

Student Government Association

End of Semester Assessment

Fall 2020

Purpose of Assessment

The Student Government Association (SGA) wanted to gather feedback from the Texas A&M University student body to understand students' experiences during the fall 2020 semester and help advocate on behalf of students for the spring 2021 semester. The survey focused on academics, student life, and student involvement. SGA worked with campus partners in developing survey questions and worked with Student Life Studies to administer the survey. Student Government Association has worked with Student Life Studies in the past; however, this was the first time for this assessment focus as it related to students' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Method and Sample

The electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The 59-question survey contained 44 quantitative questions, 14 qualitative questions, and one demographic question. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all the questions. Additionally, student demographics were gathered through the student information system. Data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey link was sent via email on December 17, 2020, to 30,418 students; however, email addresses for 50 students were undeliverable. Non-respondents received up to four reminders before the survey closed on January 6, 2021. Of the 30,368 students receiving the survey link, 2,427 took some part of the survey, yielding an 8% response rate.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations Student Government Association may take based on the results. However, SGA student leaders may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community. Student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

Academics:

- A majority of the students (88%) reported physically being in College Station for the fall semester. Additionally, 73% indicated being in College Station after Thanksgiving. Of the students in College Station, 68% reported being on campus regularly for different reasons; however, one-third (32%) said they were not on campus regularly. Furthermore, 90% of students thought they would be in College Station for the spring semester; and 60% thought that they would attend classes more in-person for the spring than they did in the fall semester.
- Two-thirds of students (69%) said they had in-person classes in the fall semester and 62% of students indicated they would have liked to have more in-person classes for the fall semester. However, 37% of students with in-person classes attended less than once a week.
- More than half the students (58%) reported that their level of engagement decreased over the fall semester. Of these students, 88% said it was due to classes being online. Additionally, 68% of students indicated that their academic performance worsened over the fall semester.
 - SGA student leaders are strongly encouraged to work with appropriate academic campus partners in sharing this information and working collaboratively on recommending changes for the spring semester.
 - SGA might also consider how to encourage more students who have in-person classes to come to campus physically for their classes as they can attend.

Student Life:

- Almost half of the student (45%) rated their mental health during the fall as below average. Students shared that the COVID-19 pandemic was the biggest factor impacting their mental health. Students also shared that their personal support (friends, family, etc.) and their involvement in a student organization helped the most in succeeding this fall semester.
- Almost three-fourths of students (72%) said they were tested for COVID-19 in the fall semester. Additionally, 56% of students support mandatory testing in the spring semester. Having easier access and increased incentives were the top reasons students provided for making them be more inclined to be tested in the spring.
 - Student Government Association leaders are encouraged to share results with various campus departments, especially those who offer the campus resources asked about in the survey. Some campus departments to consider might include Counseling and Psychological Services, Student Health Services, Offices of the Dean of Student Life, and Residence Life.
 - Most students were agreeable to being tested for COVID-19. SGA might continue to look at how they can share that message with the student body and encourage students to be tested.

Student Involvement:

- Half of the students (50%) did not feel there were enough opportunities to get involved in the fall semester. Students indicated they want to be more involved in the spring semester. Students also indicated a preference for in-person involvement opportunities and activities.
- Almost two-thirds of students (71%) stated that they would attend small-scale outdoor activities. In general, students reported they would be likely to attend small-scale activities (outdoors or indoors) and larger outdoor activities the most.
 - Students expressed an interest in being involved and certain in-person activities. SGA is encouraged to look at how to create safe opportunities for students to come together during the spring semester. This would not necessarily be creating new organizations or ongoing groups, but possible small-scale outdoor activities that bring students together.

Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviation (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 in descending mean or frequency order unless otherwise specified. This report only includes results for the quantitative questions on the survey; comments for all qualitative questions can be found in a separate document. This report is divided into four sections: Demographics, Academics, Student Life, and Student Involvement.

