

Department of Student Activities
Student Leader Inclusive Learning Outcomes
2022-2023

Purpose

Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) and staff from the Department of Student Activities met with student leaders from multiple sponsored and affiliated Texas A&M University student organizations to develop student leader learning outcomes relevant to their organizational leadership experiences. These outcomes associated with the Texas A&M University (TAMU) undergraduate learning outcomes of life-long learning and demonstrate social, cultural and global competence (<https://catalog.tamu.edu/undergraduate/general-information/student-learning-outcomes>), but as they were created in conjunction with student leaders the outcomes more closely related to their experiences as a student leader within their organizations. This was the second year for this exercise; one of the student learning outcomes (SLO) carried forward from last year (associated with the TAMU undergraduate learning outcome of demonstrating social, cultural, and global competence), however, a new SLO was created to associate with the TAMU undergraduate learning outcome for life-long learning. Those student leader defined learning outcomes were:

- Student leadership involved in my student organization(s) will be able to facilitate reflective conversations to provide members with opportunities to take ownership of their personal contributions and identify areas to further develop their skills and knowledge.
- Student leadership involved in student organization(s) will tailor activities to foster inclusion by considering the impacts on different participants, while preserving the intended experience. Activities can include, but are not exclusive to, programming, development trainings, general meetings, and recruitment activities.

Student Activities staff and student leaders engaged in intentional activities throughout the academic year which incorporated development opportunities for achieving both learning outcomes. Specifically, during the early spring semester Student Activities staff (advisors) introduced student leaders to the OARS (Open-ended questions, Affirmations, Reflective listening, and Summary) coaching framework to help them facilitate reflective conversations with their fellow organization members as they work with them. In April, an assessment was created to gain insight from student organization leaders about experiences within their student organizations related to their progress in achieving both learning outcomes during the year.

Key Findings with Recommendations

SAPAR identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the department may take based on the results. However, Student Activities staff and student leaders may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the community and are strongly encouraged to read all the results to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- In facilitating conversations and meeting with fellow students, most responding student leaders reported following the key skills of the OARS framework, using open-ended questions, affirmations, and summarizing in their meetings with fellow students to a great extent or good deal of the time. However, they reported using reflective listening skills less frequently with 40% paraphrasing words and feelings some of the time or minimally during their conversations and meetings with fellow students. When asked about assisting their members in identifying and developing skills and knowledge that contributed to the organizational goals or their future careers, student leaders spoke about helping others learn collaboration skills, a variety of communication skills from presenting to influencing skills, and building up the confidence of their fellow members.
 - Student Activities staff may want to incorporate practice of reflective listening when training student leaders in the OARS framework. Exercises that enable the students to focus paraphrasing on not

only the words heard, but the emotions or feelings conveyed could increase their comfort level and frequency of using this part of reflective listening skills when working with others.

- As the assessment of the student leaders' use of the OARS framework was self-report, assessing those students with whom they converse most frequently in their leadership roles may provide a more accurate account of the leaders' use of the framework. A formative assessment mid-year of appropriate members may provide direction for enhancing the leaders' reflective listening skills based on the OARS framework.
- Overall, student organization leaders responding reported using lesser inclusive approaches to planning than in 2022. A greater percent of 2023 respondents over last year (2022) indicated using the most inclusive approach (5) to planning activities through their student organizations, however a greater percent of 2023 respondents also indicated using the second-least inclusive planning approach (2) compared to 2022. When reviewing the data by student organization, two organizations who were not represented in the 2022 responses (Traditions Council and Student Senate) influenced the increase in the percent reporting use of the second-least inclusive approach. When asked to describe how they considered the impacts of their activities on different participants and how it differed from previous years, respondents spoke about strategies that expanded the reach of their activities, like partnering with other organizations and varying their marketing. They also mentioned strategizing new recruitment activities and efforts to reduce bias in their interview processes.
 - Providing avenues early in the year for student leaders from different organizations to share new ideas and previous efforts with one another may further widen their use of more inclusive approaches when planning organizational activities. Also, student leaders' efforts to strategize and improve inclusivity of activities may be helped by understanding more about current participants, specifically demographics of ethnicity and race, first generation in college status, college or school of participants, and other factors of participants' identity. Understanding more about those who participate can help understand not only how to better strategize efforts to appeal to more diverse populations, but may enable student leaders to further identify the obstacles preventing non-participants of various identities from joining in.
- Sharing these results with student leaders involved in development of the learning outcomes, as well as other student leadership is highly recommended as students return to campus to begin the 2023-2024 academic year. Please contact SAPAR for assistance if needed to present these results as well as to discuss the recommendations and assessing student leader learning in the upcoming year.

