abatement course continues to be successful in educating students on the learning outcomes. Students responding to the survey showed they retained information several weeks after the class and could then articulate steps to improve relationships with their neighbor, learned about city ordinances, and identified smart party steps.

Although the Noise Abatement Class will no longer be offered through Texas A&M University, the content from the class may be valuable in general to students. OCSS staff may look at ways to share some of that information. Methods to share this content could be through their website, at Housing Fair, using social media, talking with large student organizations, or making flyers or informative on magnets that are distributed to students.

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