

# MSC Freshmen in Service and Hosting (FISH) Freshman Outcomes Assessment Spring 2018

## **Background**

MSC FISH is one of the student committees in the Memorial Student Center (MSC). According to its website (<http://fish.tamu.edu/>), MSC Freshmen in Service and Hosting (FISH) is a "Freshman Leadership Organization at Texas A&M University. MSC FISH provides leadership opportunities aimed at enhancing its members' purpose and identity by engaging in community service and program development on campus and within the community." MSC FISH was created by students with the focus on aiding freshmen in the development of leadership, integrity, purpose, identity, and independence while fostering personal relationships.

MSC FISH is comprised of approximately 90 freshmen, 18 assistant directors (often sophomore leaders), and seven executive directors (often upper-class students). The structure of the organization includes four subcommittees, which is where most of the work for their programs happen. Each member has the opportunity to serve on one of the four subcommittees to plan and implement a variety of programs and projects. Additionally, MSC FISH has nine "schools" each lead by two assistant directors and includes 10 freshmen. The schools are the social aspect of the organization such as hanging out, planning gatherings, and going on road trips.

Student Life Studies has worked with MSC FISH for 11 years to assess the experience of its members. The MSC FISH leadership team developed learning outcomes in the fall of 2011 for each level of membership in the organization and this year's assessment was focused on measuring the outcomes for the freshmen.

## **Method and Sample**

The survey was developed and distributed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The 32-question survey was comprised of 28 quantitative and four qualitative questions. The data was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel® and Microsoft Word®.

An email with the survey link was sent to all 85 freshmen in MSC FISH on April 27, 2018. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on May 2, 2018. Of the 85 students receiving the survey, 67 completed some part of it, yielding a 79% 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%. Tables are in descending order for spring 2018 means or frequency percentages unless otherwise stated. In addition, summary themes are contained within this report, while the full qualitative responses can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to previous years' survey results will be made where appropriate.

The subcommittees students served on was included on the organization's contact list when the survey was sent out; therefore freshmen did not need to indicate what subcommittee they served on. Table 1, on the following page in descending order by the survey respondents, contains the percentage of freshmen on each organization subcommittee as well as those responding to the survey. Freshmen taking the survey were represented of the subcommittee membership. In looking closer at the breakdown of freshmen from each subcommittee

responding to the survey, 83% of the freshmen on Kyle Field Day took the survey, 82% of the Donations & Marketing freshmen responded, 78% of the students on Development responded, and 71% of Service & Hosting students took the survey.

<b>MSC FISH Subcommittees</b>	<b>Spring 2018 Population [n=85]</b>	<b>Spring 2018 Survey Respondents [n=67]</b>	<b>Spring 2017 Survey Respondents [n=44]</b>	<b>Spring 2016 Survey Respondents [n=65]</b>
<b>Kyle Field Day</b>	28%	30%	25%	28%
<b>Development</b>	27%	27%	25%	26%
<b>Service &amp; Hosting</b>	25%	22%	30%	25%
<b>Donations &amp; Marketing*</b>	20%	21%	20%	22%

Table 1: MSC FISH Subcommittees

\*In 2018 the Leadership subcommittee was changed to Donations & Marketing

Freshmen were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements based on their involvement in MSC FISH. Table 2 illustrates that freshmen generally agreed with all statements regarding their involvement with MSC FISH. They were most positive respecting others' viewpoints; however, were least aware of resources beyond the MSC that are available to them. All statements except two increased when compared to 2017.

<b>Because of my involvement in MSC FISH...</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Spring 2018 Mean (sd) [n=62]</b>	<b>Spring 2017 Mean (sd) [n=46]</b>	<b>Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]</b>	<b>Spring 2015 Mean (sd) [n=84]</b>
<b>I respect others' viewpoints</b>	79%	21%	--	--	3.79 (.41)	3.57 (.54)	3.83 (.37)	3.83 (.38)
<b>I share feelings, information and thoughts with those from different perspectives</b>	76%	21%	2%	2%	3.71 (.58)	3.43 (.66)	3.72 (.51)	3.62 (.54)
<b>I am more accepting of beliefs different than my own</b>	68%	31%	2%	--	3.66 (.51)	3.52 (.66)	3.72 (.45)	3.68 (.50)
<b>I have gained a passion for service</b>	65%	34%	2%	--	3.63 (.52)	3.65 (.48)	3.66 (.65)	3.67 (.47)
<b>I feel confident leading others</b>	58%	37%	5%	--	3.53 (.59)	3.43 (.54)	3.58 (.57)	3.64 (.48)
<b>I feel confident taking initiative</b>	55%	40%	5%	--	3.50 (.59)	3.40 (.58)	3.52 (.58)	3.57 (.52)
<b>I am aware of resources available to me within the MSC</b>	39%	48%	13%	--	3.26 (.68)	3.17 (.82)	3.44 (.62)	3.14 (.64)
<b>I am aware of resources available to me beyond the MSC</b>	31%	57%	13%	--	3.18 (.64)	3.24 (.74)	3.23 (.61)	2.89 (.60)

Table 2: MSC FISH Involvement

In another series of questions, members were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement about the weekly General Committee Meetings (GCMs). Table 3 shows that members agreed most with making friends in MSC FISH. However, members were less in agreement that the GCM topics were relevant and informative. Compared to 2017, members were less positive about the GCM topics being relevant, gaining knowledge from guest speakers and being able to articulate the mission of MSC FISH.

