

# **Student Activities and Recreational Sports Venture Camps Participant Evaluation Summer 2021**

## **Purpose of Assessment**

Venture Camps are extended orientation programs for admitted entering freshmen or transfer students starting in the fall semester. During 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.

This year two different camp experiences were offered to incoming students. Venture: Base Camp Backpacking was July 6-9, 2021, and Venture: Base Camp Paddling was July 13-16, 2021. Staff planning the Venture Camp programs wanted to understand the students' experiences with the Venture Camp programs and how effective they were in reaching the identified outcomes. This was the sixth year of the program and Student Activities and Recreational Sports working with Student Life Studies to assess the effectiveness of the camp experience. The last time was in 2019; Venture Camp was not held in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **Method and Sample**

The electronic survey was developed in Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys. The survey contained 46 questions (a decrease of 15 questions compared to 2019); 36 were quantitative and 10 were qualitative. Student Life Studies evaluated the results using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Word® and Excel®. Due to branching questions, not all students saw all the questions.

The evaluation was administered several weeks into the fall semester, which is similar to previous years. Student Life Studies sent the survey link through students' email addresses to all 18 camp participants on October 27, 2021. Non-respondents received up to four reminders before the survey closed on November 15. Of the 18 camp participants receiving the survey link, six completed some part of it, yielding a 33% response rate (a decrease of 14% compared to the 2019 response rate).

## **Key Findings and Recommendations**

Student Life Studies identified several key findings and developed actionable recommendations the departments may take based on the results. However, Student Activities and Recreational Sports staff may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the program and community. Staff members are strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- Similar to the past four years, respondents were very positive about their experience, the activities, and the planning that went into camp. Most participants felt that the Venture Camp programs allowed them to learn about Texas A&M and meet new people.
- There were some suggestions by students that Venture Camp staff may want to explore. Participants were not very satisfied with the food provided to them at the camps and commented that they expected better. Students' satisfaction with regards to the quality of food was at its lowest mean in the past three years. Venture Camp staff are encouraged to look at the food in 2019 when there was a notable higher level of satisfaction. Also, a student suggested carrying a larger range of medicines to camp for emergencies.
- The changes made with the hiking trail this year were very well received. In contrast to 2019, there were no negative comments regarding the hike and students seemed to be satisfied with the activities organized for them at the camp.

- Staff from Student Activities and Recreation Sports have been hosting Venture Camp for six years. It may be a good time to look at the learning outcomes initially created. Is Venture Camp achieving what it was intended to do? Additionally, many of the students attending Venture Camp are also attending other camps, primarily Fish Camp. It may be good for the two departments to look at what students learn from Venture Camp and determine the balance between this being an extended orientation program vs. an outdoor adventure trip. It also may be beneficial to map the various activities to each of the learning outcomes to identify where staff believes this topic is being covered. The results from this year for the four identified learning outcomes are listed below.
  - 100% of the participants reported being able to recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University.
  - 83% of the students felt creating academic, personal, and social goals was a helpful tool to prepare them for their first year.
  - 33% of campers said they learned about academic resources.
  - Create opportunities to engage with faculty, staff, and other students
    - 100% of students reported Venture Camp helped to develop positive relationships with other students.
    - 67% of students felt they had a mentor as they began their first year at Texas A&M.
- Staff members are 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.

## **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 2021 means or frequency percentages. Statements on the tables were changed to reflect Venture Camp programs 2021; however, the previous statements were written as 2019, 2018, or 2017. 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 gathered from the student information system. Comparisons to previous years are made where appropriate.

Students were asked which session of Venture: Base Camp they attended. One-third of the respondents (33%) attended the Backpacking session (July 6 - 9, 2021) and 66% attended the Paddling session (July 13-16, 2021).

When asked how they first learned about Venture Camp programs in a check-all-that-apply format, Table 1, on the following page, illustrates that New Student Conferences (NSC) presentations were the most common mode through which students learned about Venture Camp. Student Activities social media, resource tables at the NSC, and "other" were not methods students learned about Venture Camp. Students who indicated learning about Venture Camp through Rec Sports social media or website were asked to specify the platform. The one student who selected this option indicated that they learned about Venture Camp through the website.

<b>How did you first learn about the Venture Camp programs? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]</b>	<b>2019 Frequency Percentage [n=14]</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=17]</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=13]</b>
<b>Presentation at New Student Conference</b>	50%	14%	18%	8%
<b>Materials I received from New Student &amp; Family Programs</b>	33%	--	6%	8%
<b>Email sent to incoming students</b>	17%	43%	59%	77%
<b>Recreational Sports website or social media</b>	17%	21%	6%	--
<b>Friends or family</b>	17%	14%	35%	23%
<b>Resource table during my New Student Conference</b>	--	21%	‡	‡
<b>Student Activities website or social media</b>	--	7%	12%	15%
<b>Other</b>	--	--	--	--

Table 1: Marketing  
‡ Question not asked

Additionally, students were asked why they wanted to attend a Venture Camp program and four wrote responses. Half of the comments talked about enjoying the outdoors or specifically camping or backpacking, as being a reason, they wanted to attend. The other half wanted to meet other people or make friends.

