

Fish Camp

Non-Participant Evaluation

2021-2022

Purpose of the Assessment

Fish Camp, an optional extended orientation camp, provides a transition from high school to college for approximately 6,000 incoming freshmen. Fish Camp has assessed different aspects of the program since 2000. Fish Camp wanted to assess the freshmen who did not attend Fish Camp to understand their first semester at Texas A&M and find out if there are things Fish Camp can do in their marketing and programming for more students to attend. This is the sixth time Fish Camp has specifically sought feedback from non-participants. The last time non-participants were assessed was in 2018.

Key Findings with Recommendations

Student Life Studies identified a few findings and developed actionable recommendations Fish Camp may take based on the results from the survey administered to freshmen who did not attend this extended orientation camp. However, Fish Camp may identify other findings using their knowledge and understanding of the program and the students they serve. The organization is strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experiences.

- Just over one-third (37%) of the students who did not attend Fish Camp reported they did not feel it was beneficial, which is lower than 2018 when 45% of the students did not feel it was beneficial. Another 14% shared that they did not know about Fish Camp. Additionally, 29% of students reported they would attend Fish Camp if they could go back and change their decision; this is a 10% increase from 2018. Furthermore, non-participants report that they learn about Fish Camp much later than Fish Camp participants.
 - Fish Camp could look at their marketing and ways to change that and get that information to students earlier.
 - Fish Camp might find it beneficial to include quotes from students who attended Fish Camp, as well as those who did not attend Fish Camp, but wished they had, in their marketing materials.
 - Fish Camp could also provide information about the differences between Fish Camp and attending Howdy Week or Freshmen Orientation Week, and the value of attending both rather than selecting one over the other.
- Paying for Fish Camp was a concern for over one-third of the students who did not attend. Additionally, of those who expressed the cost being a concern, 79% were not aware scholarships were available which is a 25% increase compared to 2018. Furthermore, 41% of these students indicated that they would have attended Fish Camp if they had received a scholarship.
 - Fish Camp is encouraged to look at how scholarships are marketed to students and when that information is getting to students.
 - This information could also be valuable to share with potential donors and during fundraising activities to seek additional scholarship money to be able to offer more scholarships.

Method and Sample

The 25-question survey was developed in Qualtrics®, a software program that creates web-based surveys; 21 questions were quantitative, three were qualitative, and one was demographic. Due to branching technology, not all respondents saw all questions. Student Life Studies evaluated the results using SPSS®, a statistical software program, and Microsoft Word®.

Student Life Studies sent the electronic survey link through email on November 18, 2021, to 5,925 first-year students who did not attend Fish Camp in August 2021. Four email messages were not delivered due to invalid email addresses. Non-respondents received up to five reminders before the survey closed on January 6, 2022. The initial deadline was extended due to a low response rate. Of the 5,921 students who received the survey, 435 freshmen responded to at least part of it, yielding a 7% response rate, which is the same response rate as 2018.

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%. The summary themes for the qualitative questions are contained in this report, while the full listing is in a separate document. Tables are listed in decreasing order of the 2021 means or frequencies unless otherwise noted. Comparisons to previous years will be made where applicable.

Students were initially asked about their thoughts or views of Fish Camp. There were mixed responses from the 156 who wrote a comment. Most acknowledged they did not attend, some expressed they wished they could have or would have attended, while others were happy with their decision to not attend. Some non-participants described Fish Camp as a good experience and a way to make new friends and connections which could be helpful over the semesters. Some said that Fish Camp was too expensive and that they felt left out because they could not attend. A few respondents also said that it was irresponsible to conduct Fish Camp while Covid-19 cases were on the rise.

Using a select all that apply question, students were asked about the reasons they decided not to attend Fish Camp. Table 1, on the following page, shows that almost half of the respondents who did not attend Fish Camp had other commitments during that time. In comparison to previous years, there was a slight decrease in those who did not feel it would be beneficial, could not afford Fish Camp, heard negative things about Fish Camp, or were concerned about the length of Fish Camp. However, there was a notable increase in students reporting they did not know about Fish Camp. Those who selected the “other” option were provided the opportunity to write a response. Common responses included spots getting filled before they could sign up, Covid-19, and the cost of Fish Camp.

