

## **Venture: Base Camp Participant Evaluation Summer 2018**

### **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 9 -13, 2018 and Bravo, the second camp, was scheduled for July 16 – 20, 2018. During this five-day camp, students went rock climbing, hiking, and canoeing; had discussion groups; participated in team building activities, 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 fourth year of the program and Student Activities and Rec Sports working 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 50 questions; 38 were quantitative, 11 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 the past two years. However, in 2015 the survey was administered in the summer shortly after participants returned from camp. Student Life Studies sent the survey to all 31 camp participants on October 1, 2018. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on October 15. Of the 31 camp participants receiving the survey, 18 completed some part of it, yielding a 58% response rate.

## 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 2018 means or frequency percentages. Statements on the tables were changed to reflect Venture: Base Camp 2018; however, the previous statements were written as 2017, 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 which session of Venture: Base Camp they attended. Just under half of the respondents (41%) attended the Alpha session (July 9 - 13, 2018) and 59% attended Bravo (July 16 - 20, 2018).

When asked how they first learned about Venture: Base Camp 2018, in a check-all-that-apply format, Table 1 illustrates that an email to incoming students continued to be the most common method; however, this method decreased from last year. Venture Camp Facebook, a phone call from program staff, and "other" were not reported as a way students learned about Venture: Base Camp. Students who indicated learning about Venture Camp through social media for Student Activities or Rec Sports were asked to specify the platform. One person stated the website.

<b>How did you first learn about Venture: Base Camp 2018? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=17]</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=13]</b>	<b>2016 Frequency Percentage [n=12]</b>	<b>2015 Frequency Percentage [n=23]</b>
<b>Email sent to incoming students</b>	59%	77%	50%	52%
<b>Friends or family</b>	35%	23%	25%	13%
<b>New Student Conference</b>	18%	8%	17%	9%
<b>Student Activities website or social media</b>	12%	15%	8%	13%
<b>Materials I received from New Student &amp; Family Programs</b>	6%	8%	--	22%
<b>Recreational Sports website or social media</b>	6%	--	--	--
<b>Other</b>	--	--	--	9%
<b>Venture Camp Facebook Event</b>	--	--	--	--
<b>Phone call received from program staff</b>	--	‡	‡	‡

Table 1: Marketing  
‡ Question not asked

Additionally, students were asked why they wanted to attend Venture: Base Camp 2018 and 17 wrote in a comment. Just over half of the comments talked about enjoying the outdoors as being a reason they wanted to attend. Almost one-third wanted to meet other people or make friends, and about one-quarter wanted to learn about Texas A&M University or thought it would be fun. A couple students expressed that this camp option was a better fit for them compared to Fish Camp.

Students were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with specific events that took place during Venture: Base Camp 2018. Table 2, on the following page, indicates that students enjoyed the teambuilding activities, camp roles, and paddling on the river the most. These were different than what was reported by students last year, which included rock climbing, service project, and hiking as being most enjoyed. Students were not quite as positive about the visit to White Creek, which is the same as last year. Compared to the previous year, several statements were more positive; however, hiking, rock climbing, skit competition decreased for the second year.

