STUDENT FINANCIAL SERVICES NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

By: Brandon Jackson

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Executive Summary

SFS Performance Improvement Initiative

The Student Financial Services (SFS) Department of Georgia State University is exploring ways to streamline training, increase employee knowledge, and improve the service quality within its offices. Each of the three offices—The Office of Student Financial Aid, The Office of Student Accounts, and The Student Financial Management Center—is independently responsible for training and developing their student-facing employees. The department leadership is concerned that the current model is not comprehensive and has resulted in a lower quality of customer service in these roles. So, the leadership team commissioned a training committee to develop solutions to help meet the following goals:

1. Decrease turnover in the department.
2. Improve the quality of customer service.
3. Promote a department-wide, working knowledge of all SFS systems and processes.
4. Streamline the training process and training resource management.

Needs Assessment Summary

The training team recruited a Human Performance Technology (HPT) consultant to conduct a needs assessment in the department. Through a Leadership directive, the scope of the needs assessment project was focused on Goal 3: Promoting a department-wide, working knowledge of all SFS systems and processes. The committee identified the following project objectives for the needs assessment:

Objective 1	Objective 2
• Identify ways to increase existing employees' working knowledge of SFS systems and processes.	• Determine ways to enhance the current training processess and resources to include all SFS systems and process.

Needs Assessment Overview

Introduction

The training committee had an exploratory meeting with the consultant and expressed willingness to collect data to determine the gaps in the desired employee performance. Upon initial analysis, the committee surmised that employees lacked the knowledge and skills to provide comprehensive counseling to students about Financial Aid and Student Accounts. This was attributed to a lack of oversight in department-wide training; the team proposed a learning intervention. The consultant advised that this could be a possibility, but the team should also explore the organizational and systemic barriers to the employees' performance through data collection.

Prior to beginning the needs assessment, the committee designed and implemented a classroom instructional intervention to address the gaps. Additionally, the Associate Vice President in the department left the institution during the exploratory phase creating a shift in the leadership team's prioritization of this initiative. Consequently, the scope of the needs assessment project shifted to centering the instructional intervention developed by the committee. The team was authorized to continue developing training materials and resources but didn't have the administrative support to create any department-wide changes. The committee pivoted their consultation request to include evaluating how to increase engagement with the current instruction.

Evaluation/Assessment Criteria

After three months of implementing the current instruction, the committee noticed a lack of engagement with the training and resources. They stated that there is a lack of attendance and engagement with the post-lesson assessment/survey. In lieu of doing the department-wide performance assessment, the team requested a formative evaluation of the training that included an assessment of employee motivation. The committee worked with the consultant to identify the following questions for the data collection:

- ❖ What are the barriers to employee engagement--attendance and survey participation—with the new training course.
- ❖ What are the most common knowledge gaps of the SFS systems and processes across the departments.

Recommended Data Collection Methods

Data Collection

Employee Interviews

The consultant recommended conducting employee interviews using the guidelines of the Behavioral Engineering Model. This model would help identify the gaps in the desired engagement with the training by looking at the perception of it all levels of the organization. This model supports exploring the environmental support and the performer-level contributions surrounding any issue.

The SFS employee interviews would be conducted independently with 3-5 staff members from each Office in the department. The interviews questions were comprised of questions to assess each employee's motivation, participation, and sense of whether these trainings were relevant to them. Additionally, the questions were designed to explore the environmental support that employees have for engaging with the trainings. The interviews would provide data for the first project question. See the full list of questions in Appendix 1.1

Training Manager Surveys

The consultant recommended surveying the training managers in each office to determine what the communication and culture is around the training in each office. Additionally, the training managers are responsible for tracking employee development. Therefore, they could help identify the most common knowledge gaps experienced in each office during customer service interactions.

An eight-question survey instrument was created to send to the six people – two from each office – responsible for training and development in the department. The survey would provide data for both project questions. See the full survey in Appendix 1.2

Training Plan Process Review

The consultant recommended conducting a process review to review the areas of the training plan that coincide with the knowledge and skills gaps identified by the training managers. This would allow the team to prioritize training content and iterate on the current course. Future iterations of the training could include targeted instruction or resource creation on the most relevant topics.

Data Analysis

Due to client preference, none of the data collection instruments that were designed by the consultant were distributed. The client stated the following reasons:

1. The committee could not allow the consultant to work with any data related to individual employee performance – even if it were coded to hide the identity of the employee. Therefore, the committee could not allow employee-contact for interviews and didn't have the devoted bandwidth to conduct them themselves.
2. The committee chose to keep the study contained to the members of the committee and not involve outside managers. Especially as it related to inquiring about employee performance. Therefore, the survey was not being considered for immediate distribution. The committee recommended revisiting surveying (both employees and managers) later outside of the timeframe allotted in the MOU.

Previously Collected Data

In lieu of collecting new data, the committee provided the consultant with previously collected data about the training. The contractor received results from the following instruments:

- Eight post-training assessments that included three course satisfaction survey questions. See Appendix 2.1 for an example.
- A formative pre-training survey (issued prior to the development of the training) used to gauge interest in the training initiative and topics to include. See Appendix of 2.2 for an example.

The contractor reviewed this data to determine if any of it could be used to make recommendations for the interventions. The useful data falls into two categories: 1. Self-efficacy and 2. Satisfaction with training sessions. There is a mix of question types, but the results of each relevant item are included below.

