Graduate and Professional Student Council
Student Research Week (SRW)
Spring 2019

Purpose of Assessment

The Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) wanted to assess the experience of both the judges and competitors regarding their participation in Student Research Week 2019. Student Life Studies (SLS) has provided assistance in assessment of SWR since 2006; this is the thirteenth time SLS has assisted in developing the survey for the participants of the program.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations that the GPSC may take based on the results. However, the GPSC members and advisors may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. GPSC members and advisors are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of participants' experiences.

- Overall, Student Research Week seems to have accomplished its mission of recognizing student research at Texas A&M and providing students with the opportunity to present research they have been conducting. The opportunity for research presentation seemed to have helped student competitors feel more confident and better prepared in research presentations and dissemination of research results.

- Student Research Week seems to be able to recruit a fair number of competitors for presentation of research results. However, while an increasing number of students have participated in the event, the participation rate of judges is actually decreasing. SWR may want to continue finding ways to recruit more judges. Also, it would buttress the quality of feedbacks participants will receive if more faculty members can be recruited to participate as judges. Perhaps sharing the results of this report early in the academic year with the Faculty Senate and the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies would assist GPSC in its quest to influence faculty to participate as judges.

- Respondents of both the judges' and competitor's surveys continue to signal communication issues between SRW planners and judges, SRW planners and competitors and between the judges and competitors. There seemed to be some confusion about presentation times and a subset of students found feedback they received on their presentation not useful or relevant.
    - SRW may want to continue exploring ways to make presentations at a more specific time, rather than requiring students be present for a large chunk of time.
    - Additionally, several respondents indicated navigation difficulty for the SRW website and confusion over presentation or judging schedules. SRW may want to improve information on the website.
    - Assigning more staff to answer emails more quickly as the event draws near, and creating and making a detailed program available two weeks before the event to include the presentation times could reduce the amounts of complaints from both the competitors and judges.

Method and Sample

Both the judges' and competitors' surveys were developed and distributed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. Responses were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. The judges' survey contained eight quantitative questions and three qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. One hundred fifty-eight judges were emailed the survey link beginning March 26, 2019. Those who had not responded received three reminders and the survey closed on April 11, 2019. Seventy-seven (77) respondents completed at least some part of the survey, resulting in a 49% response rate. The response rate is comparatively higher than last year's 44% response rate.

The competitor survey contained 15 quantitative and two qualitative questions and due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The survey invitation went out via email beginning March 28, 2019. Those who had not responded received three reminders and the survey closed on April 15, 2019. Of the 877 competitors successfully sent the survey, 227 completed at least some part of the survey, resulting in a 26% response rate, a decrease of four percent compared to last year's 30% response rate.

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, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables list data in decreasing frequency or mean order for SRW 2019 unless otherwise noted. Summary themes are reported in this report; the entire list of comments can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to the previous years' surveys are given where appropriate. This report contains two sections: Judges Survey and Competitors Survey.

Judges Survey

When asked how many years they have judged SRW, 67% of the judges said one year, 20% said two years, 4% said three years, 3% said four years and 6% said five or more (n=77). Judges were asked if they served as laymen judges, topic judges or served as both topic and laymen judges. Of those who responded (n=77), 38% served as laymen judges, 46% served as topic judges and 16% served as both laymen and topic judges. Comparison with last year's results showed more judges responding to the survey served as both laymen and topic judges (16% in 2019, 9% in 2018) and a greater percentage of responding judges served as only topic judge (46% reported themselves as topic judges, 38% reported themselves as topic judges in 2018).

