

Division of Student Affairs Committee on Student Learning in the Co-Curricular Graduating Senior Survey for High Impact Practices Spring 2018

Background

According to its website (<https://studentaffairs.tamu.edu/committees/>), the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) Committee on Student Learning in the Co-Curricular (CSL) “promotes the understanding, implementation, assessment, and improvement of transformative learning experiences to prepare students to become integrative and lifelong learners. In support of the DSA strategic plan and other Texas A&M priorities, CSL provides resources for staff who facilitate co-curricular learning experiences for students.”

The Division of Student Affairs is committed to providing High Impact Practice experiences and assessing students’ learning through their involvement in these experiences. Based on AAC&U’s High Impact Educational Practices, The DSA Committee on Student Learning in the Co-Curricular states (<https://slllo.tamu.edu/highimpactpractices/>) that programs, activities, or student organizations may be a High Impact Practice (HIP) based on the following criteria:

- Students invest time and effort in purposeful tasks.
- Students interact with staff, advisors, and peers about substantive matters usually over extended periods of time.
- Students experience diversity through contact with people who are different from themselves.
- Students get frequent feedback about their performance – almost continuously – in settings that allow them to respond to that feedback.
- Students have the opportunity to integrate, synthesize and apply knowledge gained from their classroom/discipline to their co-curricular experience and vice versa.
- Student engagement encourages students to become aware of their values and beliefs and thus to better understand themselves in relation to others and the larger world.

The DSA Committee on Student Learning Assessment Team (CSLAT) wanted to assess students involved in one or more division High Impact Practice to understand their learning and skills developed through these experiences. The committee developed assessment questions to be included on the existing Texas A&M Graduating Senior Survey, administered through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation (OIE&E). This was the first time to formally assess all students on their HIP experiences.

Method and Sample

The Graduating Senior Survey is an existing electronic survey developed in Qualtrics®, a software program to develop web-based surveys. The survey is administered through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness & Evaluation with students who apply for graduation for a specific term (fall, spring, and summer). The DSA Committee on Student Learning Assessment Team developed three questions that were included on this existing survey for the Spring 2018 semester. One question was quantitative and two questions were qualitative. CSLAT identified the University Identify Numbers (UINs) of students who were involved in a division High Impact Practice at any point in their college experience and provided those to OIE&E. Students who had applied for graduation and were given the Graduating Senior Survey with matching UINs to the ones involved in a DSA HIP received these additional three questions. In spring 2018, 130 students received these additional questions, and 94 responded to at least one of the questions, yielding a 72% response rate. This was higher than the overall response rate for the Graduating Senior Survey, which was 47%.

Results

Results will be reported as 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 DSA Committee on Student Learning Assessment Team did a formal qualitative sort for the qualitative responses. The themes developed from this process are included in this report.

Using students' UIN, demographic information was gathered through university student database. Table 1 shows the results of students' classification, college, and gender. Almost all students were U4 and over half were male. Approximately one-third graduated from the College of Liberal Arts. Additionally, the frequency of division High Impact Practice experiences was analyzed, which can be seen displayed in Table 2, on the following page. Of the 130 students involved in a division High Impact Practice, 11% (n=14) were involved in more than one HIP experience. Almost half of the students were involved with the School of Military Science (SOMS) 111 course. The SOMS 111 course is a 1-credit hour course for freshmen in the Corps of Cadets and focuses on identifying your personal goals and developing your personal leadership strengths.