Limitations

There are limitations to using this data to assess the needs identified by the department. These data collection instruments were designed to determine content, assess learner comprehension, and evaluate the lesson delivery. While useful, none of the instruments directly gather the information necessary to understand the barriers to the employees' engagement. Also, neither of the instruments help to assess where the knowledge gaps are in the organization, rather they poll employee interest in different topics. The gaps in knowledge could be caused for a reason other than lack of skill and knowledge and none of the instruments gather this data.

Self-efficacy

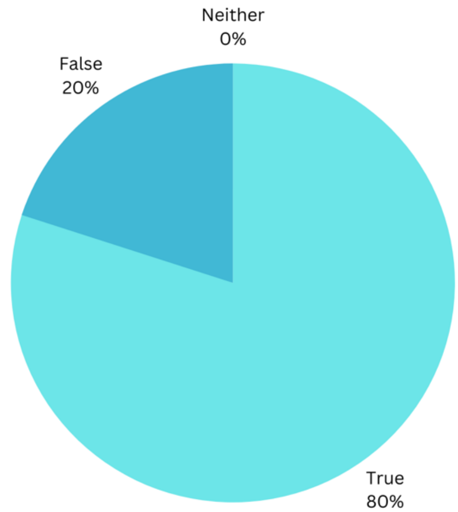


Figure 1.1

T/F: The training provided by my supervisor has allowed me to complete my daily tasks or duties efficiently.

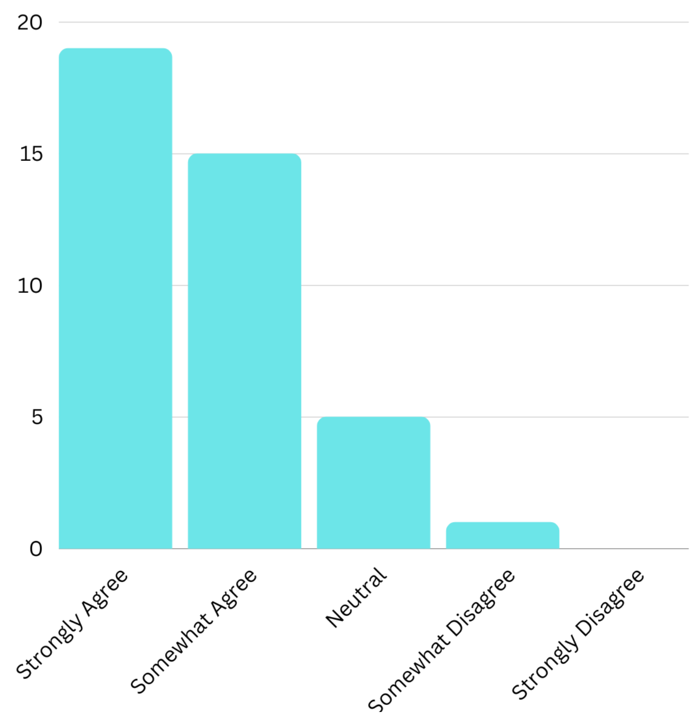


Figure 1.2

Likert: The level of training I’ve received has allowed me to be successful when assisting students.

Results

- The results displayed in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 are items from a 10-question survey delivered to employees three months prior to the development of the first training session. These questions have been highlighted for the analysis of employee self-efficacy. They provide insight into the employees' self-assessment of their performance. It would be useful to compare this to the department leadership's expectations. To do so, would require reviewing the department's key performance indicators and communication surrounding them. Perhaps the employees don't understand that there is a performance gap because of what is being communicated to them on an organizational level. This data could be a useful first step in examining the performance gap from all organizational levels and answering the project assessment question (what the most common knowledge gaps of the SFS systems and processes across the departments are).

Satisfaction with Training

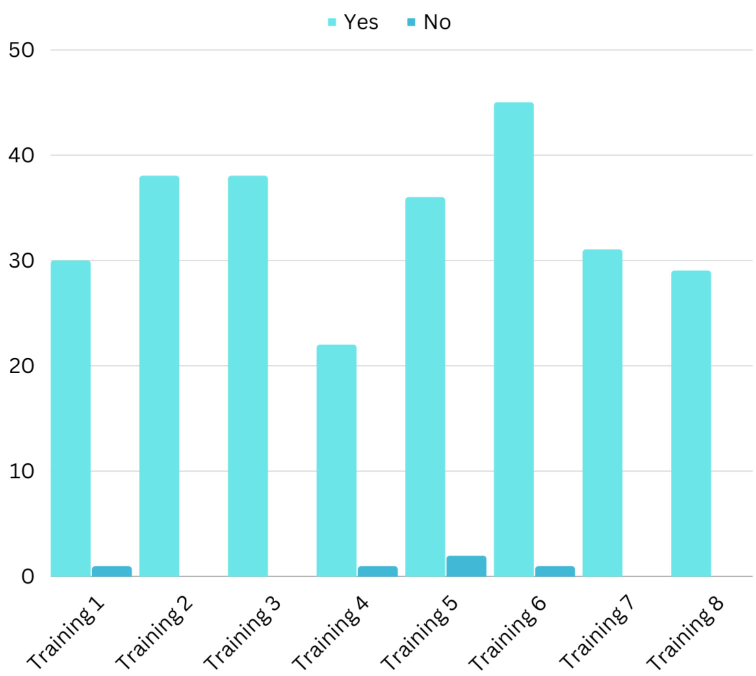


Figure 1.3

Y/N: Was the training material helpful to you?