SRW organizers provided separate rubrics to laymen and topic judges to rate and provide feedback to the presenters. Those who served as laymen judges were asked if they found the laymen rubric a useful tool in providing feedback to the students. Of the 41 people who responded, 93% of respondents answered yes the rubric was useful, 5% indicated they were unsure if the rubric was useful and only 2% suggested the rubric was not useful. Similarly, topic judges were asked if they found the topic rubric a useful tool in providing feedback to the students. Of the 46 people who responded, 85% indicated that they found the rubric as a useful tool, 11% said they were unsure and 2% said no. Also, there was one judge (2%) who reported not using the rubric at all. Both laymen and topic judges were asked to provide comments regarding the quality of the judges' rubrics. The 32 responses were primarily positive, saying they were easy to understand. A few people thought they were very detailed, while others suggested revising the rubric for scoring group presentations. Please see the attached qualitative document for the full input of the judges regarding the rubric.

Judges were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with specific features of the event on a four point scale. Table 1, on the next page, illustrates that the judges were most satisfied with the on-site check-in and least satisfied with the SRW Website.

	Very Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Dissatisfied (2)	Very Dissatisfied (1)	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
On-site Check-in	79%	20%	1%	--	3.77 (.45) [75]
Packet Information	68%	31%	1%	--	3.66 (.50) [74]
Judging Schedule	58%	35%	4%	3%	3.49 (.71) [74]
SRW Website	35%	58%	6%	1%	3.26 (.50) [74]

Table 1: Student Research Week Satisfaction

Those judges who indicated dissatisfaction were asked to provide reasons why they were dissatisfied. Nine respondents wrote comments and one specifically indicated checking in at a wrong event due to imprecise instruction and another mentioned about confusion with time limits. Others found the website lacking; either it was missing information or was challenging to navigate.

All respondents were asked how the Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC) could improve the next SRW, and 41 judges provided a variety of responses. Comments included expecting better communication before and during the event about scheduling, requirements of judging, signage, and instructions. They also would like the presentations to have a larger audience and the GPSC to make a coordinated effort in promoting this event. A couple of judges noted that several of the posters did not actually present research and several of the competitors did not show up whereas others indicated graduate students in charge of the research projects should not be included as a competitor in SRW.

The GPSC provided SWR judges' UIN and their demographics were gathered through the university student and Qualtrics database. Table 2, on the next page, shows the demographics of judge's contact list and the respondents of the judge's survey, in descending frequency order. Note that some judges are faculty, postdoc or staff so only gender information can be identified.

	Judges	
Classification	**Registered n=156**	**Respondent n=76**
Doctoral	57%	55%
Masters	17%	13%
Faculty	13%	13%
Staff	12%	14%
Postdoc	2%	4%
College	**n=139**	**n=66**
Agriculture & Life Sciences	24%	29%
College of Engineering	24%	18%
Education and Human Development	13%	18%
Science	12%	12%
Liberal Arts	9%	11%
Veterinary Medicine	9%	9%
Geosciences	5%	2%
Medicine	2%	--
Mays Business School	<1%	2%
Pharmacy	<1%	--
Architecture	<1%	--
Sex	**n=156**	**n=75**
Female	57%	59%
Male	43%	41%
Race/Ethnicity	**n=115**	**n=52**
International	50%	40%
White	26%	33%
Hispanic or Latino of any race	13%	17%
Asian	6%	4%
Black or Multi-racial with Black	2%	2%
Multi-racial excluding Black	2%	2%
Unknown	1%	2%

Table 2: Judge Demographics

Competitor Survey

Using a check-all-that-apply format, students that participated in Student Research Week (SRW) were asked if they had presented their research prior to SRW 2019. Table 3, on the next page, illustrates that while many participants had presented their research in a course or for a conference, SRW 2019 is the first venue for some students to present their research. Those who selected "other" were provided the option to write in where they had presented their research. Answers included SRW 2018, group meeting, preliminary exam and research symposiums such as the LAUNCH program and USR symposium and meetings with industry experts.

