

Student Activities

Student Experience in Freshman Leadership Organizations

Spring 2019

Purpose of Assessment

The Department of Student Activities wanted to better understand students' experience as it relates to their membership in one of the Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLOs). Specifically, Student Activities wanted to look at students' expectations from their FLO experience, if students actually received what they expected, if there were any unexpected benefits due to their membership, and if students would recommend their FLO to new incoming students. Student Life Studies has worked with Student Activities previously to assess different aspects of students in Freshman Leadership Organizations, but this was the first time for this specific topic.

Method and Sample

The electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The seven-question survey contained three quantitative and four qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all the questions. Additionally, student demographics were gathered to better understand program attendance. Data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey link was sent via email to 1,086 first-year students in all of the Freshman Leadership Organizations on April 25, 2019. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on May 2, 2019. One email address was not valid; therefore of the 1,085 students receiving the survey, 496 took some part of it, yielding a 46% response rate.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified some key findings and developed actionable recommendations Student Activities and the Freshman Leadership Advisory Council (FLAC) may take based on the results. However, staff and student leaders may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the FLO community. Staff members and student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- There were a wide range of expectations students had for joining a Freshmen Leadership Organization. Generally, these expectations were met, specifically the expectations for making friends, getting involved on campus, having fun, building leadership skills, and participating in service events. Several years ago there was narrative during recruitment with freshmen that students needed to be in a FLO in order to be successful at Texas A&M. While some students (11%) indicated this as one of the expectations, it would seem those comments are used less during recruitment. Furthermore, there did not seem to be any unexpected benefits that students reported. During recruitment and specifically the FLO Informational, FLAC may consider talking about these common expectations of students and that approximately two-thirds to almost all members reported receiving these during their first year.

- Overall, with a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of +62.2, students highly recommended their Freshmen Leadership Organization to new students. Given the NPS range of -100 to +100, generally, a positive score or anything above zero is considered a good score. Anything at +50 is considered excellent, and above +70 is considered “world class.” Furthermore, 70% of the students responding rated their FLO as a 10 out of 10 on the Net Promoter Score. This is a very positive NPS and one that FLAC may want to share during recruitment for new students.
- In looking at comments from students related to their expectations and why they rated their FLO the way they did on the Net Promoter Score, there seem to be some definite differences between the 18 Freshmen Leadership Organizations. The FLAC advisor may want to look at the results by each FLO separately. However, it is recommended that there be a plan for how to use that information positively and not build an unhealthy competition between the different FLOs. If it is decided that looking at the results by individual FLO would be beneficial, Student Life Studies can provide that data.
- The nature of this assessment was to look at the experience of first-year students in their Freshmen Leadership Organization. It is recommended that FLAC and the FLAC advisor share the overall information gathered from this survey with advisors and students leaders for all individual FLOs. In sharing these results, it may lead to discussions about how to use the results and make continuous improvements for all FLOs. The qualitative comments provided to the FLAC advisor include the FLO of the student making the comment. If the full qualitative comments are needed without the FLO associated with it, please contact Student Life Studies for a second document with only the comments.

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%. Tables are listed in descending mean or frequency order, unless otherwise stated. Summary themes of the qualitative questions are contained in this report; an entire list can be found in a separate document.

FLO members were asked to indicate the expectations they had of their FLO experience prior to joining their organization from a provided list. Based on the expectations students selected they were then asked which of those expectations they actually received from their FLO experience. Both questions allowed students to select as many expectations they had or that they received. Table 1, on the following page in descending order based on expectations prior to joining their FLO, demonstrates almost all students joined a FLO to make friends and get involved. Additionally, a majority of the students reported receiving these two expectations from their FLO involvement.

Students selecting the “other” response option for either question were given the opportunity to write a comment. Five students wrote about expectations they had prior to joining their FLO. Those included being able to plan program, gaining knowledge about business as a non-business major, and being involved with Student Government Association (SGA). One student indicated they resigned from their FLO for personal reasons. Two students provided a comment about what they actually received from their FLO experience. One reported being involved with Senate [a branch of SGA] and the other student indicated he/she had been able to plan programs.