<b>Please rate the following activities from Venture: Base Camp 2018.</b>	<b>Completely Satisfied (5)</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied (4)</b>	<b>Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)</b>	<b>Completely Dissatisfied (1)</b>	<b>2018 Mean (sd) [n]</b>	<b>2017 Mean (sd) [n=19]</b>	<b>2016 Mean (sd) [n=13]</b>	<b>2015 Mean (sd) [n]</b>
<b>Teambuilding Activities</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00) [16]	4.63 (.68)	4.62 (.51)	4.75 (.44) [24]
<b>Camp Roles</b>	88%	13%	--	--	--	4.88 (.34) [16]	‡	‡	‡
<b>Paddling on the River</b>	87%	13%	--	--	--	4.87 (.35) [15]	4.74 (.45)	4.69 (.48)	‡
<b>Free Time</b>	88%	6%	6%	--	--	4.81 (.54) [16]	‡	‡	‡
<b>Dessert Competition</b>	88%	6%	6%	--	--	4.81 (.54) [16]	‡	‡	‡
<b>Service Project</b>	81%	19%	--	--	--	4.81 (.40) [16]	4.89 (.32)	4.23 (.83)	3.17 (1.23) [23]
<b>Bead Ceremony</b>	75%	25%	--	--	--	4.75 (.45) [16]	4.53 (.84)	4.77 (.60)	‡
<b>Hiking</b>	81%	6%	--	13%	--	4.56 (1.03) [16]	4.79 (.63)	4.92 (.28)	4.08 (1.10) [24]
<b>Rock Climbing</b>	63%	25%	6%	6%	--	4.44 (.89) [16]	4.95 (.23)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00) [24]
<b>Skit Competition</b>	56%	25%	13%	--	6%	4.25 (1.13) [16]	4.63 (.60)	4.77 (.44)	4.57 (.79) [23]
<b>Visits to Offices White Creek</b>	19%	44%	31%	6%	--	3.75 (.86) [16]	4.47 (.91)	‡	‡

Table 2: Satisfaction with Activities  
‡ 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 2018, and nine students wrote comments. Many shared positive comments about their camp experience. Some mentioned specific aspects they enjoyed such as the bead ceremony, trying new things, the service project, the pace of events, and having ability groups for hiking. A few students mentioned not doing the skit competition and one said their camp did not visit White Creek.

Participants were also asked about their level of satisfaction with the planning, preparation, and experience with Venture: Base Camp 2018. Table 3, on the following page, shares that students were generally positive about all statements. They were most positive about the safety considerations, staff attitude, and staff organization. Most comments were similar compared to the previous year; however, students' level of satisfaction with the quality of the food increased quite a bit.

<b>Please rate the following items with Venture: Base Camp 2018.</b>	<b>Completely Satisfied (5)</b>	<b>Somewhat Satisfied (4)</b>	<b>Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (3)</b>	<b>Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)</b>	<b>Completely Dissatisfied (1)</b>	<b>2018 Mean (sd) [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Mean (sd) [n=18]</b>	<b>2016 Mean (sd) [n]</b>	<b>2015 Mean (sd) [n]</b>
<b>Safety Considerations</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.94 (.24)	5.00 (.00) [12]	4.92 (.28) [24]
<b>Staff Attitude</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.89 (.32)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.79 (.66) [24]
<b>Staff Organization</b>	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.78 (.55)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.04 (1.07) [23]
<b>Equipment</b>	94%	6%	--	--	--	4.94 (.25)	4.89 (.32)	5.00 (.00) [13]	4.96 (.20) [24]
<b>Communication at Camp</b>	94%	6%	--	--	--	4.94 (.25)	‡	‡	‡
<b>Group Dynamics</b>	88%	13%	--	--	--	4.88 (.34)	4.89 (.32)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.54 (.78) [24]
<b>Communication Prior to Camp</b>	88%	6%	6%	--	--	4.81 (.54)	‡	‡	‡
<b>Staff Driving</b>	75%	25%	--	--	--	4.75 (.45)	4.94 (.24)	4.92 (.28) [13]	4.79 (.51) [24]
<b>Swag Bags</b>	81%	6%	13%	--	--	4.69 (.70)	‡	‡	‡
<b>Cost of Venture: Base Camp 2018 for Experience Provided</b>	75%	19%	6%	--	--	4.69 (.60)	4.78 (.55)	4.83 (.39) [12]	4.67 (.64) [24]
<b>Quality of Food</b>	75%	19%	6%	--	--	4.69 (.60)	3.89 (.90)	4.62 (.51) [13]	4.21 (.83) [24]

Table 3: 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 Venture: Base Camp 2018, and five students wrote a comment. Most comments were very positive such as awesome, well thought out, fun, great group dynamics, and enjoyed the swag bags, staff, and food. One student felt the cost was high due to his/her financial constraints, but also indicated the cost was fair for what he/she received.