Venture: Base Camp participants were asked how they felt about the size or number of participants at Venture: Base Camp 2021. All the participants (100%) indicated that the group size was just right.

All Venture Camp program participants were also asked about their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the planning, preparation, and experience with their Venture Camp program. Table 2, on the next page, shows that students were quite satisfied with all areas except for the quality of food and communication prior to camp to some extent. They were most satisfied with the safety considerations, staff attitude, staff organization, staff driving, and communication at camp.

Please rate the following items with Venture: Base Camp 2021.	Completely Satisfied (5)	Somewhat Satisfied (4)	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (3)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)	Completely Dissatisfied (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n=6]	2019 Mean (sd) [n=12]	2018 Mean (sd) [n=12]	2017 Mean (sd) [n=16]
<b>Safety Considerations</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	4.94 (.24)
<b>Staff Attitude</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	4.89 (.32)
<b>Staff Organization</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	4.78 (.55)
<b>Staff Driving</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.83 (.39)	4.75 (.45)	4.94 (.24)
<b>Communication at Camp</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.92 (.29)	4.94 (.25)	↓
<b>Cost of Venture: Camp 2021 for Experience Provided</b>	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	4.92 (.29)	4.69 (.60)	4.78 (.55)
<b>Swag Bags</b>	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	4.83 (.39)	4.69 (.70)	↓
<b>Equipment</b>	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.55)	4.83 (.58)	4.94 (.25)	4.89 (.32)
<b>Group Dynamics</b>	33%	67%	--	--	--	4.33 (.52)	4.83 (.39)	4.88 (.34)	4.89 (.32)
<b>Communication Prior to Camp</b>	33%	50%	17%	--	--	4.00 (1.1)	4.75 (.45)	4.81 (.54)	↓
<b>Quality of Food</b>	33%	17%	17%	17%	17%	3.33 (1.63)	5.00 (.00)	4.69 (.60)	3.89 (.90)

Table 2: Satisfaction with Preparation  
↓ Question not asked

Students were again given the opportunity to share comments or explain any response regarding the planning, preparation, and experience related to their Venture Camp program, and one student wrote a response that said that they were satisfied with the camp and found it better than Fish Camp.

Participants were asked to rate their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements regarding the established learning outcomes for camp. Table 3, on the next page, reveals that again students were quite positive with all statements except for feeling more prepared for college, increased knowledge of available resources, and creating personal, social, and academic goals. Like last year, students would recommend Venture: Base Camp to other students. Also, while still positive overall, students were the least in agreement about feeling more prepared to begin their college careers. Several statements decreased slightly compared to previous years.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n=6]	2019 Mean (sd) [n=12]	2018 Mean (sd) [n=16]	2017 Mean (sd) [n]
I would recommend Venture: Base Camp to other incoming first year students.	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	4.83 (.39)	4.94 (.25)	4.88 (.33) [17]
My Venture Camp program helped me to develop positive relationships with other new students at Texas A&M.	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	4.58 (.67)	4.88 (.34)	4.83 (.71) [18]
I felt more connected to Texas A&M as a result of attending Venture Camp.	67%	17%	17%	--	--	4.50 (.84)	4.67 (.49)	4.81 (.40)	4.78 (.43) [18]
I can recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University.	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.55)	4.50 (.67)	4.81 (.40)	4.83 (.38) [18]
My enthusiasm about attending Texas A&M increased as a result of attending Venture Camp.	50%	33%	17%	--	--	4.33 (.82)	4.75 (.45)	4.75 (.58)	4.78 (.43) [18]
Creating academic, personal, and social goals was a helpful tool to prepare for my first year at Texas A&M.	33%	50%	17%	--	--	4.17 (.75)	4.42 (.67)	4.75 (.45)	4.59 (.80) [17]
I feel I have a mentor as I began my first year at Texas A&M.	50%	17%	17%	17%	--	4.00 (1.27)	3.92 (.90)	4.56 (.81)	4.06 (1.11) [18]
My Venture Camp program increased my knowledge of resources available for support within my first year at Texas A&M.	33%	33%	33%	--	--	4.00 (.89)	4.17 (.94)	4.81 (.40)	4.67 (.69) [18]
I felt more prepared to begin my college career at Texas A&M.	17%	50%	33%	--	--	3.83 (.75)	4.58 (.67)	4.56 (.77)	4.61 (.61) [18]

Table 3: Learning Outcomes

Students were asked a new set of questions about their experience in their first semester at Texas A&M University. Table 4, on the next page, displays these results. Students generally felt that they are accepted and felt comfortable at Texas A&M University except when asked if they felt like an outsider or alienated at TAMU; some responded that they agreed with this statement while some were neutral, but no one strongly agreed, and the overall ratings were on the disagree side of the scale.

