

# **Fish Camp Non-Participant Evaluation 2018-2019**

## **Purpose of the Assessment**

Fish Camp, an optional four-day extended orientation camp, provides a transition from high school to college for about 6,500 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 fifth time Fish Camp has specifically sought feedback from non-participants. The last time non-participants were assessed was in 2016.

## **Key Findings with Recommendations**

Student Life Studies identified two key findings and developed several actionable recommendations Fish Camp may take based on the results from the survey administered with 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 students they serve. The organization is strongly encouraged to read all the results and qualitative comments to gain a fuller understanding of students' experience.

- Almost half (45%) of the students who did not attend Fish Camp reported they did not feel it was beneficial. Additionally, only 19% of the students reported they would attend Fish Camp if they could go back and change their decision. This is an 11% decrease from 2016 and a 16% decrease from 2014.
  - Fish Camp could explore how the program is marketed or explained to students and describe the value that Fish Camp could have for students.
  - Targeted messages could be useful for specific populations of students such as those who live out of state, those who are from the Bryan/College Station community, first-generation students, etc., and sent at the time students need to know the information.
  - 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 Gig 'Em 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 one-third of the students who did not attend. Additionally, of those who expressed the cost being a concern, 54% were not aware scholarships were available. Furthermore, 43% of these students indicated that they would have attended Fish Camp if they had received a scholarship.
  - Fish Camp should look at how scholarship opportunities are marketed and how that information can reach more students, and at the time students need to know about it.
  - It also may be beneficial for Fish Camp to work with Student Life Studies to better understand the demographics of students most concerned with the cost of Fish Camp and those who were not aware of the scholarships available. This could help in targeted messages 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. Compared to 2016, the survey was shortened by five 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 February 7, 2019, to 4,283 first-year students who did not attend Fish Camp in August 2018, but came back to school for the spring 2019 semester. Six email messages were not delivered due to inaccurate email addresses. Non-respondents received up to three reminders before the survey closed on March 7, 2019. Of the 4,277 students who received the survey, 311 freshmen responded to at least part of it, yielding a 7% 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%. For the qualitative questions, the summary themes are contained in this report, while the full listing is in a separate document. Tables are listed in decreasing order of the 2018 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 145 who wrote a comment. Many 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 great experience, an opportunity, fun, and a foundation for college. Alternatively, others described Fish Camp as a waste of time and money, overrated, expensive, and unnecessary.

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 freshmen who did not attend Fish Camp had other commitments during that time. In comparison to 2016, there was a slight increase 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 decrease in students reporting they did not know about Fish Camp. Those who selected the "other" option were provided the opportunity to write a response. Some students indicated they were attending a different camp such as Impact or were part of a summer program on campus. Others said they did not attend due to the dates, health concern, family, work or that they did not want to go.

<b>What were reasons you decided to not attend Fish Camp? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=202]</b>	<b>2016 Frequency Percentage [n=348]</b>	<b>2014 Frequency Percentage [n=631]</b>
<b>Had other commitments during that time</b>	49%	47%	46%
<b>Didn't think that it would be beneficial</b>	45%	39%	30%
<b>Could not afford to attend Fish Camp</b>	33%	28%	40%*
<b>Unable to travel to College Station</b>	19%	‡	‡
<b>Heard negative things about Fish Camp</b>	18%	13%	10%
<b>Already knew what Fish Camp taught</b>	16%	16%	10%
<b>Length of Fish Camp</b>	16%	10%	‡
<b>Other</b>	9%	12%	12%
<b>Didn't know about it</b>	4%	6%	7%
<b>Confusion/miscommunication from Fish Camp staff</b>	2%	1%	2%

Table 1: Reason for Not Attending Fish Camp

‡ Question not asked

\*In 2014 the statement was "Didn't have the funds to attend"

Freshmen were provided the opportunity to further explain their reason for not attending Fish Camp through a qualitative question, where 116 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 or that they had to work to pay for college and could not take the time off. Some had plans to attend other camps such as Impact 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.