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements regarding the established learning outcomes for the program. Table 4, on the following page, reveals that again students were quite positive with all statements. Like last year, they were most positive about recommending Venture: Base Camp to other students. While still positive overall, students were the least positive about gaining a mentor through Venture: Base Camp 2018 and being prepared to begin their college career. Several statements increased compared to 2017.

<b>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>2018 Mean (sd) [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Mean (sd) [n]</b>	<b>2016 Mean (sd) [n=13]</b>	<b>2015 Mean (sd) [n=24]</b>
<b>I would recommend Venture: Base Camp to incoming first year students.</b>	94%	6%	--	--	--	4.94 (.25)	4.88 (.33) [17]	4.92 (.28)	4.92 (.28)
<b>Venture: Base Camp 2018 helped me develop positive relationships with other new students at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	88%	13%	--	--	--	4.88 (.34)	4.83 (.71) [18]	4.77 (.44)	4.92 (.28)
<b>I can recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&amp;M University.</b>	81%	19%	--	--	--	4.81 (.40)	4.83 (.38) [18]	4.69 (.48)	4.71 (.46)
<b>I felt more connected to Texas A&amp;M as a result of attending Venture: Base Camp 2018.</b>	81%	19%	--	--	--	4.81 (.40)	4.78 (.43) [18]	4.92 (.28)	4.92 (.28)
<b>Venture: Base Camp 2018 increased my knowledge of resources available for support within my first year at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	81%	19%	--	--	--	4.81 (.40)	4.67 (.69) [18]	4.54 (.66)	4.63 (.58)
<b>My enthusiasm about attending Texas A&amp;M increased as a result of attending Venture: Base Camp 2018.</b>	81%	13%	6%	--	--	4.75 (.58)	4.78 (.43) [18]	4.85 (.38)	4.96 (.20)
<b>Creating academic, personal and social goals was a helpful tool to prepare for my first year at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	75%	25%	--	--	--	4.75 (.45)	4.59 (.80) [17]	4.38 (.51)	4.63 (.65)
<b>I feel I had a mentor as I began my first year at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	75%	6%	19%	--	--	4.56 (.81)	4.06 (1.11) [18]	3.92 (.79)	4.33 (.87)
<b>I felt more prepared to begin my college career at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	69%	19%	13%	--	--	4.56 (.77)	4.61 (.61) [18]	4.62 (.51)	4.88 (.34)

Table 4: Learning Outcomes

Using a select all that apply format, camp participants were asked how Venture: Base Camp prepared them academically. Table 5, on the following page, reports that students learned about different academic resources. However, nobody indicated that they learned how to study. Students selecting the “other” response option were provided the opportunity to write a comment. One student wrote that they also learned about Rec Sports and Outdoor Adventures. Several options increased compared to the 2017 results, including learning about academic resources, how to interact with professors, finding out where to study, and understanding the differences between high school and college.

<b>How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you academically? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>	<b>2016 Frequency Percentage [n=12]</b>
<b>Learned about academic resources (tutoring, libraries, Supplemental Instruction [SI] sessions, etc.)</b>	81%	69%	83%
<b>Learned how to successfully interact with professors/instructors</b>	69%	63%	25%
<b>Found out where to study</b>	69%	56%	58%
<b>Understood academic differences between high school and college</b>	63%	50%	42%
<b>Learned how to manage my time</b>	25%	31%	--
<b>Other</b>	13%	6%	--
<b>None of the above</b>	6%	6%	8%
<b>Learned how to study</b>	--	13%	--

Table 5: Academic Preparedness

Participants were asked about how Venture: Base Camp prepared them for their first year at Texas A&M using a select all that apply option. Table 6 demonstrates participants generally reported each area helped prepare them. They indicated increasing their awareness of other’s experiences and backgrounds and understanding how to interact with those different from them prepared them the most. However, learning how to navigate conflicts with others was lower. One student wrote a response to the “other” option and said that learning names of people to get advice from in situations was the most helpful.