Method and Sample

The assessment questions were developed and tested in collaboration with student leaders who helped create the learning outcomes, Student Activities advisors, and SAPAR staff. The assessment was produced using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. It contained 13 questions, of which nine were quantitative and four were qualitative; due to branching technology, not all questions were displayed to all respondents. Data from the survey were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Microsoft Excel®, and Microsoft Word®.

The assessment was distributed to 229 student leaders of 34 affiliated and sponsored student organizations beginning March 31, 2023, and ending April 18, 2023. Eighty-six students representing 29 student organizations answered at least one question within the assessment.

Results

Results are reported as frequency percentages, means, and standard deviation (sd) 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; comparison to previous years' results are provided where appropriate. Summary themes are contained in this report; the entire list can be found in a separate document.

Respondents were asked in a select-all-that-apply question to identify the organization were they a leader. Noted in Table 1, the most frequently selected organizations were Fish Camp and Maroon Out. Over 85% of the organizations listed were selected by at least one respondent. One percent (1%) equals one respondent.

Organization Name	2023 Frequency % [n=86]	2022 Frequency % [n=52]
Fish Camp	9%	4%
Maroon Out	9%	--
Traditions Council	8%	--
Student Senate	8%	--
12th Can	7%	4%
Multicultural Greek Council (MGC)	7%	--
Gilbert Leadership Conference	6%	13%
Judicial Court	6%	4%
The Big Event	6%	2%
Student Government Association (SGA)Executive Cabinet	5%	11%
Aggie Muster	4%	2%
Aggie Transition Camps (ATC)	4%	2%
CARPOOL	4%	29%
Class Councils Class of '23	4%	2%
Conference on Student Government Association (COSGA)	4%	4%
Interfraternity Council (IFC)	4%	--
Replant	4%	4%
Class Councils Class of '24	2%	
Class Councils Class of '25	2%	--
Class Councils Executive team	2%	--
Fish Aides	2%	2%
Aggie Recruitment Committee	1%	--
Alternative Spring Break	1%	2%
Class Councils Class of '26	1%	--
Collegiate Pan-Hellenic Council (CPC)	1%	4%
National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)	1%	--
Order of Omega	1%	--
SGA Diversity Commission	1%	2%
SGA Legislative Relations Commission	1%	2%
Aggies & Mentors	--	2%
SGA Election Commission	--	2%
Career Closet	--	--
Freshmen Leadership Advisory Council	--	--
SGA Development Commission	--	--

Table 1: Respondent Student Organization

Facilitating Reflective Conversations

Respondents were asked to provide feedback regarding their practice following the key skills of OARS (Open-ended questions, Affirmations, Reflective listening, and Summary) method during their meetings with fellow team members, whether individually or in groups. As shown in Table 2, nearly all (96%) indicated using skills associated with O of the OARS method (using open-ended questions in conversation, inviting team members to share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings) to a great extent or a good deal. They reported practicing reflective listening skills less often, with slightly over 40% noting they paraphrased others' words and feelings after listening to some extent or minimally.

OARS Statements	To a great extent (5)	A good deal (4)	To some extent (3)	Minimally (2)	Not at all (1)	2022 Mean (sd) [n=75]
O- Used open-ended questions in conversation, inviting team members to share their ideas, thoughts and feelings.	39%	57%	4%	-	-	4.35 (.56)
S- Summarized the conversation near its end or during transition points to ensure clear communication.	49%	36%	13%	1%	-	4.33 (.76)
A- Verbally recognized team member(s) strengths and positive actions during conversations with them.	45%	41%	13%	-	-	4.32 (.70)
R- Practiced reflective listening skills while conversing with team members, including: Restating their words and feelings after listening.	39%	35%	27%	-	-	4.12 (.81)
R- Practiced reflective listening skills while conversing with team members, including: Paraphrasing their words and feelings after listening.	27%	31%	39%	4%	-	3.80 (.89)

Table 2: Use of OARS Framework by Student Leaders

Following this series of statements, respondents were asked to describe a time they worked with fellow organization members to help them identify opportunities to contribute their talents towards creating or executing a project or a program. Twenty- nine students responded representing 15 different student organizations. About one-quarter of the respondents discussed working with their fellow members as a team, and together collaborating to assume tasks and responsibilities based on each of their strengths. One student leader described this process while planning an event:

... I sat down with our team about a month before the event to finalize much of the tasks that we still had to complete. We used an open collaborative dialogue to divide out tasks that most closely aligned with the job description of each director, but also what fit their individual strengths. This allowed me to become more involved in the execution of the event as the chief student leader, as well as each director, to feel more comfortable about the expectations and execution of their tasks.