What were reasons you decided to not attend Fish Camp? (select all that apply)	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=266]	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=202]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=348]
Had other commitments during that time	44%	49%	47%
Didn't think that it would be beneficial	37%	45%	39%
Could not afford to attend Fish Camp	20%	33%	28%
Unable to travel to College Station	18%	19%	‡
Other	18%	9%	12%
Didn't know about it	14%	4%	6%
Heard negative things about Fish Camp	12%	18%	13%
Already knew what Fish Camp taught	11%	16%	16%
Length of Fish Camp	10%	16%	10%
Confusion/miscommunication from Fish Camp staff	2%	2%	1%

Table 1: Reason for Not Attending Fish Camp

‡ Question not asked

Freshmen were provided the opportunity to further explain their reason for not attending Fish Camp where 130 wrote a response. Students talked about living far away or being out of the country and unable to attend Fish Camp so close to the start of the semester. Others explained that it was too expensive for them. Some had plans to attend other camps such as Impact or Corps Orientation Camp and did not feel they needed to attend both. A couple mentioned hearing negative things about Fish Camp and not wanting to attend based on that feedback. Many respondents also commented about not attending as there was a risk of getting infected with the Covid-19 virus.

When asked if they would attend Fish Camp if they could go back and change their decision, 29% of the non-participants indicated yes, they would attend Fish Camp, 41% reported no they would not attend, and 31% were unsure. In comparison to 2018, more students said they would attend Fish Camp if they could. In 2018, 19% said yes, they would attend Fish Camp, 52% would not attend, and 30% were unsure. International students and Multiracial students reported higher that they would attend Fish Camp if they could change their decision. Additional disaggregated results can be found in a separate document.

Three questions were developed for non-participants in this survey and were also asked of participants who attended Fish Camp in August 2021. These questions were designed to better understand students' thoughts on Fish Camp's availability and cost, and how much that impacted their decision in attending or not attending Fish Camp. Table 2, on the following page in descending order by the 2021 non-participant mean score, demonstrates there were fewer sessions available to fit their schedule and the cost of Fish Camp was more of a concern for non-participants than it was for Fish Camp participants. The cost of Fish Camp was more of a concern for first generation students and Black students. The question about students being familiar with Fish Camp before being admitted to Texas A&M was asked differently between the two populations. For the non-participants, 39% agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with Fish Camp before they had been admitted to Texas A&M. For the participants, this question was asked when they first heard about Fish Camp. Just over half of participants (51%) heard about Fish Camp before even applying to Texas A&M. Additional disaggregated results can be found in a separate document.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]
There were Fish Camp sessions that were available to fit my schedule. (participants)	49%	47%	3%	1%	1%	4.41 (.67) [874]	4.56 (.61) [1,520]	4.54 (.61) [1,881]
There were Fish Camp sessions that were available to fit my schedule. (non-participants)	8%	24%	46%	15%	6%	3.14 (.98) [226]	3.37 (1.19) [197]	3.29 (1.18) [340]
The cost of Fish Camp was a concern for me. (participants)	4%	13%	26%	36%	21%	2.44 (1.09) [847]	2.71 (1.14) [1,478]	2.70 (1.10) [1,838]
The cost of Fish Camp was a concern for me. (non-participants)	12%	25%	31%	19%	13%	3.05 (1.20) [251]	3.11 (1.29) [197]	3.31 (1.34) [342]
I was familiar with Fish Camp before I was admitted to Texas A&M. (non-participants)	11%	28%	20%	25%	17%	2.91 (1.27) [236]	3.15 (1.32) [197]	3.06 (1.29) [342]