Demographics

Demographics were gathered for all students the survey was sent to and the survey respondent for the fall 2020 semester. Table 1, on the following two pages, displays this information in descending order for each demographic category by the Fall 2020 survey respondents column. The majority of the respondents were female, white, senior, students in the College of Engineering, students who were not first generation or Top 10%, and students living off-campus and not in the Corps of Cadets. The survey respondents were representative of the survey sample in many categories; however, there was an overrepresentation of female students in the respondents compared to the sample. Additionally, respondents who lived on-campus, were Top 10%, and were White were slightly overrepresented. There was a slight underrepresentation of respondents from the College of Engineering.

	Fall 2020 Survey Sample	Fall 2020 Survey Respondents
Classification	[n=30,417]	[n=2,426]
Senior	24%	24%
Junior	22%	22%
Freshman	17%	19%
Sophomore	19%	18%
Masters	10%	10%
Doctoral	6%	6%
Other: PB nondegree, Postbac UG; UG nondegree	1%	<1%
Vet (1 st – 4 th year)	1%	<1%
Ethnicity	[n=30,418]	[n=2,426]
White	57%	61%
Hispanic or Latino	23%	20%
Asian	8%	8%
International	6%	6%
Black only or Multi-Racial with Black	3%	3%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	3%	2%
Unknown or Not Reported	1%	1%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	<1%
Sex	[n=30,418]	[n=2,426]
Female	48%	61%
Male	52%	39%
College	[n=30,417]	[n=2,426]
Engineering	30%	25%
Liberal Arts	14%	15%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	12%	13%
Mays Business School	10%	13%
Education & Human Development	11%	11%
Science	7%	7%
Veterinary Medicine	6%	5%
Architecture	5%	4%
General Studies	3%	3%
Bush School of Government	1%	2%
Geosciences	2%	2%
Public Health	1%	1%
First Generation	[n=30,417]	[n=2,426]
No	69%	71%
Yes	22%	21%
Unknown	9%	9%
Top Ten Percent	[n=30,417]	[n=2,426]
No	61%	57%
Yes	39%	43%

	Fall 2020 Survey Sample	Fall 2020 Survey Respondents
Residential Living	[n=30,417]	[n=2,427]
Off-campus	83%	79%
On-campus	17%	21%
Corps of Cadets	[n=30,417]	[n=2,427]
Not in the Corps of Cadets	97%	96%
In the Corps of Cadets	4%	4%

Table 1: Student Demographics

Students were asked on the survey to identify their class year. Table 2 displays these results; the class years between 2021 and 2024 were fairly evenly represented.

What is your class year?	Fall 2020 [n=1,959]
2022	25%
2021	24%
2023	21%
2024	21%
I do not identify with a class year	6%
2020 or older	4%

Table 2: Class Year

Academics

When asked if they were physically in College Station for the fall 2020 semester, 88% of 2,351 responding students said they were and 12% indicated they were not in College Station. Those who were in College Station (n=2,065) were then asked about coming to campus regularly during the fall semester, using a select all that apply question. Almost half of the 2,064 responding students (44%) reported coming to campus regularly for in-person classes or academic purposes, 21% shared that they lived on campus, and 20% indicated that they came to campus for non-academic purposes. Alternatively, almost one-third (32%) said that they did not come to campus regularly.

Students who reported on the initial question that they were in College Station (n=2,065) were also asked if they had in-person classes for the fall semester. Two-thirds of the students (69%) reported having in-person classes and 31% said they did not have in-person classes. Students with in-person classes (n=1,426) were asked how often they attended their in-person classes. As seen in Table 3 almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) indicated attending classes at least once a week.

Approximately, how often did you attend your in-person classes?	Fall 2020 [n=1,425]
Multiple days a week	39%
Once a week	25%
A few times this semester	14%
A few days a month	8%
Not at all	8%
Once this semester	5%
Once a month	2%

Table 3: In-Person Class Attendance

Respondents who reported being physically in College Station for the fall semester on the first question (n=2,065) were asked if they were physically in College Station after Thanksgiving. Table 4 shows that almost three-fourths of the respondents (73%) were in College Station after Thanksgiving.