Through attending General Committee Meetings (GCMs)...	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Spring 2018 Mean (sd) [n=62]	Spring 2017 Mean (sd) [n=46]	Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]	Spring 2015 Mean (sd) [n=84]
<b>I have made friends in MSC FISH</b>	77%	19%	2%	2%	3.73 (.58)	3.63 (.53)	3.70 (.51)	3.74 (.49)
<b>I feel included in MSC FISH</b>	50%	44%	5%	2%	3.42 (.67)	3.41 (.65)	3.49 (.71)	3.65 (.53)
<b>I am aware of programs sponsored by other MSC Committees</b>	44%	51%	5%	--	3.39 (.59)	3.27 (.72)	3.65 (.51)	3.29 (.59)
<b>I have gained helpful knowledge from the Guest Speakers at our GCMs</b>	40%	45%	15%	--	3.26 (.70)	3.37 (.64)	3.37 (.68)	3.37 (.66)
<b>I have a better understanding of time management</b>	34%	57%	8%	2%	3.23 (.66)	3.15 (.73)	3.30 (.68)	3.33 (.73)
<b>I can articulate the mission of MSC FISH</b>	39%	45%	16%	--	3.23 (.71)	3.35 (.77)	3.27 (.69)	*
<b>I feel that the GCM topics are relevant and informative</b>	19%	60%	16%	5%	2.94 (.74)	3.17 (.77)	3.15 (.62)	3.14 (.60)

Table 3: MSC FISH General Committee Meetings

\* Statement Not Asked

In addition to being asked their level of agreement in being able to articulate the mission of MSC FISH, freshmen were then asked to write the mission of the organization. Of the 52 freshmen who wrote the mission for MSC FISH, three wrote it exactly correct. A majority of the students were able to provide main elements of the mission; however, three indicated they did not know. Engaging in community service was mentioned in some way the most by 88% of respondents. Additionally, 73% indicated something about leadership development or leaders, 42% reported the organization targeted freshmen or was a Freshman Leadership Organization and 42% talked about serving the Bryan/College Station community. Approximately one-quarter (27%) of the freshmen talked about program development and 17% commented on serving the Texas A&M campus. Some other ideas included were developing servant leaders, building friendships/relationships, and doing selfless service.

Members were asked a series of questions focused on the learning outcomes established for their role in MSC FISH. They were asked to consider their responses to the four statements prior to their involvement in the organization and then after their involvement with MSC FISH this year. Table 4, on the following page in descending order by after involvement, demonstrates that members reported growth for all statements from when they joined MSC FISH to the end of the year. Compared to 2017, members were more positive on three of the statements before their involvement, and they were slightly more positive on all statements after their involvement.

Through my involvement in MSC FISH...	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Spring 2018 Mean (sd) [n=62]	Spring 2017 Mean (sd) [n=46]	Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]	Spring 2015 Mean (sd) [n=65]
<b>I feel comfortable articulating a message when speaking in front of a group.</b>								
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	34%	42%	19%	5%	3.05 (.86)	2.98 (.80)	3.00 (.87)	3.08 (.76)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	68%	27%	5%	--	3.63 (.58)	3.50 (.55)	3.69 (.49)	3.62 (.52)
<b>I ask questions to gain necessary information when needed.</b>								
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	42%	44%	15%	--	3.27 (.71)	3.07 (.71)	3.23 (.59)	3.23 (.61)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	65%	34%	2%	--	3.63 (.52)	3.61 (.49)	3.72 (.51)	3.71 (.46)
<b>I initiate task(s), perform and complete assigned task(s) by a specific timeline.</b>								
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	48%	45%	7%	--	3.42 (.62)	3.24 (.60)	3.39 (.57)	3.43 (.53)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	65%	34%	2%	--	3.63 (.52)	3.54 (.50)	3.73 (.44)	3.68 (.47)
<b>I use resources that are available to complete specific tasks.</b>								
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	29%	60%	10%	2%	3.16 (.66)	3.17 (.68)	3.31 (.55)	3.18 (.58)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	61%	39%	--	--	3.61 (.49)	3.59 (.50)	3.69 (.46)	3.63 (.52)

Table 4: MSC FISH Learning Outcomes

The last series of questions asked members to rate the impact that various areas of MSC FISH had on their development during their freshman year. Table 5 reveals that service events and schools had the largest impact on the freshmen's development during the year. Alternatively, freshmen felt the GCMs had the least impact on their development. Freshmen rated service events and GCMs as having less of an impact compared to last year.

