Student Government Association
Student Senate Diversity and Inclusion Committee
Diversity and Inclusion Student Feedback
Spring 2024

Purpose of Assessment

The Student Government Association (SGA) Diversity and Inclusion Committee wanted to gather feedback from the Texas A&M University student body to gain insight into what issues or initiatives were essential to the student body and how their committee could better meet the needs of the students at Texas A&M. The survey focused on potential issues students could be facing in the current environment regarding diversity and inclusion and how it impacts students' success at Texas A&M. Student Government Association has worked with Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) on numerous projects in the past; however, this was the first time for this assessment focus.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations Student Government Association (SGA) may take based on the results. However, SGA student leaders may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the student body. Student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- There were differences in how students felt about there being enough representation and recognition of diverse cultures and identities. Just over half of all survey respondents felt there was enough representation; however, 25% were unsure, and 22% said there was not enough representation.
    - Student Government Association student leaders may want to look for opportunities to share these results with students, faculty, staff, and campus administrators to initiate conversations about how to look at representation on campus and what should be done about it.
- Overall, there was a large divide between students who felt more needed to be done related to diversity and inclusion compared to others who felt that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts were discriminatory, immoral, and illegal.
    - SGA student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the responses to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences and viewpoints. There are separate documents for comments by students on the College Station main campus and students at off-site locations.
    - Additionally, SGA is strongly encouraged to share these results with students, faculty, staff, and campus administrators and find ways to foster productive and civil conversations to navigate the intense divide among students.

Method and Sample

An electronic survey was developed using Qualtrics®, a survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The survey was a collaborative effort between three areas or committees of the Student Government Association: Academic Affairs Committee, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, and Diversity Commission. The entire survey consisted of 23 questions, of which 12 questions were quantitative and 11 questions were qualitative. Additionally, student demographics were gathered through the student information system. Data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Tableau®, a data visualization software, and Microsoft Excel®.

The survey link was sent to a random sample of the student body at Texas A&M University via email on February 16, 2024. The sample included 4,000 students from the College Station main campus and 7,914 students from various off-site locations; however, two email addresses for College Station main campus students and eight email addresses for off-site students were invalid. College Station main campus students received questions for all three sections of the survey; however, students from the off-site locations only saw the set of questions related to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Non-respondents received up to seven reminders before the survey was closed on March 11, 2024. Of the 11,904 students who successfully received the survey link, 497 students responded to some part of the survey, yielding a 4% response rate.

This report focuses only on survey questions for the Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Student Senate. There were eight questions for this section. Two questions were quantitative, and six questions were qualitative. Due to branching technology, not all students saw all questions. Of the 3,998 students from the College Station main campus who received the survey, 105 students responded to some part of the survey, yielding a 3% response rate. Of the 7,906 off-site students who successfully received the survey, 391 responded to at least one question on the survey, for a 5% response rate.

Results

Results are 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. Summary themes are contained in this report; the complete list can be found in a separate document.

The first question asked if students felt there was enough representation and recognition of different cultures and identities on campus. Table 1 shows that approximately half of off-site respondents and two-thirds of College Station respondents felt there was enough representation. This question was analyzed by ethnicity to see if there were any differences in populations. International students, Black students, and Asian students were less likely to feel that there was enough representation and recognition of different cultures and identities on campus. The complete results can be found in a separate document.

Do you feel there is enough representation and recognition of different cultures and identities on campus?	Yes	Unsure	No
College Station students only (n=62)	66%	14%	20%
Off-site students only (n=249)	49%	28%	23%

Table 1: Campus Representation

Students were asked to explain their responses and how representation could be enhanced, and 125 students provided a written comment. Students who felt there was enough representation on campus shared that there were many organizations and representation of different populations through these organizations and that there were many events for everyone. A few students said students can express themselves and that they do not see examples of discrimination on campus. Alternatively, many students felt that there was too much emphasis placed on diversity and that diversity was overdone. Some felt that all diversity or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) groups should be eliminated and have no place in schools. A few also expressed that DEI is a Marxist ideology and that DEI is discriminative, immoral, and now illegal. Students who felt that there was not enough representation on campus (n=70) mentioned that now there are no DEI departments or offices, that more representation was needed, and that more needed to be done to celebrate and support diverse cultures. Some students reported that Texas A&M does not represent Texas, that the school is primarily White and male, both visually and culturally, and that

there is a history of exclusion and discrimination at Texas A&M. Of the students who were unsure about the representation on campus (n=79), most said they were distant education students or online students. Some also shared that they did not know or notice it on campus. Others felt there were lots of organizations representing different populations, while others felt there was a need for more events and awareness.

When asked to share specific initiatives or events related to diversity and inclusion that they would like to see implemented or expanded, 92 students offered a wide range of comments. Some examples of events or initiatives included Cinco de Mayo, Lunar New Year, holidays around foods from other cultures, Juneteenth, graduations for diverse cultures, Oktoberfest, alumni network for students of color, and reading of land acknowledgments before different meetings and events. Other comments included providing more funding for different holiday celebrations, having more representation of different populations, offering women's sizes in apparel, having a diversity and inclusion department, and that DEI should not exist.

