

# MSC Freshmen in Service and Hosting (FISH) Freshman Outcomes Assessment Spring 2016

## **Background**

According to its website (<http://fish.tamu.edu/>), the Memorial Student Center (MSC) Freshmen in Service and Hosting (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 is dedicated to aiding freshmen in the development of leadership, integrity, purpose, identity, and independence while fostering personal relationships.

The MSC FISH structure contains eight “schools,” which are smaller groups of freshmen led by upperclassmen. Members also have the opportunity to serve on one of four subcommittees to help plan and implement a variety of programs and projects. Through these subcommittees and schools, the MSC FISH staff helps freshmen become acquainted with the campus and community while serving as mentors.

The MSC FISH leadership team developed learning outcomes in the fall of 2011 for each level of membership within the organization and this year’s assessments focused on outcomes for freshman. This is the ninth year MSC FISH has worked with Student Life Studies to assess outcomes for its members.

## **Method and Sample**

The survey was developed and distributed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The survey contained 33 questions: 28 quantitative, four qualitative, and one demographic. The data was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel® and Microsoft Word®. The spring 2016 survey was distributed to 77 freshmen, and 71 took the survey 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%. 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 scale used was 4=Strongly Agree, 3= Agree, 2=Disagree and 1= Strongly Disagree. The report is divided into four sections – Demographics, Involvement, General Committee Meetings, and Overall.

## **Demographics**

Members were asked to identify the MSC FISH subcommittee in which they participated. Table 1 contains the percentage of members who reported belonging to each committee.

<b>MSC FISH Groups Subcommittee</b>	<b>Spring 2016 (n=65)</b>
Kyle Field Day	28%
Development	26%
Service And Hosting	25%
Leadership	22%

Table 1: MSC FISH Subcommittees

## Involvement

Members were asked to indicate their agreement with a series of statements based on their involvement in MSC FISH. As noted in Table 2, members were generally positive, and respondents were more aware of resources available to them beyond the MSC than in previous years.

Because of my involvement in MSC FISH...	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]	Spring 2015 Mean (sd) [n=84]
I respect others' viewpoints	83%	17%	--	--	3.83 (.37)	3.83 (.38)
I am more accepting of beliefs different than my own	72%	28%	--	--	3.72 (.45)	3.68 (.50)
I share feelings, information and thoughts with those from different perspectives	75%	23%	3%	--	3.72 (.51)	3.62 (.54)
I have gained a passion for service	75%	18%	6%	--	3.66 (.65)	3.67 (.47)
I feel confident leading others	62%	34%	4%	--	3.58 (.57)	3.64 (.48)
I feel confident taking initiative	56%	39%	4%	--	3.52 (.58)	3.57 (.52)
I am aware of resources available to me within the MSC	51%	42%	7%	--	3.44 (.62)	3.14 (.64)
I am aware of resources available to me beyond the MSC	32%	58%	10%	--	3.23 (.61)	2.89 (.60)

Table 2: General Outcomes Statements

## General Committee Meetings

In another series of questions, members were asked to indicate their agreement about General Committee Meetings (GCMs). As Table 3 on the next page shows, the responses were primarily positive; members agreed most with making friends through General Committee Meetings. Respondents were much more positive about becoming aware of programs sponsored by other MSC Committees through the general meetings than they were in 2015.

<b>Through attending General Committee Meetings (GCMs)...</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [71]</b>	<b>Spring 2015 Mean (sd) [84]</b>
<b>I have made friends in MSC FISH</b>	73%	24%	3%	--	3.70 (.51)	3.74 (.49)
<b>I am aware of programs sponsored by other MSC Committees</b>	66%	32%	1%	--	3.65 (.51)	3.29 (.59)
<b>I feel included in MSC FISH</b>	59%	34%	4%	3%	3.49 (.71)	3.65 (.53)
<b>I have gained helpful knowledge from the Guest Speakers at our GCMs</b>	46%	45%	7%	1%	3.37 (.68)	3.37 (.66)
<b>I have a better understanding of time management</b>	41%	49%	8%	1%	3.30 (.68)	3.33 (.73)
<b>I feel that the GCM topics are relevant and informative</b>	27%	63%	8%	1%	3.15 (.62)	3.14 (.60)

Table 3: General Committee Meetings Outcomes

### Overall

Freshmen were asked if they could articulate the mission of MSC FISH. Of the 71 who responded, 41% strongly agreed and 45% agreed that they could articulate the mission, 14% disagreed and none strongly disagreed. They were then asked to write in the mission of MSC FISH. Nearly all were able to at least partially identify the mission of MSC FISH. Many indicated that it was to provide freshmen with opportunities to develop leadership skills through service and develop a passion for service, other comments generally indicated that MSC FISH wants to help freshmen engage in leadership and service to the community. The attached document includes the comments provided by the members.