Other student leaders mentioned facilitating brainstorming activities and helping others ideate to create more innovative events and programs. Another common theme included encouraging others to practice and polish their communication skills, including public speaking, interpersonal communication skills, and networking skills to expand the outreach of their program. Some spoke more generically about providing support, affirming their fellow members strengths and strengthen their own relationship building skills to better serve their fellow

members. A few spoke about providing their own expertise, like budgeting and fundraising skills, to support others' programming ideas and ensure planned events and programming happen.

A follow-up question asked respondents what skills and/or knowledge they helped their fellow members identify and develop that could be applied to future projects or program work or may be applied in their future careers. A common skill highlighted by the 29 who responded was collaboration; facilitating their peers' ability to work as a team towards a goal and invest in other's success as well as their own. Others mentioned helping those they work with to develop their creativity and creative technical skills, like graphic design. Other student leaders spoke about helping others to improve their professional communication skills and encouraging adaptability especially when working events and with bureaucratic processes they encountered. Some also spoke about bolstering their peers' confidence, promoting and honing reflection in their peers to enhance resilience when facing future challenges. As an example, one student leader shared:

We helped them identify their core values and motives, how to communicate with those that are different than them, how to take time to individually journal and reflect on their life, and how to professionally communicate with adults in various industries. We also facilitated small group time where they get to provide feedback, and also provide input to other members and find ways to work together to achieve a goal.

Fostering Inclusion

Within the assessment, respondents were next shown the second student learning outcome developed by their fellow student leaders: *Student leadership involved in my student organization(s) will tailor activities to foster inclusion by considering the impacts on different participants while preserving the intended experience. Activities can include, but are not exclusive to, programming, development trainings, general meetings, and recruitment activities.* Following that statement, respondents were asked in a select-all-that-apply question to select what types of activities they plan. Noted in Table 3, programming events was most frequently selected by over half of the respondents, followed by general meetings. Those who chose other could write in their response, and 13 wrote in responses such as dues and finances, fundraiser, finance director, and specific listing of events and meetings like judicial board meetings, university class events, roundtables, remembrance events and pantry openings.

Activity type	2023 Frequency % (n=43)	2022 Frequency % (n=33)
Programming Events	61%	55%
General Meetings	54%	49%
Training development for members	54%	42%
Recruitment Activities	35%	39%
Other	30%	24%

Table 3: Types of Activities Student Leaders Plan (n=33)

Next, the respondents were provided five descriptions of approaches to planning and were asked to select which best described their approach to planning most activities this year. Descriptions were coded within the assessment based on the degree of inclusivity the approach described, with one representing the least inclusive approach and five representing the most inclusive approach. Overall, the 2023 mean response (mean=3.66, sd=1.22) dropped slightly compared to 2022 (mean=3.88, sd=.96). Shown in Table 4, on the next page, fewer respondents than in 2022 selected the second-most inclusive approach to planning (4), which included planning some changes which could possibly result in attracting diverse participants in the activity but a greater percent of respondents also indicated using the most inclusive approach (5). However, a greater percent of respondents also indicated using the second-least inclusive approach (2). Breakdown of the responses by types of activities selected by the student leaders can be found in the attached data documents.

Approach to planning activities	2023 Frequency Percentage (n=43)	2022 Frequency Percentage (n=33)
Planning included gathering others' diverse perspectives regarding the activity, and strategizing some changes that could attract more diverse participants to the activity (4)	33%	52%
Planning included gaining and incorporating others' diverse perspectives, resulting in change to the activity which included more diverse participants. (5)	28%	15%
Planning needed few changes so activity would attract similar participants to previous years. (2)	19%	6%
Planning included reaching out to learn about the appeal of the activity based on others' diverse perspectives, although little change to the activity and participants was expected. (3)	16%	15%
Planning needed little to no change as participants and activity would be similar as previous years. (1)	5%	3%

