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Student Affairs Fee  
Advisory Board  
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

## Funding Request Form FY2023

*Department should complete one form for each individual request*

**Department:**

Student Activities

**Program, Service or Operation Requested:**

Student Affairs Coordinator (SAC) for Fish Camp – Extended Orientation

**General Description:**

The SAC for Extended Orientation position will be instrumental in providing full-time support for the advising needs of the sponsored organization, Fish Camp. Fish Camp has been coordinating an extended orientation program for incoming students each summer for almost 70 years by facilitating opportunities to learn about the Texas A&M traditions and core values, providing an experience that fosters relationships, all while informing participants of the services and opportunities that exist at TAMU. The primary advising responsibility for Fish Camp will belong to the SAC and will be supported by a Student Development Specialist III within the Extended Orientation team. All efforts are in alignment with Division and University goals, including the Student Success initiatives.

It is imperative to note, creating a SAC position to work specifically with Fish Camp would allow the Assistant Director (AD) position to be more involved with oversight and support of Fish Camp, Aggie Transition Camps (ATC), and Venture Camp as a whole. Reflecting upon the last several camp seasons, additional input with critical expertise and experience is required in order to improve operational efficiencies, managerial oversight, strategic support, and programmatic support. Additionally, due to the size and scope of Fish Camp, which traditionally serves approximately 50% of the incoming class (around 6,000 students) the current staffing model of 1.5 FTE offers insufficient support measures for the organization to ensure program expectations, anticipate the needs of current and upcoming generations along with those of their families, and effectively accommodate an increase in access allowing a larger number of attendees. As a pinnacle program to the University, the student organization Fish Camp, should have the resources and support needed to continue to provide incoming students a high-impact experience. As a simplistic comparison, New Student & Family Programs has 7 FTE versus Extended Orientation's 3 FTE (Extended Orientation includes Fish Camp, T-Camp, Howdy Camp, and Venture Camp).

Fish Camp has continued to expand its scope as it seeks to create more opportunities for incoming freshmen to attend the program. The incoming student population has continued to increase, yet the current advising structure in Fish Camp has not changed in over twenty years. As standards and expectations continue to increase, along with the student

population, there is an increasing need to enhance student development and training programs. The SAC will be responsible for designing, coordinating, and evaluating training and development initiatives for the organization. Fish Camp also recognizes a growing diversification in the student population and seeks to increase resources and accessibility.

The SAC position will assist the team with the design and implementation of the Extended Orientation Curriculum – a required educational tool for the senior student leaders in Fish Camp, ATC, and the Venture Camps. Additionally, the SAC will provide administrative support to the Extended Orientation area by ensuring compliance with local, state, and federal laws in addition to TAMU and TAMUS policies and regulations that all EO programs must comply with. Working with different stakeholders including, but not limited to, Human Resources, University Youth Programs (UYP), and Civil Rights Equity and Investigations (CREI) this position will coordinate trainings, background checks, and compliance documentation as required for approximately 2,300 directors, chairs, counselors, mentors, namesakes, and guests of the Fish Camp, T-Camp, Howdy Camp, and Venture Camp programs.

**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?***

Data derived from longitudinal studies conducted with participants of Fish Camp note a positive, statistically-significant difference in the retention rates and overall institutional affinity of students who attend extended orientation camps versus those who do not. Participation in extended orientation experiences afford students the ability to form relationships, develop an understanding of the support services around campus before classes start, and gain knowledge of Texas A&M's traditions, culture, and core values. Of the incoming students who attended Fish Camp in 2019 or 2020, during their first fall semester, 87% shared that they felt they belonged at Texas A&M, and 92% shared that they felt accepted and comfortable at Texas A&M University. Based on this and other data collected, these programs make a difference in students' ability to transition and be successful on campus. Incoming students face increasing challenges that come with transitioning to Texas A&M. By providing them with an experience that allows them to learn more about the Aggie experience while sharing their concerns or reticence in an environment that recognizes their unique needs increases the likelihood of their success as students.

***What department/Division strategic plan item does this support?***

**DEPARTMENT GOALS:**

Goal 1 – Transformational learning through curricula and high impact practices  
Through our role as facilitators of the involvement experience, Student Activities will not only create and utilize a curriculum-based approach to student leadership training and development, but it will also host collaborative programs that promote the development of leaders of character, and it will house High Impact Practices that will provide unmatched transformational learning experiences for students to develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities that employers seek in our graduates.