<b>How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you for your first year at Texas A&amp;M? (select all that apply)</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>	94%	88%
<b>Gained a better understanding about how to interact with people that are different from me</b>	94%	81%
<b>Gained a better understanding of my leadership style</b>	75%	75%
<b>Knowing the location of campus resources</b>	63%	75%
<b>Knowing how to navigate around campus</b>	56%	88%
<b>Learned how to navigate conflict with others</b>	50%	88%
<b>Other</b>	6%	6%
<b>None</b>	--	--

Table 6: 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 2018. Table 7, on the following page, shows that at least two-thirds of the students felt they learned about each option listed. They reported learning about traditions, opportunities to engage in outdoor activities, and diversity/inclusive environment the most. For a third year, none of the participants selected the “other” response option or reported learning nothing from their experience. All items either increased or stayed the same as 2017 except learning about Texas A&M’s core values.

<b>What did you learn from attending Venture: Base Camp? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Frequency Percentage [n=16]</b>	<b>2016 Frequency Percentage [n=12]</b>
<b>Traditions</b>	100%	94%	92%
<b>Opportunities to engage in outdoor activities</b>	94%	94%	100%
<b>Diversity/Inclusive Environment</b>	94%	81%	50%
<b>Involvement Opportunities</b>	88%	88%	83%
<b>Texas A&amp;M's Core Values</b>	81%	88%	100%
<b>Campus Resources</b>	81%	81%	75%
<b>What to expect in college life</b>	81%	75%	75%
<b>Importance of time management</b>	69%	69%	17%
<b>Academics</b>	69%	56%	33%
<b>Health and Wellness Strategies</b>	69%	‡	‡
<b>Other</b>	--	--	--
<b>Nothing</b>	--	--	--

Table 7: Learning  
‡ Question not asked

Camp participants were asked what they enjoyed most and least about Venture: Base Camp 2018. Several talked about meeting other students, forming relationships with others, and the small group size. Others enjoyed the outdoors aspect of Venture: Base Camp. Some mentioned specific activities such as hiking, rock climbing, and team building activities. Alternatively, several students reported they enjoyed the drive the least. Others mentioned something related to the weather, that there were not many people in the camp, and that camp was too short.

Students were asked for suggestions to improve Venture: Base Camp in the future. From the 11 students who shared a comment, they recommended scheduling more free time, having better food, and increase the number of students who attend camp. One student suggested having some of the Discussion Group conversations in the car on the drive to and from the campsite.

When students were asked how their original expectations of the trip compared to the reality of the trip, just over half of the 15 comments indicated that the trip exceeded their expectations. Several were pleasantly surprised by how well the group got along and a couple said the experience was more personal than they thought it would be. One student reported that it was not as a high adventure as he/she was expecting.

When asked about new lessons or skills learned from this experience, 13 students wrote a comment. Camp participants talked about learning campus traditions, meeting new people, interacting with others different than them, trying new things, and finding out about campus resources and services. Additionally, a couple of students reported they learned how to canoe, kayak, and tie their shoes for hiking.

Participants were provided the opportunity to share any additional comments they had regarding Venture: Base Camp 2018. Most of the responses from the eight students who wrote a comment were extremely positive, giving praises to the staff and the overall experience. One recommended to increase the length of camp to a week and one suggested to keep the group size small. One student reported liking Venture Camp better than Fish Camp.

When asked if attending Venture: Base Camp helped them in their first few weeks of college, 93% of the 15 students responding said yes and 7% said no. Nobody selected the "unsure" response option. This was more positive compared to 2017 when 77% said yes and 23% were unsure. The one student selecting the "no" option was given the opportunity to explain why camp had not helped. This individual reported he/she is in Galveston.

Now that students have been on campus for several weeks, they were asked about the topics they felt should have been covered at Venture: Base Camp or covered in greater depth, and 11 responses were provided. Students suggested covering how to study or prepare for class, what life in the Corps is like, where to get academic advising, and the location of resources on campus.