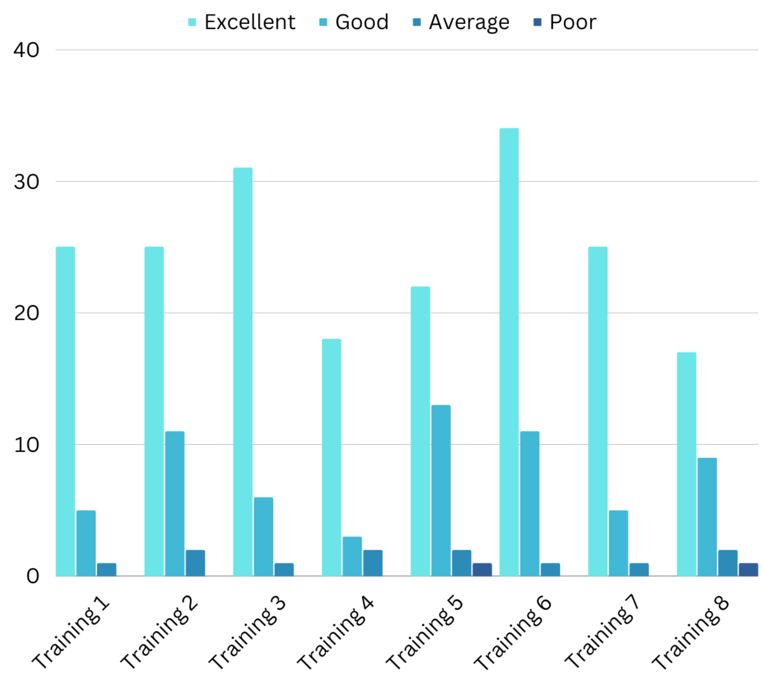


Figure 1.4

How would you rate the overall quality of the training?

Results

- The results displayed in Figures 1.3 and 1.4 display are two of the three satisfaction questions at the end of each training session. Data was provided from 8 training sessions. As mentioned by the client, there are various levels of engagement with the surveys after the course. The committee has stated that course attendance averages between 50-60 employees of the 200+ employee department. The most engagement that there has been with these surveys is 38 participants. While this doesn't help to answer the question of why there is low attendance or engagement with the resources, these results could potentially provide data about the class-style or learning content that is most relevant to employees. However, for this to answer the assessment project need-- identifying the barriers to employee engagement with the new training course. —more data would need to be collected.

Recommendations

Analysis of the previously collected data confirms the need for a formal needs assessment related to the initial needs identified by the department. Although the instructional intervention is helping employees learn and develop new skills, there is still a need to ensure the systemic and organization-level changes support actual performance improvement; the team should ensure that the knowledge and skills learned are being used effectively. For example, the results show that employees feel confident in their roles, but the committee needs to assess if the roles and responsibilities have been clearly defined to the employees.

The recommendations included in this report are based on preliminary expert judgements but has not data justifications. The committee is encouraged to gather more data to explore whether the recommendations will be effective for the needs of the department.

Communities of Practice

SFS could explore implementing communities of practice surrounding Financial Aid and Student Account processes. SFS leaders could facilitate discussion groups and learning cohorts focused on teaching specific case-processing skills through team activities and challenges. Communities of practice are an informal way for participants to regularly interact with each share knowledge and skill. Employees may require extra support from their peers after learning new material in a training session. With processes as complex as the ones in SFS, it is usually helpful for employees to have continued discussion and activities to sharpen their skills.

SFS could consider facilitating an internal message board/chat or even website where team members can collaborate with counselors in other offices. Management could host skill drills and provide other prompts for employees to practice. This would allow for the diffusion of some of the more esoteric Financial Aid and Student Accounts processing knowledge by counselors in the roles.

Electronic Performance Support System

Electronic Performance Support Systems (EPSS) provide just-in-time, on- the-job support/ training for performing specific tasks. EPSSs are a computer-based performance enhancement tool that would allow the department to store resources, tutorials, and instructions for how to complete certain job functions. This could even include flowcharts designed to direct employees to specific information while working a case with a student.

SFS should consider tasking the committee with exploring the feasibility of building a online repository for processes and procedures. The team could work with a developer or IT professional to build it so that it can route employees to relevant information just as they need it.

Appendix 1: Original Data Collection Tools per MOU

1.1 Employee Interview

Motivation

These questions are meant to help us understand the internal culture around skills training.

1. What, if any, emphasis does your department place on learning the processes of the other departments?
2. How do you feel like learning skills from other departments impacts your role?

Participation

These questions are meant to uncover employees view on participation in this voluntary initiative.

3. What factors do you usually consider before engaging in professional development?
4. Do you feel like participating in these training sessions has been (or could be—if they haven't gone) beneficial? Why or Why not?

Relevance

These questions are designed to help us understand what the gaps are from a firsthand perspective.

5. What kind of resources would be helpful for you as you work complex student cases in your role?
6. In your opinion, what information or skills from other departments are good to know in your role?

1.2 Training Manager Survey

1. Which department are you in? ______________

2. Describe how your department's vision and daily operation may be impacted by your employees gaining extra knowledge about Financial Aid and Student Accounts processes. ___________
3. What is support like from you director regarding employee development? __________
4. Does your team make regular announcements about the training sessions offered by the training team? __Y __N __ Sometimes
5. How are your employees evaluated around their knowledge of the processes in other departments?
6. Likert: How often do you review employee cases involving multi-department input? Never→Often
7. On a scale of 1-5 how much does your leadership team highlight the benefits of skills training to employees?
8. Which skills outside of your department are most important for your employees to learn?

