

Graduate and Professional Student Government

Student Research Week

Spring 2023

Purpose of Assessment

Student Research Week (SRW) is a four-day competition coordinated by the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG). Students can share their research conducted at Texas A&M either through oral presentations or poster sessions. This year, Student Research Week was held March 20-24, 2023. The Graduate and Professional Student Government wanted to assess the experiences of the competitors, judges, and volunteers regarding their participation in Student Research Week 2023. This is the 16th time Student Affairs Strategic Planning has assisted GPSG in assessing some aspect of SRW since 2006.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Student Affairs Strategic Planning identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations that the Graduate and Professional Student Government may take based on the results. However, the GPSG members and advisors may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the event and those participating in it. GPSG members and advisors are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of participants' experiences.

- Most of the competitors (86%) agreed or strongly agreed that they had a positive experience with Student Research Week. Additionally, 76% or more felt that the check-in process was fast and efficient, the registration was easy to understand, and GPSG provided information to keep them informed. Competitors also provided several recommendations regarding judges and awards.
 - GPSG might explore how judges are recruited and scheduled to ensure there are enough judges for all categories, the same number of judges for each category, and that the same judges score all the presentations in a category. Additionally, competitors and judges both recommended having judges score presentations that are in their area of expertise. GPSG could look at recruiting judges earlier and possibly sending confirmation emails to judges a few days before SRW begins to decrease the number of no-show judges.
 - Student leaders may also investigate how awards are determined and if they are equitable for all categories. Competitors felt that some categories had a lot of disciplines that were different from one another, especially in the sciences. This increased the number of students competing for one award. SRW leaders are encouraged to look at the organization of the categories and if they are spread out by discipline to be consistent for all groups. Additionally, SRW may want to explain more about the judging process and be more transparent about it with competitors.
- Just over three-fourths (79%) of competitors participated in Student Research Week to practice their presentation. However, only 52% of the students felt the feedback they received from judges was helpful.
 - Student Research Week planners may want to look at options to encourage judges to provide feedback overall, but also to provide more specific feedback about how to improve rather than just saying good job or interesting research. If judges do not have suggestions for improvement, they could highlight things the students did well.
- All volunteers (100%) reported that it was easy to register as a volunteer and 94% said they felt appreciated as a volunteer. However, 78% thought the planning committee worked with their schedule and availability and 72% said that they felt their assistance was needed.
 - The SRW planning committee may look at how to have more work for volunteers or fewer volunteers for each time block.

Method and Sample

An electronic survey was developed and distributed using Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys and databases. The full survey consisted of 35 questions: 25 quantitative, four qualitative, and six demographic questions. The survey had three sections based on respondents' role (competitor, judge, or volunteer) with Student Research Week. Individuals only received questions associated with their role; however, some people were in multiple roles and therefore received multiple sections. Additionally, one qualitative question was asked of everyone regardless of their role.

The competitor survey contained 18 questions, which is five fewer questions than asked in 2022. Thirteen questions were quantitative, two were qualitative, and three were demographic. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions in this section. There were ten questions on the judge survey: six quantitative, one qualitative, and three demographic questions. The volunteer survey was comprised of six quantitative questions.

The survey invitation was sent to 857 participants through email on May 1, 2023; however, five email addresses were invalid and the survey was not delivered. Non-respondents received up to three reminders, all sent after finals concluded before the survey was closed on May 24, 2023. Of the 852 people successfully receiving the survey link, 203 completed at least some part of the survey, yielding a 24% response rate. Data were analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, Microsoft Excel®, and Tableau®.

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%. Tables list data in decreasing frequency or mean order for SRW 2023 unless otherwise noted. Summary themes are included in this report; the complete list of comments can be found in a separate document. Some comparisons to previous competitor surveys are provided where appropriate; however, most questions changed in 2023. Comparisons are not made for the judge survey, last completed in 2020, or the volunteer survey, last administered in 2014. This report is divided into six sections: SRW Marketing, Competitors, Judges, Volunteers, SRW Overall Suggestions, and Demographics.

