

Department of Student Activities

Academic Performances of Freshmen Leadership Organizations

2019 - 2020

Purpose of Assessment

The Department of Student Activities wanted to examine the academic performance of the Texas A&M University fall 2019 first-time in college (FTIC) student cohort (N=9,613). In particular, whether there were differences in academic performance (cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) at the beginning and end of spring 2020) within Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLO) and FTIC students who did not participate in a FLO.

Key Findings

Student Life Studies (SLS) identified the following key findings. However, staff in the Department of Student Activities and student leaders in the Freshman Leadership Advisory Council (FLAC) may identify other key findings using their knowledge and understanding of the FLO community.

- Students in a Freshmen Leadership Organization persisted from fall 2019 to spring 2020 at a 99% rate, compared to a 98% rate for students not in a FLO.
- All FLOs maintained above a 3.0 GPA for both the fall 2019 and spring 2020 semesters.
- Students in a FLO had a higher GPA for both semesters when compared to students who were not in a FLO.
- There was no statistically significant difference within FLOs and the cumulative GPR at the end of the fall 2019 or the spring 2020 semester.
- There was a statistical significant difference between those students not in a FLO and six individual FLOs (Fish Aides, FLIC, FREE, MSC ALOT, MSC FISH, and PREP).
- Students in FLOs had higher average ACT/SAT equivalent standardized test scores compared to students who were not in a FLO.

Results

The FTIC fall 2019 cohort had 9,613 students, of which 11% (n=1,035) participated in any of the 17 Freshmen Leadership Organizations (FLO) in the 2019-2020 academic year. Of FTIC Fall 2019 cohort of students, 98% persisted to the spring 2020 semester (n=9,446). Students in a FLO persisted at a slightly higher rate (99%) compared to students not in a FLO (98%).

Of the 9,446 FTIC students who persisted and enrolled in the spring semester, 11% (n=1,029) were members in one of the FLOs. The number of freshmen members in FLOs ranged from 40 members in Fish Aides and FLOC to 100 members in MSC ALOT. Consistent with the 2018-2019 academic year, 11% of the 10,245 FTIC fall 2018 student cohort participated in one of the 18 Freshmen Leadership Organizations. Similarly to the last academic year, the number of freshmen members in FLOs ranged from 39 members in Fish Aides to 100 members in MSC ALOT.

Table 1, on the following page, provides the cumulative GPA at the beginning and end of the spring 2020 for students in a FLO and those not in a FLO, as well as the GPA for individual FLOs. Students in a FLO had higher GPAs than students not in a FLO. All individual FLOs had GPAs above a 3.0 for both semesters and each were above the GPA for students not in a FLO. GPAs were higher for both fall 2019 and spring 2020 compared to the previous year, for both students in a FLO and those not in a FLO. Additionally, similarly to last year, GPAs in the spring semester were higher than the fall semester. Fish Aides, PREP and ASSIST saw the highest GPAs.

In looking at an academic predictor prior to starting college, students in a FLO also had higher ACT/SAT equivalent standardized test scores than students not in a FLO. A majority of the individual FLOs (14 of the 17 organizations) had higher ACT/SAT equivalent standardized test scores than students not in a FLO.