Student Demographics	Frequency Percentages
Classification	
U4	96%
G7	3%
U5	1%
College	
Liberal Arts	35%
Mays Business School	15%
Engineering	15%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	13%
Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences	7%
Education & Human Development	5%
Geosciences	5%
Architecture	4%
Science	2%
Bush School of Government & Public Service	1%
Gender	
Male	58%
Female	42%

Table 1: Student Demographics (n=130)

High Impact Practice Experience	Frequency Percentages
School of Military Sciences (SOMS) 111 Course	49%
Corps International Excursions	12%
Resident Advisor Experience	11%
Leadership, Living, Learning Community	10%
MSC Officer Experience	5%
MSC Hospitality Executive	2%
Parsons Mounted Cavalry	2%
Peer Advisor for Veteran Education	2%
MSC FISH Executive	1%
MSC SCONA	1%
DMS - Liberal Arts Diversity Certificate	1%
Spring Leadership Exchange	1%
Sex in the Dark Facilitator Training	1%
SPRITE Program	1%
Class Councils Directors	1%
CLUES	1%

Table 2: High Impact Practice Experience (n=145)

Using a check all that apply formatted question, graduating students were asked to select the Texas A&M Undergraduate Learning Outcome(s), if any, they developed through their participation in the specific High Impact Practice experience in which they were involved. Table 3 indicates that working collaboratively and practicing personal and social responsibility were rated highest. Students rated their HIP experience the lowest in helping them show proficiency in current technologies and the ability to adapt to emerging technologies.

Texas A&M Undergraduate Learning Outcome	Specific Learning Outcome Statement	Frequency Percentage
Work collaboratively	Work with others to support a shared purpose or goal	72%
Practice personal and social responsibility	Acknowledge and address the consequences of one's own actions	71%
Work collaboratively	Consider different points of view	71%
Practice personal and social responsibility	Recognize an ethical dilemma and apply rational decision-making in order to address it	69%
Communicate effectively	Demonstrate effective oral communication skills	63%
Prepare to engage in lifelong learning	Formulate a plan of personal goals for continued professional growth	63%
Demonstrate critical thinking	Evaluate, analyze, and integrate information a variety of sources	59%
Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence	Articulate the value of a diverse and global perspective	58%
Demonstrate social, cultural, and global competence	Recognize diverse economic, political, cultural, and religious opinions and practices	57%
Demonstrate critical thinking	Develop critical, reasoned positions	54%
Communicate effectively	Demonstrate effective writing skills	42%
Prepare to engage in lifelong learning	Show proficiency in current technologies and the ability to adapt to emerging technologies	33%

Table 3: Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (n=83)

Students were asked two qualitative questions specifically about the High Impact Practice they were involved with: “How did this experience change you?” and “How might the change described above impact your future?” The responses from these questions were analyzed together; eight themes were identified for skills or areas in which students improved or changed as a result of their involvement in their experience. These themes are found in Table 4, with the number of responses for each theme. Additionally, there were 15 responses that were determined to not answer the question at all and were removed from analysis; these comments included statements such as nothing, no, not much, etc. Almost all of these type of responses were from students in SOMS 111 course.

Theme	Number of Responses
Diversity	12
General Statement	12
Confidence	8
Critical Thinking	8
Teamwork	7
Global/International Experience	3
Time & Stress Management	3
Communication	2

Table 4: Number of Responses per Theme

This report describes the eight themes that were identified, which are reported in order based on the number of responses for that theme. Additionally, student quotations are included with each theme. Comments connected to multiple themes were included in all themes that applied; therefore some parts of a comment may seem to connect with other identified themes.

Diversity

Several of the students discussed working with others different than themselves or discovering about different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives. For some this was a challenge, but they learned from that experience.

“The single most important experience I had; more specifically, it was my time within a specific MSC committee. I was forced to ask questions about my own identity because of the inequalities and subtle “-isms” I was experiencing. More importantly, however, I learned how to better address those systemic issues. Additionally, it gave me the confidence to go forth and tackle issues/problems that I am passionate about.”

General Statement

This theme covered a range of ideas that did not fit in the other identified themes or included general statements, but not directly related to the question being asked or the comment was very broad. Some of these included appreciating advisors of the organization or experience, expressing positive feeling of their experience with an organization, or being able to meet friends through their experience. Others shared a general statement such as gaining leadership skills, helping for their career, or supporting them as they transitioned to college life; however, these comments did not provide any specific details.

