

# Student Life

## New Student and Family Programs

### Howdy Week Assessment 2023

#### **Purpose of Assessment**

Howdy Week is a campus-wide collaboration to serve as Aggieland's official welcome for all new and returning students. Howdy Week occurs the days before the start of the semester and was held on August 17-22, 2023. New Student and Family Programs (NSFP) wanted to understand students' experiences attending the Fall 2023 Howdy Week. Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research has worked with New Student and Family Programs assessing coordinators involved with Howdy Week since 2017. The first time to assess students occurred in 2021.

#### **Key Findings with Recommendations**

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, NSFP staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the program and organizations involved. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of the coordinators' and students' experiences.

- Fall 2023 Howdy Week appears to have been successful. At least 83% of students reported gaining the four outcomes that are designed for Howdy Week. Additionally, 89% of students had a positive experience attending Howdy Week events.
- Not being moved in was the most common reason students did not attend Howdy Week events, and this more than doubled from 25% in 2021 to 56% in 2023.
  - Howdy Week planners are encouraged to continue working with campus stakeholders when it comes to scheduling Howdy Week. Avoiding as much overlap with move-in would be beneficial for students and scheduling it to as close to a week as possible. Additionally, working with event coordinators to spread activities out more across all the days and different times throughout the day.
  - Howdy Week planners may also want to explore options to hold more activities inside due to the summer heat, as well as provide more water stations.
  - NSFP should continue to work with specific departments such as Residence Life to help when scheduling move-in appointments, the Office of the Commandant for the FOW schedule, and Transportation Services for the timing of bus routes.
- New Student and Family Programs is also encouraged to share results with their stakeholders, such as event coordinators, Aggie Orientation Leaders, Student Life, and others.

#### **Method and Sample**

The electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. Results were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software program, Tableau®, a data visualization platform, and Microsoft Excel®.

The 12-question survey included eight quantitative and four qualitative questions. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The survey link was sent through email on August 24, 2023, to random sample of 4,000 new students; however, one email address was invalid. Non-respondents received up to four reminders before the survey closed on September 18, 2023. Of the 3,999 students receiving the survey, 352 responded to some part of it, yielding a 9% response rate.

## Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviation (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are in descending order based on the 2023 results, unless otherwise stated. Comparisons to the student survey conducted in 2021 will be made where appropriate.

Students were initially asked if they attended any events during Fall 2023 Howdy Week. Almost three-fourths (73%) of the 315 students stated that they attended an event and 27% said that they did not. This was slightly fewer students attending events compared to 2021 when 79% indicated they attended Howdy Week events and 21% said they did not.

Seven follow-up questions were asked to students who attended Howdy Week events (n=229). The first question asked students what featured events, if any, they attended. Table 1 shows that the Class of '27 Photo was the event attended the most, with approximately two-thirds of all students attending. Alternatively, 2% of students reported that they did not attend any featured events. Students indicating that they attended Explore Aggeland (n=12) were asked to share the event(s) they attended in the Bryan/College Station community. Half of the six respondents shared that they attended the market in downtown Bryan, one said the scavenger hunt, one said the self-guided tour, and one walked their classes.

<b>What featured events, if any, did you attend? (Select all that apply)</b>	<b>Frequency Percentage [n=227]</b>
Class of '27 Photo (August 20)	69%
First Day of Class Photo (August 21 & 22)	47%
Rec-A-Palooza (August 18)	40%
GatheRing and Yell Practice (August 20)	31%
Howdy Week Movie Night (August 19)	30%
MSC's Party in the Park (August 17)	26%
President's Picnic (August 19)	26%
Ice Cream Carnival (August 18)	25%
Maroon Out Your Move-In (August 19)	21%
University Libraries Open House (August 18)	20%
Donuts with Career Center (August 19)	12%
StuAct Block Party: Koldus Kickoff (August 17)	10%
Explore Aggeland (August 20)	5%
Howdy Week Soccer Game (August 17)	4%
MGC x NPHC Meet the Greeks (August 18)	2%
I did not attend any of the Featured Events	2%

Table 1: Featured Events Attendance

Students were also asked what general events they attended during Fall 2023 Howdy Week and were provided a link to the list of general events scheduled. Many of the 40 responding students mentioned various college events, especially for Agricultural and Life Sciences, Arts and Sciences, and Engineering. Some other events mentioned by multiple students included Popsicle Picnic, Pizza at the Plaza, Middle Ages Faire, MSC Open House, student abroad, Aggie Trivia, and garden tours. A few students wrote attending some of the featured events from the previous question.

When asked about their overall experience attending Howdy Week events, 89% of students reported it being positive, as seen in Table 2, on the following page. This is similar to the results in 2021.

	<b>Extremely Positive (5)</b>	<b>Somewhat Positive (4)</b>	<b>Neither Positive nor Negative (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Negative (2)</b>	<b>Extremely Negative (1)</b>	<b>2023 Mean (sd) [n=219]</b>	<b>2021 Mean (sd) [n=936]</b>
Attending Fall 2023 Howdy Week was:	45%	44%	8%	4%	--	4.30 (.77)	4.30 (.79)

Table 2: Overall Experience (n=213)

Students who indicated they had a negative experience attending Howdy Week events (n=8) were asked what could have been improved to make their experience better. Many of the eight comments were about the extreme heat and so many events being outside and during the afternoon, the hottest time of the day. A few students indicated they were moving in and missed some of the events they wanted to attend. Other comments shared included having shorter wait times, making it a full week, offering more to do at events, and events not starting on time.