<b>Please respond to the following questions about what Texas A&amp;M University is like for you.</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2021 Mean (sd) [n]</b>
<b>People at TAMU accept me.</b>	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.55) [6]
<b>I feel comfortable at TAMU.</b>	33%	67%	--	--	--	4.33 (.52) [6]
<b>I belong at TAMU.</b>	33%	67%	--	--	--	4.33 (.52) [6]
<b>I am similar to the kind of people who succeed at TAMU.</b>	17%	83%	--	--	--	4.17 (.41) [6]
<b>I get along well with people at TAMU.</b>	33%	67%	--	--	--	4.33 (.52) [6]
<b>People at TAMU are a lot like me.</b>	17%	67%	17%	--	--	4.00 (.63) [6]
<b>I feel like an outsider at TAMU.</b>	--	17%	--	50%	33%	2.00 (1.20) [6]
<b>I feel alienated from TAMU.</b>	--	--	17%	33%	50%	1.67 (.82) [6]

Table 4: Experience at Texas A&M University

Using a select all that apply format, camp participants were asked how their Venture Camp program prepared them academically. Table 5, on the following page, reports that students learned how to manage their time and how to interact with professors. Both topics increased compared to previous years. However, topics like finding where to study and understanding differences between high school and college decreased.

<b>How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you academically? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]</b>	<b>2019 Frequency Percentage [n=11]</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>
<b>Learned how to manage my time</b>	67%	27%	25%	31%
<b>Learned how to successfully interact with professors/instructors</b>	50%	46%	69%	63%
<b>Found out where to study</b>	33%	73%	69%	56%
<b>Learned about academic resources (tutoring, libraries, Supplemental Instruction [SI] sessions, etc.)</b>	33%	64%	81%	69%
<b>Understood academic differences between high school and college</b>	17%	73%	63%	50%
<b>Other</b>	--	9%	13%	6%
<b>Learned how to study</b>	--	9%	--	13%
<b>None of the above</b>	--	--	6%	6%

Table 5: Academic Preparedness

Participants were also asked how their Venture Camp program prepared them for their first year at Texas A&M using a select all that apply option. Table 6 demonstrates that participants generally reported each area helped prepare them. They indicated increasing their awareness of others' experiences and backgrounds, understanding how to interact with those different from them, and learning how to navigate conflict prepared them the most.

<b>How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you for your first year at Texas A&amp;M? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]</b>	<b>2019 Frequency Percentage [n=11]</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>
<b>Gained a greater awareness of other's experiences and backgrounds coming into Texas A&amp;M</b>	67%	91%	94%	88%
<b>Learned how to navigate conflict with others</b>	67%	55%	50%	88%
<b>Gained a better understanding of my leadership style</b>	50%	55%	75%	75%
<b>Gained a better understanding about how to interact with people that are different from me</b>	33%	82%	94%	81%
<b>Knowing the location of campus resources</b>	33%	64%	63%	75%
<b>Knowing how to navigate around campus</b>	33%	55%	56%	88%
<b>Other</b>	--	--	6%	6%
<b>None</b>	--	--	--	--

Table 6: Prepared for Texas A&M

Using a select all that apply option, campers were asked about what they learned from attending their Venture Camp program. Table 7, on the following page, shows that students most often learned about traditions, health and wellness strategies, and Texas A&M's core values. Fewer students indicated they learned about diversity/inclusion and academics. For a fifth year, none of the participants selected the "other" response option or reported learning nothing from their experience.

What did you learn from attending a Venture Camp program? (select all that apply)	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2019 Frequency Percentage [n=11]	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=16]	2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]
<b>Traditions</b>	100%	100%	100%	94%
<b>Health and Wellness Strategies</b>	83%	46%	69%	↓
<b>Texas A&amp;M's Core Values</b>	67%	100%	81%	88%
<b>Opportunities to engage in outdoor activities</b>	67%	91%	94%	94%
<b>Involvement Opportunities</b>	67%	82%	88%	88%
<b>Importance of time management</b>	67%	55%	69%	69%
<b>Campus Resources</b>	67%	55%	81%	81%
<b>What to expect in college life</b>	50%	82%	81%	75%
<b>Academics</b>	50%	36%	69%	56%
<b>Diversity/Inclusive Environment</b>	33%	82%	94%	81%
<b>Nothing</b>	--	--	--	--
<b>Other</b>	--	--	--	--

Table 7: Learning  
↓ Question not asked

Camp participants were asked what they enjoyed most and least about their Venture Camp program experience and four students responded to each question. Several students talked about making new friends and enjoying the company of their fellow campers. Alternatively, students indicated what they liked the least was the food, carrying a big load while paddling, and waiting for others while hiking.