The final question asked if camp participants also attended any other orientation program in addition to Venture: Base Camp. A majority of the respondents (80%) reported they attended Fish Camp. Additionally, 10% each indicated attending T-Camp, Impact Retreat, and the “other” option. The student selecting the “other” option wrote that he/she attended Salt Camp. This was fairly similar to the results in 2017 when 90% indicated they attended Fish Camp, 10% said Impact Retreat, and 10% selected the “other” response option.

Student demographics of all Venture: Base Camp 2018 attendees and the survey respondents can be found in Table 8, in descending order for each category by the 2018 survey respondent column. A majority of the respondents were white, male, freshmen in the College of Engineering.

<b>Student Demographics</b>	<b>2018 Camp Attendees [n=29]</b>	<b>2018 Survey Respondents [n=16]</b>	<b>2017 Camp Attendees [n=40]</b>	<b>2017 Survey Respondents [n=21]</b>	<b>2016 Camp Attendees [n=30]</b>	<b>2016 Survey Respondents [n=13]</b>
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	52%	63%	38%	33%	43%	31%
Female	48%	38%	63%	67%	57%	69%
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
White	76%	69%	70%	74%	83%	77%
Hispanic	14%	19%	23%	19%	10%	15%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	6%	3%	--	--	--
African American	3%	6%	--	--	--	--
2 or more/excluding Black	3%	--	5%	10%	7%	8%
<b>College</b>						
Engineering	41%	56%	20%	14%	31%	31%
Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences	7%	13%	--	--	10%	15%
Agricultural and Life Sciences	17%	6%	13%	14%	7%	--
General Studies	10%	6%	15%	14%	20%	15%
Geosciences	7%	6%	--	--	3%	8%
Liberal Arts	3%	6%	13%	19%	3%	8%
Mays Business School	3%	6%	15%	14%	7%	8%
Education and Human Development	7%	--	10%	10%	10%	8%
Architecture	3%	--	8%	10%	3%	--
Sciences	--	--	8%	5%	3%	8%
Rural Public Health	--	--	--	--	3%	--
<b>First Generation Status</b>						
No	93%	94%	83%	76%	83%	85%
Yes	7%	6%	18%	24%	17%	15%
<b>Classification</b>						
Freshman	76%	69%	83%	86%	83%	77%
Sophomore	10%	13%	10%	5%	7%	8%
Senior	7%	13%	--	--	--	--
Junior	7%	6%	8%	10%	10%	15%

Table 8: Demographics



In addition to the student demographics gathered from the university student database, respondents were asked if they were a first-time A&M student or a transfer student. Of the 17 students responding, 82% indicated they were a first-time A&M student and 18% said they were a transfer student. Compared to 2017, there were more transfer students when 94% reported being first-time A&M students and 6% said they were transfer students.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

As similar to the past three years, respondents were very positive about their experience, the activities, and planning that went into camp. Most participants felt that Venture: Base Camp 2018 allowed them to learn about Texas A&M, meet new people, and make the transition into the Aggie Family.

Furthermore, based on this year's results, Venture: Base Camp 2018 seems to have fulfilled its intended learning outcomes. All students agreed or strongly agreed that they could recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University; additionally, 100% reported learning about traditions and 81% indicated they learned about the core values. All students stated that creating academic, personal, and social goals was helpful. Again, 100% of all camp participants reported that Venture: Base Camp increased their knowledge of campus resources; additionally, 81% reported that they learned about academic resources. All students felt that camp helped them develop positive relationships with other students and 81% felt they had a mentor at the beginning school.

The evaluation has not asked about students being able to recognize resources available in the local community or about having opportunities to engage with faculty and staff. These are also included as learning outcomes. The camp planners may want to look if these are learning outcomes for the program and how they are being introduced at camp. If so, then maybe consider looking at how to assess those areas as well.

The most common suggestions from campers last year were to have more free time as part of the schedule to offer more variety and better quality of food. Based on the results this year, it would seem that changes made in the planning of camp were positive in these areas. Students rated these areas more positively than last year.

Some responses were a little repetitive from participants, which may indicate the questions seem similar to them. Additionally, some of the feedback has been consistent for the past several years. 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 removed.

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. Additionally, 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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***Services provided by Student Life Studies are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee.***

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