Table 2: Availability and Cost Factors of Fish Camp

Fish Camp non-participants who indicated the cost of Fish Camp was a concern for them (n=93), were asked two follow-up questions. They were first asked if they were aware that scholarships were available at the time of Fish Camp registration. Of the 89 students responding, 21% said yes, they were aware and 79% reported they were not aware. Fewer students knew about scholarships compared to 2018 when 46% of respondents indicated that they knew about the scholarships. When asked if they had received a scholarship and if that would have changed their decision to attend Fish Camp, 41% of the 90 students responded said yes it would have, 23% said no it would not have changed their decision, and 36% were unsure. There was a slight increase for first generation students reporting that receiving a scholarship would have changed their decision to attend Fish Camp. Additional disaggregated results can be found in a separate document.

Freshmen were asked about their attendance at any other extended orientation type of program. As seen in Table 3 on the next page, and similar to 2018, over two-thirds of the students (70%) reported attending Howdy Week. Alternatively, 19% indicated not attending any extended orientation program. The eleven students who wrote a response for the “other” option indicated they attended New Student Conference, Gateway, GAP, CONNECT, Traditions Night, and Veterans Camp.

Which of the following other extended orientation type of programs, if any, did you attend? (select all that apply)	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=215]	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=186]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=331]
Howdy Week*	70%	68%	69%
None	19%	21%	18%
Impact	9%	11%	11%
Freshmen Orientation Week – Corps of Cadets	9%	10%	14%
Other	5%	4%	5%
ExCEL	1%	1%	2%
Venture Camps	1%	1%	<1%
Transfer Camps	1%	--	<1%

Table 3: Attendance at Other Extended Orientation Programs
(* Howdy Week was known as Gig Em' week in 2018 and 2016)

Non-participants were asked two questions about what they would like if they were to attend an extended orientation program. Respondents were asked what they would hope to learn and/or gain from an extended orientation program, and 64 responded. Students talked about having the opportunities to make more friends, learning more about the campus and campus resources, and understanding more about the traditions.

Next, respondents were asked about the type of activities they would like to see included in an extended orientation experience, using a select-all-that-apply question. Table 4 illustrates that traditions and outdoor activities continue to be the most popular responses; however, outdoor activities decreased compared to 2018. The students who wrote a response for the "other" option stated diversity, sports, and academic knowledge.

What types of activities would you like to see in an extended orientation experience? (select all that apply)	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=187]	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=161]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=283]
Tradition (education on the history of your University, traditions, etc.)	52%	56%	55%
Outdoor/Adventure (rope course, hiking, kayaking, etc.)	49%	59%	65%
Peer Mentoring	41%	42%	33%
Leadership Development	38%	48%	41%
Arts and Culture	33%	35%	30%
Service (service project in the community)	29%	45%	35%
International Travel	23%	26%	40%
Other	5%	3%	4%

Table 4: Desired Activities in Extended Orientation Programs

When asked if they attended MSC Open House to learn about student organizations, 55% reported they attended, 23% said that they knew about it, but did not attend, and 22% indicated they were unaware of the event. This is a decrease in students attending MSC Open House when in 2018, 68% reported they attended MSC Open House, 19% knew about it but choose not to attend, and 13% did not know about the event.

Furthermore, students were asked if they joined any Texas A&M student organizations, and 59% said they had joined an organization and 41% stated they had not; an 8% decrease compared to 2018 when 67% reported they had joined an organization. Students indicating they had joined a student organization (n=128) were asked how

many organizations they had joined. Almost half (43%) had joined one organization, 33% had joined two, 16% reported joining three organizations, and 8% indicated joining four or more groups.

