

Venture: Base Camp Participant Evaluation Summer 2017

Background

According to its website (<http://venturecamp.tamu.edu>), Venture: Base Camp is the “premiere outdoor extended orientation experience set to take place both on the Texas A&M main campus and in the Texas Hill Country. Base Camp is sure to provide you with many fun and exciting activities including camping, hiking, canoeing, rock climbing, team building activities, and so much more.” Venture: Base Camp is a collaborative effort between Extended Orientation in the Department of Student Activities and Outdoor Adventures in the Department of Recreational Sports for admitted entering freshmen or transfer students starting in the fall semester. Throughout the camp experience, students participate in a variety of outdoor activities and take part in Discussion Groups (DGs) to discuss college life at Texas A&M and campus traditions. Each camp day represented one of Texas A&M University's core values: Loyalty, Integrity, Selfless Service, Leadership, Excellence, and Respect.

There were two sessions of Venture: Base Camp over the summer. The first one, Alpha, took place on July 10 – 15, 2017 and Bravo, the second camp, was scheduled July 17 – 22, 2017. During this six-day camp, students went rock climbing, swimming, and canoeing; had discussion groups; learned about Aggie traditions; and took a campus tour/scavenger hunt.

Staff from Extended Orientation and Outdoor Adventures identified the following learning outcomes. After attending Venture: Base Camp, participants will:

- Recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University
- Create academic, personal, and social goals to define and measure personal successes in the first year
- Recognize multiple resources available for support located on campus and within the local community
- Create opportunities to engage with faculty, staff, and other students

This was the third year of the program and the third time to work with Student Life Studies to assess the effectiveness of the camp experience.

Method and Sample

The electronic evaluation was developed in Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. The evaluation contained 46 questions; 35 were quantitative, 10 were qualitative, and one was demographic. Student Life Studies evaluated the results using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Word® and Excel®.

The evaluation was administered several weeks into the fall semester, which is similar to what was done in 2016. However, in 2015 the survey was administered in the summer shortly after participants returned from camp. Student Life Studies sent the survey to all 40 camp participants on September 12; however, one email address bounced and was not received. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on September 25. Of the 39 camp participants receiving the survey, 23 completed some part of it, yielding a 59% response rate (16% increase from the year before).

Results

Results are reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Tables are listed in descending order for the 2017 means or frequency percentages. Statements on the tables were changed to reflect Venture: Base Camp 2017, however, the previous statements were written as 2016 or 2015. Not applicable responses were removed prior to analysis. The summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report; the full listing is in a separate document. Additionally, demographic information was pulled from the student information system. Comparisons to previous years will be made where appropriate.

Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with specific events that took place during Venture: Base Camp 2017. Table 1 indicates that students enjoyed the rock climbing, service project, and hiking the most. However, they were not quite as positive about the visit to White Creek or the Bead Ceremony. Compared to the previous year, many statements were more positive; however, rock climbing, hiking, skit competition, and bead ceremony decreased.

Please rate the following activities from Venture: Base Camp 2017.	Completely Satisfied (5)	Somewhat Satisfied (4)	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (3)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)	Completely Dissatisfied (1)	2017 Mean (sd) [n=19]	2016 Mean (sd) [n=13]	2015 Mean (sd) [n]
Rock climbing	95%	5%	--	--	--	4.95 (.23)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00) [24]
Service project	90%	11%	--	--	--	4.89 (.32)	4.23 (.83)	3.17 (1.23) [23]
Hiking	90%	--	11%	--	--	4.79 (.63)	4.92 (.28)	4.08 (1.10) [24]
Paddling on the River	74%	26%	--	--	--	4.74 (.45)	4.69 (.48)	‡
Teambuilding activities	74%	16%	11%	--	--	4.63 (.68)	4.62 (.51)	4.75 (.44) [24]
Skit competition	68%	26%	5%	--	--	4.63 (.60)	4.77 (.44)	4.57 (.79) [23]
Campus tour activities	74%	16%	5%	5%	--	4.58 (.84)	4.15 (1.14)	4.75 (.53) [24]
Free Time at the Rec Center	63%	32%	5%	--	--	4.58 (.61)	‡	‡
Bead Ceremony	68%	21%	5%	5%	--	4.53 (.84)	4.77 (.60)	‡
Visits to Offices at White Creek	68%	16%	11%	5%	--	4.47 (.91)	‡	‡

Table 1: Event Satisfaction

‡Question not asked

Students were given the opportunity to share comments or explain any response regarding the events and activities that took place during Venture: Base Camp 2017, and seven students wrote in a comment. All students shared positive comments regarding their experiences such as camp was an amazing time, loved it, would recommend it, enjoyed the outdoor time, and want to be a mentor next year. One student suggested having more group time during camp.