Appendix 2: Previously Collected Data

2.1- Pre-training Survey Administered by SFS

Training Pre-Survey Results Report

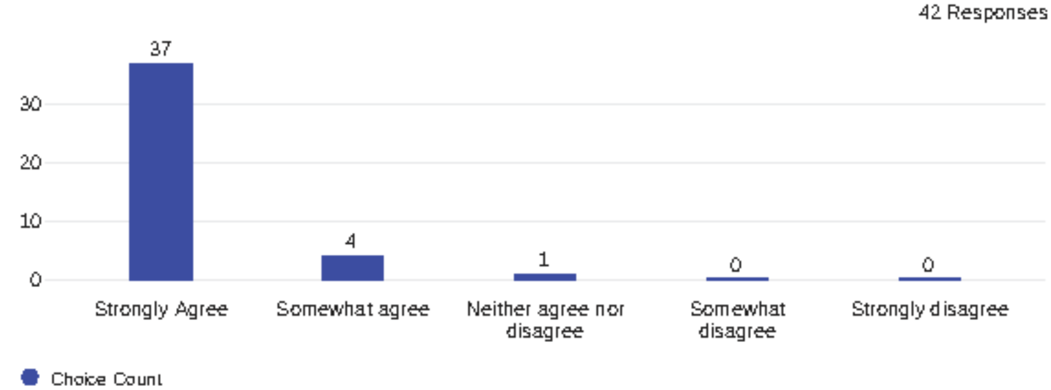
October 2022

Survey Administered 10/26/22 to 10/28/22

Total Responses: 46

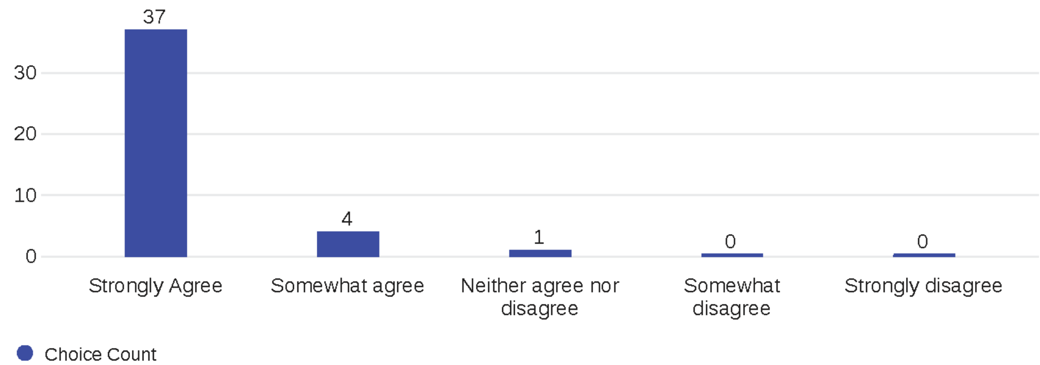
Q1 - Training should provide me with all the tools required to complete my assigned duties or tasks.

42 Responses



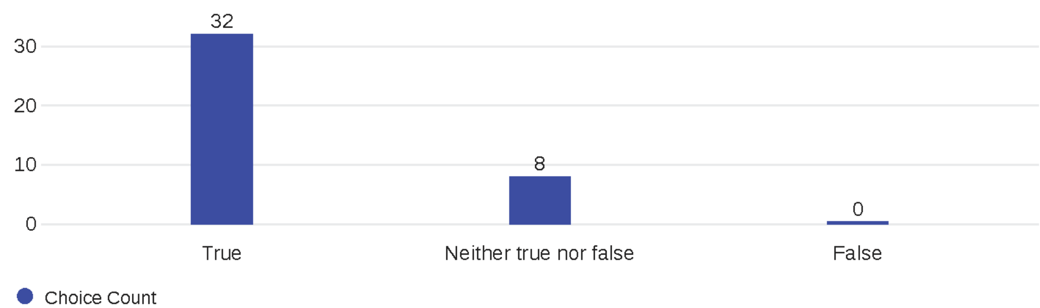
Q2 - Training should provide me with all the tools required to complete my assigned duties or tasks.

42 Responses



Q3 - The training provided by my supervisor allows me to complete my daily tasks or duties efficiently.

40 Responses



Q4 - What skills would you like to improve upon through training?

31 Responses

SAP, State Programs, and verification.

Skills pertaining to Financial Aid.

1. Understanding Federal Work Study (How it is applied/awarded for students), to better help students understand how FWS will assist with T/F 2. R2TV- How funds are calculated to be adjusted depending students withdrawal date, to better help students understand the balance that may occur 3. EFC Calculation and Pell eligibility, students/parents often disagree with their EFC, should we be able to explain how the EFC is determined can better assist students to be knowledgeable about their Pell award.

n/a

Understanding HOPE

Conflict resolution Communication

Processing of Financial Aid

Adaptability, Teamwork, Technical

navigating efficiently through BANNER

Understanding student accounts to better answer questions and the process.

Banner screens and how to use more effectively. Maybe to be refreshed on Excel. The flow and/or phrases of financial aid process

RT24 & SULA calculations. It's help better explain the process to students

SAP and HOPE.

Researching skills for particular problems

I would like to have a better understanding about how information flows through banner and our other systems to create workflow. There needs to be better transparency around which jobs are or are not running and how that impacts workflow. I would like to see more information about how staff are held accountable to their deliverables and what the expectations of each department are.

understanding the Change of circumstance process and why it takes so long PRG/FATV hold and review timelines and updates. What is the process? KPI and FinAid Job data and cycles. How often and how many? SAP: Potential collaboration opportunities Hope, Zell and SAL processing and timelines

Student and parent plus Loans and Hope processing

CPOS understanding SAP review process VMF update/adjustments

SAP, Grade level changes, classes not paid for with federal aid

Technical

Understanding state programs and federal loans. Become more knowledgeable to better assist students.