	Cumulative GPA Beginning of Spring 2020 Semester	Cumulative GPA End of Spring 2020 Semester	2019-2020 Pre-College ACT/SAT Equivalent	Cumulative GPA Beginning of Spring 2019 Semester	Cumulative GPA End of Spring 2019 Semester	2018-2019 Pre-College ACT/SAT Equivalent
FTIC Students in all FLOs	3.46 (n=1,029)	3.59 (n=1,029)	1329 (n=1,035)	3.44 (n=1,084)	3.41 (n=1,084)	1306 (n=1,069)
FTIC Students Not in a FLO	3.21 (n=8,417)	3.38 (n=8,413)	1289 (n=8,578)	3.16 (n=9,161)	3.18 (n=9,161)	1275 (n=9,138)
Aggie Fish Club	3.40 (n=56)	3.55 (n=56)	1353 (n=56)	3.29 (n=56)	3.25 (n=56)	1312 (n=56)
ASSIST	3.60 (n=48)	3.67 (n=48)	1365 (n=48)	3.59 (n=48)	3.58 (n=48)	1344 (n=47)
FAST	3.44 (n=53)	3.57 (n=53)	1349 (n=54)	3.49 (n=54)	3.46 (n=54)	1313 (n=53)
Fish Aides	3.62 (n=40)	3.72 (n=40)	1366 (n=40)	3.62 (n=39)	3.57 (n=39)	1337 (n=37)
Fish Council	3.37 (n=60)	3.52 (n=60)	1325 (n=60)	3.26 (n=50)	3.27 (n=50)	1293 (n=50)
FLARE	3.42 (n=49)	3.59 (n=49)	1258 (n=50)	3.41 (n=53)	3.44 (n=53)	1255 (n=53)
FLED	3.42 (n=59)	3.56 (n=59)	1281 (n=60)	3.38 (n=60)	3.33 (n=60)	1273 (n=59)
FLEX	3.34 (n=71)	3.50 (n=71)	1296 (n=72)	3.39 (n=72)	3.41 (n=72)	1279 (n=72)
FLIC	3.53 (n=60)	3.62 (n=60)	1318 (n=60)	3.43 (n=60)	3.36 (n=60)	1272 (n=60)
FLiP	3.37 (n=56)	3.47 (n=56)	1309 (n=56)	3.44 (n=56)	3.40 (n=56)	1306 (n=56)
FLOC	3.41 (n=40)	3.51 (n=40)	1283 (n=40)	3.29 (n=60)	3.29 (n=60)	1292 (n=60)
FORME	3.33 (n=56)	3.50 (n=56)	1314 (n=56)	3.45 (n=56)	3.37 (n=56)	1285 (n=56)
FREE	3.46 (n=80)	3.63 (n=80)	1383 (n=80)	3.43 (n=70)	3.45 (n=70)	1379 (n=70)
MSC ALOT	3.52 (n=100)	3.63 (n=100)	1329 (n=100)	3.42 (n=100)	3.37 (n=100)	1322 (n=94)
MSC FISH	3.52 (n=90)	3.62 (n=90)	1347 (n=90)	3.53 (n=89)	3.52 (n=89)	1344 (n=86)
MSC FLI	3.48 (n=57)	3.59 (n=57)	1336 (n=59)	3.48 (n=58)	3.48 (n=58)	1309 (n=57)
PREP	3.62 (n=54)	3.74 (n=54)	1349 (n=54)	3.55 (n=54)	3.55 (n=54)	1315 (n=54)

Table 1 – Academic Performance of FLOs and Students Not in a FLO

GPA's and ACT/SAT equivalent standardized test scores were cross tabulated with different student demographics for students in any of the Freshmen Leadership Organizations and those not in a FLO. The complete data can be found in a separate document. Students in a FLO had higher GPAs and ACT/SAT test scores than students not in a FLO for all demographics (sex, ethnicity, first-generation, Top 10%, social economics), except for those with senior classification based on the credit hours first-time students brought in. Students with senior classification had lower GPAs in a FLO compared to not being in a FLO. Some points to highlight based on individual demographics:

- Males and females had similar GPAs; however, males had higher ACT/SAT test scores.
- Black or Multi Racial with Black and Hispanic or Latino had lower ACT/SAT test scores. Black or Multi Racial with Black, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and American Indian had a GPA below 3.0 one or more of the semesters.
- First generation students had lower GPAs and ACT/SAT test scores for compared to continuing generation students.
- For students in a FLO, those who were Top 10% of their class had higher GPAs than those who were not Top 10%. However, the opposite was true for students who were not in a FLO; those who were not Top 10% had higher GPAs than those who were Top 10%.
- Generally, as students' family income levels increased, GPAs and ACT/SAT test scores also increased. This was the case for students who were not in a FLO. It was mostly the same for students who were in a FLO, with a couple of exceptions.