Participants were also asked about their level of satisfaction with the planning, preparation, and experience with Venture: Base Camp 2017. Table 2 shares that students were generally positive about all statements. They were most positive about the safety considerations and staff driving. With the exception of staff driving, all statements decreased when compared to 2016; with the quality of food decreasing the most.

Please rate the following items with Venture: Base Camp 2017.	Completely Satisfied (5)	Somewhat Satisfied (4)	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (3)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)	Completely Dissatisfied (1)	2017 Mean (sd) [n=18]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]	2015 Mean (sd) [n]
Safety considerations	94%	6%	--	--	--	4.94 (.24)	5.00 (.00) [12]	4.92 (.28) [24]
Staff driving	94%	6%	--	--	--	4.94 (.24)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.79 (.51) [24]
Equipment	89%	11%	--	--	--	4.89 (.32)	5.00 (.00) [13]	4.96 (.20) [24]
Staff attitude	89%	11%	--	--	--	4.89 (.32)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.79 (.66) [24]
Group dynamics	89%	11%	--	--	--	4.89 (.32)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.54 (.78) [24]
Staff organization	83%	11%	6%	--	--	4.78 (.55)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.04 (1.07) [23]
Cost of Venture: Base Camp 2017 for experience provided	83%	11%	6%	--	--	4.78 (.55)	4.83 (.39) [12]	4.67 (.64) [24]
Communication	78%	22%	--	--	--	4.78 (.43)	5.00 (.00) [13]	4.54 (.78) [24]
Quality of food	22%	56%	11%	11%	--	3.89 (.90)	4.62 (.51) [13]	4.21 (.83) [24]

Table 2: Event Satisfaction

Students were again given the opportunity to share comments or explain any response regarding the planning, preparation, and experience related to Venture: Base Camp 2017, and one student wrote in a comment indicating the communication could have been better, specifically related to one camper being asleep at chow circle.

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding the established learning outcomes for the program. Table 3 reveals that again students were quite positive with all statements. They were most positive about recommending Venture: Base Camp to other students. Alternatively, students were less positive about gaining a mentor through Venture: Base Camp 2017, which was the same as the previous two years. There were several statements that increased when compared to 2016 including developing positive relationships with other students, being able to recall and discuss traditions and values, increasing knowledge of available resources, creating goals were helpful, and feeling they had a mentor.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2017 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n=13]	2015 Mean (sd) [n=24]
I would recommend Venture: Base Camp to incoming first year students.	88%	12%	--	--	--	4.88 (.33) [17]	4.92 (.28)	4.92 (.28)
Venture: Base Camp 2017 helped me develop positive relationships with other new students at Texas A&M.	94%	--	--	6%	--	4.83 (.71) [18]	4.77 (.44)	4.92 (.28)
I can recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University.	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.38) [18]	4.69 (.48)	4.71 (.46)
I felt more connected to Texas A&M as a result of attending Venture: Base Camp 2017.	78%	22%	--	--	--	4.78 (.43) [18]	4.92 (.28)	4.92 (.28)
My enthusiasm about attending Texas A&M increased as a result of attending Venture: Base Camp 2017.	78%	22%	--	--	--	4.78 (.43) [18]	4.85 (.38)	4.96 (.20)
Venture: Base Camp 2017 increased my knowledge of resources available for support within my first year at Texas A&M.	78%	11%	11%	--	--	4.67 (.69) [18]	4.54 (.66)	4.63 (.58)
I felt more prepared to begin my college career at Texas A&M.	67%	28%	6%	--	--	4.61 (.61) [18]	4.62 (.51)	4.88 (.34)
Creating academic, personal and social goals was a helpful tool to prepare for my first year at Texas A&M.	77%	6%	18%	--	--	4.59 (.80) [17]	4.38 (.51)	4.63 (.65)
I felt I had a mentor as I began my first year at Texas A&M.	50%	18%	22%	11%	--	4.06 (1.11) [18]	3.92 (.79)	4.33 (.87)

Table 3: Learning Outcomes

Using a select all that apply format, camp participants were asked how Venture: Base Camp prepared them academically. Table 4 reports that students learned about academic resources and how to successfully interact with professors. However, students were least positive about learning how to study. Students selecting the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write in a comment. One student wrote in that they learned how to deal with roommate conflicts. A couple of items had larger increases compared to the 2016 results, including learning how to interact with professors, how to manage time, and how to study. However, learning about academic resources decreased compared to 2016.