Prior to SRW 2019, I have presented my research: (select all that apply)	2019 Percent [n=203]	2018 Percent [n=163]	2017 Percent [n=196]
None of the Above	39%	32%	35%
For a class presentation	31%	37%	35%
At a professional conference	30%	35%	35%
At a departmental seminar	15%	22%	27%
At more than one professional conference	15%	20%	19%
Other	6%	6%	7%

Table 3: Research Presentations

Using a check-all-that-apply format, survey respondents were asked why they chose to participate in SRW 2019. Table 4 shows nearly two thirds of students (79%) participated to practice their presentation skills or add experience to their CV or résumé (70%). Also, more than half of the students (54%) participated for getting feedback from judges. Finally, one third of students (38%) participated for the opportunity to win a cash prize. Respondents who chose "other" were provided the option to write in their rationales for participation. Answers included professors encouraged them to join SWR 2019, course, scholarship, program or certificate requirements.

Why did you choose to participate in Student Research Week: (select all that apply)	2019 Percent [n=214]
Presentation Practice	79%
Experience to add to my CV or resume	70%
Feedback provided by judges	54%
Chance at winning cash prize	38%
Other	10%

Table 4: Participation

Competitors were asked if the judges' feedback they received on the feedback form was valuable. Of 217 respondents, 45% said yes, 23% did not receive feedback, 20% were neutral, and 8% said no. Those who answered yes and neutral were asked to explain the most useful parts on the feedback forms. The 79 comments addressed proper communication of research results, body language, research dissemination and implications for future research. Some students mentioned they felt the topic judges may not have a good understanding of their research topics and thus the feedback they received seemed irrelevant.

Those who indicated not finding the feedback from the judges valuable (n=17) were asked to choose from a check all-that-apply list of reasons as to why. As noted on Table 5, on the next page, the most frequently chosen reason was that the competitors did not think the feedback provided on the form would be useful in helping them improve, although that reason was chosen less frequently this year than in 2018 or 2017. The percentage of students who found judges' feedback on the form unclear decreased compared to SRW 2018. Those who chose "other" (n=4) were asked to comment and responses ranged from unclear, missing to conflicting feedbacks.

What reason(s) did you find the feedback from the judges *not* valuable?	2019 Percent [n=17]	2018 Percent [n=14]	2017 Percent [n=20]
I do not think the feedback provided on the form will be useful in helping me improve.	38%	43%	55%
I found the feedback on the form unclear.	24%	36%	10%
I did not receive my feedback form because I did not attend the Closing Ceremony.	14%	14%	25%
Other	19%	36%	30%
I did not receive my feedback form because I did not pick it up after the event.	5%	7%	5%
I did not receive a feedback form because my judge(s) did not fill one out.	--	7%	5%

Table 5: Judges' Feedback Not Valuable

The next series of questions asked whether SRW participants applied knowledge and skills they learned from the classroom to their presentation. Table 6 indicates that almost all respondents agreed obtaining a better understanding of their abilities for research presentation, applying knowledge gained from classrooms and utilizing written/graphic communication skills.

Skill Application	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2019 Mean (sd) [n]
From this experience I have a better understanding of my abilities to present research.	40%	54%	5%	2%	3.42 (.60) [203]
During the experience I was able to apply knowledge of my research and other related information I gained in the classroom setting.	45%	52%	2%	2%	3.41 (.60) [199]
During the experience I was able to apply written/graphic communication skills I learned in the classroom to my SRW research presentation.	47%	48%	4%	<1%	3.31 (.64) [195]

Table 6: Skill Application

Competitors also responded to a series of questions about their overall Student Research Week experience. Table 7 ,on the next page, shows that SRW increased competitors' confidence in presenting their research. The responses have been fairly consistent and positive over the past three years.

Overall, my Student Research Week experience. . .	Strongly Agree (4)	Agree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2019 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]
Helped me feel more confident in presenting research	46%	49%	4%	1%	3.38 (.64) [204]	3.36 (.72) [141]	3.42 (.62) [207]
Increased my awareness of student research at Texas A&M	47%	45%	7%	1%	3.37 (.77) [200]	3.31 (.67) [137]	3.33 (.64) [204]
Contributed to my overall learning/development	37%	58%	4%	1%	3.33 (.57) [203]	3.28 (.69) [140]	3.32 (.74) [208]
Provided a supportive/constructive environment to present my research	40%	51%	7%	2%	3.28 (.70) [201]	3.24 (.77) [143]	3.23 (.75) [208]