SRW Marketing

Using a select all that apply question, all three roles were asked how they learned about Student Research Week. Table 1, on the following page in descending order by the competitors, shows that word of mouth was the most selected for competitors, followed by general bulk emails; however, judges and volunteers learned about SRW from general bulk emails, followed by word of mouth. There were differences in the advertising method for the distinct roles. Those who selected the "other" response option were given the opportunity to write about how they learned about SRW. Other ways competitors learned about Student Research Week were through their research lab, team, or professor, Aggie Research Program, Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, and Century Scholarship. Judges reported learning about SRW because of past participation or were specifically asked to participate. One volunteer indicated finding out about Student Research Week from the Graduate and Professional Student Government.

I learned about SRW from: (Select all that apply)	2023 Competitors [n=129]	2023 Judges [n=55]	2023 Volunteers [n=18]
Word of mouth (friends, colleagues, student organization, etc.)	50%	29%	50%
General bulk email	31%	75%	61%
Advisor/Dean/Department Head	29%	15%	6%
Other	6%	7%	6%
Digital marketing (website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	5%	16%	6%
Physical marketing (posters, fliers, yard signs, etc.)	4%	16%	39%

Table 1: Marketing

Competitors

Competitors were asked to identify the role they played in their research project and the type of research they presented. Table 2, in descending order for each question, illustrates that over half of the respondents conducted their research project individually and that they did a poster presentation during Student Research Week.

	2023 Percent [n=129]
I was a:	
Individual	57%
Group Member	21%
Group Leader	17%
I presented multiple presentations with different roles	5%
I did a:	
Poster Presentation	57%
Oral Presentation	39%
Both an oral and a poster presentation	4%

Table 2: Research Roles and Types

Using a select all that apply question, respondents were asked why they chose to participate in Student Research Week. As seen in Table 3, most participated in SRW for presentation practice and to add it to their Curriculum Vitae (CV) or résumé, which is similar to last year. For the write-in “other” option, one person said that their advisor recommended that they participate, and the other person shared they wanted to present a potentially research-funded project.

Why did you choose to participate in SRW? (Select all that apply)	2023 Percent [n=129]	2022 Percent [n=157]
Presentation practice	79%	83%
Experience to add to my CV or résumé	72%	80%
Feedback provided by judges on my research or presentation	51%	49%
Chance to win a cash prize	36%	43%
Requirement for a course, program, or capstone	12%	†
Other	2%	6%

Table 3: Motivation to Participate in SRW
(† response option was not provided)

Additionally, competitors were asked if they had presented their work prior to Student Research Week 2023. Table 4 indicates that just over one-third of the respondents had not presented their research prior to SRW 2023, which is like last year. Those who had previously presented their research did it for a class presentation the most. Those selecting the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write where they presented their research. Two of the five comments indicated presenting at SRW 2022, and two others reported to their lab. The last response shared that they presented their research at a workshop.

Prior to SRW 2023, I have presented my research (Select all that apply)	2023 Percent [n=126]	2022 Percent [n=156]	2020 Percent [n=13]	2019 Percent [n=203]
I have not presented my research prior to SRW 2023	36%	38%	23%	39%
For a class presentation	30%	28%	46%	31%
At a departmental seminar or symposium	28%	26%	8%	15%
At a professional conference	25%	23%	15%	30%
At more than one professional conferences	19%	15%	8%	15%
Other	5%	8%	--	6%

Table 4: Presented Research Prior to SRW 2023

When asked if the judges’ feedback they received on the feedback form was valuable, just over half (52%) of the 127 respondents said the feedback was valuable, which is more than the 32% who said yes in 2022; however, it is lower than the 64% who said yes in 2020. Additionally, 31% were neutral about the feedback being valuable or not, 14% reported that the feedback was not valuable, and 3% indicated that they did not receive feedback. Furthermore, competitors were asked if they felt the judges asked them fair questions regarding their research. Three-fourths (75%) said yes, 14% indicated no, and 11% were unsure.

Competitors were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of questions about their experience with Student Research Week. Table 5 indicates that overall, competitors were positive about their experiences. They were most in agreement about the check-in process being fast and efficient. They were slightly less in agreement that the committee kept them updated on important details regarding SRW.