How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you academically? (select all that apply)	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=12]
Learned about academic resources (tutoring, libraries, Supplemental Instruction [SI] sessions, etc.)	69%	83%
Learned how to successfully interact with professors/instructors	63%	25%
Found out where to study	56%	58%
Understood academic differences between high school and college	50%	42%
Learned how to manage my time	31%	--
Learned how to study	13%	--
None of the above	6%	8%
Other	6%	

Table 4: Academic Preparedness

Participants were asked about how Venture: Base Camp prepared them for their first year at Texas A&M using a select all the apply option. Table 5 demonstrates participants were positive about all statements. One student wrote in a response to the “other” option and said that meeting others and developing relationships before the school year began prepared them.

How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you for your first year at Texas A&M? (select all that apply)	2017 Frequency Percentage
Learned how to navigate conflict with others	88%
Gained a greater awareness of other’s experiences and backgrounds coming into Texas A&M	88%
Knowing how to navigate around campus	88%
Gained a better understanding about how to interact with people that are different from me	81%
Gained a better understanding of my leadership style	75%
Knowing the location of campus resources	75%
Other	6%
None	--

Table 5: Prepared for Texas A&M (n=16)

Using a select all that apply option, campers were asked about what they learned from attending Venture: Base Camp 2017. Table 6 shows that students learned about opportunities to engage in outdoor activities and traditions the most. None of the participants selected the “other” response option or reported learning nothing from their experience. Most items were similar when compared to the previous year; however, there were larger increases in diversity/inclusive environment, the importance of time management, and academics.

What did you learn from attending Venture: Base Camp? (select all that apply)	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=12]
Opportunities to engage in outdoor activities	94%	100%
Traditions	94%	92%
Texas A&M's Core Values	88%	100%
Involvement	88%	83%
Campus Resources	81%	75%
Diversity/Inclusive Environment	81%	50%
What to expect in college life	75%	75%
Importance of time management	69%	17%
Academics	56%	33%
Other	--	--
Nothing	--	--

Table 6: Learning

Camp participants were asked what they enjoyed most and least about Venture: Base Camp 2017. Numerous things were mentioned including rock climbing, kayaking, meeting new people, being outside, the bead ceremony, the river trip and team building activities. Alternatively, group time being too long, not having enough free time, always needing life jackets, the car rides, reflections in the evening, only having two showers, and the food were the aspects students reported least enjoying.

Students were asked for suggestions to improve Venture: Base Camp 2017. Students recommended having more variety in the food, more free time, more open large group time, and more sessions. However, they would like less safety requirements. Additionally, students suggested having better transportation and better food planning so there would be enough food for everyone.

When students were asked how their original expectations of the trip compared to the reality of the trip, many indicated that they did not know what to expect from camp or did not have high expectations. However, most students indicated the trip was better than they thought and surpassed their expectations.

When asked about new lessons or skills learned from this experience, students talked about navigating campus, learning about available resources, finding places to study, understanding campus traditions, meeting other students, being able to resolve conflicts, and discovering the diversity on campus. Additionally, a couple students learned how to canoe and rock climb from attending.

Participants were provided the opportunity to share any additional comments they had regarding Venture: Base Camp 2017. The responses were extremely positive giving praises to the staff and the overall experience.

When asked how they heard about Venture: Base Camp 2017, in a check-all-that-apply format, Table 7 illustrates that email to incoming students continued to be the most common method. Recreational Sports website or social media, Venture Camp Facebook, and “other” were not reported as a marketing method students used.

How did you hear about Venture: Base Camp 2017? (select all that apply)	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=13]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=12]	2015 Frequency Percentage [n=23]
Email sent to incoming students	77%	50%	52%
Friends or family	23%	25%	13%
Student Activities website or social media	15%	8%	13%
New Student Conference	8%	17%	9%
Materials I received from New Student & Family Programs	8%	--	22%
Other	--	--	9%
Recreational Sports website or social media	--	--	--
Venture Camp Facebook Event	--	--	--

Table 7: Marketing

When asked if attending Venture: Base Camp helped them in their first few weeks of college, 77% said yes and 23% were unsure. Nobody selected the “no” option. This was less positive compared to 2016 when 92% said yes, 8% were unsure, and nobody reported no. Any student who would have selected the “no” option, would have been given the opportunity to explain why camp had not helped them. None of the participants saw this question.