Rate the impact that the following areas of MSC FISH had on your development freshman year.	Significant Impact (4)	Some Impact (3)	Little Impact (2)	No Impact (1)	Spring 2018 Mean (sd) [n=58]	Spring 2017 Mean (sd) [n=45]	Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]
<b>Service Events</b>	71%	29%	--	--	3.71 (.46)	3.76 (.48)	3.74 (.50)
<b>Schools</b>	83%	9%	3%	5%	3.69 (.78)	3.62 (.65)	3.79 (.50)
<b>Road trips/ Retreats</b>	74%	16%	5%	5%	3.59 (.82)	3.40 (.86)	3.77 (.45)
<b>Subcommittee work</b>	45%	38%	14%	3%	3.24 (.82)	3.24 (.88)	3.32 (.76)
<b>GCMs</b>	10%	53%	28%	9%	2.66 (.79)	2.84 (.85)	3.01 (.72)

Table 5: Impact

As a follow-up question, freshmen were asked what one area of MSC FISH from Table 5 had the largest impact on their development. Of the 55 members that responded, schools were the most commonly cited by 55% of the responses as having the largest impact. When asked to explain their choice, members mentioned schools helped them build relationships and create a community their first year of college. They described the schools as comfortable, supportive, and safe. Just over one-quarter (27%) of the freshmen indicated that service events had the largest impact on their development. They talked about making a difference, finding their passion, discovering about themselves, and looking beyond themselves to help others. Road trips and subcommittees were each listed by 7% of the freshmen. Students talked about the road trips as having no interruptions or stress so they could focus on creating stronger bonds with other members. The subcommittees were how freshmen felt they contributed to MSC FISH and had the opportunity to practice skills. One person (2% of the respondents) reported the GCMs had the largest impact and provide the opportunity to explore a different topic.

When asked to share anything that MSC FISH taught them over the year such as skill sets and mindset changes they gained, 53 members responded with a variety of answers. Members mentioned specific skills gained through MSC FISH such as writing professional emails, running a meeting, writing grants, speaking with others, and managing time. Several talked about working with a variety of people, understanding others, listening to others, and building relationships. Additionally, many mentioned service and developing a passion for helping others.

Freshmen were invited to share any additional comments or suggestions regarding their experience with MSC FISH, and 37 wrote a comment. Approximately half of all the responses were praises about students' experience in MSC FISH such as it was the best decision they made, learning lots from the experience, meeting so many people, and making friends. Alternatively, there were several suggestions shared including allowing more transparency, especially from the student staff to the freshmen, planning more road trips/retreats, having more deadlines, and being more inclusive. There were several who felt the GCMs were boring, long, and pointless. There were ideas about making these weekly meetings more meaningful and engaging. A few would like to see freshmen having more influence in the organization and programs that are planned, as well as more tasks being given to freshmen to do. Some students indicated they felt MSC FISH was focused more on the social aspect than service. One person indicated that people should not be punished for not doing their service hours and that punishing someone sent the wrong message about why we should do service in the first place.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

MSC FISH members continue to report learning more about themselves and others, respecting others' viewpoints, and sharing with those from different perspectives. They expressed their enjoyment at being involved and that they had made friends through MSC FISH. The schools and the social aspect is what freshmen feel is the most impactful in their development.

MSC FISH leadership may want to explore the purpose of the General Committee Meetings. Are these being used to really develop the freshmen? Meetings could be mapped to different areas that were the focus when MSC FISH was created: development of leadership, integrity, purpose, identity, and independence.

Freshmen reported growth in all four learning outcomes when asked to think about how they were when they joined MSC FISH and where they were at the end of the year. However, freshmen also reported feeling fairly strong about their abilities in these areas before joining MSC FISH. It may be beneficial for the leadership to look at direct measures for these areas and see the differences or possible growth of freshmen throughout the year, rather than students' self-reflected view of their growth. If the leadership is serious about doing this, they should have a plan developed early in the fall semester for directly assessing freshmen to ensure there is ample time to develop an instrument as well as identify when the best time to administer it would be.

The MSC FISH leadership is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of the members' feedback. There were several comments with specific examples or detailed experiences that may be beneficial for the leadership to read in its entirety. The MSC FISH leadership is also encouraged to share this information with the leadership staff for the 2018-2019 academic year, as well as share the results with other interested stakeholders.

Many of the results from this year are similar to what has been seen in the past few years. MSC FISH may want to consider how beneficial this assessment is in making improvements for the organization. If the survey is not going to be changed, it may not be necessary to administer it every year. If it will continue to be administered, it may be helpful to change some questions to learn new information that may help in making changes for the future. Furthermore, if the organization is planning to administer a survey, it should be planned out in advance and be scheduled as part of the calendar. The last several years, MSC FISH leaders have come to Student Life Studies very late requesting assistance with this assessment. This has not allowed for any conversation with Student Life Studies staff to better understand what the goals of the assessment are and if the current instrument is best suited.

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