

# **Department of Student Activities Leadership and Service Center Spring Leadership Exchange Program Spring 2016**

## **Background**

The Spring Leadership Exchange (SLE) is an international exchange between Texas A&M – College Station and Texas A&M – Qatar. The Leadership and Service Center, in the Department of Student Activities, provides students participating in the program structured opportunities to learn about global leadership and the importance of service to society. According to its website (<http://studentactivities.tamu.edu/leadership-opportunities/programs/>), “students from each campus visit the partner institution during their respective spring break period. In what amounts to a two-week exchange, students are challenged to consider leadership from a global perspective and develop an inclusive model of leadership which should reflect the values and cultures explored through the exchange experience.”

The purpose of the Leadership Exchange Program is to allow Texas A&M students from the Qatar and College Station campuses to share diverse cultures, perspectives, and experiences with one another while learning together about leadership in a global society. This program enhances the academic experience of the participants by giving them a first-hand opportunity to compare very different cultures and prepare them to participate in a global workforce. Specifically, participants will:

- Participate in meaningful dialogue between students from the Qatar and College Station campuses
- Be exposed to different concepts in leadership and cultural relevance of leadership
- Collaborate with a diverse group to create a common outcome
- Synthesize learning from leadership workshops, cultural experiences, and individual reflections throughout the program

The first half of the exchange was on TAMU-College Station campus from February 26 – March 4, 2016. The week-long schedule included a mix of social, cultural, and educational activities designed to expose the TAMU-Qatar students to various aspects of life in College Station and – to a broader extent – the United States. Activities included a campus tour, Texas A&M Women’s Basketball game, Silver Taps, horseback riding, a tour of Kyle Field, meeting Reveille, volunteering with Twin City Missions, and going to the Houston Rodeo.

The last half of the exchange took place in Doha at the TAMU-Qatar campus from March 11-18, 2016. Similar to the first half of the exchange, there were social, cultural, and educational activities, which exposed the TAMU-College Station students to Doha. During the week-long schedule, students had the opportunity to explore the Texas A&M Qatar campus, participate on a mosque tour, attend a TAMU-Qatar football game (soccer), take a desert safari, go on a dinner cruise, and spend some time at Souq Waqif.

This is the seventh year Student Life Studies has worked with the Leadership and Service Center to assess this program.

## **Method and Sample**

There was one survey designed to assess the Spring Leadership Exchange participants. The survey contained 19 questions, of which six were demographic, five were quantitative, and eight were qualitative. Participants completed the assessment at the conclusion of the exchange.

The survey was developed using Teleform<sup>®</sup>, survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. The data was analyzed using SPSS<sup>®</sup>, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel<sup>®</sup>. There were 25 students participating in the exchange program. All participants completed the assessment for a 100% response rate.

## Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviations (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 the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are included in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document. Comparisons will be made to previous years where appropriate. One note is that in 2015 the only completed surveys returned were from the Texas A&M College Station campus.

Table 1 provides the demographics of the students participating in the Spring Leadership Exchange. A majority of the students were sophomores and juniors living off-campus and had family attend college before them.

	Spring 2016	Spring 2015	Spring 2014	Spring 2013
<b>Texas A&amp;M Campus</b>	<b>n=24</b>	<b>n=12</b>	<b>n=22</b>	<b>n=20</b>
TAMU College Station	50%	100%	50%	60%
TAMU Qatar	50%	--	50%	40%
<b>Classification</b>	<b>n=25</b>	<b>n=12</b>	<b>n=20</b>	<b>n=20</b>
Freshman	--	--	--	5%
Sophomore	48%	42%	45%	25%
Junior	44%	50%	45%	45%
Senior	8%	8%	10%	25%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>n=25</b>	<b>n=12</b>	<b>n=22</b>	<b>n=19</b>
Male	56%	33%	50%	63%
Female	44%	67%	50%	37%
Other	--	--	--	--
<b>International Student</b>	<b>n=25</b>	<b>n=12</b>	<b>n=22</b>	<b>n=20</b>
Yes (Qatar Foundation Sponsored)	16%	--	9%	10%
Yes (Int'l Student at TAMU College Station)	--	8%	5%	5%
No	84%	92%	86%	85%
<b>Current Place of Residence</b>	<b>n=25</b>	<b>n=12</b>	<b>n=22</b>	<b>n=21</b>
On-Campus	32%	50%	36%	43%
Off-Campus	68%	50%	64%	57%
<b>First Generation College Student</b>	<b>n=25</b>	<b>n=12</b>	<b>n=22</b>	<b>n=19</b>
Yes	28%	25%	18%	16%
No	72%	75%	82%	84%

Table 1: Demographics

Participants were asked if they would recommend this program to a friend. Almost all respondents (96%) said yes and only one student (4%) said maybe.