Freshmen were asked a series of questions about their level of agreement or disagreement related to their experience at Texas A&M. Table 5 indicates that freshmen felt welcomed at Texas A&M and had developed friendships with their peers. However, just over one-third of the freshmen reported finding an upperclassman mentor. Students were less positive about many of the statements this year compared to 2018. Additional disaggregated results can be found in a separate document.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2021 Mean (sd) [n]	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]
I feel welcome and accepted at Texas A&M.	30%	43%	17%	6%	4%	3.90 (1.03) [217]	4.14 (.97) [181]	4.26 (.91) [315]
I have developed friendships with other freshmen.	26%	47%	13%	8%	6%	3.81 (1.08) [217]	4.04 (1.12) [181]	4.14 (1.00) [316]
I feel prepared to be successful academically at Texas A&M.	24%	45%	20%	7%	4%	3.78 (1.01) [217]	4.01 (1.02) [181]	4.07 (.94) [316]
I feel comfortable using campus resources.	20%	42%	26%	8%	4%	3.65 (1.02) [217]	3.91 (.94) [181]	4.11 (.84) [316]
I have a support system at Texas A&M.	14%	36%	31%	11%	7%	3.40 (1.08) [217]	3.78 (1.02) [181]	3.84 (.99) [316]
I was prepared to manage the transition from high school to college.	16%	39%	21%	15%	8%	3.40 (1.17) [215]	3.81 (1.17) [181]	3.65 (1.18) [317]
I know the traditions of Texas A&M.	15%	36%	26%	17%	6%	3.39 (1.01) [217]	3.57 (1.10) [181]	3.82 (1.06) [316]
I feel able to manage my time effectively.	14%	36%	29%	17%	5%	3.36 (1.07) [217]	3.70 (.93) [181]	3.69 (.98) [316]
I have an upperclassman mentor this semester.	21%	28%	16%	22%	14%	3.20 (1.36) [214]	3.05 (1.43) [181]	3.17 (1.39) [315]

Table 5: Freshmen's Fall Semester Experience

A majority (91%) of the freshmen self-reported that they planned to return to Texas A&M in Spring 2022 and next academic year, 3% indicated returning to Texas A&M in Spring 2022 but not next academic year. Additionally, 2% indicated they did not plan to return in the spring, and 4% were unsure of their plans.

Demographics of the students who did not attend Fish Camp were obtained through the student information system or asked on the survey. Table 6, on the following page in descending order by survey respondents, displays the results of the survey population and the survey respondents. Several demographic categories were

consistent between the survey sample and survey respondents. However, the gender was flipped between the survey population and the respondents.

Demographic Statements	Survey Respondents [n=311]	Survey Population [N=4,283]
College		
College of Engineering	32%	38%
College of Science	12%	9%
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	11%	10%
College of Liberal Arts	9%	9%
College of Education and Human Resource Development	9%	6%
Mays Business School	8%	8%
General Studies	8%	8%
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Science	7%	7%
College of Architecture	3%	3%
College Public Health	1%	1%
College of Geosciences	1%	1%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian/White	44%	43%
Hispanic or Latino	27%	28%
Asian	18%	20%
Black/Multi-Racial including Black	5%	4%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	2%	3%
International	2%	1%
American Indian	1%	<1%
Unknown	1%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	--	<1%
First Generation Student		
Not First Gen	73%	73%
First Gen	25%	26%
Unknown	2%	1%
Gender		
Female	57%	45%
Male	43%	55%
Classification		
Freshman	84%	85%
Sophomore	12%	11%
Junior	5%	4%
Top 10 Percent		
Not Top 10%	49%	51%
Top 10%	52%	49%
Residency		
On-campus, in a residence hall/apartment	52%	
Off-campus, in an apartment or house with friends or on your own	32%	
Off-campus, with family member(s)	9%	
On-campus, in the Corps of Cadets	7%	

Table 6: Demographics

Organization Background

According to its website (<https://fishcamp.tamu.edu/mission/>), Fish Camp “strives to welcome freshmen into the Aggie Family by sharing the traditions and values of Texas A&M University and building long-term relationships that embody the Aggie spirit.” In order to do this, freshmen participate in various programs to learn about campus life, Aggie traditions, and a variety of services and resources to help students succeed. Additionally, freshmen are divided into smaller Discussion Groups (DGs) to meet other students and have the opportunity to ask questions in a smaller environment.

Project Details

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/>.

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