

Department of Residence Life
AFAM and Aggie Familia End of Year Assessment
2017 – 2018

Background

The Department of Residence Life was initially awarded a Division of Student Affairs College Completion Grant for the 2016-2017 academic year to create a support network for under-represented students living on-campus, specifically Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latino students. This grant was renewed for the 2017-2018 academic year. Following from the Aggie family ideal, the Black/African-American group was referred to as AFAM and the Hispanic/Latino group was named Aggie Familia.

As part of the grant, identity-conscious programs and mentoring opportunities were planned throughout the 2017-2018 academic year for these student populations. Programs included topics such as academic connections, money management, stress management, and finishing the semester strong. Through these events, AFAM and Aggie Familia students were able to connect with faculty, staff, and other students to establish and build a community with people, programs, and resources.

The grant planning committee worked with Student Life Studies to understand students' experience over the 2017-2018 academic year. While several assessments have been conducted as part of the Aggie Familia/AFAM initiative, this was the first time for assessing the students' overall experience at the end of the academic year.

Method and Sample

An electronic survey was developed in Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. The 15-question survey contained 11 quantitative and four qualitative questions. Student Life Studies evaluated the results using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Excel®.

Student Life Studies sent an email with the survey link to the 3,458 students in the AFAM and Aggie Familia initiative on April 25, 2018; however, one email address was not valid. Non-respondents received up to three reminders prior to the beginning of finals week. In order to increase the response rate, the survey was kept open after finals ended. Two additional reminders were sent to non-respondents before the survey closed on May 14, 2018. From the 3,457 students receiving the survey, 309 students completed some part of the survey, yielding a 9% response rate.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending mean or frequency percentage order for the Spring 17-18 column unless otherwise stated. Results are reported by each student population throughout the report; the Aggie Familia results are shaded a light gray on all tables. For the qualitative questions, the summary themes are contained in this report, but the full listing is in a separate document. Some questions were asked of students at the welcome events held in September 2017 and some similar questions were asked of students from the first year on an assessment administered at the end of the fall semester in November/December 2016. Comparisons will be made where applicable.

Respondents were asked about personal connections they made during the academic year. Table 1 illustrates students made more connections with peers, especially from their classes, the residence halls, and student organizations. Students selecting the “other” response option wrote other students, friends, roommate, and church. Additionally, for several response options, students were asked to name specific people. These results can be found in a separate document. More AFAM students seemed to make connections with faculty, peers in AFAM, and Residence Life staff compared to Aggie Familia students. When comparing results from the end of the fall semester for the first year to the end of the spring semester for the second year, students were similar in reporting connections made with peers. However, it seems more students made connections with faculty and any staff/advisor when looking at the end of the spring semester.

| Select anyone you have made a personal connection with. (select all that apply) | Spring 17-18 Aggie Familia Frequency Percentage [n=132] | Spring 17-18 AFAM Frequency Percentage [n=35] | Spring 17-18 Overall Frequency Percentage [n=167] | 16-17 Overall Frequency Percentage [n=223] |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Peers in your classes | 76% | 63% | 73% | 78% |
| Peers in the residence halls or apartment | 51% | 63% | 53% | 54% |
| Peers in student organizations you have joined | 52% | 54% | 53% | 51% |
| Residence Life staff (RA, APM, Community Director, etc.) | 31% | 43% | 34% | 27% |
| Faculty | 20% | 43% | 25% | 14% |
| Organization advisor | 9% | 14% | 10% | 4% |
| Peers in Aggie Familia/AFAM | 6% | 17% | 8% | 5% |
| Other staff members | 5% | 11% | 7% | 3% |
| Other | 5% | 9% | 6% | 3% |

Table 1: Connections

Students were asked about the most important goal they set for themselves during the academic year, and 160 students shared their goal. A majority of the students referenced an academic goal such as achieving a specific GPA, passing classes, or making good grades. Some also talked about developing good study habits, not procrastinating, creating a study schedule, and managing their time. A few indicated their goal was to get off academic probation, get into graduate school, change their major, and find an internship. Other goals mentioned included balancing school with social life, being involved, making friends, and finding themselves.