Table 4: Approaches to Planning Efforts to Improve Inclusivity

Breakdown of the responses by organization selected by the student leaders provides more information about the somewhat bimodal nature of 2023 responses as compared to responses in 2022. There were four more organizations represented in the 2023 responses that were not represented in 2022 responses. Two of these organizations, Traditions Council and Student Senate, rated their approaches to planning efforts to improve inclusivity relatively low on average. As demonstrated in charts below and on the following page (Figure 1 and Figure 2), when removing these two organizations' responses from the distribution, the overall shape of the distributions between the years is similar, although a greater percentage of 2023 respondents' selecting the most inclusive approach (5) still remains.

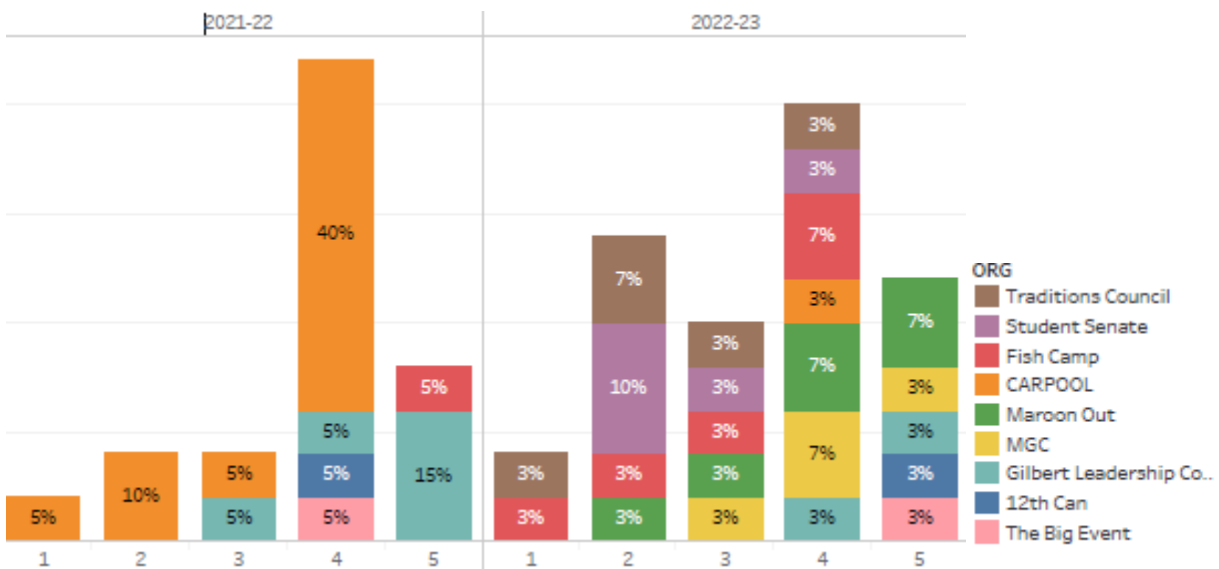


Figure 1: Approach to Planning Efforts by All Organizations Responses Percentage

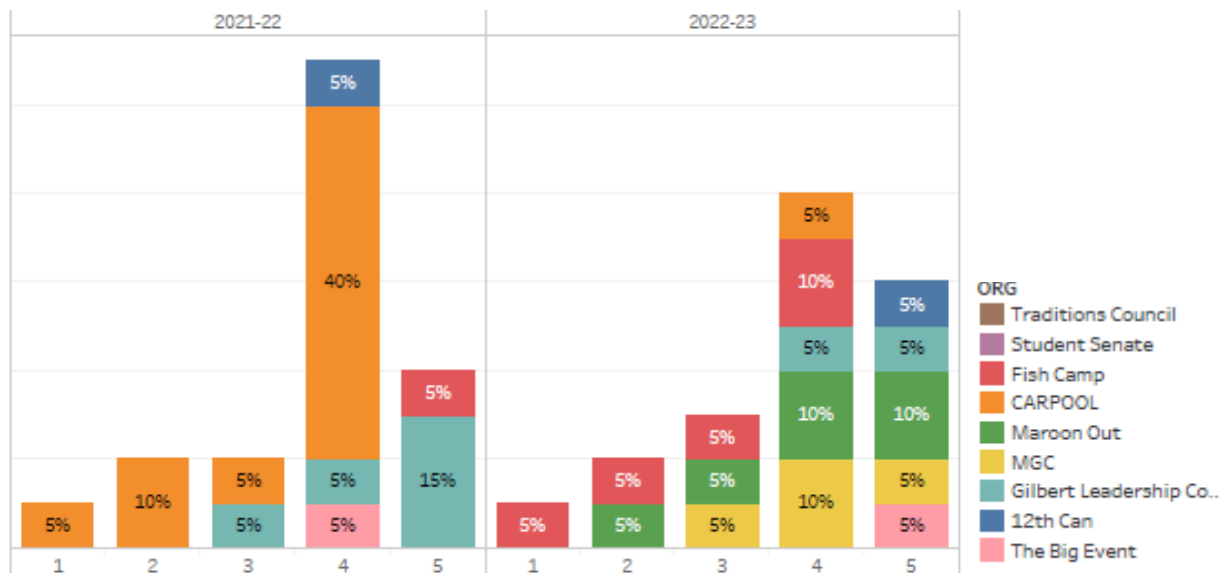


Figure 2: Approach to Planning Efforts by Organizations Responses Percentage Not including Traditions Council and Student Senate

A higher number of Fish Camp leader responses in 2023 also contributed to an elevated percentage of the 2023 responses indicating less inclusive planning efforts, in comparison to that organization's 2022 response. The difference in distribution method between 2022 and 2023 assessments may also account for differences in the organizational representation in responses. In 2022, student leaders received their invitation to participate in the assessment through an open link provided by their fellow student leaders or advisors; whereas, in 2023, each student leader of the organizations chosen to be involved in the assessment was invited to participate in the assessment through a unique link via their university email. Additional charts showing the comparison of mean for years 2022 and 2023 by student organization can also be found in the attached document.

The next question asked respondents to describe how the activities they planned this year with their organization considered the impacts of that activity on different participants and what various perspectives or experiences, if any, did they include in planning that differed from previous years. Twenty-six responded, and 12 described how they considered the impacts of their activities on different participants and expanding the reach of their activities to include more varied student participation. About half of these respondents mentioned strategies they used in an effort to increase the student body's awareness and participation in their programming. This included forming new partnerships with other organizations as outreach initiatives and using more varied social media and other marketing platforms as efforts to reach a wider variety of students. And for some it included a complete overhaul, as one student describes "Completely overhauled the organization of the Judicial Board to provide greater transparency and buy-in from the IFC community, resulting in the largest, youngest, and most diverse Judicial Board in IFC history."

