

## **Offices of the Dean of Student Life New Student and Family Programs Howdy Week 2018**

### **Background**

Howdy Week is coordinated by New Student and Family Programs in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life and takes place just before the fall semester at Texas A&M University. Howdy Week, formerly known as Gig 'Em Week, is Aggieland's official Week of Welcome. This week is full of events and opportunities for new and returning students to become familiar or reacquainted with the Texas A&M University campus, fellow Aggies, and the Bryan/College Station community. Howdy Week was held on August 19-26, 2018.

Howdy Week staff wanted to capture assessment data about students' experiences attending different activities from the week, specifically the Class of 2022 Photo and the Summer Reading Program. Additionally, Howdy Week Coordinators of signature events were asked for feedback. This was the third time Howdy Week has formally assessed the events through Student Life Studies.

### **Method and Sample**

Two electronic surveys were developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys, and one paper survey was developed using Teleform®, a software program that creates paper-based surveys and databases, to assess different aspects of Howdy Week. Student Life Studies evaluated the results for all assessments using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Excel®. Demographic information of students at an event was gathered from the University student database.

The 14-question Howdy Week Coordinators survey included eight quantitative and six qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The survey link was sent through email on September 4, 2018, to coordinators of the signature events during Howdy Week. Some coordinators were responsible for more than one event during the week and had the option to repeat the survey to respond to the same set of 14 questions for additional events they planned and coordinated. Before the survey closed on September 21, 2018, up to three reminders were sent to non-responders. Of the 95 coordinators who received the survey, 68 responded to some part of the survey, yielding a 72% response rate.

The second survey was for the Summer Reading Program. The survey contained six quantitative questions and one qualitative question. The paper survey was distributed to students who attended one of the faculty-led discussion sessions on August 21, 2018. Of the 77 students receiving the survey, all completed it for a 100% response rate.

The third survey was a follow-up survey for the same students who attended the Summer Reading Program. This survey comprised of two quantitative questions. The survey link was sent on October 4, 2018, to students who attended one of the faculty discussion sessions. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on October 22, 2018. Of the 86 students receiving the link for the follow-up survey, 43 completed some part of it, for a 50% response rate.

The final program being assessed was the Class of 2022 Photo on Kyle Field held on August 21, 2018. New Student and Family Programs swiped student IDs for many of the students attending that event to gather demographic data to understand the make-up of the students attending that event.

## 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%. The summary themes are contained in this report, while the full listing is in a separate document. Comparisons to 2017 will be made where appropriate. This report is divided into three sections: Coordinator Survey, Summer Reading Program, and Class of 2022 Photo.

### Coordinator Survey

Coordinators were asked for the name of the event coordinated as part of Howdy Week 2018. The 47 responses for event names can be found in a separate document.

Event planners were asked what day of the week and time frame their signature event was scheduled. Table 1 shows that Tuesday was the most selected date for events, closely followed by Wednesday and Monday. There was a decrease in events later in the work week compared to 2017. The weekends continue to be the least selected options. In terms of time blocks, also in Table 1, afternoons were the most common time for events to be scheduled, followed by evening and lunchtime.

<b>Event Scheduling</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=71]</b>
<b>Day of the Week</b>	<b>[n=68]</b>	
Tuesday	22%	20%
Wednesday	21%	20%
Monday	21%	16%
Thursday	16%	21%
Friday	13%	20%
Saturday	4%	3%
Sunday, August 26*	3%	1%
Sunday, August 19*	--	--
<b>Time Blocks (select all that apply)</b>	<b>[n=66]</b>	
Late Afternoon (3:00 – 5:00 pm)	38%	‡
Early Afternoon (1:00 – 3:00 pm)	36%	‡
Evening (5:00 – 8:00 pm)	27%	‡
Lunchtime (11:30 am – 1:00 pm)	24%	‡
Mid-Morning (9:30 – 11:30 am)	11%	‡
Late Night (8:00 pm – Midnight)	9%	‡
Early Morning (8:00 – 9:30 am)	5%	‡

Table 1: Event Scheduling

\*change for 2018 dates

‡Question not asked

Coordinators were asked about the estimated attendance for their event. Table 2, on the following page, indicates that almost one-third of the events had about 50-100 students attending. Almost one in five events had over 500 students in attendance. In 2017 this question was formatted to allow respondents to write the attendance and had a range of responses from zero (7%) to 4,500 students. Almost one-third of the write-in responses (32%) had 1 – 99 attendees, 40% had 100 – 500 people, 8% had 501 – 1000 attendees, and 13% had over 1,000 in attendance.

What was your estimated attendance for this event?	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=68]
50-100	31%
Over 500	19%
Less than 50	15%
201-300	13%
101-200	9%
301-400	9%
401-500	4%

Table 2: Event Attendance

When asked about the general nature for their event, 72% of the event coordinators said it was a come and go event and 22% reported it was a structured program. Additionally, 6% selected the other response option and were provided an opportunity to write a comment. Of the three comments, two talked about the event being planned as a come and go event for at least part of it, but that it was also structured. The other comment indicated hosting guided tours.