When asked what they learned as a result of their experience with the leadership exchange, most students wrote about gaining a better understanding of each other's cultures, respecting different values and perspectives, and learning how to be a good leader. Several students reported that they learned to communicate and interact with people from diverse backgrounds. Also, some Qatar students included Aggie spirit and the history of Texas A&M.

Students were also asked how they would apply what they learned to other areas of their life. Professionally, students noted being an effective leader while working with diverse people, solving problems in a better way and respecting other people's methods, and communicating and interacting with others despite differences. One College Station student specifically mentioned applying things learned from interacting with another culture and religion to the upcoming event of studying abroad in Egypt. Moreover, one Qatar student talked about bringing the Aggie spirit and traditions to the Qatar campus. One student specifically mentioned applying the information to their position as an RA and peer mentor. Personally, students said they would learn and listen before they judge, be more kind and open minded to others, and continue to learn other cultures and religions.

Students were asked a series of questions to address the program’s learning outcomes. As seen in Table 2, responses were positive overall. A majority of all participants (92%) strongly agreed that they all had meaningful dialog with students from the other campus and only two of those participants (8%) choose to agree.

<b>As a result of participating in the Spring Leadership Exchange...</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2016 Mean (sd) [n=25]</b>	<b>2015 Mean (sd) [n=12]</b>
<b>I had meaningful dialog with students from the other campus (either TAMU-CS or TAMU-Q)</b>	92%	8%	--	--	--	4.92 (.28)	5.00 (.00)
<b>I value differences in others</b>	84%	16%	--	--	--	4.84 (.37)	4.92 (.29)
<b>I can articulate a definition of leadership</b>	68%	28%	8%	--	--	4.64 (.57)	4.42 (.67)
<b>I have learned about leadership from a global perspective</b>	44%	52%	4%	--	--	4.40 (.58)	4.75 (.45)

Table 2: Student Perspective on Learning Outcome Statements

Students were given a chance to share what they felt were the most and least effective elements of the pre-departure meetings. A summary of what to expect, presentations about Texas’ and Qatar’s culture, agendas and logistics, and getting to know the students going on the trip before leaving were most commonly listed as the best part of the meetings. Regarding the least effective elements, of the 11 comments received from Qatar’s students, a majority reported that nothing was ineffective. However, three included that meetings were slightly long, icebreakers were not necessary for every meeting, and the structured discussions were not effective when people were not familiar with each other as well as Tim Powers’ talk. In addition, all College Station students commented on this question. They commonly mentioned Dr. Rotter’s lecture, 8:00 am meetings on Friday, extending meetings, and Aggie traditions as least effective. It is worth mentioning that a few elements rated as the most effective elements were also rated as the least effective, such as the meeting at 8:00 am and Tim Powers’ talk.

Participants were asked what elements of the College Station itinerary worked best. Many students indicated that the campus tours, Rowan Company, Kyle Field, and group lunch were most enjoyable. Alternatively, students were asked which elements of the College Station itinerary were least effective. Responses included the Hillel Center, all-weekend sessions, and the lack of free time to explore College Station.

Additionally, students were asked what elements of the Qatar itinerary worked best and which were least effective. Students generally were very satisfied with the Qatar trip. Several of them indicated that they loved everything. The Desert Safari, food, city exploration, museums, dinner cruise, and the mosque were most appreciated. Regarding the least effective ones, responses included that spending too much time at the museums, limited lunch options, not much time with Doha students, and little scheduled on Friday morning.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, the results indicate the learning outcomes were met. Students from both campuses could have meaningful dialog with students from other campus, value differences in others, articulate what they learned regarding leadership and different perspectives. Students enjoyed getting to spend time together and learning about each other.

According to the comments on pre-departure meetings, planning staff may want to re-design those presentations so that all students from both Texas A&M campuses would benefit. Moreover, planning staff may want to reduce single meeting’s time, spend less time on introducing Aggie traditions, increase social events to strengthen bonds between students, and schedule a later meeting time on Friday if necessary.

Considering that many College Station students felt that the College Station itinerary had limited free time and the Hillel Center was not effective, planning staff may want to consider allocating more free time during weekends and removing the Hillel Center visit.

During the College Station students' time in Qatar, planning staff may want to spread time evenly throughout activities such as free time, group time, and time spent at museums.

Planning staff may want to look into the lasting effects the program has on students. This could be done by giving a follow-up assessment to participants six months or a year after the conclusion of the Spring Leadership Exchange.

While qualitative summary themes were included in this report, the planning staff is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments for a deeper understanding of the feedback from students. It is also recommended that planning staff share this report with program stakeholders.

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