Problem solving

I would like to learn about awarding plus loans specifically.

None

Relationship building skills - while we are one group (SFS), the units appear separate and do not actually want to build upon others strengths. Attentiveness skill - being aware that when a question is asked among another group that it may be due to a student right in front of a person's face or on the phone.

banner navigation and what screens are best to look at in specified troubleshooting

Hope processing, Technical processes, KPI and PSP reports

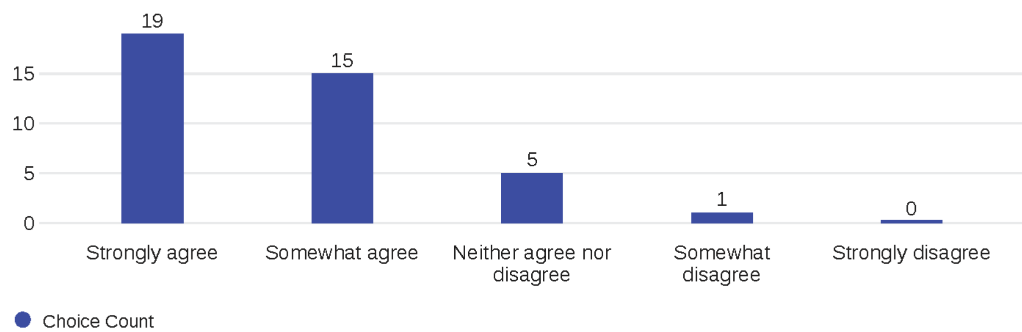
Improving my knowledge on how to interpret the KPI, navigating through Salesforce, and more training in Slate.

Reviewing loan limits.

I would like to learn more about Hope and Pell.

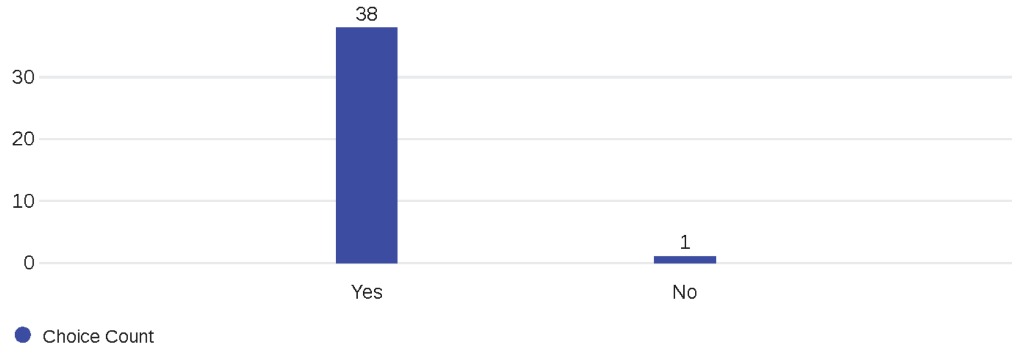
Q5 - The level of training I have recieved, to date, has allowed me to be successful when assisting a student.

40 Responses



Q6 - Overall, do you enjoy professional development training?

39 Responses



Q7 - What topics would you like to learn more about during training?

29 Responses

SAP, State Programs, verification, and other professional development related topics.
The Electric processing of Financial Aid.
Federal Work Study Pay/awards Return 2 Title 4 funding adjustments EFC Calculation - Pell eligibility
n/a
How each team works to provide financial aid to students
Sap appeal process EFC appeal process
Verification and SAP the overall of Financial Aid processing
Loan Processing, RLADLOR, Budgets, Scholarship Processing, Reinstatements, TSAAREV
Updates on federal regulations, student accounts, HOPE, updates on verification such as Independency appeals, change of circumstances etc..
FAFSA and Verification requirements Award and Budget SAP Appeal and qualied documents acceptable Parent Plus

RT24 and SULA calulations

Serving students with accuracy, consistency, and promptness.

Researching hope and loan issues

SFMC already has pretty comprehensive overviews of all SA and FA topics that impact students. I am most interested in learning more about process flows and processing.

Same answer as before except add CPOS

Leadership, Coaching and Supervising,

SAL loan processing

SAP , Loans and Classes not paid for by federal aid

All phrases of financial aid and student services

state programs, federal loans, electronic processing

HOPE process and Student Accounts

Graduate student awarding and Bbay.

None

Emotional Intelligence
HOPE
Student Accounts

review processes

Refund processing, Hold removals, office etiquette, cross training within SFS departments

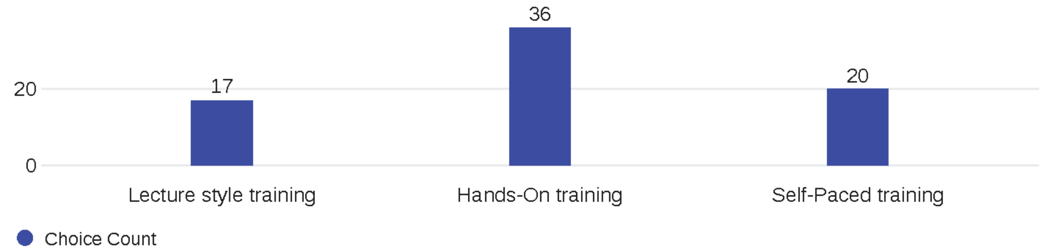
The topics listed above.

I'm open to anything.

Return to Title IV

Q8 - How do you learn most effectively? Select all that apply.

39 Responses



Q9 - What is your strongest and weakest subject area within SFS?

33 Responses

Strongest: Federal aid
Weakest: SAP, Student Accounts, and Verification.

