Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research
Division Staff Assessment Needs and Training
Spring 2024

Purpose of Assessment

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) conducts a survey every three years to understand division staff members' experiences and needs related to assessment. Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research staff use this information to develop resources and training programs for the Division of Student Affairs and adjust their assessment services to meet staff members' needs. This is the sixth year Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research has conducted this survey; the previous surveys were completed in the summers of 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, and January 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.

- Division staff members were positive in their feedback and seemed to value assessment. Additionally, 86% of staff members reported they incorporate assessment into the work that they do and 87% said that they use assessment results to make decisions about programs and services. Both of these were higher compared to 2021, 2018, and 2015. Furthermore, 69% of staff members felt that the Division of Student Affairs effectively utilized assessment results to share "its story" institutionally, which also increased compared to 2021.

- Approximately two-thirds of division staff members (67%) reported that they assessed what students were learning through their program/unit. This is six percentage points higher compared to 2021. Additionally, 46% of those who reported that they assessed student learning indicated they included a structured reflection. Alternatively, when respondents were asked about barriers they faced in measuring student learning, staff members said that students' lack of response to surveys or students' responses not fully conveying their learning were barriers. Additionally, staff members shared that they were uncertain about their ability to determine appropriate methods for measuring student learning in the co-curricular.
    - Student Affairs Planning, Assessment, & Research will explore adding alternate assessment methods on their website, as well as what methods would be appropriate for different situations.
    - When meeting with clients to discuss their projects, SAPAR will also provide resources and encourage clients to use different methods to measure student learning such as exit slips, rubrics, or polls.
    - Department staff will also look for opportunities to share assessment results for projects that did not utilize a survey to gather data.

- Some respondents commented on not having time, whether that was for planning assessment efforts, doing the assessment, or time to interpret assessment data to reflect on improvements.
    - Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research will look at developing a training workshop on assessment planning (strategic planning for the department and planning for individual projects). The strategic planning for the department could also be shared with the Assessment Committee.
    - SAPAR will add resources and information on the learning center on the website about both strategic planning and planning for individual projects and highlighting how utilizing assessment results can reduce stress or workload.

- o Department staff will develop a training session to bust common myths related to assessment work such as assessment requires a lot of time, you have to assess everything all the time, and you have to completely revamp a program to truly use assessment results.

- One-third of division staff expressed that the training sessions SAPAR provides were valuable.
  - o SAPAR will continue to offer training sessions and will focus on some recommended topics including interpreting statistical data, using Excel for basic statistics and data visualization, assessment methods beyond using surveys, assessment learning during a presentation, understanding statistics (standard deviation, coefficients, statistical significance, etc.), using assessment data to make decisions, and using Qualtrics.
    - ▪ This might provide the department with the opportunity for student employees and Graduate Assistants to gain public speaking experience by working with staff members to develop programs and then give those presentations or create on-demand videos for the website.
  - o Staff members will explore opportunities to collaborate with DSA Marketing and Communications to provide training on how to present results, particularly using tools such as infographics.

- Some staff members shared that they did not know what services Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research offered or that they had not worked with the department.
  - o SAPAR will talk with the Assessment Committee to understand the strategy used in their department for assessment efforts and how SAPAR could share resources and services with departments, such as doing department road shows.
  - o SAPAR will continue to present as part of the New Student Orientation, scheduled three times a year.
  - o SAPAR will collaborate with DSA Marketing and Communications to conduct a story of the department and the services available.

- Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research is encouraged to share these results with stakeholders, such as the DSA Assessment Committee, Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, and clients. Additionally, all Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research staff members should read all qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of the comments and themes.

Method and Sample

The survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates electronic surveys and databases. The 14-question survey consisted of six quantitative questions, four qualitative questions, and four demographic questions. The survey contained 11 fewer questions compared to 2021 and 45 fewer questions compared to 2018. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Tableau®, a data visualization software, and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey link was sent to 201 full-time professional staff members in the Division of Student Affairs, which represented all departments except Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research. The survey link was sent to staff members' email accounts on January 8, 2024; non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on January 22, 2024. Of the 201 staff members who received the survey, 109 completed at least part of the survey, yielding a 54% response rate (an 11% decrease from 2021).

Furthermore, department representation for the survey recipients and survey respondents, as well as the response rate by individual departments can be found in descending order by the department response rate in Table 1. Respondents' departments were fairly representative of the survey recipients. Residence Life represented the largest percentage of the recipients and respondents. Response rates of individual departments ranged from 71% to 25%. Just over half of all the departments had less than a 50% response rate.