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2023 Mean (sd) [n=127]
The check-in process was fast and efficient.	65%	29%	4%	2%	--	4.58 (.65)
I found the registration form to be easy to follow.	56%	40%	2%	2%	--	4.50 (.63)
My overall experience with SRW was positive.	46%	40%	8%	4%	2%	4.23 (.93)
The SRW committee did a good job keeping me updated on important details regarding the event.	50%	26%	14%	8%	2%	4.13 (1.08)

Table 5: Competitors’ Experience

When asked what changes, if any, they would recommend for the registration form, half of the 24 comments were about the registration form and process and the other half were about various aspects of Student Research Week. Suggestions for the registration form included having a choice of presentation time, receiving presentation time quicker, using something other than Google, and having a place to give credit to your Principal Investigator and/or mentor. A few people did not remember the registration form and a couple of people said no changes were needed. There was a wide range of general recommendations for SRW. Several commented on the judges, by not

letting them finish their presentation, not being interested, and giving inaccurate reports. Other thoughts included receiving more feedback, being more transparent with the awards process, providing snacks, and explaining how competitors should prepare earlier. A couple of students talked about being more organized and following the schedule rather than having competitors present earlier than their scheduled time.

Using a select all that apply questions, competitors were asked which workshop, if any, they attended prior to Student Research Week. A majority of the 127 participants (88%) indicated they did not attend a workshop. Additionally, 9% reported attending the oral and poster presentation workshop and 6% attended the abstract workshop.

Those who reported they attended one of the workshops (n=15) were asked if they found the workshop helpful. Almost all 15 respondents (93%) said yes, they found the workshop helpful, and 7% said it was not helpful. Nobody selected the unsure option. Looking closer at the results, 100% of those reporting they went to the oral and poster presentation workshop reported it was helpful; however, only 88% of those who attended the abstract workshop said it was helpful, and 13% said it was not helpful.

Additionally, these competitors were asked to explain why they felt the workshop was helpful or not helpful. Four students who attended the oral and poster presentation workshop and reported the workshop was helpful responded. Students shared that they learned how to make their presentations better and stand out, continue to be professional, and organize their posters. Additionally, one student commented on receiving feedback from the judges to improve their presentation skills and another student said it provided a chance to practice.

Judges

When asked if they felt the presentations they judged were in their area of expertise, 69% of the 55 respondents said yes. Additionally, 24% reported that the presentations they judged were not in their area of expertise and 7% were unsure. Judges were also asked if they were asked to judge additional poster or oral sessions than they were originally assigned. Over three-fourths (82%) shared that they were not asked to judge additional events, and 18% reported that they were asked to judge additional events.

Judges were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding their experiences at Student Research Week. Table 6 reveals that judges were more in agreement that their time preferences were considered when they were assigned time slots. There was less agreement that the digital rubric was more streamlined than the paper-based rubric.

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2023 Mean (sd) [n=55]
My time preferences were considered when it came to my judging time slots.	86%	13%	2%	--	--	4.84 (.42)
The rubric was easy to follow and fill out during the judging process.	55%	36%	2%	7%	--	4.38 (.85)
The process was streamlined with the digital rubric instead of a paper-based rubric.	46%	33%	9%	9%	4%	4.07 (1.12)

Table 6: Judge Experience

Judges were also asked to explain their response about their time preferences being considered and 14 provided a comment. Several judges stated that they were scheduled at the time they requested, and said it was perfect, great, and organized. One person reported that they would prefer to have both of their time slots on the same day rather than coming to the Memorial Student Center twice. One person indicated being assigned a time they were not

available. Additionally, three judges commented on the rubric. One judge felt the rubric system was easy to use; however, two judges indicated that they did not prefer the digital rubric.

Volunteers

When asked how many shifts they volunteered for during Student Research Week, half of the 18 volunteers reported working two shifts. Additionally, 22% of respondents said they worked one and three shifts each, and 6% worked four or more shifts.

Volunteers were asked to rate their level of agreement and disagreement with several statements about their experience. Table 7 shows that volunteers were most in agreement that it was easy to register as a volunteer; however, they were least in agreement that their assistance was needed during Student Research Week.