The next set of questions asked freshmen specifics about the learning outcomes established for their role within MSC FISH. They were asked to consider their responses to the questions prior to their involvement and then after their involvement with MSC FISH this year. Table 4, on the following page, shows that members reported they were most positive about initiating, performing, and completing tasks on a timeline after being involved with MSC FISH. While members were least positive about feeling comfortable speaking in front of a group, this is the outcome where they gained the most improvement from before and after their involvement in MSC FISH this year.

<b>Through 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 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]</b>	<b>Spring 2015 Mean (sd) [n=65]</b>
<b>I initiate task(s), perform and complete assigned task(s) by a specific timeline.</b>						
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	44%	52%	4%	--	3.39 (.57)	3.43 (.53)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	73%	27%	--	--	3.73 (.44)	3.68 (.47)
<b>I ask questions to gain necessary information when needed.</b>						
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	31%	61%	8%	--	3.23 (.59)	3.23 (.61)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	75%	23%	3%	--	3.72 (.51)	3.71 (.46)
<b>I use resources that are available to complete specific tasks.</b>						
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	35%	61%	4%	--	3.31 (.55)	3.18 (.58)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	69%	31%	--	--	3.69 (.46)	3.63 (.52)
<b>I feel comfortable articulating a message when speaking in front of a group.</b>						
<i>Before my involvement this year</i>	34%	37%	25%	--	3.00 (.87)	3.08 (.76)
<i>After my involvement this year</i>	70%	29%	1%	--	3.69 (.49)	3.62 (.52)

Table 4: Outcomes

Members were then asked to rate the impact that various areas of MSC FISH had on their development during their freshman year. Table 5 shows that schools and road trips/ retreats had the largest impact on freshmen's development during the year.

<b>Rate the impact that the following areas of MSC FISH had on your development freshman year.</b>	<b>Significant Impact (4)</b>	<b>Some Impact (3)</b>	<b>Little Impact (2)</b>	<b>No Impact (1)</b>	<b>Spring 2016 Mean (sd) [n=71]</b>
<b>Schools</b>	83%	13%	4%	--	3.79 (.50)
<b>Road trips/ Retreats</b>	79%	20%	1%	--	3.77 (.45)
<b>Service Events</b>	77%	20%	3%	--	3.74 (.50)
<b>Subcommittee work</b>	49%	35%	14%	1%	3.32 (.76)
<b>GCMs</b>	25%	52%	21%	1%	3.01 (.72)

Table 5: Impact

As a follow up question, respondents were asked what one area of MSC FISH from Table 5 had the largest impact on their development. Of the 69 members that responded, schools were the most commonly cited as having the largest impact. When asked to explain their choice, members mentioned the sense of belonging, community, family, and support that their school provided being integral to their development over the year. Members wrote that service events helped them in developing a passion for service and their organization. Responses about subcommittees and their role in developing leadership, time management, and professionalism were also common.

The next question asked members to share anything that MSC FISH taught them over the year such as skill sets and mindset changes they gained. Sixty-nine people responded with a variety of answers, the most common being an a passion for selfless service, leadership skills, a greater appreciation for relationships with peers, the importance of supporting others, and open-mindedness towards new and different people, ideas, and experiences.

Freshmen were prompted to share any additional comments or suggestions regarding their experience with MSC FISH. The majority of comments were glowing accolades of their experiences with MSC FISH, indicating it was a great experience. Many constructive suggestions for changes were provided including that freshmen would have liked to have participated in more projects, and been provided leadership opportunities, as well as delegated tasks that seemed only the purview of Assistant Directors. Other comments were included as well, such as having GCMs focused more on helping members navigate their freshmen year and college in general.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

MSC FISH members reported learning more about themselves and others, becoming more aware of their ability to be open to others' viewpoints, and increasing their passion for service as a result of joining MSC FISH. They expressed their enjoyment at being involved and that they had friends through MSC FISH.

Staff may look at increasing programming that targets the needs and development of freshmen. A more intentional variety of activities and topics offered at the GCMs focused on the experiences of freshmen, and including freshmen in the planning process could lead to members being more invested in the programs. Leadership should also consider placing more responsibility on freshmen, as it may help with their development towards desired learning outcomes and their feeling of purpose in the organization.

The freshmen participants reported growth towards the learning outcomes targeted for them, and in every category reported higher confidence in the outcomes than previous years. As it is the lowest rated outcome, a focus on public speaking would be useful in the 2016-2017 year.

Finally, as freshmen involved in MSC FISH report such positive social connections and engagement as a result of their participation in the organization, leadership may want to consider evaluating the participants' rate of persistence at Texas A&M in comparison to their classmates who do not get involved in MSC FISH. Are these MSC FISH participants more likely to remain and graduate from Texas A&M than their non-participating classmates?

The MSC FISH leadership is encouraged to read all the qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of the member's feedback. The MSC FISH leadership is also encouraged to share this information with the leadership staff for the 2016-2017 academic year, as well as share the results with other interested stakeholders.

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