Students were asked for suggestions to improve Venture Camp in the future and four responded to this question. Comments included providing better food, better planning of the itinerary, carrying a larger range of medicines, and having greater gender equality in camp participants.

When asked how their original expectations of the trip compared to the reality of the trip. Three of the four respondents enjoyed the trip and one even said that it was better than they expected. The fourth participant found spending two days on the river tiring.

When asked about new lessons or skills learned from this experience, three students wrote a comment. Camp participants talked about learning how to swim against rapids, setting up a tent, and leadership. However, one participant said that the skills learned at camp were not relevant to campus.

When asked if attending their Venture Camp program helped them in their first few weeks of college, 50% of the six students responding said yes and 50% were unsure. Nobody selected the "no" response option. Any student selecting the "no" option would have been given the opportunity to explain why camp had not helped; however, no respondents saw this question.

Since students had been on campus for several weeks when the survey was administered, they were asked about the topics they felt should have been covered at Venture Camp programs or covered in greater depth. The three responses suggested covering student organizations, tips for establishing a friend group, and time management.

The final question asked if camp participants also attended any other orientation program in addition to their Venture Camp program. Of the six respondents, 83% attended Fish Camp and 33% attended Impact Retreat.



Student demographics of all Venture Camp program attendees and the survey respondents can be found in Table 8, in descending order for each category by the 2021 survey respondent column. A majority of the respondents were White, male, and freshmen.

<b>Student Demographics</b>	<b>2021 Camp Attendees [n=18]</b>	<b>2021 Survey Respondents [n=6]</b>	<b>2019 Camp Attendees [n=30]</b>	<b>2019 Survey Respondents [n=14]</b>	<b>2018 Camp Attendees [n=29]</b>	<b>2018 Survey Respondents [n=16]</b>
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	64%	71%	53%	64%	52%	63%
Female	36%	29%	47%	36%	48%	38%
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
White	73%	71%	67%	64%	76%	69%
Multiracial excluding Black	--	14%	10%	14%	3%	--
Asian	--	--	7%	14%	3%	6%
Hispanic	27%	14%	17%	7%	14%	19%
African American	--	--	--	--	3%	6%
<b>College</b>						
Engineering	27%	29%	37%	36%	41%	56%
Agricultural and Life Sciences	27%	14%	10%	7%	17%	6%
Mays Business School	27%	--	3%	--	3%	6%
Sciences	9%	29%	7%	7%	--	--
Geosciences	9%	14%	7%	14%	7%	6%
Liberal Arts	--	--	13%	21%	3%	6%
Education and Human Dev.	--	14%	3%	7%	7%	--
General Studies	--	--	3%	7%	10%	6%
Public Health	--	--	10%	--	--	--
Architecture	--	--	7%	--	3%	--
Vet. Med. & Biomedical Sciences	--	--	--	--	7%	13%
<b>First Generation Status</b>						
Not First Generation	100%	64%	70%	79%	93%	94%
First Generation	--	36%	23%	21%	7%	6%
Unknown	--	--	7%	--	--	--
<b>Classification</b>						
Freshman	81%	86%	77%	71%	76%	69%
Sophomore	9%	14%	13%	7%	10%	13%
Junior	9%	--	3%	7%	7%	6%
Postbaccalaureate Undergraduate	--	--	3%	7%	--	--
Senior	--	--	3%	7%	7%	13%
<b>Top 10%</b>						
Yes	64%	71%	‡	‡	‡	‡
No	36%	29%	‡	‡	‡	‡

Table 8: Demographics  
‡ demographic not included

## **Program Background**

Venture Camp programs are 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. According to its website (<http://venturecamp.tamu.edu>), Venture: Base Camp welcomes freshmen and transfer students through new opportunities and helps with the transition to Texas A&M through outdoor experiences."

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

## **Project Details**

One limitation of these results is that it represents a small number of students. For some questions, 15% to 17% is representing one student.

The Department of Student Life Studies provides quality assessment services, resources, and assessment training for departments in the Texas A&M University Division of Student Affairs and student organizations. Services by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through Student Life Studies can be found at <https://studentlifestudies.tamu.edu/results/>. Additionally, division staff and students can follow Student Life Studies on Facebook.

To work with Student Life Studies for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://slsform.dsaapps.tamu.edu/>.

Report Prepared for: Andrew Carruth, Student Activities  
Report Prepared by: Adit Sanghani and Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies  
Report Prepared on: March 10, 2022  
Analysis Prepared by: Judith Barrera, Student Life Studies  
Survey Created by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies