

Division of Student Affairs Needs and Training Assessment Summer 2018

Background

Student Life Studies provides training and educational workshops on a variety of assessment topics for staff members in the Division of Student Affairs. In order to meet the needs of staff members, Student Life Studies conducts a survey every three years to understand staff members' experiences and needs related to assessment. Student Life Studies uses this information to develop training programs and resources for the Division of Student Affairs.

Divisional staff members were provided the following definitions as they began the survey:

Assessment—collecting, analyzing, and using data to make decisions for continuous improvement.

Program/Unit—area that the respondent oversees or works in (which could be the whole department or a smaller focus area within a department).

This is the fourth year Student Life Studies has conducted this survey; the previous surveys were completed in the summers of 2009, 2012, and 2015.

Method and Sample

The survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates electronic surveys and databases. The 59-question survey consisted of 49 quantitative questions, three qualitative questions, and seven demographic questions; which was a decrease of 12 questions from 2015. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Word®.

The survey link was sent to a sample of all full-time staff members in the Division of Student Affairs, this was approximately one-third of the division, which represented all departments except Student Life Studies. The survey link was sent to staff members' email account on July 24, 2018; non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on August 7, 2018. Of the 176 staff members who received the survey, 90 completed at least part of the survey, yielding a 51% response rate (an 11% decrease from 2015).

Furthermore, department representation for the sample and the respondents, as well as the response rate by individual departments can be found in Table 1, on the following page. The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (OVPSA) represented the largest percentage of the sample. One note is that department directors were listed as part of the OVPSA. The largest percentage of the respondents was Residence Life. Response rates of individual departments ranged from 100% by three departments to 20% by one department. Almost one-third of all the departments had less than a 50% response rate.

Departments	Sample Percent [n=176]	Respondent Percent [n=90]	Department Response Rate [overall=51%]
University Arts	1%	2%	100%
Becky Gates Children’s Center	1%	1%	100%
Veterans Resource and Support Center	1%	1%	100%
Disability Services	3%	4%	67%
Residence Life	14%	18%	64%
Student Counseling Service	3%	3%	60%
Student Activities	11%	12%	58%
Department of Information Technology	5%	6%	56%
Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs	15%	16%	54%
Recreational Sports	10%	10%	53%
Multicultural Services	3%	3%	50%
Music Activities	2%	2%	50%
Offices of the Dean of Student Life	13%	12%	48%
Student Health Center	2%	1%	33%
Memorial Student Center	7%	3%	25%
Office of the Commandant - Corps of Cadets	7%	3%	25%
University Center and Special Events	3%	1%	20%

Table 1—Department Demographics

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%. The Not Applicable and Don’t Know options were counted as missing data. Tables are in 2018 descending mean or frequency order unless otherwise stated. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are reported in this report; however, the entire list can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to previous years are made where appropriate.

Staff members were asked a series of questions to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on how assessment relates to their work and their thoughts about assessment within their department and the Division of Student Affairs. Table 2, on the following page, illustrates that staff rated the highest level of agreement with their level of awareness of the resources provided by Student Life Studies. Alternatively, staff members were less sure about assessment being part of everyone’s job and how they were incorporated assessment into their work. Several statements about departments and individuals supporting or incorporating assessment decreased compared to the results in 2015.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Mean (sd) [n]	2012 Mean (sd) [n]
I am aware of the assessment resources available through Student Life Studies	51%	41%	7%	1%	--	4.41 (.68) [83]	4.13 (.77) [98]	4.24 (.71) [76]
Assessment is supported in my department	46%	42%	7%	4%	1%	4.28 (.85) [83]	4.35 (.61) [97]	3.97 (.82) [76]
Assessment is tied to our department's strategic plan	46%	40%	8%	5%	1%	4.24 (.89) [83]	4.24 (.80) [93]	3.79 (.79) [63]
My department incorporates assessment into our programs and services	38%	48%	10%	5%	--	4.18 (.80) [82]	4.41 (.80) [97]	3.82 (.83) [74]
Assessment is pervasive in the Division of Student Affairs	32%	54%	9%	4%	1%	4.12 (.81) [81]	4.02 (.75) [90]	3.55 (.88) [69]
I use assessment to make decisions about programs and services	27%	60%	7%	6%	--	4.07 (.77) [82]	4.06 (.70) [97]	3.89 (.70) [72]
My department frequently talks about assessment	33%	47%	10%	11%	--	4.01 (.93) [83]	3.92 (.97) [98]	3.46 (.98) [74]
I incorporate assessment into the work I do	22%	57%	17%	5%	--	3.95 (.76) [83]	4.03 (.72) [99]	4.10 (.48) [72]
Assessment is part of everyone's job	26%	46%	14%	13%	--	3.86 (.96) [84]	4.03 (.92) [97]	4.01 (.80) [75]

Table 2—How Assessment Relates to Our Work

Additionally, staff members were asked a couple of questions regarding their program/unit specifically. When asked if their program/unit had developed learning and/or program outcomes, 81% reported they had developed outcomes, 11% were unsure, and 9% said they did not have outcomes (n=82). Additionally, staff members were asked if their program/unit collected persistence or retention data. Of the 78 responses, 63% stated yes they collected this type of data, 17% were unsure, and 21% reported they did not collect this data.

Using a select all that apply option, staff members were asked about methods their program/unit had used at least once in the past three years. Table 3, on the following page, shows that the utilization of surveys remains the most common method. Additionally, almost two-thirds identified other methods, such as tracking, focus groups, benchmarking, and existing data. Alternatively, 2% reported not knowing the methods that have been utilized. Those who selected the "other" option were provided the opportunity to write a response, which included e-Campus, reporting, and metrics. Staff reported an increase in using surveys, benchmarking, existing data, reflection, and document analysis compared to the results from 2015.

Which of the following methods of gathering data has your program/unit engaged in <u>at least once</u> over the last three years? (Please check all that apply)	2018 Percent (n=82)	2015 Percent (n=98)	2012 Percent (n=77)	2009 Percent (n=117)
Surveys—electronic or paper	95%	92%	91%	88%
Tracking the number of people attending an event/using services	67%	78%	79%	69%
Focus groups	61%	68%	45%	54%
Benchmarking	61%	56%	60%	‡
Using existing data-University level surveys, retention data, etc.	60%	39%	31%	31%
Reflective questions/prompts	56%	25%	16%	8%
Rubrics	45%	50%	42%	35%
Documented Observations	35%	48%	32%	38%
Document analysis	23%	17%	8%	17%
Case studies/scenarios	16%	29%	22%	17%
Photography	13%	13%	9%	10%
Other	4%	5%	9%	10%
I don't know what methods we have used	2%	1%	3%	7%

Table 3—Assessment Methods Used

‡ Question not asked

When asked approximately what percentage of the assessments done with their program/unit in the past year utilized Student Life Studies for assistance, 38% of the 81 staff responding stated 1%-25% of their assessments were done with assistance from Student Life Studies, 17% said between 26%-50%, 27% said between 51%-75%, and 10% reported 76%-100%. Additionally, 7% reported that none of their assessment work was done with assistance from Student Life Studies.

Division staff members were asked if they assessed what students were learning through their experiences associated with their program/unit. Almost two-thirds (63%) of the 80 staff who responded said they did assess student learning, while 23% said they did not, and 15% reported they did not directly work with students. Those who reported they were measuring what students were learning (n=50) were asked a follow-up question to describe how they are assessing student learning. Staff mostly shared the method they used, including surveys, reflection, rubrics, exit interviews, and focus groups. Additionally, several mentioned using observation or performance evaluation; based on how the comment was often written, it seemed this was used often with student employees. A few respondents talked about measuring students' skill before and after the experience.

Using a select all that apply option, staff members were asked about how they shared assessment results within the Division of Student Affairs and separately asked about if they shared assessment results at any level outside the division. Tables 4 and 5, on the following page, demonstrates department staff meetings was the most common method for sharing within the division. Additionally, conference presentations and sharing with faculty/staff outside one's department were the most common external methods selected. Staff who selected the "other" option reported sharing results internally through annual reports, with supervisors and students, and with infographics. Additional methods mentioned for sharing externally included emails to stakeholders, using infographics, at committee or advisory board meetings, benchmarking with other institutions, and through annual reports.

In comparison to previous years, one important note is that this question was asked combining both internal and external methods; therefore a few response options have the same previous results on both tables. Utilizing department websites and marketing materials as well as social media increased compared to 2015. External methods of sharing that increased compared to 2015 include conference presentations, sharing with faculty/staff, using social media, and writing an article for a professional association journal/magazine.

How do you share assessment results with any level within the division? (Check all that apply)	2018 Percent (n=81)	2015 Percent (n=57)	2012 Percent (n=64)	2009 Percent (n=57)
Department staff meetings	80%	88%	88%	95%
DSA Update	35%	‡	‡	‡
Student organization meetings	27%	40%	45%	51%
Department/organization website	27%	16%	20%	28%
Department newsletter/brochures/marketing material	27%	14%	27%	35%
Social media	20%	19%	22%	‡
Other	17%	18%	24%	7%
I do not have assessment results to share	6%	‡	‡	‡
Do not share within my program/unit, department, or division	5%	‡	‡	‡
Press releases	3%	11%	12%	2%

Table 4—Internally Sharing Results
‡ Question not asked

How do you share assessment results at any level outside the division? (Check all that apply)	2018 Percent (n=78)	2015 Percent (n=57)	2012 Percent (n=64)	2009 Percent (n=57)
Conference presentation (state, regional, or national)	53%	40%	45%	18%
Faculty/staff outside of my department	46%	44%	53%	49%
WEAVEonline	26%	‡	‡	‡
Social media	21%	19%	22%	*
Professional association journal/magazine article	19%	4%	8%	4%
University publication (digital or printed)	15%	‡	‡	‡
Student organization meetings	14%	40%	45%	51%
Professional association newsletter	13%	‡	‡	‡
Other	12%	18%	24%	7%
I do not have assessment results to share	9%	‡	‡	‡
I do not share outside the division	8%	‡	‡	‡
Press releases	3%	11%	12%	2%

Table 5—Externally Sharing Results
‡ Question not asked

Staff who reported they did not share assessment results outside the Division of Student Affairs (n=6) were asked a follow-up question to explain why and three shared a comment. One indicated the results were private or for internal use, one said it was not relevant, and one reported not having formal results together yet to share.

The next section focused on staff members' knowledge and their interest in topics related to assessment processes, implementation, and utilization. The scale used for the knowledge questions was 4=extensive knowledge, 3=some knowledge, 2=a little knowledge, and 1=no knowledge. The interest question scale was 4=a lot of interest, 3=some interest, 2=slight interest, and 1=no interest. Table 6, listed in descending order by 2018 Interest on the next page, indicates that staff felt most knowledgeable about developing survey questions, using assessment results, and writing outcomes; which is similar to the results in 2015. However, staff reported feeling less knowledgeable about using assessment results for publications or presentations and using case studies. When looking at staff members' level of interest, they were most interested in learning how to use assessment results for improvement. Staff expressed the least interest in learning about the assessment cycle. In comparing 2018 results with 2015, staff members reported an increase in their level of knowledge for several areas including using assessment results for

improvement, documenting student learning, planning and implementing data collection methods, using benchmarking, analyzing quantitative data, and developing survey questions. Alternatively staff indicated a decrease in their level of knowledge for facilitating focus groups/interviews, using rubrics, and using case studies. Additionally, staff members expressed an increase in interest for all topics. Furthermore, staff members reported a higher level of interest than knowledge for three items: developing survey questions, writing learning/program outcomes, and the assessment cycle.

Please respond to your level knowledge and your interest on the following topics:	2018 Knowledge Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Interest Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Knowledge Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Interest Mean (sd) [n]	2012 Knowledge Mean (sd) [n]	2012 Interest Mean (sd) [70]
Using assessment results for improvement	2.90 (.74) [77]	3.30 (.77) [69]	2.78 (.64) [92]	3.11 (.86) [91]	3.11 (.70) [77]	2.81 (1.02) [70]
Sharing assessment results	2.61 (.77) [74]	3.09 (.83) [70]	2.63 (.78) [94]	2.74 (.81) [92]	2.76 (.75) [77]	2.61 (.97) [70]
Analyzing qualitative data	2.56 (.82) [77]	3.06 (.90) [68]	2.52 (.84) [91]	2.82 (.95) [91]	2.76 (.87) [77]	2.63 (1.00) [70]
Using assessment results for publications/presentations	2.30 (.80) [76]	3.03 (.90) [70]	‡	‡	‡	‡
Documenting student learning	2.73 (.84) [77]	3.01 (.93) [67]	2.62 (.75) [92]	2.96 (.98) [91]	2.64 (.81) [77]	2.79 (.96) [70]
Planning and implementing data collection methods	2.75 (.76) [77]	2.94 (.93) [68]	2.66 (.75) [92]	2.79 (.89) [91]	2.87 (.77) [77]	2.53 (.88) [70]
Using benchmarking	2.74 (.91) [77]	2.94 (.88) [68]	2.68 (.76) [92]	2.88 (.95) [91]	2.93 (.82) [77]	2.61 (.94) [70]
Using assessment results for external benchmarking	2.38 (.84) [77]	2.90 (.89) [69]	‡	‡	‡	‡
Analyzing quantitative data	2.53 (.90) [77]	2.88 (.93) [69]	2.45 (.78) [92]	2.70 (.98) [90]	2.73 (.84) [77]	2.44 (.94) [70]
Developing survey questions	2.94 (.71) [77]	2.85 (.90) [68]	2.79 (.75) [92]	2.74 (.89) [91]	2.94 (.77) [77]	2.54 (.85) [70]
Writing learning/program outcomes	2.88 (.78) [77]	2.84 (.94) [68]	2.90 (.72) [94]	2.71 (.98) [93]	2.99 (.81) [77]	2.42 (.99) [70]
Facilitating focus groups/interviews	2.51 (.84) [77]	2.75 (.96) [67]	2.64 (.85) [91]	2.72 (.95) [90]	2.61 (.85) [77]	2.54 (1.02) [70]
Using rubrics	2.57 (.85) [77]	2.72 (.91) [68]	2.64 (.84) [91]	2.64 (.85) [90]	2.47 (.96) [77]	2.29 (1.02) [70]
Using case studies	2.31 (.82) [77]	2.70 (.91) [67]	2.49 (.87) [92]	2.67 (.93) [91]	2.68 (.90) [77]	2.46 (.86) [70]
Developing reflective prompts	2.43 (.87) [77]	2.68 (1.07) [68]	‡	‡	‡	‡
Assessment cycle	2.74 (.77) [77]	2.57 (.89) [68]	2.73 (.81) [94]	2.41 (.91) [93]	‡	‡

Table 6—Knowledge and Interest in Assessment Topics

‡ Question not asked

Using a select all that apply question, staff members were asked how Student Life Studies could help them in the assessment process. Table 7 illustrates staff members look to Student Life Studies for analyzing or interpreting data and providing general support for assessment efforts the most. Staff reported needing less help from Student Life Studies in providing training or resources, sharing assessment results, and identifying changes to make improvements. Those selecting the “other” response option could write a comment. One respondent reported not feeling official assessment was necessary and the other said for Student Life Studies to continue the good work being done.

How can Student Life Studies help you in the assessment process? (select all that apply)	2018 Percent (n=75)
Analyzing or interpreting data	73%
Providing general support in assessment efforts	72%
Developing assessment questions or prompts	67%
Writing reports to summarize assessment results	63%
Explaining relevance in quantitative data	59%
Planning assessment projects - what should be assessed	56%
Identifying changes to make for improvement based on assessment results	48%
Sharing assessment results	47%
Providing training and resources	45%
Other	4%

Table 7—Help from Student Life Studies

Staff members selecting the option for Student Life Studies to provide training and resources (n=34) were asked a follow-up question to share what topics they would like to see provided. A wide range of suggestions were provided including overall assessment planning, survey design, developing reflection prompts, creating a rubric, interpreting data, using software (Qualtrics, Atlas t.i., etc.), using different methods, and using direct assessment methods.

The final series of questions were demographic in nature to better understand the respondents. As seen on the following page in Table 8, a majority of the respondents were assistant/associate directors who have been in the student affairs profession and the Division of Student Affairs at Texas A&M for more than 10 years. Furthermore, just over half of the staff have assessment responsibilities in their job duties. Over half of the staff advise a student organization, supervise undergraduate students, or supervise graduate students. Those that selected the “other” option wrote administrative staff, end-user support specialist, and senior administrative coordinator.

