

Survey Services



CASE STUDY

Contributing to Student Success at Texas Southern University

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*Dr. Veon McReynolds,
Director of Institutional Research,
Texas Southern University*

The University

Beginning in 1927, Texas Southern University evolved from a progression of extension classes to a junior college. Eventually it grew into a four-year private institution and, ultimately, a state-supported institution of higher learning. The institution became a university during the era of segregation. In 1947, the Texas State Senate passed a bill providing for the establishment of the university, including a law school, to be located in Houston. Originally known as the Texas State University for Negroes, it became Texas Southern University in 1951. Then in 1973, TSU was designated a “special purpose” institution for urban programming. This designation described what Texas Southern University was doing from its inception—embracing diversity.

Today, Texas Southern University offers bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree programs in such areas as law, pharmacy, vocational education, arts and sciences, education, public affairs, and communications. Other areas of emphases are found in the Center for Excellence in Urban Education, the Center for Transportation Training and Research, and the Center on the Family. Currently, 980 faculty members and support personnel staff TSU. More than 11,000 students, representing ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds, are currently enrolled at the university.

The Situation and Process

Dr. Veon McReynolds, Director of Institutional Research, talks about the ways in which ACT’s Student Opinion Survey (SOS) has been used to collect data that help provide each TSU student with the best educational experience. “TSU has used the SOS since 2000, and findings from the survey have been beneficial to our students and the program curriculum,” said McReynolds. “The TSU student is, primarily, a nontraditional commuter. A little more than 25% of the students are transfer students, and 70% enroll in developmental classes.” McReynolds says these numbers pose no concern because programs are in place to see that the students make a successful transition. The results from the SOS provide feedback that helps ensure that programs and services are meeting students’ needs.

The survey is conducted in the spring of each year. Classes of undergraduates and graduates are selected to approximate the percent of the total enrollment in each of the colleges. The surveys are administered in class and returned to ACT for scanning and reporting. A response rate of between 40% and 50% is typical. ACT's Basic Reporting Package—which includes the Summary Report, Graphics Report, and Normative Data Report—is ordered along with the CD of raw data.

Because a number of completed surveys are returned after the instruments have been sent to ACT, Dr. McReynolds orders the CD of raw data and adds the data from late surveys for purposes of his own reporting.

The Outcomes

The SOS data are compiled and used in several ways to impact student success. Primarily, the data are used to pinpoint areas in which students indicate dissatisfaction and to then devise strategies to turn that dissatisfaction into satisfaction. The Executive Vice President for Enrollment Management and Planning and the President's Executive Committee study the data and use their findings to support strategic and long range planning for the university.

Responses from the SOS have led to the following improvements:

- Two new parking garages
- New Science Center
- New Recreation Center
- New School of Public Affairs building

The data are also used to compare TSU students with those in the national norms, to compare characteristics of TSU student groups, and for benchmarking. Recent SOS findings indicate that TSU has:

- 75% African-American students compared to the national norms of 18%
- 23% of students age 23-25 compared to the national norms of 15%
- 43% of students transferring from another four-year or two-year college compared to 31%

Understanding the differences between their students and the “typical” college student population helps the administration to better interpret the findings from the SOS and identify ways to use that information to enhance services and programs for TSU students

Finally, a longitudinal data report is prepared and posted on the university's website. This report includes data across several years, allowing all who view the report to see where the problem areas were, the improvement in student satisfaction with areas where action was taken, and a wealth of other information that can be used to affect a more positive student experience.

Why ACT's Survey Services?

Along with the Student Opinion Survey, TSU intends to continue use of two other ACT Survey Service instruments—Alumni Survey and Withdrawing/Nonreturning Student Survey—to keep abreast of student and alumni needs and opinions. To date, the use of the data from the three surveys has enabled the university to, in part, continue providing programs and services that contribute to the success of Texas Southern University students.

To learn more about how your institution can benefit from ACT Survey Services, write outcomes@act.org or call **800/294-7027**.