Expectations (select all that apply)	What expectations did you have of your FLO experience prior to joining? [n=496]	Which of the expectations that you had for your FLO experience, did you actually receive from your FLO? [n=461]
Make friends	95%	90%
Get involved on campus	92%	82%
Have fun	82%	77%
Build leadership skills	78%	70%
Participate in service events	69%	63%
Network with other students	66%	56%
Thought it would be cool to be in a FLO	66%	52%
Attend social events on-campus	65%	58%
Join a group of similar people	62%	52%
Learn new things about myself	52%	49%
Attend social events off-campus	52%	45%
The organization was connect to things I believed in	36%	33%
Network with former students/professionals	32%	24%
Form study groups with students in my major	27%	21%
Thought everyone else was joining a FLO	23%	9%
Thought I needed to be in a FLO to be successful at A&M	11%	4%
Other	1%	1%
I did not have any expectations	<1%	--

Table 1: FLO Expectations

Students reporting they received what they were expecting from their FLO experience were given the opportunity to further describe the expectations they had prior to joining their FLO. Two-thirds (67%) of the 227 comments were about making friends or meeting other students. A few specifically discussed meeting people with similar interests or majors as them. Other expectations students mentioned included developing leadership skills, getting involved, doing community service, having fun, and growing personally or learning about themselves. There were a few students who talked about joining a FLO to help as they transitioned to college.

Students indicating they did not receive the expectations they had prior to joining their FLO were asked to explain why they felt that way and 22 students responded with varying comments. Students reported that there were not enough socials or events to have a way to be involved or meet other students. There were also comments about the cliques they experienced in their FLO or other members who were inactive.

All respondents were asked to explain anything they received or learned through their FLO membership that they did not expect. The two main themes from the 233 comments were not new or something students did not expect; however, students talked about it being much more than they anticipated. FLO members talked about gaining friends and described them as family, lifelong, and extremely close. Students indicated they expected to grow or learn about themselves, but that they did not expect to learn so much. They commented on learning about leadership, professionalism, time management, networking, school traditions, communication, public speaking, and gaining confidence. There were a few comments

from students expressing that they learned their FLO was unorganized, it did not do enough service, it was a big time commitment, or that it is was hostile.

Using a Net Promoter Score (NPS) question, FLO members were asked how likely they were to recommend joining their FLO to a friend. The NPS is an index ranging from -100 to +100 and measures the willingness of someone to recommend a product or service to others. Respondents were given the options of zero to 10 with 10 being most likely to recommend their FLO to others. Scores of a nine or 10 are promoters, a score of seven or eight are passives, and scores six and below are detractors.

Given the NPS range of -100 to +100, generally, a positive score or anything above zero is considered a good score. Anything at +50 is considered excellent, and above +70 is considered "world class." As seen on Figure 1, the Net Promoter Score for the FLOs was +62.2.



Figure 1: Net Promoter Score

Figure 2 shows the breakdown of promoters, passives, and detractors. Just over three-fourths (76%) of the FLO members were promoters, 11% were passive, and 13% were detractors. Additionally, Table 2, on the following page, provides a more detailed breakdown of the Net Promoter Score and reveals that over two-thirds of the respondents scored their FLO recommendation at 10.

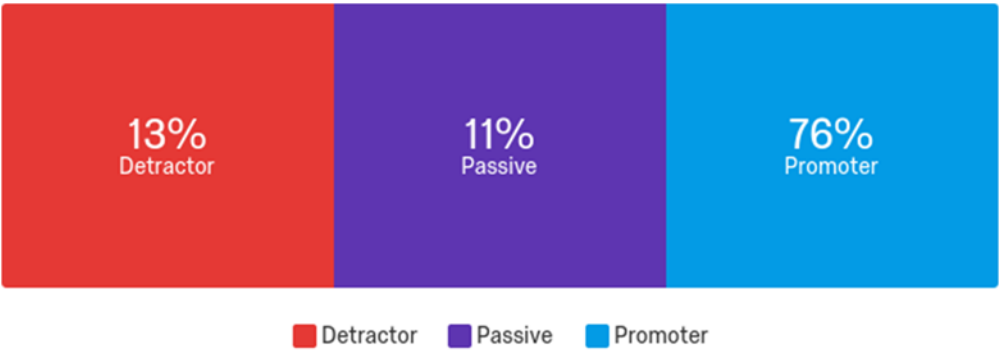


Figure 2: Breakdown of NPS Scores

Net Promoter Score		Frequency Percentage [n=318]
Promoter	10	70%
	9	6%
Passive	8	7%
	7	4%
Detractor	6	2%
	5	3%
	4	2%
	3	2%
	2	2%
	1	1%
	0	1%