#### Goal 4 – Impact

Through local, regional, and national leadership roles, presentations, and publications, Student Activities will promote its outstanding programs and services to establish itself as the national benchmark for risk management, traditions-based programming, student leadership development, and service outreach.

#### DIVISION GOALS:

##### Goal 1 – Enrich Student Experience

The addition of this staff member would allow the number of EO programs to continue to grow, thereby increasing the number of opportunities for students to engage in high-impact, transformational experiences. Additionally, through the commitment to ensuring proper training and compliance, the quality of the existing experiences would continue to meet not only legal standards but also maintain optimal environments for new and incoming Aggies.

##### Goal 2 – Contribute to Student Success, Including Retention and Timely Graduation

The University is working to increase retention rates, and we have data that shows that students who attend many of our programs retain at a higher rate than students who do not. For example, looking at retention rates from Fall 2014 to Fall 2018, the overall student retention rate was about 92%. Comparing students who attended Fish Camp to students who did not, students who did attend Fish Camp retained at a 95% rate, whereas students who did not attend Fish Camp were only retained at an 89% rate. This is evident in first generation college students as those who attended Fish Camp retained at a rate of 92%, whereas the retention rate of those who did not attend was 84%. The overall campus retention rate for first generation students during this time was 88%. Additional data is available upon request.

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

Information supporting the need for the additional extended orientation support has been gathered over many years through avenues including student surveys and focus groups, assessment feedback disclosed through Fish Camp, Venture Camps, and T-Camp participant surveys, and national studies conducted around the various models of orientation and extended orientation programs at 4-year colleges and universities.

To determine the need for the additional staff member, members of the Department of Student Activities met to review goals, objectives, position descriptions, and the current structure and workload of the Extended Orientation team. It was agreed that due to the high reputational risk associated with our Extended Orientation programs, an additional staff member is necessary to support them and manage compliance and oversight for all. Both Fish Camp and Aggie Transition Camps require significant staff support to sustain their large and complex operations, and when programming, operations, or errors in the collecting and tracking of compliance related materials have far-reaching impacts. In 2021 alone, Fish Camp was engaged in varying capacities with the President of Texas A&M, the Board of Regents, the Vice President for Student Affairs, as well as external stakeholders, to identify ways to strengthen support for Fish Camp.

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

Being asked to increase oversight and increase the size of the program without the structure and staff support necessary to maintain them successfully is not possible in the current staffing model. Without expanded staffing, we will continue to be restrained from being able to reach the intended goal of serving all incoming students with a spot for every incoming student who wants to attend an Extended Orientation event. Thus far, we have discontinued the planning of Venture Camp: Leadership, which would have provided an experience emphasizing leadership and service within the Bryan/College Station community for 75-100 incoming Aggies, as well as other Venture Camp collaborations designed to appeal to different populations and entice individuals who are currently not served by one of our existing offerings that positively impact student retention.

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

For the new SAC staff member, assessment tools will largely align with the Human Resource metrics of Annual Evaluations, goal achievements, and regular supervisor meetings to oversee progress. Additionally, part of the EO curriculum includes mid-year 360 evaluations for advisors as well as end of the year Exit Interviews conducted with outgoing student leaders. Therefore, the individual's success could also be determined in part by the feedback given during these two assessments.

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

Completely self-funded, Fish Camp dedicates tremendous time to fundraising in order to keep camp attendance fees affordable rather than increasing the registration cost for campers beyond a reasonable rate. While, their fundraising efforts have been very successful, including raising over \$80,000.00 in 2019 toward participant scholarships, participant registration has continued to expand in scope and enrollment. This in turn requires an increase in large-scale fundraising events and heightened organizational complexity. Fish Camp's current organizational budget already supports 50% of a full-time advisor. Given the shared responsibility to this program, the University should identify a method of supporting Fish Camp through additional staffing.

**Total Estimated Cost**

<b>Funding Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Student Affairs Coordinator Salary	\$ 53,727.00
Benefits	\$ 20,207.00
Professional Development	\$ 1,800.00
<i>Less Estimated Partial/Matching Funds (if Applicable)</i>	
<b>TOTAL INCREASE REQUESTED</b>	<b>\$75,734.00</b>