In looking closer at the differences in the fall 2019 semester compared to the spring 2020 semester, Table 2, on the following page, reveals that the GPA increased in the spring for almost two-thirds of all FTIC students. Students in a FLO had a slightly higher percentage of GPAs that stayed the same and a slight lower percentage of GPAs that decreased compared to students not in a FLO. Of the 17 individual FLOs, 12 had at least 50% of their members achieving higher GPAs in the spring compared to the fall. FLARE had the highest percentage for GPAs increasing (76% of their members); they also had the lowest percentage (4%) for GPAs decreasing.

	GPA Stayed the Same	GPA Increased	GPA Decreased
All FTIC Students (n=9,442)	23%	62%	16%
FTIC Students in all FLOs (n=1,029)	29%	57%	14%
FTIC Students Not in a FLO (n=8,413)	22%	62%	16%
Aggie Fish Club (n=56)			
ASSIST (n=48)	35%	42%	23%
FAST (n=53)	32%	51%	17%
Fish Aides (n=40)	40%	45%	15%
Fish Council (n=60)	22%	67%	12%
FLARE (n=49)	20%	76%	4%
FLED (n=59)	29%	59%	12%
FLEX (n=71)	20%	66%	14%
FLIC (n=60)	37%	48%	15%
FLiP (n=56)	30%	43%	27%
FLOC (n=40)	25%	55%	20%
FORME (n=56)	21%	64%	14%
FREE (n=80)	31%	63%	6%
MSC ALOT (n=100)	28%	57%	15%
MSC FISH (n=90)	38%	49%	13%
MSC FLI (n=57)	26%	58%	16%
PREP (n=54)	39%	56%	6%

Table 2 – Change between Beginning and End of Spring 2020 Semester GPA

When the university moved all courses online after spring break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students were given the opportunity to take any class as a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grade. Forty-six percent (46%) of the students who participated in a FLO and 45% of the students not in a FLO opted for S/U grade in at least one course taken in the spring 2020 semester, as seen in Table 3, on the following page. Additionally, of the students who opted for the S/U grade in at least one course, students in a FLO were slightly higher to have earned a satisfactory grade compared to students not in a FLO.

	Received Only a Satisfactory Grade	Received Only an Unsatisfactory Grade	Received Both Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory Grade	Did Not Opt for S/U Grade
All FTIC Students (n=9,442)	39%	2%	4%	55%
FTIC Students in all FLOs (n=1,029)	42%	1%	3%	54%
FTIC Students Not in a FLO (n=8,413)	39%	3%	4%	55%

Table 3 – Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Grades

As shown in Image 1, there was a statistically significant GPA difference between participants of six FLOs and students not in a FLO. These six FLOs were Fish Aides, FLIC, FREE, MSC ALOT, MSC FISH, and PREP. Students who participated in these FLOs had a median GPA consistently higher than 3.0 with some case below a 2.00 GPA at the end of the spring 2020, compared to students who did not participate in a FLO, where the median GPA was slightly below FLOs' GPA and some extreme cases with GPA below 1.00.