When asked, through a select all that apply response option, how they marketed their event, a majority of the coordinators, as seen in Table 3, said the Howdy Week brochure or schedule. Those selecting the “other” response option and were provided space to write a response and two shared a comment. One reported Fish Camp and T-Camp, which are extended orientation programs, and the other indicated the event had to be canceled due to a delayed opening for the Zachry Building.

How did you market this event? (Select all that apply)	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=67]	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=68]
Howdy Week Brochure or Schedule	88%	‡
Word of Mouth	75%	‡
Facebook	66%	90%
Instagram	49%	‡
Flyers/Digital Signage	45%	‡
Website	45%	66%
Twitter	43%	63%
Email	34%	‡
New Student Conference/Extended Orientation Program	22%	‡
MaroonLink	15%	‡
Other	5%	60%

Table 3: Event Marketing (‡Question not asked)

When asked if they used any form of assessment for their event, 29% said yes and 71% reported they did not assess their event. There was a slight increase in events being assessed compared to last year when 24% said yes and 76% said no. Coordinators who assessed their event (n=20) were asked a follow-up question to describe how they assessed the event. Of the comments, most mentioned having some type of evaluation or survey. Other assessment methods mentioned included tracking attendance, observation of the event, and a post-event meeting. Some mentioned measuring their program metrics or having analytics but did not explain more about the assessment process. Some also mentioned the results of their assessment or general review of the event.

When asked to share any suggestions for the Howdy Week event proposal process, 27 wrote a comment providing a variety of ideas. Some suggestions included having a social media schedule, scheduling more meetings to discuss proposals, helping with reserving space, pushing the deadline back later, being stricter with times overlapping, and identifying events as come and go vs. structured in the schedule. A couple coordinators reported information in the schedule being inaccurate and suggested having a way to review this. There were several coordinators who described the process as being easy, smooth, and simple.

Coordinators were asked about resources that would have been helpful to them and 22 shared their thoughts. Some of the resources mentioned included meeting in person to covering information, having a website with detailed information, developing an FAQ site, receiving an email notification, suggesting new ideas, providing links that work, offering marketing resources, and helping with making reservations.

Respondents were asked if they utilized the Event Planner Guide. Just over one-third (37%) reported using the guide, 44% said they did not use the guide, and 19% were unsure. Those who reported using the Event Planner Guide (n=25) were given a follow-up question to share their experience. Of the 15 who wrote a comment, just over one-third describe the guide as helpful. Some talked about knowing the steps to plan a program and understanding how to reserve space. A few indicated that the Howdy Week logo was appreciated and easy to use. One commented that he/she had most of the program planned when the guide came out in late July and one indicated that some links did not work.

Coordinators were asked to share any suggestions or changes they had for Howdy Week 2019 and there were 24 comments shared on a variety of topics. A couple people talked about the process for being a signature event. Some thought there should be more late night programming and more promotion. There were a few comments related to the timing of events and that the Class Photo should be right after GatherRING and looking at the time for the ice cream social. One person indicated that receiving a list of useable space options would be beneficial.

The final question asked coordinators about additional events they coordinated and if they wanted to share feedback on that event specifically by completing the survey again. Three-fourths (75%) said they did not coordinate another event, 18% reported they did coordinate another event but did not want to share feedback regarding it, and 7% coordinated another event and would provide feedback. These respondents were taken back to the beginning of the survey to respond to the questions for that event.

### **Summer Reading Program**

Students attending the book discussions with a faculty member received a paper survey at the end of their discussion. This was to gather immediate feedback from participants on their experience with the summer reading program. Students were asked if they read the selected book prior to the book discussions with their faculty member. Almost all students (87%) reported they read the entire book, 12% said they read part of the book, and 1% indicated they did not read the book. This was similar to last year when 90% read the entire book, 10% read part of the book, and 1% did not read the book.

Students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements about the reading program. Table 4, on the following page, illustrates that students were generally positive about all statements. They reported the highest level of agreement about utilizing reflection and critical thinking skills to process the discussion. Students were the least positive about the program helping them feel prepared for a college-classroom environment. Compared to last year, there was an increase of all statements.

<b>Please respond to the following statements:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2018 Mean (sd) [n=77]</b>	<b>2017 Mean (sd) [n=95]</b>
<b>I used reflection to process the discussion with faculty and other students.</b>	65%	34%	1%	--	3.64 (.51)	3.48 (.70)
<b>I used critical thinking skills to process the discussion.</b>	62%	36%	1%	--	3.61 (.52)	3.54 (.62)
<b>I actively participated in the dialogue during the book discussion.</b>	61%	33%	5%	1%	3.53 (.66)	3.52 (.65)
<b>As a result of participating in the summer reading program, I feel prepared for a college-classroom environment.</b>	38%	58%	3%	1%	3.32 (.60)	‡

Table 4: Summer Reading Program Experience  
‡Question not asked

When asked if they would suggest this program to an incoming student next year, 92% of the students indicated they would recommend the program and 8% said maybe. Nobody selected the option to not recommend this program to future incoming students. This was slightly more positive than last year when 87% of the students said yes, 10% said maybe, and 3% said they would not suggest the program.