Table 2: Breakdown for the Net Promoter Score

Respondents were provided the opportunity to explain their zero to ten rating for recommending their FLO and 262 wrote a comment. Promoters used a wide range of positive comments to describe their FLO experience such as being the highlight of their freshman year, an amazing experience, and life-changing. Several talked about being in a FLO helping with the transition from high school to college, growing in their skills and leadership, and making friends. Those who were considered passive generally indicated their experience was good, but that there was also room for improvement. These students shared that it was a great way to meet other students, be involved on campus, and gain leadership skills. However, some also felt that FLOs were not for everyone, that they are time-consuming, and that they are not always organized. Some of the detractors also indicated that being in a FLO is not for everyone. Others described their FLO as not being welcoming or inclusive, having poor counselors or executives, and needing to change how things are run. A few reported their FLO was not organized, inactive, pointless, and lacked leadership.

Student Activities provided the Freshman Leadership Organization that students were members of, as well as students University Identification Number (UIN). Table 3, on the following page, shows the breakdown of Freshman Leadership Organizations by the full FLO membership and the survey respondents. Demographics were gathered through the student information system, based on the UINs. Table 4, found on page 7, displays this information in descending order for each category by the survey respondents. A majority of the respondents were female, white, freshmen who were not first generation and in the College of Engineering.

	FLO Members [n=1,086]	Survey Respondents [n=496]
MSC Aggie Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT)	9%	8%
Freshmen Reaching Excellence in Engineering (FREE)	6%	8%
Freshmen Leaders in Progress (FLiP)	5%	8%
MSC Freshmen in Service and Hosting (FISH)	8%	7%
Freshmen Leaders In Christ (FLIC)	6%	7%
Freshman Leaders Establishing Excellence (FLEX)	7%	6%
Freshman Leaders On Campus (FLOC)	5%	6%
Freshmen Organizing and Running Mixed Events (FORME)	5%	6%
Aggie Fish Club (AFC)	5%	5%
Freshmen Aggies Spreading Tradition (FAST)	5%	5%
Freshmen Leadership Experience (FLE)	5%	5%
Progressively Reaching Excellence in Professionalism (PREP)	5%	5%
Freshman Leaders in Education and Human Development (FLED)	6%	4%
Freshmen Liberal Arts Reaching Excellence (FLARE)	5%	4%
Fish Council	5%	4%
MSC Freshman Leadership International (FLI)	5%	4%
Aggies Selflessly Serving in Shaping Tomorrow (ASSIST)	4%	4%
Fish Aides	4%	4%

Table 3: Freshman Leadership Organizations

	FLO Members [n=1080]	Survey Respondents [n=494]
Classification		
Freshman	54%	53%
Sophomore	44%	45%
Junior	2%	2%
Senior	<1%	<1%
College		
Engineering	28%	26%
Business	15%	13%
Liberal Arts	13%	13%
Agriculture	9%	11%
Education	9%	11%
General Studies	11%	9%
Veterinary Medicine	7%	7%
Science	5%	6%
Architecture	1%	2%
Geosciences	1%	1%
Public Health	1%	1%
Sex		
Female	53%	59%
Male	47%	42%
Ethnicity		
White	71%	74%
Hispanic or Latino	16%	14%
Asian	7%	7%
Multi-Racial (excluding Black)	3%	3%
African American/Black	2%	2%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
Unknown or Not Reported	<1%	<1%
International	<1%	--
First Generation		
No	88%	89%
Yes	11%	11%
Unknown	1%	<1%

Table 4: Student Demographics

Department and Organization Background

According to its website (<https://studentactivities.tamu.edu/about-us/>), the Department of Student Activities “fosters and supports leadership, learning, and involvement opportunities that enhance the growth and development of students and recognized student organizations. As members of the university community, we are committed to a philosophy of shared responsibility that develops leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good, and we subscribe to the Texas A&M core values of Respect, Excellence, Leadership, Loyalty, Integrity, and Selfless Service.”

There are 18 Freshman Leadership Organizations at Texas A&M University, those individual FLOs report to the Freshman Leadership Advisory Council (FLAC). According to its website (<https://flac.tamu.edu/about/>), FLAC “serve as the over-arching body of the 18 official FLOs. Since FLOs are members of FLAC, we coordinate recruitment between them, create events, establish rules, and uphold standards to ensure every FLO provides a quality experience. FLAC is not a FLO.”

Student Life Studies

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, anyone can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

To work with Student Life Studies for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

Report Prepared for: Bruce Brown, Student Activities
Report Prepared by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies
Analysis Prepared by: Lyric Jackson, Student Life Studies
Survey Created by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies
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