Alternatively, students who reported that they had a positive experience attending Howdy Week events (n=194) were asked what contributed to them having a positive experience and 102 students wrote a comment. Many students wrote about how nice, friendly, and welcoming everyone was at the events. Meeting other students that they already knew or making new friends was also something many felt contributed to their positive experience. Several students also commented on getting free things, having prizes, and enjoying free food and drinks.

The final four follow-up questions for students who stated they attended any events during Fall 2023 Howdy Week asked about what students gained from attending Howdy Week events. Table 3, in descending order by the “Yes” column, demonstrates that 83% or more of students agreed with all four statements and gaining what was intended during Howdy Week. Almost all students report that they interacted with at least one new student. However, developing a sense of belonging with the campus community was the lowest based on what students shared.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>2023 Yes</b>	<b>2023 No</b>	<b>2023 Unsure</b>
I interacted with at least one new or returning student.	98%	2%	1%
I learned about at least one campus resource (such as a student organization, office/department, or service).	94%	3%	3%
I increased my comfort in navigating Texas A&M to find services and opportunities available.	89%	3%	8%
I developed a great sense of belonging within the campus community.	83%	5%	12%

Table 3: Overall Outcomes (n=213)

Students who reported they did not attend any events during Fall 2023 Howdy Week (n=86) were asked why they were unable to attend. Table 4, on the following page, illustrates that over half of the students did not attend Howdy Week events because they were not moved in yet, which doubled compared to 2021. Students who said they had not moved in yet were asked when they moved in. August 19 was the common move-in date, although several students moved in the Sunday before classes started. Those indicating that they were attending another university-sponsored event were asked to share what event. Freshman Orientation Week (FOW) with the Corps of Cadets was indicated by a couple of students. Other events included sorority recruitment, orientation with their major, and living community meetings and socials. Students who reported having a scheduling conflict were also asked to share their conflict. Students said they were moving in, attending FOW or were part of the Corps of Cadets, and working. Those selecting the “other” response option had the opportunity to write a response. Transportation was the most common response. Others included attending the Connect Retreat, moving or setting up their room, having too much going on, and that events were not promoted for off-campus students.

<b>Why were you unable to attend any Howdy Week 2021 programs? (Select all that apply)</b>	<b>2023 Frequency Percentage [n=68]</b>	<b>2021 Frequency Percentage [n=241]</b>
I was not moved-in yet	56%	25%
Events did not interest me	28%	12%
Scheduling conflicts	18%	23%
Other	18%	9%
I did not know about it	18%	5%
I was attending another university-sponsored event	10%	14%
Health and safety concerns	3%	12%

Table 4: Reasons for Not Attending Howdy Week Programs

The last question asked all students, regardless of whether they attended Fall 2023 Howdy Week events or not, to share any suggestions or events they would like to see for future Howdy Weeks and 80 students provided a comment. The most common recommendations were to not have Howdy Week overlap with move-in, schedule it for a full week and not just a weekend, and not have most of the big events the first two days of Howdy Week when most students were not moved in or still in the process of moving in. Other suggestions included holding more events inside, having more buses running especially at night, scheduling events to last longer, or staggering students coming to not be so crowded. A couple of ideas for future Howdy Week events included Aggie Wranglers performing and a silent disco.

Student demographics were gathered from the university student database based on valid Universal Identification Number (UIN). Table 5, on the following page, displays the demographics for all students receiving the survey (survey population) and students who responded to the survey. Results are in descending order based on the survey respondents for each category. Most students were female, freshmen, in the College of Engineering and Arts & Sciences, and not first-generation. In most cases the survey respondents were representative of the survey population; however, there was a slight over representation of female, freshmen, and students living on campus who responded to the survey.

<b>Student Demographics</b>	<b>Survey Population [n=3,987]</b>	<b>Survey Respondents [n=352]</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	51%	63%
Male	49%	38%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White	53%	48%
Hispanic or Latino	25%	28%
Asian	14%	16%
Black or Multi-Racial with Black	3%	4%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	3%	3%
International	<1%	<1%
Unknown or Not Reported	<1%	<1%
American Indian	<1%	--
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	<1%	--
<b>Classification</b>		
Freshman	74%	80%
Sophomore	18%	12%
Junior	8%	8%
Senior	<1%	<1%
<b>College</b>		
Engineering	30%	31%
Arts and Sciences	32%	31%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	13%	13%
Education and Human Development	6%	7%
Mays Business School	8%	7%
Architecture	3%	3%
Public Health	3%	3%
Other	2%	3%
Performance and Visualization	1%	2%
Bush School of Government	2%	1%
<b>First Generation Status</b>		
Not First Generation	78%	75%
First Generation	21%	25%
Unknown	<1%	<1%
<b>Housing Status</b>		
On-Campus	48%	61%
Off-Campus	52%	39%

Table 5: Student Demographics

### **Background**

Howdy Week is coordinated by New Student and Family Programs in Student Life. These days are full of events and opportunities for new and returning students to become familiar or reacquainted with the Texas A&M University campus, fellow Aggies, and the Bryan/College Station community.

## **Project Details**

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research 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 Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research can be found at <https://dsasp.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, anyone can follow Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research on Facebook.

To work with Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://dsasp.tamu.edu/aqform/>.

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