

Offices of the Dean of Student Life

Student Assistance Services

Student Experience Assessment

2018 - 2019

Purpose of Assessment

Student Assistance Services is one of the units in the Offices of the Dean of Student Life. According to its website (<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/sas/>), Student Assistance Services (SAS) “seeks to connect Texas A&M University students with the appropriate guidance, resources, and support to address a variety of personal and academic matters.” Students are often referred to Student Assistance Services for a variety of reasons such as concerning behavior, student death, sexual violence, withdrawal from school, student welfare checks, and general consultation. Student Assistance Services wanted to gather feedback on the experience of students who meet with staff in their office. This is the first time this assessment project has been conducted.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified some key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, Student Assistance Services staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the students they serve. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students’ experiences.

- Students were generally very positive regarding their experience with Student Assistance Services. A majority (83%) of students from the post-assessment said they were likely to reach back out to SAS for help and 80% reported they were likely to refer their friends or peers to Student Assistance Services.
- Student Assistance Services often provides other campus and/or community resources for students. On the post-assessment, a majority (85%) self-reported they could identify at least one resource. Of these students, 94% were able to list at least one accurate resource.
- Almost all of the students on the pre-assessment (93%) indicated they had some level of stress when they were meeting with Student Assistance Services. Staff members may want to consider putting together resources on stress-management to give to all students coming into their office for meetings.
- On the post-assessment some students mentioned the location and office space not being convenient or as comforting. Since Student Assistance Services will be moving to a new building for the spring 2020 semester, the staff may want to think about how to furnish their new space and if there are ways to create a space that feels more comfortable and homey for students.

Method and Sample

Two separate surveys were created to assess students’ experience working with Student Assistance Services. A pre-assessment was given to students as they came to the office for a meeting with a staff member and the post-assessment was sent electronically to students approximately one week after their appointment.

The pre-assessment survey was developed using Teleform[®], a survey design software that creates scannable forms and databases. This paper survey contained seven questions: four were quantitative and three were qualitative. The survey was given to 423 students when they came in for an appointment with one of the staff members in Student Assistance Services. All 423 students took the survey, for a 100% response rate.

The post-assessment survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The 13-question electronic survey contained seven quantitative questions and six qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw every question. The post-assessment was sent to students' email addresses of those who met with a staff member from Student Assistance Services. Surveys were sent approximately once a week from September 21, 2018 through May 20, 2019, to 627 students; however, 13 email addresses were not valid and the survey invitation was not received. Up to two reminders were sent to non-respondents before the survey closed on June 3, 2019. Of the 614 students receiving the survey invitation, 138 completed some part of the survey, yielding a 22% response rate.

The data from both surveys were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending order for mean or frequency percentages. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the entire list of responses can be found in a separate document provided to Student Assistance Services.

Pre-Assessment

Students were initially asked if they were aware of what they were coming into the office for the day of their appointment. Of the 384 students responding, 88% said yes they were aware and 13% reported they were not aware. Students who indicated they were aware why they had a meeting with a staff member from Student Assistance Services (n=336), were asked a follow-up question about any resources they had already utilized to help overcome their current situation. Table 1 shows that over half (58%) reported they utilized Student Counseling Service. Respondents selecting the "other" option were able to write a response. Of the 97 comments, respondents mentioned utilizing 12th Can, University or College Station Police Department, Corps of Cadets, Disability Services, professors, family/friends, the HelpLine or personal counselor, Student Legal Services, and Residence Life staff.

If yes, what resources have you already utilized, if any, to help overcome your current situation? (select all that apply)	Frequency Percentages
Student Counseling Service	58%
Academic Advisor	33%
Other; please share what resources	24%
Student Health Services	21%
Academic Success Center	10%
Student Financial Services	9%
Supplemental Instruction (SI)	8%
Career Center	3%
Writing Center	3%

Table 1: Utilized Resources (n=308)

When asked to indicate their current stress level at the time of their appointment, 54% of the students responding reported experiencing significant stress, 39% said they were experiencing some stress, and 7% indicated they were not experiencing any stress (mean=1.53/3.00; sd=.62; n=419).