Demographics	2018 Percent	2015 Percent	2012 Percent	2009 Percent
Job Titles	(n=77)	(n=92)	(n=75)	(n=112)
Assistant/Associate Director	35%	34%	32%	23%
SDS (I, II, III, IV)	25%	25%	*	*
Coordinator/Manager	21%	16%	17%	19%
Director/Department Head	14%	12%	12%	9%
Other	5%	10%	7%	9%
Business Administrator/Coordinator	--	3%	4%	6%
Assessment Responsibilities in Official Job Duties	(n=77)	(n=90)	(n=76)	(n=112)
Yes	52%	61%	51%	51%
No	48%	39%	43%	40%
Don't know	--	‡	‡	‡
Fulltime Years in Student Affairs /Higher Ed	(n=77)	(n=94)		
More than 10 years	46%	47%	‡	‡
7 – 10 years	25%	17%	‡	‡
4 – 6 years	18%	20%	‡	‡
1 – 3 years	12%	15%	‡	‡
Less than 1 year	--	1%	‡	‡
Fulltime Years in Student Affairs at Texas A&M	(n=75)	(n=85)	(n=77)	(n=112)
More than 10 years	37%	47%	39%	32%
1 – 3 years	24%	22%	22%	28%
4 – 6 years	23%	15%	22%	15%
7 – 10 years	12%	12%	13%	15%
Less than 1 year	4%	4%	4%	10%
Advise a Student Organization	(n=77)	(n=92)	(n=77)	
Yes	55%	50%	43%	‡
No	46%	50%	57%	‡
Supervise Undergraduate Students	(n=75)			
Yes	51%	**	**	**
No	49%	**	**	**
Supervise Graduate Students	(n=76)			
No	58%	**	**	**
Yes	42%	**	**	**

Table 8—Respondent Demographics

‡ Question not asked

*SDS levels were asked separately

**Undergraduate and Graduate Students were asked together

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, assessment within the Division of Student Affairs seems to be generally supported; however, it does appear that support and assessment being incorporated in the department and for individuals has decreased since 2012. There was an increase in awareness of the resources provided by Student Life Studies. Additionally, it seems a majority of departments also work with Student Life Studies for their assessment efforts and only 7% of respondents reported that they did not utilize Student Life Studies. Furthermore, almost one-third of the respondents indicated using Student Life Studies more than 50% of the time.

While utilizing surveys to collect assessment data is still the most common method, there were increases in a few other data collection techniques. However, staff reported a decrease in their level of knowledge for facilitating focus groups/interviews, using rubrics, and using case studies. Furthermore, division staff requested having more training in some of these areas. Student Life Studies may want to consider offering training on using other assessment methods beyond surveys. One specific training topic the department might consider is related to reflection questions/prompts. This could include how to write good reflective prompts, analyzing qualitative data, and using qualitative data to make changes.

Almost two-thirds of staff reported that they assessed what students were learning through their experiences or employment. However, staff members were not able to describe how they assessed what students learn as well. Student Life Studies may want to explore offering new training or resources specifically focused on assessing student learning. Since student employment was described often, the department may want to explore a specific training for supervisors on assessing student learning in employment.

While it seems that knowledge related to several assessment topics decreased compared to 2015, interest in all assessment topics increased. Student Life Studies could utilize this information to create training workshops and on-demand videos for staff. Additionally, Student Life Studies could review resources on the website and look at opportunities to update the website with new resources.

Responses about departments using assessment results went down compared to 2015; however, individually staff reported using results slightly more than they did in 2015. It is unknown if staff recognize how colleagues in their department are using assessment results. Student Life Studies could look at options to help highlight assessment work throughout the Division of Student Affairs, and specifically staff using assessment results. This could be through a short write-up on the website or doing interviews with staff members that are shared as a podcast.

Student Life Studies is encouraged to share these results with stakeholders, such as the DSA Assessment Team, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, and department clients. Additionally, Student Life Studies staff should read all qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of the comments and themes.

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