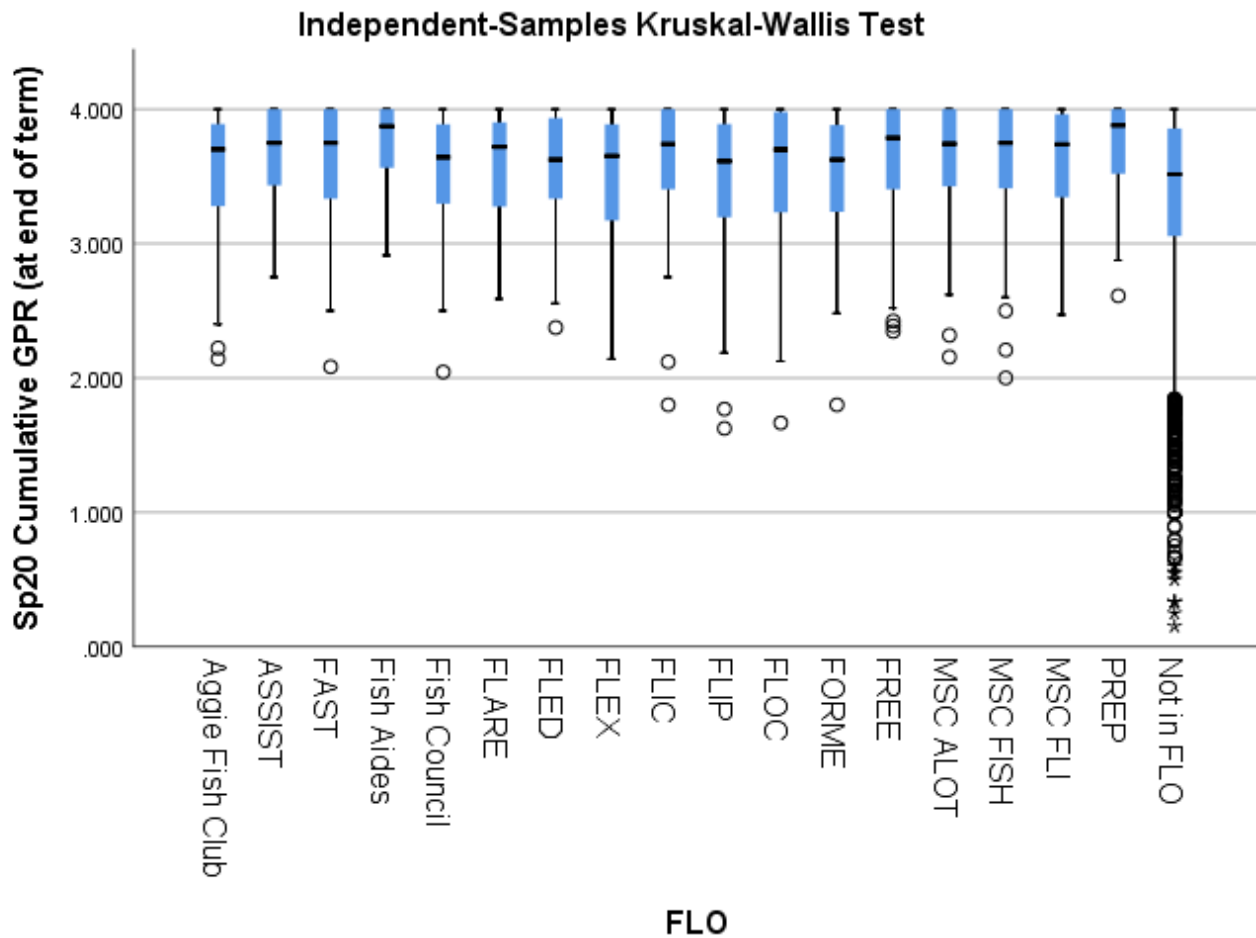


Image 1 – Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test

Department and Organization Background

The mission statement for the Department of Student Activities, according to its website (<https://studentactivities.tamu.edu/about-us/>), is to

“foster and support 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.”

According to its website (<https://flac.tamu.edu/about/>), the Freshman Leadership Advisory Council (FLAC) serve as “the over-arching body of the 18 official FLOs. Since FLOs are members of FLAC, we coordinate recruitment between them, create events, establish rules, and uphold standards to ensure every FLO provides a quality experience. FLAC is not a FLO.” Throughout the year there were 18 Freshman Leadership Organizations (FLO) at Texas A&M University; however, in the spring 2020 semester, one FLO left FLAC, and therefore this study represents the members of 17 FLOs.

Student Life Studies

In March 2020, the university moved all courses to online delivery for the remainder of the academic year, and shelter at home executive orders were in place beginning late March through April 2020 due the COVID-19 pandemic. Students were given the opportunity to take any class as a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grade. According to the website for the Office of the Registrar (<https://registrar.tamu.edu/Transcripts-Grades/Grades#0-GradingSystem>), satisfactory grades of C or higher are not included in the GPA calculation. However, unsatisfactory, Ds, and Fs, hours are included a students' GPA.

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

To work with the department for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

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