Students were asked to share any suggestions they had to improve the Summer Reading Program and 51 elected to write a response. Many students shared positive opinions about enjoying the experience. Several suggested that the program include upperclassmen so they could participate again next year. Suggestions included advertising the program more, sharing discussion questions in advance, and having a wider selection of books (fiction, nonfiction, and personal development). Others would have liked to see directional signs to show them where to go, arrange the seating in a circle, and have a deeper discussion.

Approximately 6-weeks after the book discussions, participants were sent an electronic follow-up survey to find out if the summer reading program assisted students in the college-classroom environment. Table 5 reveals that for many students the summer reading program did assist them in the college-classroom environment; however, one-quarter to one-third did not agree.

<b>Please respond to the following statements:</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (4)</b>	<b>Agree (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2018 Mean (sd) [n=43]</b>
<b>As a result of participating in the summer reading program, I have been more comfortable in a college-classroom environment.</b>	19%	56%	23%	2%	2.91 (.72)
<b>As a result of participating in the summer reading program, I felt prepared for a college-classroom environment.</b>	14%	54%	28%	5%	2.77 (.75)

Table 5: Summer Reading Program Follow-Up

### Class of 2022 Photo

Demographics of the students who attended the Class of 2022 Photo during Howdy Week were obtained through the student information system. Table 6, on the following page, displays these results. A majority of the students were male, white, freshmen in the College of Engineering.

<b>Demographic Statements</b>	<b>Class of 2022 Photo [n=1,830]</b>	<b>Class of 2021 Photo [n=1,228]</b>
<b>College</b>		
Engineering	37%	35%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	10%	9%
Liberal Arts	10%	10%
Science	10%	8%
Mays Business School	8%	8%
Education and Human Resource Development	7%	7%
Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Science	7%	6%
General Studies	5%	11%
Architecture	3%	4%
Geosciences	2%	2%
Public Health	1%	1%
Exchange	<1%	<1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	58%	65%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	29%	26%
Asian	7%	4%
Black or Multi-Racial with Black	3%	3%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	3%	2%
International	1%	1%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	--
Unknown/Not Reported	<1%	<1%
<b>Generation Status</b>		
Continuing Generation	72%	76%
First Generation	26%	23%
Unknown	1%	1%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	55%	56%
Female	45%	45%
<b>Classification</b>		
Freshman	87%	88%
Sophomore	9%	9%
Junior	3%	2%
Senior	<1%	<1%
Masters/Doctoral/Non-degree	<1%	<1%
<b>Top 10 Percent</b>		
Top 10%	59%	‡
Not Top 10%	41%	‡

Table 6: Demographics  
‡Question not asked

Citizenship was also gathered for students attending the Class of 2022 Photo event. Almost all students (99%) were from the United States. Other countries represented at this event included Bangladesh, China, Germany, Honduras, India, Mexico, Nigeria, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Summer Reading Program seemed to have been positively received by students and the coordinators for the Signature Events were positive about Howdy Week overall. Specifically, for the Summer Reading Program, students read the books prior to the book discussion, had many positive comments regarding this experience, and would like it to be expanded for upperclassmen. New Student and Family Program staff members are encouraged to look at opportunities to expand the program. Additionally, there might be opportunities to include the reading program with the FYEX courses being discussed at the institution and if reading a book could be a common experience for all new students. This also might allow for further discussions about the book content later in the year.

Last year coordinators offered several suggestions to the Howdy Week planners such as sharing information about scheduling, tracking attendance, marketing their events, and bringing coordinators together before Howdy Week. Based on the feedback this year, it would seem that many of these suggestions were done to improve the experience for the coordinators, and these were generally well-received. There were some additional suggestions from event coordinators this year that New Student and Family Program staff may want to consider. While coordinators who used the Event Planner Guide were positive about it, maybe staff could send it out earlier to the coordinators, or possibly create a coordinators page on the website and post it there. Another idea could be developing a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) from coordinators and share that information on a website. If New Student and Family Programs is unsure of questions to be included, staff could keep track of questions asked for the 2019 Howdy Week to develop the FAQs for the following year.

Howdy Week staff is encouraged to read through all of the qualitative responses to gain a better understanding of the themes represented in this report. New Student and Family Programs is also encouraged to share results with their stakeholders such as other event coordinators, Aggie Orientation Leaders, Offices of the Dean of Student Life, and other stakeholders.

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