Students were asked about their level of comfort regarding their meeting with Student Assistance Services. A majority of the responding students indicated they were comfortable about the meeting (15% were extremely comfortable and 67% were comfortable). Alternatively, 15% reported they were uncomfortable and 3% said they were extremely uncomfortable (mean=2.06/4.00; sd=.64; n=416).

The final questions on the pre-assessment provided students the opportunity to share anything they would like their case manager from Student Assistance Services to know prior to their meeting. There were a wide range of responses from the 209 students who wrote a comment. Some reported they were meeting with SAS for academic reasons such as withdrawing from school, being readmitted, or having some academic challenges. Several talked about their mental state, with many reporting they felt an increased level of anxiety and depression. Some were looking for resources since being discharged from a hospital or other facility for medical or mental concerns, dealing with an emergency, or experiencing a loss of a family member. Some had been referred to Student Assistance Services for resources, information, or support, usually by another staff member on campus.

Post-Assessment

On the follow-up survey, students were initially asked if they were able to identify at least one university and/or community resource that they could utilize after their meeting with Student Assistance Services. Of the 109 responses, 85% said yes they could identify a resource and 15% reported they could not. Those indicating they could identify a resource (n=93) were provided the opportunity to list that resource and 87 students shared a wide range of resources. Some resources students reported that they could utilize included Student Counseling Service, Disability Services, 12th Can, Career Center, and the Sexual Assault Resource Center.

When asked if they actually had utilized at least one resource that they learned about since meeting with Student Assistance Services, 70% of the 115 responses reported they had utilized a resource and 30% said they had not. Students indicating they had not utilized a resource (n=35) were asked a follow-up question to share what had prevented them from utilizing a suggested resource(s). The two most common responses from 28 students were that they did not feel they needed any additional resources or that they had not had the time. A couple of students indicated resources had not been shared with them and one student explained that he or she had met with someone but that the appointment was not helpful.

Students were asked about their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and how they felt they could navigate their situation. Table 2 reveals that students were mostly in agreement with both statements.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd)
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with Student Assistance Services.	59%	27%	10%	2%	3%	4.38 (.93)
After meeting with Student Assistance Services, I was able to make more informed decisions on how to navigate my current situation.	51%	31%	13%	3%	3%	4.25 (.97)

Table 2: Student Experience (n=114)

There were two different follow-up questions based on how students responded to the two questions above. Students who indicated they disagreed or strongly disagreed (n=5) were given the opportunity to share what would have improved their experience with Student Assistance Services. All five students wrote a response with several discussing their individual situation. One person indicated they would like to have met with someone who was compassionate and another stated that they needed more assistance than was given. The second follow-up question was to students who strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to make more informed decisions to navigate their situation (n=93). They were asked what they had done to navigate their situation; numerous response options were shared from the 57 students who wrote a comment. Several students talked about what they had done to improve their academics such as focusing on study habits, talking with professors, understanding the syllabus, and creating a schedule. Some talked about taking some action such as meeting with a counselor, filing an investigation report or police report, creating a budget, and talking with others such as parents, close friends, and advisors. A few mentioned they had avoided certain people or situations.

When asked if Student Assistance Services had helped them continue their enrollment at Texas A&M University, 79% of the 110 respondents said yes and 21% reported no. All students were provided the opportunity to explain their response and 55 wrote a comment. Many of those who said SAS had not helped them continue their enrollment indicated that they were never planning or in jeopardy of leaving school. A few said they had been suspended and one indicated that someone suggested he/she leave the institution. Many of those reporting SAS helped them continue their enrollment, had positive comments about Student Assistance Services and appreciated their support and care. Some said that SAS gave them hope and a new perspective. A couple of students said that the financial assistance they received is what allowed them to continue. Others talked about getting help, staying on track, decreasing stress, feeling safe, and having deadlines adjusted contributed to them remaining in school.

Students were asked about their likelihood to contact Student Assistance Services in the future and their likelihood to refer friends to Student Assistance Services. Table 3 shows that again students reported a fairly high likelihood for both referring a friend and going back to Student Assistance Services.