The scholarship process.

Strongest - Customer Service, Listening to what the student needs are and resolving their issues effectively.

Weakest - Balance Resolution

n/a

Strongest: Customer service
Weakest: Knowing where everything is in Banner

STRONGEST
-hope
-fafsa

weakest
-sap appeal
-processing
-efc appeals

Student Account my weakest and reviewing file is strongest

Weakest area is Electronic Processing.
Strongest area is Document Processing.

Strongest - Interpersonal communication and explaining basic FA to students

Weakest - Navigating the different websites and plethora of pages to extract the information needed to assist the student

Withdrawing vs dropping and the point/timeframe when aid will be affected: adjusted/reduced.

Strongest: Customer service, SFS vmf, Banner SAP and verification, and many more
Weakest: Banner packaging

Student accounts and HOPE the weakest. Strongest is know financial aid process.

Strongest is VMF;
Weakest; Hope/Zell Miller

SULA and RT24 calculations

SAP is weakest. All-around knowledge is strongest.

My strongest area is customer service and my weakest is patience

Understanding banner workflows and what processing is actually doing.

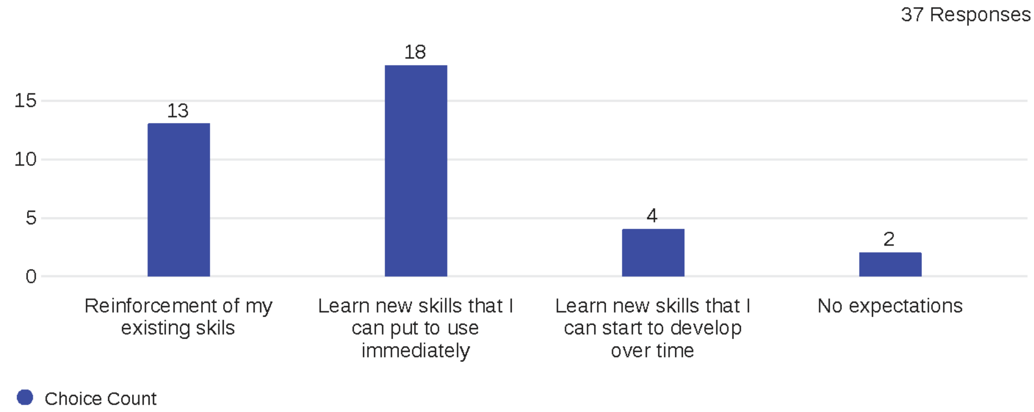
Strongest: prior to GSU I worked in many FA capacities so I have a lot of strong subject areas that I do not currently use

Weakest: GSU processes and timelines

1. Excellent customers service during the good and bad times.
2. How to have conversation about something that I'm not 100% sure about in an email.

strong - customer service
weak - PSP review and understanding

Q10 - What do you expect from the SFS training team and program?



2.2- Example of Post-training Assessment administered by SFS

Study Abroad Post-Quiz/Survey Report

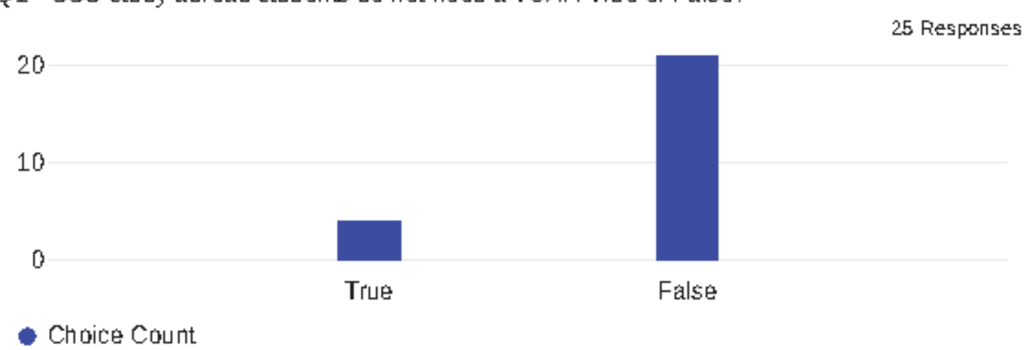
Training Date: March 8, 2023

Survey Administered: 03/08/2023-03/17/2023

Total Responses: 26

Training Quiz Questions

Q1 - GSU study abroad students do not need a TCAF. True or False?



Correct Answer: False.

Q2 - On the consortium agreement, what is the minimum number of hours a student should be enrolled?

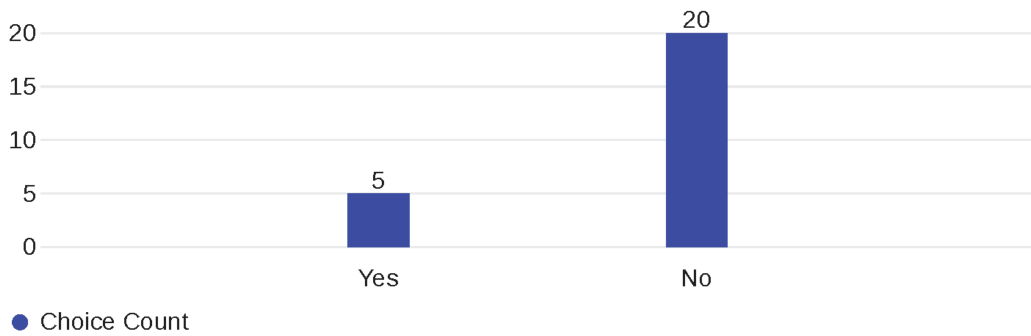
25 Responses

6 hours	22
8 hours	0
12 hours	0
All of the Above	3

Correct Answer: 6 hours.