Departments	Survey Recipients Percent [n=201]	Survey Respondent Percent [n=109]	Department Response Rate [overall=54%]
Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs	8%	11%	71%
Student Activities	11%	14%	68%
Student Life	13%	17%	67%
Disability Resources	5%	6%	64%
Career Center	13%	14%	58%
Residence Life	20%	18%	49%
Student Community Standards	3%	3%	43%
Recreational Sports	13%	10%	42%
Memorial Student Center	4%	3%	38%
Multicultural Services	3%	2%	33%
Music Activities	3%	2%	33%
Veterans Resource and Support Center	2%	1%	25%

Table 1—Department Demographics

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%. The Not Applicable and Don't Know options were counted as missing data. Tables are in descending mean or frequency order for 2024 unless otherwise stated. Summary themes for the qualitative questions are included in this report; however, the complete list can be found in a separate document. Comparisons to previous years are made where appropriate.

Divisional staff members were provided with the following definitions as they began the survey:

Assessment—collecting, analyzing, and using data to make decisions for continuous improvement.
Program/Unit—the area that the respondent oversees or works in; for small departments that may be the whole department and for larger departments that may be a smaller focus area.

Staff members were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement on how assessment relates to their work. Table 2, on the following page, illustrates that staff were mostly in agreement with both statements that they used assessments for decision-making and that they incorporated assessment in their work. Agreement with both statements increased compared to the results in 2021, 2018, and 2015.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2024 Mean (sd) [n]	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Mean (sd) [n]
I incorporate assessment into the work I do.	30%	56%	10%	2%	2%	4.11 (.80) [103]	3.93 (.82) [111]	3.95 (.76) [83]	4.03 (.72) [99]
I use assessment to make decisions about programs and services.	30%	57%	9%	3%	2%	4.10 (.82) [104]	4.00 (.79) [110]	4.07 (.77) [82]	4.06 (.70) [97]

Table 2—How Assessment Relates to Our Work

When asked how they share assessment results, 56 staff members provided a wide range of methods they used. Many mentioned sharing results at diverse types of meetings with different stakeholders such as students, supervisors, colleagues, planning committees, and leadership teams. Other methods included websites, social media, grant applications, presentations, pass-backs with student organizations, and email messages. A few individuals indicated that they do not share assessment results. Additionally, some respondents shared how they used assessment results and not how they shared results.

Division staff were asked if they assessed what their students were learning through their experiences with their program/unit. Two-thirds (67%) of the 100 respondents indicated they assessed their students' learning, 21% reported they did not, and 12% shared that they did not work directly with students. This is similar to the results in 2021 when 61% said they assessed student learning, while 19% said they did not, and 20% reported they did not work directly with students. Those who reported that they assessed what their students were learning (n=67), were asked a follow-up question about if they included a structured reflection as part of measuring student learning. Of the 65 responses, 46% reported that they included a structured reflection, 29% were unsure, and 25% shared that they did not incorporate a structured reflection.

Respondents who indicated either that they assessed student learning (n=67) or did not assess student learning (n=21) were asked to share what barriers, if any, they faced in measuring what students were learning through their experiences, and 57 provided a comment. Almost one-quarter of respondents listed student responses to assessments as barriers. This included students' lack of response to surveys, providing perfunctory responses that do not fully convey their learning, or students' lack of engagement or involvement in the experiences. Respondents also shared that lack of time and administrative constraints were barriers to assessing student learning, such as not having time to assess student learning nor time to reference or use the data once the assessment has been completed. Nearly one-fifth of respondents reported uncertainty about their ability to determine appropriate methods to measure student learning within the co-curricular. A few indicated that assessing student learning did not fit the mission of their work with students.

A new question that was added in 2021 asked staff about their level of agreement or disagreement with how the division utilizes assessment institutionally. Table 3, on the following page, reveals that just over two-thirds of staff agreed that the division uses assessment data to share its story with the institution, which was higher than in 2021.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2024 Mean (sd) [n]	2021 Mean (sd) [n]
The Division of Student Affairs effectively utilizes assessment to share "its story" institutionally.	13%	56%	25%	6%	--	3.76 (.75) [87]	3.51 (.86) [96]

Table 3—DSA Assessment Utilization

Staff members were asked a new question to identify what services provided by Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research were the most valuable to them. Respondents were provided a list of services and asked to select their top three. Table 4 illustrates that providing general support in assessment efforts and analyzing or interpreting data were the most valuable services provided. Alternatively, explaining relevance in quantitative data was the least valuable service provided. Furthermore, four people (4%) said none of the services provided by Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research were of value. One person selected the "other" response option and shared that they did not utilize Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research in their work.