Furthermore, when asked about the achievement of their goal, 55% indicated they were on track to achieve their goal by the end of the semester, 34% reported they had already achieved their goal, and 12% said no they had not/would not achieve their goal (n= 178). Looking at each student population, 50% of the Aggie Familia students were on track, 36% had reached their goal, and 15% had not/would not reach their goal. For AFAM students, 70% were on track to achieve their goal, 28% had already achieved it, and 3% had not/would not achieve it.

Using a select-all-that-apply option, respondents were asked who they relied on while they have been at Texas A&M. Table 2, on the following page, shows students relied on their peers the most. Those selecting the “other” response option wrote that they relied on their family, faith, themselves, roommate, tutoring, and student organizations. AFAM students report relying on faculty members, organizational advisors, and Residence Life staff slightly more than Aggie Familia students.

| Who have you relied on while you have been at Texas A&M? (select all that apply) | Spring 17-18 Aggie Familia Frequency Percentage [n=143] | Spring 17-18 AFAM Frequency Percentage [n=39] | Spring 17-18 Overall Frequency Percentage [n=182] | 16-17 Overall Frequency Percentage [n=231] |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Peers/Friends | 90% | 90% | 90% | 90% |
| Faculty | 25% | 31% | 26% | 26% |
| Organization advisor | 19% | 23% | 20% | 20% |
| Residence Life staff (RA, APM, Community Director, etc.) | 15% | 26% | 17% | 18% |
| Other | 11% | 10% | 11% | 16% |
| Other staff members | 7% | 8% | 7% | 7% |

Table 2: Relied On

Students were asked a follow-up question to explain how these individuals supported them while they have been at Texas A&M. Many of the 119 comments shared that these individuals provided encouragement, kept them motivated, were there for them, offered advice, held them accountable, and gave them support. They talked about specific areas such as studying, transitioning into college, making connections and friends, and getting internships.

Students were asked their level of agreement or disagreement with different statements about their perception of Texas A&M and the Department of Residence Life. The scale used for these statements was Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). In descending order by the Spring 2017-2018 Aggie Familia column, Table 3, on the following page, displays the results. Both populations had the highest agreement that they planned to graduate from Texas A&M University, and both populations felt that Residence Life had a stronger commitment to diversity compared to the university. AFAM was least positive about the university's commitment to diversity, while Aggie Familia was least positive about being able to be themselves at Aggie Familia or AFAM events. Furthermore, all statements decreased when compared the students' level of agreement in September at the beginning of the second year to April/May at the end of that academic year. The AFAM students were more positive than the Aggie Familia students for Residence Life having a strong commitment to diversity, recommending the program to their friends, and being able to be themselves at Aggie Familia/AFAM events. Alternatively, Aggie Familia students were more positive about feeling welcomed at Texas, A&M and that the university had a strong commitment to diversity. Furthermore, these students were slightly more positive about their plan to graduate from Texas A&M when compared to AFAM students.

| | SA (5) | A (4) | N (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | Spring 17-18 Aggie Familia Mean (sd) [n] | Spring 17-18 AFAM Mean (sd) [n] | Sept. 17-18 Aggie Familia Mean (sd) [n] | Sept. 17-18 AFAM Mean (sd) [n] | 16-17 Aggie Familia Mean (sd) [n] | 16-17 AFAM Mean (sd) [n] |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|--|--|---|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| I plan to graduate from Texas A&M University. | 77% | 21% | 1% | -- | 2% | 4.71 (.64) [128] | 4.70 (.56) [40] | 4.92 (.33) [130] | 4.83 (.58) [23] | ‡ | ‡ |
| | 75% | 20% | 5% | -- | -- | | | | | | |
| I feel welcome at Texas A&M University. | 40% | 43% | 13% | 4% | 1% | 4.17 (.85) [128] | 3.88 (.82) [40] | 4.61 (.65) [131] | 4.39 (.72) [23] | 4.21 (.86) [177] | 3.77 (.98) [60] |
| | 23% | 48% | 25% | 5% | -- | | | | | | |
| Residence Life has a strong commitment to diversity. | 26% | 41% | 26% | 4% | 3% | 3.83 (.97) [126] | 4.08 (.89) [40] | 4.57 (.66) [131] | 4.57 (.66) [23] | 3.93 (.87) [178] | 3.70 (.94) [60] |
| | 38% | 38% | 20% | 5% | -- | | | | | | |
| Texas A&M University has a strong commitment to diversity. | 27% | 38% | 21% | 9% | 5% | 3.74 (1.10) [126] | 3.55 (1.04) [40] | 4.42 (.72) [131] | 3.83 (1.03) [23] | 3.84 (1.01) [178] | 3.27 (1.19) [60] |
| | 25% | 20% | 40% | 15% | -- | | | | | | |
| I would recommend other Aggie Familia/ AFAM events to my friends. | 18% | 28% | 46% | 2% | 6% | 3.50 (1.00) [123] | 3.80 (.91) [40] | 4.80 (.50) [133] | 4.83 (.49) [23] | ‡ | ‡ |
| | 30% | 23% | 45% | 3% | -- | | | | | | |
| I was able to be myself at Aggie Familia / AFAM events.* | 13% | 27% | 48% | 5% | 7% | 3.34 (1.02) [122] | 3.58 (.96) [40] | 4.66 (.70) [134] | 4.91 (.29) [23] | ‡ | ‡ |
| | 23% | 20% | 53% | 3% | 3% | | | | | | |