Q3 - Do all study abroad students have to submit a consortium agreement?

25 Responses



Correct Answer: No.

Q4 - The best way to find out if a student needs to submit a consortium agreement is via the?

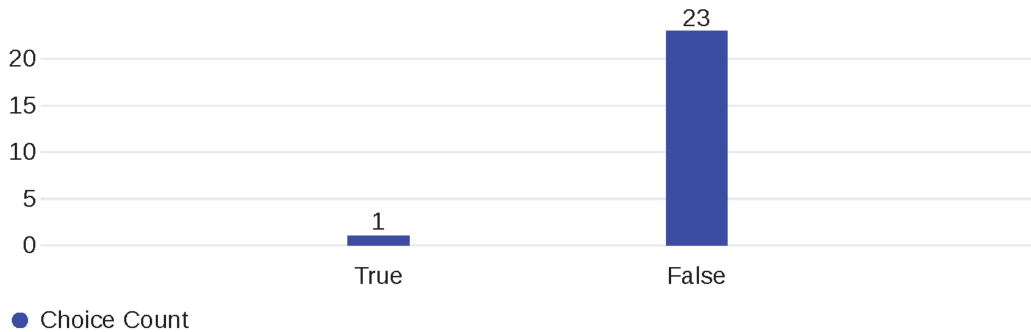
24 Responses

TCAF	24
Loan Change Form	0
Verification Form	0
All of the Above	0

Correct Answer: TCAF.

Q5 - The only signature needed on the TCAF is the student's signature. True or False?

24 Responses



Correct Answer: False.

Q6 - Study abroad students enrolled in audit classes are not taking the classes for college credit. True or False?

23 Responses

Correct Answer: False.

Q7 - What email do we need on the consortium agreement?

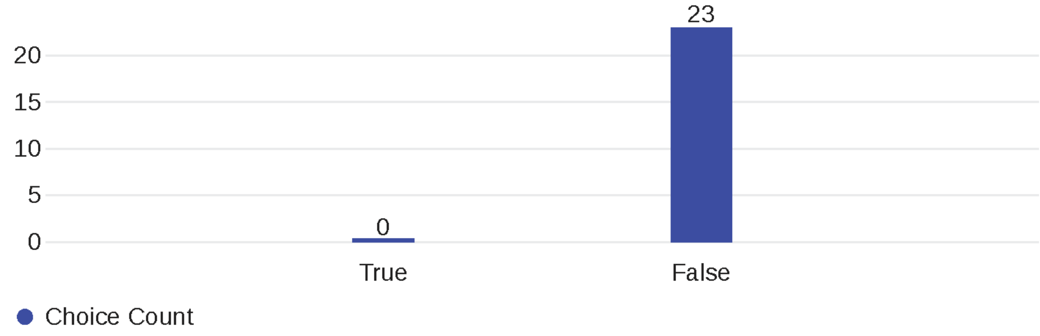
23 Responses

Student Email	5
Study Abroad School Email	14
Consortium Email	0
All of the Above	4

Correct Answer: Study Abroad School Email.

Q8 - Study abroad schools can be communicated with via the phone. True or False?

23 Responses



Correct Answer: False.

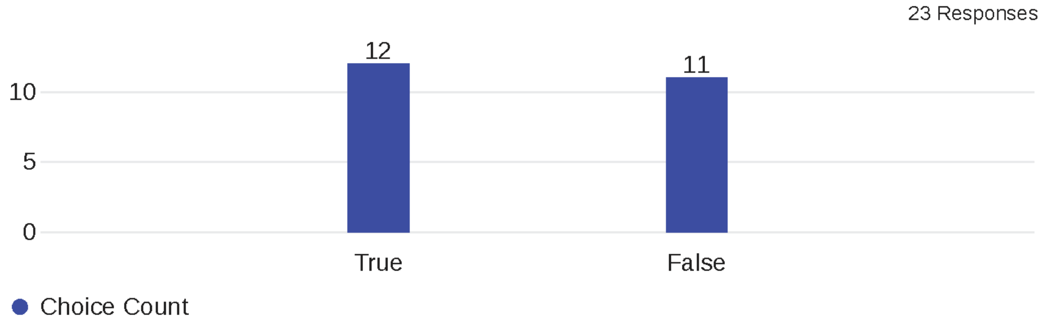
Q9 - What does TCAF stand for?

23 Responses

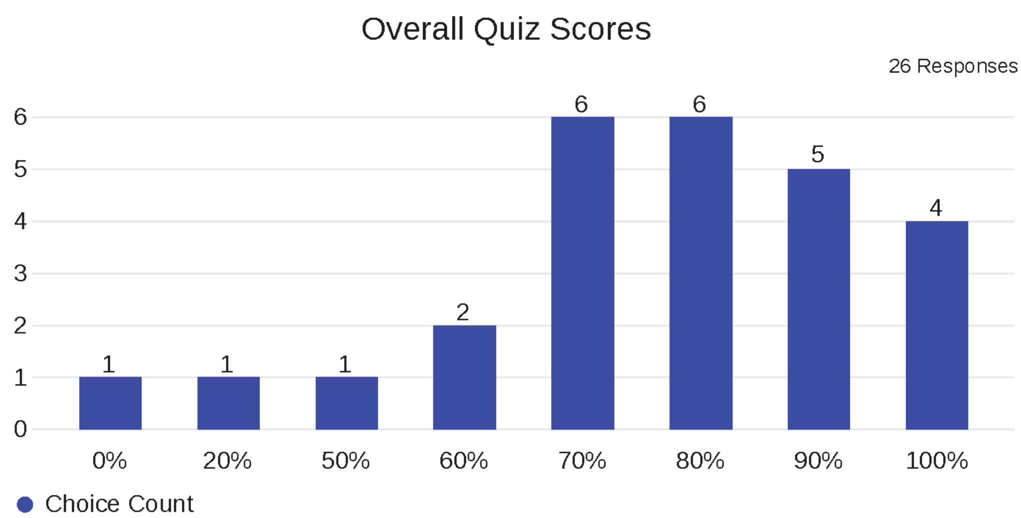
Take Care After Friday	0
Transfer Credit Advisement Form	0
Transfer Credit Approval Form	23

Correct Answer: Transfer Credit Approval Form.