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with these statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2023 Mean (sd) [n=18]
It was easy to register as a volunteer.	56%	44%	--	--	--	4.56 (.51)
I felt my assistance was appreciated.	50%	44%	6%	--	--	4.44 (.62)
The planning committee was able to work with my schedule to give me the times I requested.	28%	50%	17%	6%	--	4.00 (.84)
I felt my assistance was needed.	28%	44%	22%	6%	--	3.94 (.87)

Table 7: Volunteer Experience

SRW Overall Suggestions

Competitors, judges, and volunteers were all asked to share suggestions for improving Student Research Week in the future and 79 respondents provided a wide range of feedback and ideas. Competitors and judges commented on there not being enough judges and that there was confusion with judging. Additionally, judges and competitors suggested that judges have the expertise to match with the presentations and to have a plan for judges not showing up. Furthermore, judges and competitors expressed some frustration with the rubric this year and would like it to be in paper format as well as some changes to the content of the form. Competitors also shared disappointment that feedback was not provided or that it was not helpful. Judges recommended advertising earlier for judges and be clearer in the communication of who is eligible to judge. Additionally, judges would like to see confirmations with presenters a few days before Student Research Week to not have as many no-shows, and they would like the registration deadline earlier to provide more time for matching and information to be sent back. Finally, judges recommended sending an email listing all the winners after Student Research Week concluded. Competitors had several suggestions about the judges and judging process, including having judges go to all the posters, training judges, having the same number of judges for each category, and using the same judges for a category. Competitors also reported that judges were not engaged in the presentations or asked questions that were provided during the presentation. Competitors also would like more information and communication earlier about what to expect from Student Research Week, and to know when they present earlier. Furthermore, competitors also commented on there being more categories to better match faculty with the presentation and to make the odds of winning more consistent between all categories. Volunteers recommended having more for them to do during their volunteer shift and changing the sign-up process by decreasing the time from giving availability to receiving volunteer shift assignments. There was also a recommendation to have the sign-up be through Sign-up Genius to sign up for a specific day and time. A few people shared that the SRW staff were helpful and that everything was well organized.

Demographics

Competitors and judges were asked to self-report their classification and college or school. Table 8, in descending order for each category for the competitors, shows that almost two-thirds of the competitors were undergraduate students and one-third were from the College of Arts & Sciences. Almost half of the judges were PhD students and one-third were from the College of Engineering. Respondents selecting the “other” option could write their classification or college/school. One competitor reported their classification was a research assistant. Additionally, one competitor said they were in the department of Biological & Agricultural Engineering, which is in both Agriculture & Life Sciences and Engineering. Judges indicated several classifications, including staff members, research scientists or staff, post-doc, and former students. One judge reported being in Athletics and one said they were in the Division of Research.

Additionally, competitors and judges were asked to write their department, and those responses can be found in a separate document. Furthermore, some additional demographics were gathered from the student information system based on email addresses provided by the Graduate and Professional Student Government. This can also be found in a separate document.

Self-Reported Demographics	2023 Competitors	2023 Judges
Classification	[n=127]	[n=55]
Undergraduate Student	60%	--
Ph.D. Student	29%	46%
Master's Student	8%	15%
Professional Student	2%	--
Other	1%	20%
Faculty	†	20%
College/School	[n=127]	[n=54]
Arts & Sciences	37%	26%
Agriculture & Life Sciences	17%	13%
Engineering	17%	32%
Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences	10%	4%
Education & Human Development	6%	11%
Public Health	6%	4%
Bush School of Government & Public Service	2%	--
Medicine	2%	--
Architecture	1%	2%
Mays Business School	1%	2%
Transition Academic Programs	1%	--
Not Listed	1%	4%
Dentistry	--	--
Engineering Medicine	--	4%
Law	--	--
Nursing	--	--
Performance, Visualization & Fine Arts	--	--
Pharmacy	--	--

Table 8: Demographics
(† response option was not provided)

Background

According to its website (<https://srw.tamu.edu/about/>), the mission of Student Research Week is to “recognize and celebrate student research at Texas A&M University by providing an opportunity for students to present research and to foster an environment for students, faculty, staff, and administration to learn about the research occurring at Texas A&M University.” The Graduate and Professional Student Government created Student Research Week (SRW) as a one-day poster event in 1994. Per its website (<http://srw.tamu.edu/>) Student Research Week:

Is the largest student-run research symposium in the nation. This four-day competition highlights student research occurring on the Texas A&M campus. Students who participate are provided a venue to present their work through either oral presentations or poster sessions. This event allows students, faculty, and the community to see the depth and breadth of research conducted at Texas A&M. For the past 27 years, SRW has been a valuable tool in meeting the university’s mission of academic, research, and service excellence. SRW is a premier program of the Graduate and Professional Student Council and is supported by several academic and nonacademic departments on campus.

Project Details

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

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

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