Were you physically in College Station after Thanksgiving?	Fall 2020 [n=2,064]
Yes, I returned to College Station after Thanksgiving	57%
No, I did not plan to and did not return	23%
Yes, I did not leave College Station	16%
No, I planned to return to College Station, but did not	4%

Table 4: Physical Location after Thanksgiving

When asked if they wanted the opportunity to have more in-person classes this past fall semester, 62% said that they did and 38% reported that they did not.

Students are asked about their level of engagement in class as the semester progressed, whether their classes were in-person or through Zoom. Over half of the 2,273 students responding (58%), stated that their level of engagement decreased over the semester, 35% said that their level of engagement remained the same, and 6% reported that their level of engagement increased over the semester. There was a follow-up question for students who reported their level of engagement in class decreased over the semester (n=1,327). Table 5 demonstrates that a majority of the students responding to this question indicated that the class being online was a factor in their level of engagement decreasing over the semester.

What factors contributed to your level of engagement in class decreasing as the semester progressed (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=1,320]
The class being online	88%
Difficulty with professors adapting to dual modalities	51%
Fewer peer-to-peer discussions in class	36%
Fewer students coming to in-person classes as the semester continued	30%
Less group work in class	16%
Other	13%

Table 5: Factors Decreasing Class Engagement

When asked if they felt their professors successfully adapted to virtual learning, 44% said yes, 42% said maybe, and 14% stated no.

Using a select all that apply questions, students were asked about their academic performance for the fall semester. Note, students were told that academic performance did not need to be the final grade in classes. Table 6, on the following page, illustrates students felt several factors impacted their academic performance, especially increased anxiety or stress, COVID-19, and increased academic workload. However, almost one-third of respondents reported that their academic performance had not worsened in the fall semester.

Did your academic performance worsen in the fall 2020 semester? (Select any factors, if any at all, that contributed)	Fall 2020 [n=2,144]
Yes, increased anxiety or stress	51%
Yes, COVID-19	40%
Yes, increased academic workload	34%
No, my academic performance did not worsen this fall semester	32%
Yes, current events	29%
Yes, personal or family mental health concerns	25%
Yes, personal or family heal concerns	19%
Yes, economic burden	17%
Yes, other reasons	5%

Table 6: Factors Impacting Academic Performance

When asked if they felt the university provided ample grade accommodations in the fall 2020 semester, 42% felt they did, 25% said maybe, and 33% reported they did not. Students were also asked about what they might like to see or see more of in terms of grade accommodations. Table 7 reveals that a pass/fail option was most requested by students.

What, if any, would you have liked to see or see more of in terms of grade accommodations? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=2,050]
Pass/Fail options	66%
Q-drops not counting against you	37%
Extended Q-drop deadline	30%
None	20%
Unlimited Q-drops	17%
Withdrawal options	11%
Other	4%

Table 7: Grade Accommodations

Respondents were asked about the degree they felt different academic resources helped or did not help them to succeed academically in the fall 2020 semester. The "Did Not Use the Resource" responses were removed from the analysis. Table 8, on the following page, indicates that students felt that professor office hours and departmental advising were the most helpful resources. However, students reported that peer tutoring was the least helpful resources.

To what degree do you feel these academic resources helped you or did not help you succeed academically this fall semester?	Helped a Great Deal (4)	Helped Some (3)	Did Not Help Much (2)	Did Not Help at All (1)	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
Professor Office Hours	25%	46%	21%	8%	2.88 (.88) [1,438]
Departmental Advising	26%	45%	17%	12%	2.86 (.94) [1,283]
Supplemental Instruction (SI) Sessions	31%	34%	21%	14%	2.81 (1.03) [716]
Outside Tutoring Options	32%	29%	25%	14%	2.79 (1.04) [492]
TA Office Hours	22%	44%	20%	14%	2.74 (.95) [1,050]
Peer Tutoring	22%	38%	24%	16%	2.67 (.99) [683]

Table 8: Academic Resources

Using a select all the apply questions, students were asked if they planned to physically be in College Station for the spring 2021 semester. Almost two-thirds (64%) reported they planned to physically be in town taking classes in-person and 49% said they planned to be in College Station taking classes virtually. Alternatively, 10% of respondents indicated that they did not plan to be in College Station physically.