	Very Likely (5)	Likely (4)	Neutral (3)	Unlikely (2)	Very Unlikely (1)	Mean (sd)
How likely are you to refer your friends/peers to Student Assistance Service?	58%	22%	16%	2%	3%	4.31 (.98)
How likely are you to reach out to Student Assistance Services for help with issues that may arise during your time at A&M?	56%	27%	9%	5%	4%	4.26 (1.05)

Table 3: Student Referrals (n=110)

Students stating they were unlikely or very unlikely to reach out to SAS for help with issues that may arise (n=5) were asked a follow-up question about what would prevent them from contacting Student Assistance Services. Of the five comments, a couple indicated that meeting with SAS did not help their situation. One felt that the location was terrible, and one indicated the staff member SAS recommended lacked empathy and compassion.

The final question gave students the opportunity to write anything else they would like to share with Student Assistance Services to help improve the student experience and 26 provided comments. Many students shared praise for Student Assistance Services and staff who worked with them. There were a few suggestions including for SAS to follow-up more with students after their meeting or to communicate more regarding their investigation. A couple of students recommended for SAS to be more visible so all students know the unit is there for students. A few would like to see SAS in a different location. Some thought that more training related to compassion and empathy would be helpful.

Pre- and Post-Assessment Demographics

The pre-assessment asked students for their name and University Identification Number (UIN). Names were used internally for student meetings and are not included in this report or as a separate document. Additionally, Student Assistance Services provided the UINs of students who were sent the post-assessment. The UINs were used to gather demographic information from the university student database. Based on accurate UINs, the demographics of students attending their meeting with SAS, are listed with the pre-assessment respondents, all students sent the post-assessment, and the respondents to the post-assessment. The demographic information can be found in Table 4, on the following page in descending order for the pre-assessment for each area. There are some slight difference in the pre-assessment and those sent the post-assessment because not all written UINs on the pre-assessment were legible or accurate. The demographics based on the pre-assessment closely match those of students sent the post-assessment, with one slight difference for the classification. There were more Liberal Arts and female students, and fewer General Studies and male students responding to the post-assessment compared to those who were sent the post-assessment.

	Pre- Assessment Respondents [n=382]	Post- Assessment Population [n=401]	Post- Assessment Respondents [n=118]
Classification			
Senior	27%	33%	36%
Sophomore	22%	18%	18%
Junior	21%	24%	22%
Freshman	20%	14%	12%
Masters	8%	8%	9%
Doctoral	3%	3%	3%
Non-degree	<1%	<1%	--
College			
Engineering	23%	21%	20%
Liberal Arts	21%	22%	27%
Agriculture	15%	14%	11%
Education	9%	8%	10%
Business	7%	8%	8%
Science	6%	5%	5%
General Studies	5%	7%	3%
Architecture	5%	5%	6%
Veterinary Medicine	4%	4%	3%
Geosciences	3%	3%	4%
Public Health	2%	2%	2%
Bush School of Government	1%	1%	2%
Nursing	<1%	<1%	--
Sex			
Female	53%	53%	63%
Male	47%	47%	37%
Ethnicity			
White	50%	49%	50%
Hispanic or Latino	27%	28%	27%
African American/Black	8%	8%	7%
International	7%	6%	9%
Asian	6%	7%	4%
Multi-Racial (excluding Black)	3%	3%	3%
American Indian	--	<1%	--
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	--	--	--
Unknown or Not Reported	--	--	--
First Generation			
No	64%	64%	59%
Yes	28%	29%	31%
Unknown	8%	7%	10%

Table 4: Student Demographics

Department Background

According to its website (<https://studentlife.tamu.edu/>), the Offices of the Dean of Student Life “strive to enhance your opportunities as a student to participate fully in the University experience.” The department does this through sharing information, services, programs, and involvement opportunities. Student Assistance Services is one of several program areas in the department. While each area has a specific mission and function, they all have the common goal to provide education, outreach, and support to students.

Student Life Studies and Project Details

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, division staff and students 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/>.

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