Students were asked about the topics they felt should have been covered at Venture: Base Camp or covered in greater depth, and several responses were provided. Students suggested covering finding study groups, how to get involved, the process for joining student organizations, navigating campus, and managing time better.

The final question asked if camp participants also attended any other orientation program in addition to Venture: Base Camp. A majority (90%) indicated they attended Fish Camp, 10% said Impact Retreat, and 10% selected the “other” response option. One student wrote “sadly no” when provided the opportunity to share a comment for the “other” response option. This was fairly similar to 2016 when 91% indicated also attending Fish Camp and 27% said they went to Impact Retreat.

Student demographics of all Venture: Base Camp 2017 attendees and the survey respondents can be found in Table 8, in descending order by the 2017 survey respondent column on the following page. A majority of the respondents were white, female, freshmen in the College of Liberal Arts. Most demographic categories were fairly similar between all camp participants and the evaluation respondents.

Of the students responding to the evaluation, 94% reported being freshmen and 6% said they were transfer students. Additionally, students were asked which session of Venture: Base Camp they attended. Just over half of the respondents (53%) attended the Alpha session (July 10 - 15, 2017) and 47% attended Bravo (July 17 - 22, 2017).

Student Demographics	2017 Camp Attendees [n=40]	2017 Survey Respondents [n=21]	2016 Camp Attendees [n=30]	2016 Survey Respondents [n=13]	2015 Camp Attendees [n=30]	2015 Survey Respondents [n=24]
Gender						
Female	63%	67%	57%	69%	57%	63%
Male	38%	33%	43%	31%	43%	38%
Ethnicity						
White	70%	74%	83%	77%	60%	63%
Hispanic	23%	19%	10%	15%	17%	17%
2 or more/excluding Black	5%	10%	7%	8%		
Unknown	--	--	--	--	13%	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	--	--	--	3%	4%
Other	--	--	--	--	3%	4%
African American	--	--	--	--	3%	--
College						
Liberal Arts	13%	19%	3%	8%	7%	--
Engineering	20%	14%	31%	31%	47%	46%
General Studies	15%	14%	20%	15%	7%	8%
Mays Business School	15%	14%	7%	8%	3%	4%
Agricultural and Life Sciences	13%	14%	7%	--	13%	17%
Education and Human Development	10%	10%	10%	8%	7%	8%
Architecture	8%	10%	3%	--	3%	4%
Sciences	8%	5%	3%	8%	10%	8%
Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences	--	--	10%	15%	3%	4%
Geosciences	--	--	3%	8%	--	--
Rural Public Health	--	--	3%	--	--	--
First Generation Status						
No	83%	76%	83%	85%	80%	75%
Yes	18%	24%	17%	15%	17%	21%
Unknown	--	--	--	--	3%	4%
Classification						
Freshman	83%	86%	83%	77%	83%	88%
Junior	8%	10%	10%	15%	3%	4%
Sophomore	10%	5%	7%	8%	13%	8%

Table 8: Demographics

Conclusions and Recommendations

As similar to the past two years, respondents were very positive about their experience, the activities, and planning that went into camp. Most participants felt that Venture: Base Camp 2017 allowed them to meet new people and make the transition into the Aggie Family. Based on this year's results, Venture: Base Camp 2017 seems to have fulfilled its intended learning outcomes; furthermore, these were slightly higher when compared to the previous year.

The most common suggestions were related to the planning of the camp. Participants would like to have more free time as part of the schedule and felt that some of the evening discussions were long. Planning staff may want to look at options to structure the evenings and build more free time or possible pair and share activities to feel as if they are having more time to interact with other students. Another suggestion was related to food and offering more variety and better quality. Staff may want to explore different food options that might be feasible for camp.

Responses seemed to be a little repetitive from participants, which may indicate the questions seem similar to them. Venture Camp staff may want to review the questions before next summer to determine if they are providing useful information or if some questions could be combined or deleted.

Venture: Base Camp staff is strongly encouraged to read through all of the qualitative responses to gain a better understanding of the themes represented in this report. There were suggestions shared from participants, and staff may want to consider implementing some of these changes or explaining the rationale for why some things are the way they, especially related to some of the safety requirements.

Venture: Base Camp staff is also encouraged to share results with their stakeholders. This could be sharing information with the various speakers or campus resources discussed at camp, potential donors, incoming students to market why students could attend, and the Division of Student Affairs.

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