Students reporting that they planned to be in College Station physically taking classes in-person (n=1,341) were asked a follow-up question about what they thought their attendance would be for their in-person classes in the spring. Almost two-thirds (60%) indicated they thought they would attend their in-person classes more often than they did in the fall semester, 37% thought they would attend their in-person classes the same as they did in the fall, and 3% thought they would attend their in-person classes less often in the spring than they did in the fall.

The final question related to academics asked students if they would like to have virtual learning options available in the future, after COVID-19. Half of the 2,064 students who responded (51%) stated that they would like virtual learning options to be available, 32% said maybe, and 18% reported that no, they would not like these options to be available.

Student Life

Students were asked how they felt their mental health was for the fall semester. One-quarter of the 2,077 students who responded rated their mental health above average (7%=excellent and 19%=good). Alternatively, 45% felt their mental health was below average (32%=poor and 13%=terrible). Almost one-third (30%) felt their mental health was average. Students who felt their mental health was terrible, poor, or average (n=1,556) were asked about factors they felt impacted their mental health. Table 9 indicates that COVID-19 was the most common factor, followed by an increased academic workload and current events.

Which factors do you feel impacted your mental health? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=1,535]
COVID-19	78%
Increased academic workload	62%
Current events	61%
Personal or family health concerns	46%
Economic burden	34%
Other	13%

Table 9: Factors Impacting Mental Health

Respondents were asked about the degree they felt different campus resources helped or did not help them succeed this fall semester. The "Did Not Use the Resource" responses were removed from the analysis. Table 10, on the following page, shows that personal support systems and student organization involvement were the most helpful. The Helpline was rated as the least helpful.

To what degree do you feel these resources helped you or did not help you succeed this fall semester?	Helped a Great Deal (4)	Helped Some (3)	Did Not Help Much (2)	Did Not Help at All (1)	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
Personal Support System (such as friends, family, etc.)	63%	30%	5%	2%	3.54 (.68) [1,814]
Involvement in Student Organizations	38%	39%	15%	9%	3.06 (.93) [1,268]
Academic Advising	27%	45%	16%	12%	2.87 (.95) [1,352]
Financial Aid	29%	36%	15%	20%	2.75 (1.08) [1,008]
Career Center	18%	47%	20%	15%	2.69 (.94) [434]
COVID-19 Emergency Funds	29%	31%	15%	26%	2.61 (1.16) [636]
On-Campus Programs	14%	46%	20%	20%	2.55 (.96) [505]
Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS)	20%	33%	26%	21%	2.52 (1.04) [301]
Virtual Programs	14%	43%	21%	22%	2.49 (.99) [673]
Helpline	17%	26%	28%	30%	2.30 (1.07) [166]

Table 10: Student Resources

Using a select all the apply questions, students were asked about being tested for COVID-19 during the fall semester. Table 11, in descending order by those who reported being tested, reveals that almost three-fourths of the responding students were tested in the fall semester.

Did you take a COVID-19 test this fall semester? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=2,010]
Yes, out of precaution	44%
Yes, I was randomly selected	29%
Yes, I was exposed to COVID-19	26%
Yes, I experienced symptoms	10%
Yes, other reasons	3%
No	28%

Table 11: COVID-19 Testing

When asked if they would support more mandatory COVID-19 testing in the spring semester if it meant more opportunities for campus involvement or in-person activities, 56% of the 2,011 responding students indicated they support more mandatory testing. Additionally, 22% said maybe they would support mandatory testing and 22% reported that they would not support it.

Students were asked about any factors that would make them more inclined to take a COVID-19 test in the spring semester through a select all that apply question. As seen in Table 12, having easier access and increased incentives were the most common factors.