Table 3 – Perceptions

‡ Question not asked

*On the Sept. 17-18 survey the question asked: "I was able to be myself at the Welcome Social."

Respondents were provided a list of statements and asked to select the three that were most important to them. Table 4, on the following page in descending order by the Spring 2017-2018 Aggie Familia column, communicates that receiving various opportunities, resources, and services to help them succeed was important to both populations. The Aggie Familia students rated growth and development based on their racial/ethnic identify the lowest; similarly, AFAM students rated growth and development and mentoring from others who could identify with their Aggie experience as the lowest. AFAM students seemed to have a higher desire to have a support network of people who identify with their racial/ethnic identity and mentoring from others who can identify with their Aggie experience compared to Aggie Familia students.

| From the list below, please select the three that are most important to you. | Spring 17-18 Aggie Familia Frequency Percentage [n=126] | Spring 17-18 AFAM Frequency Percentage [n=38] | Sept. 17-18 Aggie Familia Frequency Percentage [n=131] | Sept. 17-18 AFAM Frequency Percentage [n=23] | 16-17 Aggie Familia Frequency Percentage [n=174] | 16-17 AFAM Frequency Percentage [n=59] |
|---|--|--|---|---|---|---|
| Various opportunities, resources, and services that are critical to my success | 78% | 71% | 64% | 70% | 74% | 80% |
| Feeling included in campus life | 61% | 55% | 76% | 70% | 67% | 68% |
| Sense of community with people who identify with my racial/ethnic identity | 44% | 42% | 64% | 52% | 41% | 49% |
| Mentoring from others who can identify with my Aggie experience | 38% | 34% | 31% | 48% | 43% | 36% |
| Support network of people who identify with my racial/ethnic identity | 34% | 47% | 52% | 22% | 28% | 39% |
| Growth and development based on my racial/ethnic identity | 22% | 34% | 37% | 48% | 21% | 24% |

Table 4: Values

When asked if they had faced challenges as a student of color at Texas A&M, overall 36% said yes and 64% said no (n=171). This was slightly higher than when students in the first year were asked about this at the end of the fall semester; 30% said yes and 70% said no (n=233). Additionally, there were differences when looking at each population separately. The AFAM students had a closer split, and it was more common for them to report having had challenges as a student of color at Texas A&M. Over half of the 40 students taking the survey (58%) said they had faced challenges and 43% said they had not. Alternatively, for the Aggie Familia students, 29% reported they had faced challenges and 71% said they had not faced challenges as a student of color (n=131). This difference in populations is consistent when looking at the results from the first year at the end of the fall semester: 53% of AFAM students reported facing challenges while only 23% of the Aggie Familia students said they had faced challenges.

Students were asked to explain their responses and 91 wrote a comment. Students who reported they had faced challenges discussed feeling left out or lonely, having difficulty with other students being able to relate to his/her experiences, receiving comments about their skin and/or hair, being told they do not belong at Texas A&M, and being called names by other students. Those who said they had not faced challenges talked about other students being welcoming, inclusive, and nice. One student said students are treated by the way they behave. A few students indicated they had faced challenges, but it was not based on being a student of color but rather the transition to college. A few students also stated that they do not look diverse so they have not experienced any challenges.