“There are not enough words to describe the ways these experiences have shaped me. It is because of my MSC involvement and because of my involvement in my church that I have become the person I am today. My MSC experiences shaped me into the person I want to be.”

Confidence

Most comments associated with this theme were about students learning about themselves and gaining self-assurance in their own skills and abilities due to their division High Impact Practice.

"At the time in college when I joined the MSC Fish Executive Team, I already understood myself and what my core values were. However, it was one of the first times where I had to manage and motivate a large group of people as well as set long term goals and the steps necessary to accomplish them. It was one of the most insightful experiences into what management looks like and it really helped solidify what leadership style I am best at. In regards to how my experience on the MSC Fish Executive Team will impact my future, I am much more confident in my ability to lead a large group of people and how to balance being hands-on while allowing myself to delegate work too."

Critical Thinking

There were several comments included in this theme such as having difficult conversations with others, solving problems, and addressing challenging situations.

"Being apart of TSP [The Sex Project] was a great experience. In the sense that it taught me how to have the conversations that no one wants to have but everyone should be taking about! It taught me to care more for myself and my health and it also sparked my interest in health care."

Teamwork

In this theme students talked about being able to delegate tasks to other students and working with others to accomplish some task or project.

"The Memorial Student Center is the most transformative experience I have gone through and undeniably changed my life. It helped me refine my career goals, challenged me to become a better leader, allowed me to gain confidence in myself and my ability to lead, and provided numerous professional and practical skills that will last far longer than the technical knowledge from my coursework. The MSC provided me with a significant international experience, a significant understanding of different cultures, international issues and a greater appreciation for diversity. Through the MSC I have been able to serve the campus and community and mentor many younger students. Through this experience I have had a ton of fun, made the most friends, learned a lot and been challenged and encouraged the most during my time at A&M. I am a better person because of this experience."

Global/International Experience

The comments found in this theme were similar to those in the diversity theme, but they specifically discussed learning from others about different cultures, beliefs, and perspectives due to an international experience.

"The International Excursion was fantastic and exposed me to cultures I was completely unfamiliar with and changed how I view my relationship to others around the world as well as a better understanding of America's strategic place in the world. SOMS 111 was useless. Because of the corps excursion I decided to go back to Eastern Europe again the next summer and learned even more. The knowledge gained in these trips is important to understanding a strategically vital part of the world that is the dividing line"

Time & Stress Management

Students talked about improving their time management and/or stress management because of their High Impact Practice involvement.

"This experience changed me in that I have developed into a better person, leader, and able to manage my time in order to reach my goals."

Communication

There were two comments associated with this theme; however, they were very different. One student talked about being able to articulate their point for unpopular opinions. The other student discussed non-verbal communication through body language.

"This experience exposed me to how much is said and understood through body language. In PMC you learn how to care for and ride horses. Since horses communicate non-verbally, you learn to read the body language of the horse and how to control your body language in order to maintain control of your horse. This put me more in touch with my personal body language and made me better at reading other people's body language."

Conclusions and Recommendations

Students involved in a High Impact Practices identified several skill based areas that they learned and gained through their experience. Students identified these skills through a list, and also could talk about them in the sense of what they gained and how it could help them in the future. However, writing skills and technology abilities were rated the lowest. These may not fit as easily with several of the experiences; however, where they may fit, staff might be able to do more to help students see how these HIP experiences could be assisting them in developing these competencies.

CSLAT may want to consider working with advisors and supervisors to develop learning outcomes for various experiences and strategies to articulate those outcomes to students early in the experience. CSLAT could help advisors and supervisors in how to create a culture of learning within a group and strategies for communicating these expectations with students.

CSLAT is encouraged to establish a marketing message for a variety of stakeholders to share the results from this assessment initiative. Some stakeholders could include advisors for those division-level High Impact Practices and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Furthermore, CSLAT may want to review the process for identifying a High Impact Practice as well as look at previous approved experiences to determine if they really fit the criteria for a HIP.

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