What factors, if any, would make you more inclined to take a COVID-19 test in the spring semester? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=1,934]
Easier access	48%
Increased incentives	47%
Student organization requirement	28%
Better information regarding testing	27%
Peer encouragement	25%
Residential requirement	22%
None	20%
Other	8%

Table 12: Factors for COVID-19 Testing

Student Involvement

When asked if they felt there were ample opportunities to get involved on campus in the fall semester, half (50%) of the 1,981 students who answered the question said no. Additionally, 31% reported that maybe there were ample opportunities and 19% indicated that there were ample opportunities. Using a select all that apply question, students were asked if they were involved in one or more student organization in the fall semester. Of the 2,025 responding students, 49% shared that they were mainly involved virtually and 20% said they were mainly involved in-person. Alternatively, 37% of the students indicated that they were not involved in the fall semester.

Students who reported they were involved in one or more student organization either virtually or in-person (n=1,277) were asked a follow-up if they felt that their involvement helped their overall college experience for the fall 2020 semester. Additionally, students who indicated they were not involved in a student organization (n=748) were also asked a follow-up if they thought that not being involved negatively impacted their overall college experience for the fall 2020 semester. As seen in Table 13, overall, involved students felt their involvement did help their college experience. Students who were not involved were more evenly spread in terms of if they felt that not being involved negatively impacted their college experience.

	Definitely Yes (5)	Probably Yes (4)	Might or Not (3)	Probably Not (2)	Definitely Not (1)	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
Student Involved Only: Do you feel that your involvement helped your overall college experience for the fall 2020 semester?	36%	28%	15%	14%	7%	3.74 (1.27) [1,268]
Students Not Involved Only: Do you feel that not being involved negatively impacted your overall college experience for the fall 2020 semester?	24%	20%	20%	13%	22%	3.11 (1.47) [734]

Table 13: Student Involvement

Students were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with several statements related to their student involvement for the spring semester. Table 14 demonstrates that students would prefer more in-person involvement opportunities and would be likely to attend in-person events. While in slightly less agreement, students also reported they were likely to be involved in virtual activities in the spring semester.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Fall 2020 Mean (sd) [n]
I would like more in-person involvement opportunities offered in the spring semester.	46%	22%	18%	7%	8%	3.90 (1.28) [1,928]
I likely would attend in-person events and activities in the spring semester.	44%	22%	16%	8%	10%	3.82 (1.34) [1,925]
I am likely to be involved in the spring semester if virtual activities continue.	23%	29%	27%	13%	8%	3.46 (1.20) [1,925]

Table 14: Student Involvement for the Spring Semester

To understand better what type of events or activities students would be willing to attend in-person, they were asked to select the types of events or specific traditional events they would attend in-person during the spring semester with appropriate COVID-19 regulations and guidance. Table 15, on the following page, indicates that students are more likely to attend in-person smaller-scale events (indoor or outdoor) and student organization meetings the most. In looking at larger events, students were more likely to attend outdoor events than indoor events in general.

Which types of events or specific events, if any, would you be willing to attend in-person in the spring semester with COVID-19 regulations and guidance? (select all that apply)	Fall 2020 [n=1,884]
Small-scale outdoor events	71%
Small-scale indoor events	59%
Student organization meetings	59%
Athletic events	53%
The Big Event (outdoor event in March)	53%
Large-scale outdoor events	51%
Muster Ceremony (indoor event on April 21)	42%
Muster BBQ (outdoor event on April 21)	37%
Elephant Walk (outdoor event on April 22)	36%
Large-scale indoor events	35%
Pull Out Day (outdoor event in March)	35%
Ring Dance (indoor event in late April)	32%
Fish Fest (outdoor event in April)	24%
I would not be likely to attend any event in-person	14%
Other	4%

Table 15: In-Person Attendance for Spring Activities and Events

Organization Background

The Student Government Association (SGA) at Texas A&M University represents all enrolled students on important issues. There are over 1,300 students involved in SGA, according to its website (<http://sga.tamu.edu/>), and its organizational structure consists of three governing branches, 17 committees and commissions.

According to their mission statement, the Student Government Association is “committed to serving Texas A&M University by representing student opinion, addressing campus needs through targeted programming and the maintenance of tradition, and providing opportunities for leadership development in order to enrich the quality of student life.”

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, 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/>.

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