

# Memorial Student Center: MSC CAMAC

## Mi Casa es Su Casa

### 2016-2017

#### **Background**

Per its website <http://camac.tamu.edu/about/> the mission of the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Committee for the Awareness of Mexican-American Culture (CAMAC) is to unite students from diverse backgrounds, establish an appreciation for Hispanic cultures, and provide an education forum regarding current issues affecting the Latino cultures and community. To meet the organizational mission, MSC CAMAC has a variety of sub-committees designed to provide oversight and planning for activities and events sponsored by the committee.

Since 2005, MSC CAMAC has featured the program Mi Casa Es Su Casa whose purpose is to develop a support system for Hispanic students, especially freshmen and transfer students. It is an opportunity for Hispanic students to interact with Hispanic professors as the latter prepare a home cooked meal in their house. This year dinners were hosted monthly from September through April, except December, January and March.

The MSC CAMAC leadership wanted to understand the student experiences with the program, especially its effect on the participating students' motivation to stay in college through graduation. A survey was designed to collect this information and given to students after their participation in each dinner. This is the fourth time MSC CAMAC has worked with Student Life Studies to assess this program.

#### **Method and Sample**

The surveys were produced using Teleform<sup>®</sup>, a software program that creates scannable paper surveys and databases. The surveys included three demographic questions, two quantitative questions and one qualitative question. The data was analyzed using SPSS<sup>®</sup>, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup> and Microsoft Word<sup>®</sup>.

The survey was distributed to students after they joined faculty and staff for a meal in their home on September 20, 2016, October 20, 2016, November 17, 2016, February 15, 2017, and April 20, 2017. Surveys were distributed to 224 participants and 206 participants responded for a 92% response rate.

#### **Results**

Results include frequency percentages, means, and standard deviations (sd) 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%. The agreement scale is 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree and 1=Strongly Disagree. Summary themes are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document.

#### **Demographics**

As students can participate multiple times thus fill out multiple surveys, 116 University Identification Numbers (UIN) of the 206 respondents were unique and 101 of those UINs were valid. Fifty-one participants went to more than one dinner; 25 attended twice, 20 attended three dinners, two attended four dinners and four participant attended five dinners.

The valid UIN data also indicated 62% of participants were female and 38% were male. Classification of attendees (based on 2017 spring semester data) were 16% freshmen, 18% sophomores, 20% juniors, 46% seniors and 1% were doctoral students. Three-quarters (75%) were reported as first generation college students. Based on UIN, TAMU systems indicated the race/ethnicity of participants as 94% Hispanic or Latino of any Race, 3% White, 1% Black only plus 2 or more/1 Black, 1% Asian only, and 1% International students. Table 1 shows the colleges represented by the participants.

| College of...       | % of participants<br>(n=101) |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Liberal Arts        | 32%                          |
| Education           | 18%                          |
| Architecture        | 14%                          |
| Engineering         | 12%                          |
| Agriculture         | 6%                           |
| Business            | 5%                           |
| Veterinary Medicine | 4%                           |
| General Studies     | 3%                           |
| Geosciences         | 3%                           |
| Sciences            | 2%                           |
| Nursing             | 1%                           |
| Public Health       | 1%                           |

Table 1: Colleges of Participants

The participants were also provided a text box on the survey to share their ethnicity. Of the 170 who shared their ethnicity, the majority wrote in Hispanic (56%); the next most common reported themselves as Mexican-American (15%), Mexican (9%), Latino/a (6%) and Hispanic/Mexican (3%). The remaining ethnicities reported from participants included Chinese Singaporean, White, Caucasian, Hispanic white, Hispanic-Salvadoran, Mexican-American and Syrian, Mexican-Filipino, Chicana, Puerto Rican and African-American. Participants were also asked if they were an international student to share what country they were from. Twenty-eight people responded, the majority of those responses were N/A, seven were from Mexico and three were from Singapore.

### **Program Assessment**

Participants were asked about their experience with Mi Casa es Su Casa and its impact on them. As noted in Table 1, on the next page, participants were most favorable about the program being a good use of their time, but were a less positive about its impact on their likelihood to stay in college.

|   | Strongly Agree (5) | Agree (4) | Neutral (3) | Disagree (2) | Strongly Disagree (1) | 2016-17 Mean (sd) [n] | 2015-16 Mean (sd) [n] |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Attending this program was a good use of my time  | 93%                | 6%        | --          | --           | 1%                    | 4.92 (.39) [205]      | 4.86 (.51) [173]      |
| Because of this experience I am more likely to feel comfortable approaching Texas A&M faculty | 84%                | 16%       | --          | --           | 1%                    | 4.82 (.49) [142]      | ‡                     |
| Because of this experience I am more likely to stay in college                                | 78%                | 14%       | 6%          | 1%           | 1%                    | 4.71 (.65) [202]      | 4.62 (.72) [173]      |

Table 2: Participant Learning Outcomes  
‡ Question not asked

Finally, participants were asked to share how this experience motivated them to stay in college through graduation. Two-hundred and two students responded, and many indicated that this experience motivated them to stay in college through graduation because they met people who support and encourage them to be successful. The students also noted that they learned how to interact with professors and faculty as well as they were becoming much more comfortable with those interactions as a result of Mi Casa. Others said they felt like they were part of a family and very welcomed. Some of the participants indicated the experience motivated them because they felt included into the Texas A&M community as they shared their experience with other students and other Hispanics. Quite a few said they were inspired by their hosts as they have had similar experiences to them, and gained a greater understanding of the doors that were open because they will graduate. Some also talked about support resources they learned about on campus while attending the dinners as well.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Student participants in Mi Casa es Su Casa generally reported the program a good use of their time, and found it enhanced their feelings of support and belonging at Texas A&M. Many indicated they were more motivated to stay in college as a result of participating because of the shared experience with other students and Hispanics on campus and gaining inspiration from their hosts. As the participants provided UINs, Mi Casa es Su Casa organizers can verify if participants' persistence supports their declared motivation to stay in college. As 44% participated more than once during the year, it also may be worthwhile to analyze whether those multiple participations resulted in any differences in persistence to graduation.

Mi Casa es Su Casa intends to target freshmen and transfer students for participation, yet upperclassmen constituted the majority of participants in this year's program. Although the classification of participants was analyzed based on spring classifications (when many of the Class of 2020 may have earned credits to be considered sophomores), still freshmen and sophomores represented only 34% of participants. Mi Casa es Su Casa organizers may want to review its marketing strategies and find methods that specifically reach freshmen and transfer students, to increase their participation as indicated in the Mi Casa es Su Casa purpose statement.

MSC CAMAC leadership is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments provided to better understand and appreciate the participants' feedback. They are also encouraged to share the results of

this assessment with those involved in planning Mi Casa es Su Casa, as well as other stakeholders involved, such as the faculty who welcome students into their homes. These results could also be shared with the students who participate, and within marketing materials geared toward future participants.

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