One-third of the comments spoke about strategizing recruitment activities to include more diverse members with new activities at recruiting events and adjusting their new member recruiting (marketing and interviewing processes) to reduce bias inherent in those activities. One student shared some steps implemented by their organization to reduce bias in recruitment:

We began banner holding this year to meet more freshmen who could apply. We also met with a psychologist and the diversity commissioner on a few topics to teach staff members how to remove bias from an interview scenario. We then held mock interviews to show example excellent, good, and poor

answers. The mock interviews also placed them in a scenario where they would have to score people they already knew, and had bias towards, and had to remove it to excel in the exercise.

Those respondents whose answers did not really describe considering the impacts of their organizations' activity on different participants and what various perspectives or experience were included in planning that differed from previous years generally spoke about changes in planning as well. They mentioned speaking with previous participants and other known stakeholders, as well as using assessment results from previous programs to make changes and improvements. However, their comments did not reflect on how those changes impacted or the activities involved different participants than in the past. As an example, one respondent said, "I spoke a lot with my fellow members and my committee members to identify what they enjoyed about the organization and what they did not and communicated that to the exec cabinet. I advocated for the things that were important to them."

Respondents were asked if they would like all the responses they provided in the assessment emailed to them for future reference to use in resumes and other career development documents. Of the 43 who responded, 72% said no and 28% said yes. Those who indicated they wanted their responses sent to them provided the email address for that distribution and their responses were sent to that provided address by SAPAR.

Background

Per its website <https://studentactivities.tamu.edu/about-us/>, the Department of Student Activities "fosters and supports leadership, learning, and involvement opportunities that enhance the growth and development of students and recognized student organizations. As members of the university community, we are committed to a philosophy of shared responsibility that develops leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good, and we subscribe to the Texas A&M core values of Respect, Excellence, Leadership, Loyalty, Integrity, and Selfless Service."

Project Details

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 (SAPAR) 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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