Student Involvement—Part I

Highlights

November 2002

Background

According to Rhoads and Neurer (1998), “student learning through service may contribute to significant development outcomes” including self-understanding, social responsibility, and learning about cultural differences. In a study about the long-term effects of volunteerism in college, Astin, Sax, and Avalos (1999) found positive benefits from community service participation in the area of racial understanding as well as a range of other skills and activities such as work preparation and graduate school attendance.

The February 2003 Aggie R-ring telephone survey on volunteer and community service was initiated in order to collect benchmarking information on Texas A&M students’ involvement in service activities. The survey addressed how many hours are devoted to service, types of service being conducted, and reasons for not volunteering.

NOTE: For the purpose of the survey, “service activity” was defined as “a helpful act performed by one that donates time, services, or actions” and “philanthropy” was defined as “raising and/or distributing donated funds to promote human welfare.” This survey concentrated on service activities exclusively.

Results

In how many Texas A&M student organizations do you currently participate?

- 75% were involved in at least one student organization.
- 33% of freshmen were not involved in any organizations compared to 17% of sophomores, 23% of juniors, and 26% of seniors.

How many hours per month do you participate in this (these) organization(s) service activities?

- 51% participated in 8 or more hours of service activities with their organizations.

On average, how many hours per month, outside of Texas A&M organizational activities, do you participate in volunteer work or community service activities?

- 38% did not participate outside of their organizations
- 17% said 8 or more hours per month

Including both personal and organizational service, in what type(s) of service activities are you involved?

- Adults (51%) were the main audience of service activities while counseling (32%) was the leading topic.
- 17% of males said they did not participate in service activities compared to 9% of females.

 Were you involved in volunteer work or community service activities during high school?

- 82% participated in service activities during high school.
- 92% of freshmen reported involvement in high school service compared to 84% of sophomores and 79% of juniors and seniors.
- 78% of students with high school community service experience reported involvement in student organizations compared to 61% of students who did not have high school service experience.

For what reason(s) are you unable to volunteer?

- The most frequently cited reason was lack of time followed by academic commitments, lack of interest, and work commitments.

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For a complete report, please contact Student Life Studies.