The final question on the survey asked students what kind of support, if any, would help them continue to be successful / be more successful at Texas A&M. There was a wide range of comments from the 74 students who shared. Students wanted caring advisors or help with academic advising, finding a community of racial peers, receiving general support and academic assistance (tutoring, disability services, counseling, etc.), having access to student services, finding mentors, receiving more financial aid, having more diversity on campus, and offering more opportunities to meet other students.

Demographic information was gathered on students through the university's student database. Table 5, on the following page, in descending order by the survey respondents for each category, displays the data for the population and the survey respondents. For most areas, the survey respondents matched closely with the population. There were fewer Engineering and male students taking the survey compared to the population. Alternatively, there were more first generation, junior, and female students responding to the survey compared to the population.

| Demographics | Population Frequency Percentage [N=3,458] | Respondents Frequency Percentage [n=309] |
|--|--|---|
| College | | |
| Engineering | 31% | 22% |
| Liberal Arts | 15% | 18% |
| Science | 9% | 11% |
| Agriculture and Life Sciences | 9% | 10% |
| Education & Human Development | 8% | 9% |
| Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences | 7% | 8% |
| Architecture | 4% | 6% |
| General Studies | 7% | 6% |
| Geosciences | 2% | 4% |
| Mays Business School | 7% | 3% |
| Public Health | 2% | 3% |
| Other: Bush / Galveston | <1% | -- |
| Classification | | |
| Sophomore | 35% | 35% |
| Freshmen | 37% | 33% |
| Junior | 16% | 21% |
| Senior | 12% | 9% |
| Other: Masters, non-degree, doctoral, & Vet | 1% | <1% |
| Race/Ethnicity | | |
| Hispanic/Latino | 86% | 83% |
| Black/African-American | 15% | 18% |
| First Generation | | |
| First Generation | 52% | 61% |
| Continuing Generation | 47% | 39% |
| Unknown | 1% | 1% |
| Gender | | |
| Female | 50% | 71% |
| Male | 50% | 29% |

Table 5: Demographics

Conclusions and Recommendations

Generally students were positive about their experience at Texas A&M; however, Hispanic/Latino students were more positive than their Black/African-American counterparts in many areas. Additionally, Black/African-American students were much more likely to report having faced challenges as students of color.

Students indicated they connected most with their peers, as well as having relied on their peers since coming to Texas A&M. Black/African-American students were more likely to make connections and rely on faculty, Residence Life staff, and organizational advisors than Hispanic/Latino students. However, by the end of the spring semester, both populations reported having more connections with faculty and various staff compared to the end of the fall semester.

Students from both populations indicated planning on graduating from Texas A&M University and that they felt that the Department of Residence Life had a stronger commitment to diversity compared to the institution. However, all perception areas were lower at the end of the year compared to the beginning.

The areas that students reported as most important included having opportunities, resources, and services to support their success and feeling included. The department may want to continue looking at methods for developing opportunities and sharing resources to students. Additionally, it will be important for the department staff to continue to focus on building community in the residence halls and apartments; as well as with certain populations.

For many students, the goal they set for themselves was academically related. The Department of Residence Life has emphasized academic initiatives for all students in the last several years, and they are encouraged to continue this. It is probably not unique that students in these populations set goals related to their academic success. Overall, 12% of the students indicated they had not or would not reach their goal, which is just over 400 students. While not all those students' goal may have been academically related, the likelihood is that there are many students who could benefit from the Academic Peer Mentors or other programs and services offered by Academic Support Initiatives.

The grant planning committee is strongly encouraged to read through the qualitative responses to gain a better understanding of the themes represented in this report. These may also help in making changes or implementing any suggestions students shared. Staff members are also encouraged to share results with their stakeholders. This could be sharing information with Residence Life staff, faculty and staff mentors, and the students involved.

Report Prepared for: Dustin Grabsch and the AFAM/Aggie Familia Planning Committee
Report Prepared by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies
Report Prepared on: June 9, 2018
Analysis Prepared by: Ligia Perez and Alyssa Gonzalez, Student Life Studies
Survey Created by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies

***Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee.
Find Student Life Studies on Facebook!***