

Housing Fair 2016 Follow-up Survey
Offices of the Dean of Student Life—
Off Campus Student Services
Spring 2016

Background

Every spring Off Campus Student Services (OCSS) in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life at Texas A&M University hosts the Housing Fair, which provides students an opportunity to interact with property managers/vendors, so they can make housing decisions for the summer and fall. The 2016 Housing Fair was held on February 18th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the MSC Bethancourt Ballroom. Student Life Studies has worked with the OCSS to assess students' satisfaction since 2002; this year's survey was sent to attendees later in the semester and intended to assess whether students who attended the fair used the resources offered to find housing for the upcoming summer and fall semesters.

Method and Sample

The survey was developed and analyzed using Qualtrics[®], survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The attendees received an e-mail on April 21st requesting their participation in a 6-question web-based survey. Four of the questions were quantitative and two of the questions were qualitative. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. Five-hundred email invitations to the survey were sent to participants of the Housing Fair. Those 500 attendees were randomly selected from the entire database of attendees to the Housing Fair. Up to three reminders were sent to non-respondents. Of the 500, only 37 responded yielding a 7% 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%. Qualitative themes are reported; the entire list can be found in a separate document

Students were asked how they found out about Housing Fair in a check all that apply format. Table 1, on the following page, indicates that word of mouth continues as the most effective marketing method. The five "other" write in responses all stated that they knew about the Housing Fair from emails.

How did you find out about Housing Fair? (Check all that apply)	2016 Percent (n=37)	2015 Percent (n=467)	2014 Percent (n=568)
Word of mouth	63%	41%	44%
Walk in/Day of advertising	21%	13%	17%
Newsletter	11%	7%	3%
Digital ad in MSC	11%	6%	1%
Other	10%	18%	14%
Banner Hanging from Koldus	8%	9%	*
Facebook	5%	12%	16%

Table 1-How Students Learned about Housing Fair

*not a response option

Next respondents were asked if they have arranged their housing for the next academic year. Of the 37 respondents, 90% selected that they had arranged their housing for the upcoming year, 3% selected that they had not yet arranged their housing but were looking, 3% selected that they had not arranged their housing or started searching, and 5% said that they do not need housing in the Bryan/College Station area for the upcoming academic year.

Feedback was requested regarding how helpful the students found the Housing Fair in assisting their search for housing in Bryan-College Station. Rating on a five point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree, 34 responded and 44% strongly agreed the Housing Fair provided them with helpful information that will assist them in their search for housing, 44% agreed, 12% were neutral. No one selected disagree or strongly disagree (Mean=4.32, sd=.68).

Next students were asked, in a select all that apply format, what resources provided at the Housing Fair they found most useful for their search. Of the 34 responses collected, 75% found the handouts from the properties represented at the housing fair to be the most useful. That was followed by the off-campus survival manual at 29%, the AggieSearch website at 12%. Three percent of cases were “other;” the response given said that t-shirt advertising was useful.

Students were then asked to give feedback about the other resources they were using in their search for housing in the Bryan/College Station area. No responses were collected for this question.

Finally respondents were asked what they would have liked to have learned about off campus living that they did not learn about at the 2016 Housing Fair. Of the 17 responses collected, many of them suggested that the housing vendors did not give enough information on rates and floor plans. Some other suggestions were including smaller properties not just the large student living apartments, talking about utilities and how to set them up, and current resident testimonials about the locations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The feedback received from respondents on the Housing Fair was positive, however the feedback comes from a small portion of attendees. The students that responded to the survey indicated that the Housing Fair provided them with useful information that helped in their search for housing. Many also indicated that they have arranged their housing for next year, which could be attributed to this Housing Fair.

Off Campus Student Services may want to consider adding some booths to the Housing Fair that include the utility companies in Bryan/College Station, and include some of the smaller apartment complexes, and duplexes in the area.

Finally Off Campus Student Services could consider changing the invitation date of the survey to determine how the information from the Housing Fair was used. The invitations this year were sent in late April, during that time of the school year students could have been distracted with finals and likely did not take the time to complete the survey. If the survey were sent out in mid-March instead, perhaps the response rate would be higher.

Off Campus Student Services is encouraged to share these assessment results and subsequent changes with their stakeholders and others outside their department who may benefit.

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