

**Student Government Association
Academic Affairs Committee
Future Academic Initiatives
Spring 2024**

Purpose of Assessment

The Student Government Association (SGA) Academic Affairs 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 academic resources, additional costs students incur for classes they take, professors, and classroom management system. 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 academic community. Student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- Students varied considerably in their financial concerns related to academic classes. Approximately one-third of students responding to the survey agreed that they struggle to pay for textbooks and required course materials whereas 46% disagreed and the remaining 21% were neutral.
 - Student Government Association student leaders may want to look for opportunities to share this with colleges and schools, especially faculty to consider this in their classes.
 - Additionally, SGA may explore options available to work with university administrators to develop a process for financial assistance to students who are struggling with academic expenses.
- Students offered a wide range of suggestions and ideas to improve Canvas and their academic experience.
 - SGA student leaders are strongly encouraged to read all the responses to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.
 - Student leaders may want to collaborate with areas of campus such as the libraries and other academic support offices to promote their services to students.
 - Additionally, SGA is strongly encouraged to share these results with schools, colleges, and other university administrators.

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 Academic Affairs Committee. There were eight questions for this section of the survey. Five questions were quantitative, and three questions were qualitative. Only students from the College Station main campus received this section of the survey. Of the 3,998 students who received the survey, 105 students responded to some part of the survey, yielding a 3% 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.

College Station students were asked to report their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements related to their academics. Table 1 shows that students were most in agreement that professors understood Texas A&M traditions and their importance to students and that they could easily access and find academic resources. Students were less in agreement with any of the statements related to costs associated with taking classes, especially that the price of a textbook or a homework/classwork platform caused them to drop the class. The questions about professors understanding campus traditions and students easily accessing academic resources were also looked at by academic schools and colleges to see if there were any differences. These results can be found in a separate document; however, care should be used in interpreting any differences as the number of students in some colleges is as low as one person.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean (sd) [n]
Professors understand Texas A&M traditions and their importance to students.	33%	35%	19%	6%	6%	3.83 (1.16) [48]
I can easily access and find academic resources.	21%	52%	15%	10%	2%	3.79 (.97) [48]
Buying scantrons is spending money I need to spend elsewhere on educational materials, living expenses, etc.	27%	8%	40%	17%	8%	3.29 (1.27) [48]
I struggle to pay for textbooks and required course materials.	13%	21%	21%	25%	21%	2.79 (1.34) [48]
The price of a textbook or homework/classwork platform has caused me to drop a class.	13%	4%	17%	28%	38%	2.26 (1.36) [47]

Table 1: Academics

When asked how Canvas could be structured to serve students better, 14 students wrote a comment. A couple of students described Canvas as awesome, and one student expressed appreciation for additional graduate student resources and “MySSO” being added to Canvas. Several students offered ideas and suggestions. Some would like all professors to be required to use Canvas and for there to be standardized places for all professors to put syllabi and other information. Other comments included being able to mark items as read since the notifications do not always go away, providing more training for professors, for professors to not copy and paste information from semester to semester because dates are not updated from one semester to the next, so it gets confusing, and for important academic events and dates to automatically be put in the Canvas calendar. One student commented that as a Teaching Assistant (TA) adjusting grades on a quiz or test question had to be done individually for all students and not for everyone at once.

Students were asked about resources that would help them in the classroom and 11 students wrote a comment. A couple of students mentioned having professors who enjoyed teaching or cared about their students’ success and having online textbooks or physical textbooks available to use. Other comments by students included having tutors, formatting classes with more discussion and engagement, training professors more, providing bigger desks, and having American Political Science Association (APSA) reference guides available.

The last question asked students to share changes that would improve their academic experience. There were numerous ideas shared from the comments of 14 students. A few students indicated that having professors who enjoyed teaching, providing more mental health resources, offering more seats in classes, and recording classes would improve their academic experience. Other suggestions included having faculty stop time-gating with assignments for students to work ahead, offering options to challenge a grade, expanding or flexibility with office hours, having more distance learning courses, providing more handicapped parking closer to buildings, not having assignments due on religious holidays, supporting diversity, and professors to not use iClickers or textbooks with other fees.

Demographics of students who received the survey and who completed the survey were gathered through the university student database. Table 2, on the following page in descending order by survey sample for each category, displays those results.

	Survey Sample [n=4,000]	Survey Respondents [n=105]
Sex		
Male	54%	45%
Female	46%	55%
College/School		
Engineering	32%	25%
Arts & Sciences	25%	23%
Agriculture and Life Sciences	12%	14%
Business	9%	9%
Education and Human Development	7%	7%
Architecture	3%	5%
Bush School	3%	10%
General Studies	3%	1%
Other / Exchange	2%	1%
Veterinary Medicine	1%	2%
Public Health	1%	3%
Performance and Visualization	1%	1%
Medicine	<1%	--
Ethnicity		
White	51%	52%
Hispanic or Latino	22%	22%
Asian	12%	10%
International	8%	13%
Black or Multi-Racial with Black	4%	2%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	3%	1%
Unknown or Not Reported	<1%	--
American Indian	<1%	--
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	<1%	--
First-Generation Status		
Not First-Generation	67%	61%
First-Generation	18%	12%
Unknown	15%	27%
Classification		
Senior	32%	19%
Junior	20%	16%
Sophomore	18%	20%
Freshman	11%	10%
Masters	10%	20%
Doctoral	7%	13%
Vet	1%	--
Undergraduate Post-Baccalaureate	<1%	<1%
Top 10% Status		
Not Top 10%	65%	72%
Top 10%	35%	28%

Table 2: 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.

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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