Q10 - The aid for non-GSU study abroad students disburses with regular students. True or False?



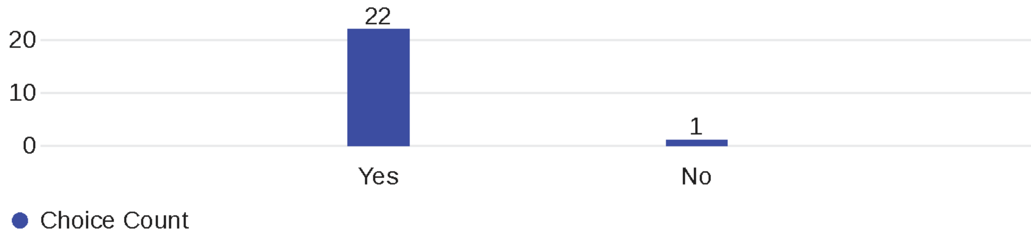
Correct Answer: False.


Overall Quiz Scores
26 Responses
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
1
1
1
2
6
6
5
4
0%
20%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Choice Count

Training Survey Questions

Q1 - Was the training material and content helpful to you?

23 Responses

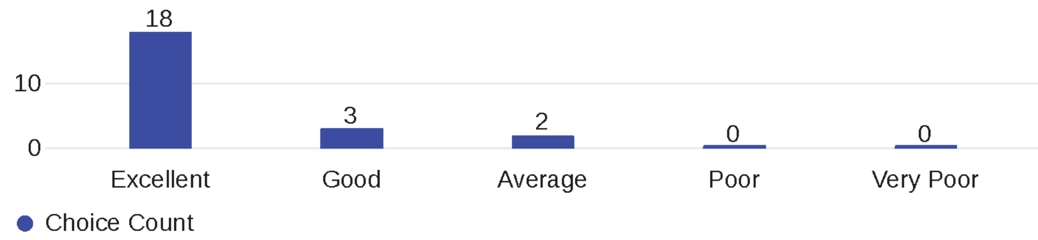


Q2 - The trainer was engaging and supportive.

	23 Responses
Strongly agree	18
Somewhat agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Somewhat disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0

Q3 - How would you rate the overall quality of the training?

23 Responses



Appendix 3- Project Contract

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

Between

Brandon Jackson

and

Student Financial Services Unit of Georgia State University

This is an agreement between **Brandon Jackson** hereinafter called "the consultant" and the **Student Financial Services Unit of Georgia State University** hereinafter called "the client".

I. PURPOSE and SCOPE

The purpose of this MOU is to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each party as they relate to the implementation of the needs assessment for the client's new training initiative. In particular, this MOU is intended to establish clear guidelines regarding the work that will be conducted.

II. BACKGROUND

Context

The Student Financial Services (SFS) unit at Georgia State consists of three offices: The Office of Student Financial Aid, The Office of Student Accounts, and the Student Financial Management Center. SFS leadership desires to identify opportunities to streamline training and service quality improvements throughout all three offices. This initiative will impact over 200 employees and supervisors across all six Georgia State University campuses.

Description of Clients

The client would like to address the consistency and quality of service provided at each office's student-facing touchpoints. Currently, each office is responsible for its own training and the training content is specialized for each area. The client would like to create a more holistic approach to training new staff on the entire unit. Additionally, the client would like to explore opportunities for creating information repositories for employees to reference while assisting students.

Objectives of the project

1. Identify ways to increase existing employee knowledge of processes and systems in each SFS office.
2. Determine effective, time-efficient ways to incorporate a holistic training/onboarding process for new employees.

III. Consultant Responsibilities Under this MOU

Consultant role in the project:

- Evaluate current training plan in each office

- Analyze onboarding system and culture around development

- Provide tool and process recommendations

Project Deliverables:

- Needs Assessment
- Implementation Recommendations

IV. *Client* RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THIS MOU

Client will provide access to:

- *Current training material and process documents*
- *Contact Information with trainers from each office*
- *Any system housing training or development activities*
- *Provide availability to explain or elaborate on any materials provided.*

V. Project Timeline

Date	Task	Estimated Hours	Completed By

VII. Client Contact Information

Miti Mehta | mmehta4@gsu.edu | 404-413-2129

Jacqueline Frasier-Banks | jfraiser@gsu.edu | 678-891-3400

VII. EFFECTIVE DATE AND SIGNATURE

This MOU shall be effective upon the signature of **Brandon Jackson** and **Miti Mehta & Jacqueline Frasier-Banks**. It shall be in force from *02/01/2023* to *05/05/2023*

Brandon Jackson and **Student Financial Services Unit of Georgia State** University indicate agreement with this MOU by their signatures.

Signatures and dates

Your Name

________________________________ ______________________
Date

[Insert Name] for [*Insert Name of Agency]*

________________________________ ______________________
Date