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Student Affairs Fee
Advisory Board
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

Funding Request Form FY2026

Department should complete one form for each individual request

Department:

Department of Multicultural Services

Program, Service or Operation Requested:

DMS Explorations

General Description:

The Explorations program provides students with co-curricular experiences through one-day trips to explore various sites in different Texas cities. Sites can offer a variety of experiences including museums, festivals, theater productions, famous attractions, fairs, nature destinations, notable sites, cuisine, and more!

Request Type:

- Full
 Increase
 One-Time
 Partial/Matching

Type of Funds Requested:

- UAF
 Other

General Questions

How does this address an important need and/or positively impact students?

Explorations promote student learning by providing an environment that recognizes, values, and integrates experience into the pursuit of learning. Students travel as one community via charter bus to the site destinations and back to Aggieland. Explorations aim to provide learning experiences that are memorable and transformational at a minimal fee. Many students have limited opportunities to travel outside the Bryan/College Station area to experience the wealth of culture in Texas, primarily due to financial and transportation constraints. The Explorations program provides students with opportunities to be introduced to new places in Texas, learn new information about sites and cultures in Texas, and develop critical thinking while working to make sense of a world outside of their own area and see the state of Texas as a global community.

What department/Division strategic plan item does this support?

The Explorations program supports the following Division strategic priorities:

#5 Student Learning Through Engagement - We acknowledge each student's unique

developmental journey. We commit to student learning by providing a wide array of experiences that allow for varying levels of involvement resulting in student growth in personal and career-ready competencies.

#6 Wellbeing - We acknowledge the importance of an academic and campus environment that allows all our community members to thrive. Helping individuals develop greater self-awareness and strategies for resilience, we create a culture of holistic development that promotes integrated programs and services fostering a healthy campus community. Integrate holistic wellbeing practices in programs, services, and facilities. Increase competency and capacity for staff to support student well-being.

The Explorations program supports the following department goals and objectives:

#2. Expand developmental experience offerings that foster meaningful student connection, engagement, and learning

Please provide data, evidence, and/or input (student faculty, staff, other) you gathered to help you determine the need for additional resources.

There has been consistent outreach from campus partners who desire students they work with to have increased opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities away from campus. Most recently, the Routh First-Gen Center desired to collaborate with Explorations for this reason in addition to provide opportunities to explore Texas in an affordable way. For the upcoming trip, 79 of 81 registered participants identify as first-generation students. Research contends first-generation college students to be more likely to be part of families classified within the lower socioeconomic category when compared to their peers whose parents have college degrees. This correlation can impact many aspects of their educational journey including access to social capital, resources, and their overall college experience.

In previous years the Explorations trips averaged 50 students per trip and developed intentional partnerships with faculty and campus units for delivery. Academic collaborations enrich the depth of the experience by connecting experiential learning to classroom learning. Explorations have grown increasingly popular since the program's launch, so the department has resorted to securing two charter buses to manage the student and campus collaborator interest. Popularity even during the pandemic continued to increase as the virtual Explorations reached 2,682 participants in FY21, which was a 952% increase from FY20. While this level of participation was not sustained when in-person programming returned, the interest in attending the in-person Exploration returned to pre-pandemic numbers where they increased by at least 5% each trip. As a result, students have been turned away from attending due to limited space. The department does not want to return to that response.

What actions have you implemented or discontinued internally to address the identified need?

Instead of filling a staff position, the department reallocated a portion of the funding from a cancelled position to meet this identified student need. In addition, the following has been a focus:

- Reallocation of programming funds
- Partnerships with faculty for specific trips who could implement a trip fee to supplement funding
- Implementation of a nominal trip fee

If funding is granted, what metrics will you use to evaluate the success of this program/service/operation?

The assessment plan for Explorations will continue to collect similar feedback to what is included below for a previous trip:

- 95% of students that participated asserted their understanding of history and cultures in Texas was enhanced by the trips.
- 92% of students that participated said they would like to attend another Exploration.

Student voices:

“This trip taught me to explore, to venture, to worry less and to experience more. It taught me to tie the lessons I’d learned in my previous classes to the real world, and it allowed me to see first-hand what culture looks like.” – Student Attendee (Dallas Art Museum Trip)

“The overall best thing about attending this event was seeing the connectedness of an entire community that is often forgot about in modern day America... Communities all seem to share incredible bonds these connections inspire me to better understand my history and the history of others.” – Student (Austin Pow Wow Trip)

“This experience opened my eyes to the beauty of culture that I always knew existed but never got to truly experience or appreciate. I am overwhelmingly grateful for this opportunity and greatly looking forward to future Explorations.” – Student Attendee (San Antonio Lunar New Year Festival Trip)

Have other sources of funding (fundraising, sponsorship, reserves, etc.) been considered? Please explain.

The department has sought collaborations with campus units. Reserve funding has been identified as a potential resource for continued one-time funding, however as an annual expense, considering campus-wide involvement and consistent and increasing student interest, an increase in the department’s annual allocation is needed to keep the trip fee manageable for students. The department is also researching long-term partnership opportunities with faculty who have the ability to implement a trip fee to supplement funding, however this would still be an additional expense to students.

Total Estimated Cost

Funding Description	Amount
Charter Bus	\$28,000
(\$3,500 x 2) per trip for 4 trips	
Hydration drinks & in route snacks	\$1,000
<i>Less Estimated Partial/Matching Funds (if Applicable)</i>	\$19,000
TOTAL INCREASE REQUESTED	\$10,000

Research Reference

[First-Generation College Students and Family Support: A Critical Review of Empirical Research Literature \(ed.gov\)](#)

[Breaking Down Barriers: First-Generation College Students and College Success | The League for Innovation in the Community College](#)