What services provided by Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research are the most valuable to you? (Select the top three services)	2024 Percent [n=99]
Providing general support in assessment efforts	49%
Analyzing or interpreting data	48%
Providing training and resources	33%
Building dashboards to display assessment results	25%
Developing assessment questions or prompts	23%
Writing reports to summarize assessment results	23%
Identifying changes or improvements to make based on assessment results	20%
Planning assessment projects – what should be assessed	18%
Identifying appropriate assessment tools for your assessment	14%
Sharing assessment results	12%
Explaining relevance in quantitative data	9%
Nothing	4%
Other	1%

Table 4—Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research Services

Staff members who selected training and resources (n=33) as a valuable service were asked a follow-up question to share what topics they would like to see provided. Several suggestions were provided from the 10 comments. A few would like to see training sessions on using Excel for basic statistics and making charts or graphs. A couple also would like more on assessments beyond just a survey or assessing learning during a presentation. Other topics included interpreting the data, understanding statistics (standard deviation, coefficients, statistically significant, etc.), developing good questions, using informal assessment data to make decisions, and in-depth Qualtrics training.

All staff members were asked what services they would like to see provided by Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research that are not currently being provided, and 23 ideas were shared. About half of the comments were either appreciation for the department, that no additional services were needed, or people wrote not applicable. Some additional services staff members would like to see included providing infographics, sharing collaborative ideas, having individual meetings with areas, building templates and timelines, offering training on how to identify and document process flow, and creating a pipeline for assessment results going to the Division of Marketing and Communications. A couple of people would like the department to continue offering training sessions and sharing data results. A few indicated that they were not aware of the services provided by Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research. One person shared that they felt constrained in using the department due to the assessment planning process each summer and that they do not have much input in the process within their department.

The final series of questions were demographic to understand better the respondents. As seen in Table 5, in descending order for each category, a majority of the respondents were assistant/associate directors or Student Development Specialists (SDS). Those that selected the "other" option wrote student affairs coordinator, coordinator, and career coordinator. Just over half of all respondents reported having assessment responsibilities in their official job duties. Of the 98 respondents, most shared that they have been in the student affairs profession for more than 10 years. There were almost the same number of staff who reported they had been in the Division of Students Affairs at Texas A&M for one to three years as there were who have been here more than 10 years.

Demographics	2024 Percent	2021 Percent	2018 Percent	2015 Percent	2012 Percent	2009 Percent
Job Titles	**(n=99)**	**(n=112)**	**(n=77)**	**(n=92)**	**(n=75)**	**(n=112)**
Assistant/Associate Director	35%	44%	35%	34%	32%	23%
Student Development Specialist (I, II, III, IV)	31%	13%	25%	25%	*	*
Program Coordinator/Manager	14%	15%	21%	16%	17%	19%
Director/Department Head	11%	13%	14%	12%	12%	9%
Other	8%	13%	5%	10%	7%	9%
Assessment Responsibilities in Official Job Duties	**(n=99)**	**(n=113)**	**(n=77)**	**(n=90)**	**(n=76)**	**(n=112)**
Yes	53%	44%	52%	61%	51%	51%
No	37%	50%	48%	39%	43%	40%
Don't know	10%	5%	--	⅃	⅃	⅃
Fulltime Years in Student Affairs/Higher Ed	**(n=98)**	**(n=110)**	**(n=77)**	**(n=94)**		
More than 10 years	41%	59%	46%	47%	⅃	⅃
1 – 3 years	19%	9%	12%	15%	⅃	⅃
7 – 10 years	15%	13%	25%	17%	⅃	⅃
4 – 6 years	12%	19%	18%	20%	⅃	⅃
Less than 1 year	12%	--	--	1%	⅃	⅃
Fulltime Years in Student Affairs at Texas A&M	**(n=98)**	**(n=110)**	**(n=75)**	**(n=85)**	**(n=77)**	**(n=112)**
1 – 3 years	30%	22%	24%	22%	22%	28%
More than 10 years	28%	44%	37%	47%	39%	32%
Less than 1 year	20%	1%	4%	4%	4%	10%
4 – 6 years	12%	21%	23%	15%	22%	15%
7 – 10 years	10%	13%	12%	12%	13%	15%

Table 5—Respondent Demographics
⅃ Question not asked
*SDS levels were asked separately

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research Department Background

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 (SAPAR) can be found at https://sapar.tamu.edu/results/. Additionally, anyone can follow Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research on Facebook.

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

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