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement about faculty and staff being adequately trained and equipped to promote a diverse and inclusive learning environment. Table 2 reveals that approximately two-thirds of College Station students and approximately half of off-site students agreed with this statement. College Station students agreed faculty and staff were adequately trained more than students at off-site locations. This question was looked at by ethnicity and college/school to see if there were any differences. Those results can be found in separate documents.

Faculty and staff are adequately trained and equipped to promote a diverse and inclusive learning environment.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
College Station students only	33%	36%	18%	7%	7%	3.82 (1.16) [61]
Off-Site students only	25%	27%	36%	8%	4%	3.61 (1.08) [231]

Table 2: Faculty and Staff Training

Students were asked to explain their responses, and 75 students provided a written comment. Students who agreed or strongly agreed that faculty and staff were adequately trained to promote a diverse and inclusive learning environment talked about being treated with respect and that they had positive experiences or no issues. Others commented that professors were caring, wanted to help students, and promoted a diverse learning environment. A few said that some faculty staff were adequately trained but others were not, professors care more about research than teaching, and that staff in the dining halls (such as Sbisa) needed to be trained on cross-contamination. Students who disagreed or strongly disagreed that faculty and staff were not adequately trained shared that faculty and staff do not recognize pronouns, shy away from topics of race and disability, and refer to students as "the blacks" or "those browns." Some felt that faculty and staff were too worried about Senate Bill 17, related to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at public institutions of higher education. A few mentioned that the curriculum is white-centered. Students who were neutral about faculty and staff being adequately trained said they had not observed anything either way or had no related experience to comment. Others felt that some faculty and staff were trained but others were not and that they tolerate diversity, but do not promote it. Some felt that faculty and staff were trained on racism but that they were not trained on sexism. Others shared again that DEI is not inclusive, and that less emphasis was needed on diversity.

A follow-up question asked students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement to share what improvements could be made for faculty and staff to be adequately trained and equipped to promote a diverse and inclusive learning environment. Several of the 16 comments suggested training faculty and staff on how to respectfully address students, understanding different religions or holy days, sensitivity, sexism, and subliminal messages. Other comments were about the curriculum needing more DEI or going beyond white, American experiences and including it as part of the recruitment or hiring process.

When asked about the role students can play in fostering diversity and inclusion on campus, 96 students provided a written comment. Many students talked about students attending events on campus to continue to educate themselves and learn about other cultures and religions. Other students talked about students being accepting, open, respectful, and welcoming. Several students commented on being active addressing the concerns such as advocating for equitable policies, speaking up, creating safe spaces for all students, voting for people who support DEI, and putting themselves in places where they are underrepresented.

The last question asked students how the university could facilitate and encourage these efforts, and a wide range of comments were provided by 89 students. Some students suggested that the university create more organizations, add diverse foods to the cafeteria, fight for DEI offices, support student events, acknowledge the importance of religious holidays, educate students, and ensure marketing explains what events are and that they are for everyone. Some students talked about funding by investing in a diverse student population and providing money for diverse events. Alternatively, some students talked about not forcing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), that DEI is Marxist ideology, and that DEI needs to be eliminated.

Demographics of students who received the survey and who completed the survey were gathered through the university student database. Table 3, below and continued on the following page in descending order by survey sample for each category, displays those results. A breakdown of campus sites can be found in a separate document.

	Survey Sample [n=11,819]	Survey Respondents [n=496]
College/School		
Engineering	21%	12%
School of Law	14%	24%
Galveston	11%	21%
Arts & Sciences	10%	6%
Medicine	7%	5%
Public Health	6%	6%
Business	5%	5%
Dentistry	5%	3%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	4%	3%
Nursing	4%	3%
Pharmacy	3%	3%
Education and Human Development	3%	2%
Bush School	2%	3%
Other/Exchange	2%	1%
Architecture	2%	5%
Veterinary Medicine	1%	1%
General Studies	1%	<1%
Performance and Visualization	<1%	<1%

	Survey Sample [n=11,819]	Survey Respondents [n=496]
Sex		
Male	50%	43%
Female	50%	57%
Top 10% Status		
Not top 10%	76%	86%
Top 10%	24%	14%
Ethnicity		
White	45%	45%
Hispanic or Latino	25%	22%
Asian	12%	8%
International	5%	7%
Black or Multi-Racial with Black	6%	10%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	2%	2%
Unknown or Not Reported	4%	5%
American Indian	<1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	<1%	--
First-Generation Status		
Not First-Generation	50%	40%
First-Generation	17%	14%
Unknown	33%	47%
Classification		
Senior	19%	14%
Junior	12%	9%
Sophomore	11%	10%
Freshman	10%	9%
Masters	20%	30%
Doctoral	4%	4%
Professional	18%	16%
Undergraduate Post-Baccalaureate	7%	6%

Table 3: Student Demographics

Organization Background

The Student Government Association (SGA) at Texas A&M University represents all enrolled students on important issues. According to its website (http://sga.tamu.edu/), SGA is "dedicated to engaging and representing the students of Texas A&M University. Its organizational structure consists of three governing branches and various committees and commissions.

Project Details

One possible limitation in using these results is the low response rate. Caution should be used in interpreting these data and their representation of the student body. Additionally, the overall demographics are not representative of the overall student body of College Station and all off-site locations combined. Students from off-site locations are a relatively small portion of the student body; however, they make up a majority of the survey respondents.

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

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