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 Organization Peer Coaches

General Description:
In an effort to support the 1,100+ student organizations (RSOs) at Texas A&M, the Student Organization Development & Administration (SODA) office within the Department of Student Activities is seeking to establish a peer coach program of 10 student leaders who could consistently initiate contact and provide support to all of our student organizations. This group will provide regular touchpoints, communication, and networking opportunities in both one-to-one and small group formats, education and guidance for Diversity and Inclusion strategies within a student organization framework, risk management support and referrals for organization activities, and compliance-based information regarding laws, rules, and policies. This is not a replacement for existing and ongoing community-wide contact or large-scale communications, but rather an enhancement of existing services by providing regular and meaningful contact from a member of the SODA team with the student leadership of each of our RSOs.

The current limitation that inhibits this type of engagement with each student organization by our staff is the sheer quantity of RSOs compared to the number of SODA staff (4 professional staff, 2 GAs, 2 Student Assistants), as well as the existing responsibilities of these staff members that take priority over unsolicited touch-points and connections. The current processes for student organization communication, interaction, and direct support are primarily reactive, as RSO interactions and direct support are typically accomplished through on-demand consultations which are provided to students and advisors who reach out in person, by phone, and by email regarding event planning, campus protocols, and organization management. The goal of this program would be to provide capacity for a primarily proactive effort to initiate consistent and individualized communication, interaction, and direct support for each of our RSOs within the student organization community.

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?
The Student Organization Peer Coaches program will seek to achieve the following impacts:
- Ensure direct, intentional, and proactive engagement with every student organization throughout each academic year to build relational support for student leaders, provide personalized interactions with a consistent Peer Coach, and develop individualized guidance to address the unique needs and success of each group.
- Increase the sense of belonging and campus climate for the entire student population by focusing on Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Access education and enhancements within our recognized student organizations, which many students perceive as representatives of the university.
- Enhance the safety and success of organization activities by increasing the level of risk management support for each of our student organizations and their unique activities.
- Decrease interactions of organizations in the conduct process by proactively delivering information through direct interpersonal channels and enhancing student leaders' knowledge and awareness of student organization rules, protocols, and best practices, thus bolstering a positive educational experience in the co-curricular environment for all students on campus.

What department/Division strategic plan item does this support?
- Department Strategic Outcome: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) - Promote a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible campus climate
- Department Strategic Outcomes: Communication - Model communication excellence that is proactive, thorough, transparent, and showcases our decision-making strategies, particularly as they relate to collaborating with campus stakeholders
- Division Strategic Goal: Create an Inclusive Environment - Create an inclusive environment that develops leaders who productively engage in a wide spectrum of ideas, perspectives, and cultures
- Division Strategic Goal: Support Student Wellbeing - Provide innovative programs and resources that promote the health, wellbeing, and safety of students
- Division Strategic Goal: Ensure Future Effectiveness - Strategically leverage resources and develop new strategies to ensure our future effectiveness and sustainability

Please provide data, evidence, and/or input (student faculty, staff, other) you gathered to help you determine the need for additional resources.
- Over the past decade, the organization community at Texas A&M has grown by over 36%, significantly outpacing the growth of our staffing structure in the Student Organization Development and Administration (SODA) office.
- The SODA office recently implemented a student organization support tracking effort to collect data on staff contact with student organization leaders and advisors. During the 2021 Spring semester, which was unusually slow due to the impact of the pandemic on organization activities, SODA staff engaged in 1,527 points of contact with 483 unique student organizations. These contacts were primarily reactive in nature as responses to organization initiated inquiries, and represent SODA contact with only approximately 40% of the 1,100+ recognized student organizations, meaning that about 60% of RSOs did not have a direct point of contact or interaction with our staff during that time.
- In the 2019-2020 academic year, 2,497 MaroonLink event forms were submitted for review, guiding our risk management consulting efforts.
- During the 2019-2020 academic year, Student Activities received more than 100 reports of potential organization violations, many of which led to requirements for follow-up action or response and/or findings of responsibility with sanctions issued and tracked.

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

- The SODA area has developed and implemented a communication plan to provide regular updates and timely guidance to student leaders and advisors on a regular basis, but these are sent in bulk emails to the entire student organization community.
- Currently all SODA staff and student assistants are assigned a portion of the submitted Event Planning Forms based upon the categories of the submitting organizations, and event reviews are conducted as time permits to provide basic risk management recommendations.
- For student organization accountability processes, staff in Student Activities and the SODA area redistributed responsibilities for organization investigation follow-up, SOAB case-management, and organization sanction management between multiple staff to facilitate organization communication.
- In late Spring 2020, following the rise of COVID conditions, we utilized student workers in the department to reach out to all groups via a mass email to provide basic COVID information and offer themselves as resources, garnering significant responses from organizations with questions on topics ranging from event planning and recruitment to university policies and expectations.

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

Simple assessment metrics would include:
- Qualitative feedback from organizations regarding experiences with their Peer Coaches.
- Feedback from the Coaches assessing their interactions and impact for organizations.
- Quantitative measures tracking amount and degree of contact, as well as topics covered.
- Analysis of the increase or decrease in conduct cases and consultation requests, as well as the distribution changes in SODA staff contact logs.

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

We have evaluated several other funding sources to support initial program costs including grants from the Office of Diversity, the Division of Student Affairs, and the Association of Former Students, as well as off-campus grants from national associations, however many of these funding options constitute one-time requests and would not provide ongoing support.

Total Estimated Cost

Funding Description	Amount
10 peer coaches, 8 hrs/week, 30 weeks during the academic year at $7.25/hr.	$17,400
Peer Coach training and education support funds	$600
Less Estimated Partial/Matching Funds (if Applicable)	
TOTAL INCREASE REQUESTED	$18,000