Table 7: Overall Experience

When given the opportunity to provide suggestions for improvement, 114 competitors took the time to respond. A majority of the suggestions focused on needing improved communication of presentation schedules, details about the event (e.g., location of check-in table, time of awards ceremony), and specific time slots for the oral presentations and poster judging. A number of students called for more topic judges whose expertise closely align with their presentation topic. Moreover, several respondents reported the website did not contain enough detailed information. There also seemed to be some confusion about when students were supposed to check in before presenting and when judges should start the sessions. Competitors also received conflicting information about whether this was an excused absence. Finally, quite a few participants reported the need for better organization in the award ceremony as some competitors received awards meant for the other category (e.g., awarding a biochemistry prize to a mechanical engineering student) or wrong classification (e.g., a graduate student received an award meant for undergraduate students).

The GPSC provided SWR competitors' UIN and their demographics were gathered through the university student database. Table 8 on the next page shows the demographics of competitors and the respondents of the competitors' survey, in descending order of the competitors' demographics. In Table 9, following on page 8, provides the year- by- year ratio of competitors to judges, in descending percentage order (judges).

	Competitors	
Classification	**Registered n=872**	**Respondent n=223**
Senior	45%	37%
Doctoral	20%	28%
Junior	15%	14%
Masters	10%	13%
Sophomore	6%	6%
Freshman	2%	2%
Med, Third Year	1%	<1%
Med, Fourth Year	<1%	--
Pharmacy, Third Year	<1%	--
Postbac UG	<1%	--
UG Nondegree	<1%	--
College	**n=872**	**n=223**
College of Engineering	29%	22%
Veterinary Medicine	22%	19%
Agriculture & Life Sciences	11%	15%
Science	9%	14%
Education and Human Development	8%	9%
Liberal Arts	7%	9%
Geosciences	5%	6%
Architecture	2%	2%
Public Health	2%	2%
Medicine	2%	1%
Bush School of Government and Public Service	2%	<1%
Mays Business School	<1%	<1%
General Studies	<1%	--
Pharmacy	<1%	--
Exchange	<1%	--
Sex	**n=872**	**n=223**
Female	57%	69%
Male	43%	31%
Race/Ethnicity	**n=872**	**n=223**
White	45%	47%
Hispanic or Latinx of any race	18%	15%
Asian	16%	16%
International	15%	16%
Black or Multi-racial with Black	4%	3%
Multi-racial excluding Black	2%	2%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Unknown	<1%	<1%
First Generation Status	**n=872**	**n=223**
Not First Generation	65%	65%
Unknown	18%	18%
First Generation	17%	16%

Table 8: Competitor Demographics

	2019 n=1043	2018 n=709	2017 n=964
Competitor	85%	78%	79%
Judges	15%	12%	21%

Table 9: Yearly Ratio of Judges and Competitors

Background

The Graduate and Professional Student Council (formerly the Graduate Student Council) created Student Research Week (SRW) as a one-day poster event in 1994. This year, the program celebrated its 22nd annual research extravaganza March 18-22, 2019. Per its website (http://srw.tamu.edu/):

> This four-day competition highlights student research occurring on the Texas A&M campus. Students who participate are provided a venue to present their work through either oral presentations or poster sessions. This event allows students, faculty, and the community to see the depth and breadth of research conducted at Texas A&M. For the past 20 years, SRW has been a valuable tool in meeting the university's mission of academic, research, and service excellence. SRW is a premier program of the Graduate and Professional Student Council and is supported by several academic and nonacademic departments on campus.

The goals for SRW 2019 included increasing participation from judges, competitors, and volunteers; cutting down operation costs through sustainability; spotlighting research and sparking interdisciplinary conversations; and increasing the quality of the experience for all. Not only do students compete in SRW, they also have the opportunity to volunteer during the week and support their peers by attending any of the poster or oral-presentation sessions. Judges can be faculty, staff or graduate students.

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 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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