When asked if they would attend Fish Camp if they could go back and change their decision, 19% of the non-participants indicated yes they would attend Fish Camp, 52% reported no they would not attend, and 30% were unsure. In comparison to 2016, fewer students said they would attend Fish Camp if they could. In 2016 the results were that 30% said yes they would attend Fish Camp, 42% would not attend, and 29% were unsure.

Three questions were developed for non-participants on this survey and were also asked on the participant survey to those who attended Fish Camp in August 2018. 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 2018 non-participant mean score, demonstrates that non-participants were neutral or more in agreement with all three statements. However, approximately one-third of the non-participants reported not being familiar with Fish Camp prior to being admitted and that the cost of Fish Camp was a concern. The question about students being familiar with Fish Camp prior to being admitted to Texas A&M was asked differently between the two populations. For the non-participants, 52% agreed or strongly agreed that they were familiar with Fish Camp before they had been admitted. For the participants, this question was asked when they first heard about Fish Camp. Just over half of all respondents (51%) heard about Fish Camp prior to applying to Texas A&M, and 11% learned about Fish Camp after completing their application to Texas A&M, but before being admitted.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]	2014 Mean (sd) [n]
<b>There were Fish Camp sessions that were available to fit my schedule. (non-participant)</b>	19%	31%	26%	17%	8%	3.37 (1.19) [197]	3.29 (1.18) [340]	3.49 (1.06) [400]
<b>There were Fish Camp sessions that were available to fit my schedule. (participant)</b>	61%	35%	3%	1%	<1%	4.56 (.61) [1,520]	4.54 (.61) [1,881]	4.70 (.56) [2,017]
<b>I was familiar with Fish Camp before I was admitted to Texas A&amp;M. (non-participant)</b>	14%	38%	13%	19%	16%	3.15 (1.32) [197]	3.06 (1.29) [342]	3.06 (1.30) [400]
<b>The cost of Fish Camp was a concern for me. (non-participant)</b>	17%	25%	23%	22%	13%	3.11 (1.29) [197]	3.31 (1.34) [342]	3.52 (1.23) [402]
<b>The cost of Fish Camp was a concern for me. (participant)</b>	7%	18%	27%	33%	14%	2.71 (1.14) [1,478]	2.70 (1.10) [1,838]	2.63 (1.14) [1,909]

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=83), were asked two follow-up questions. They were first asked if at the time of Fish Camp registration they were aware that scholarships were available. Of the 83 students responding, 46% said yes, they were aware and 54% reported they were not aware. When asked if they had received a scholarship if that would have changed their decision to attend Fish Camp, 43% of the 83 students responding said yes it would have, 22% said no it would not have changed their decision, and 35% were unsure.

Freshmen were asked about their attendance at any other extended orientation type of program. Seen in Table 3, and similar to 2016, over two-thirds of the students (68%) reported attending Gig 'Em Week. Alternatively, 21% indicated not attending any extended orientation program. The eight students who wrote a response for the "other" option indicated they attended CONNECT, New Student Conference, Gateway, and AFC Soar.

Which of the following other extended orientation type of program, if any, did you attend? (select all that apply)	2018 Frequency Percentage [n=186]	2016 Frequency Percentage [n=331]	2014 Frequency Percentage [n=397]
<b>Gig 'Em Week (in August before classes began)</b>	68%	69%	70%
<b>None</b>	21%	18%	17%
<b>Impact</b>	11%	11%	13%
<b>Freshmen Orientation Week - Corps of Cadets</b>	10%	14%	11%
<b>Other</b>	4%	5%	5%
<b>ExCEL</b>	1%	2%	2%
<b>Venture Camps</b>	1%	<1%	‡
<b>Transfer Camps</b>	--	<1%	--

Table 3: Attendance at Other Extended Orientation Programs

‡ Question not asked

Non-participants were asked 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 74 responded. Students talked about learning how to navigate the campus, campus information or traditions, and how to join student organizations. They also expressed wanting to feel welcomed or have a sense of inclusion and wanting to meet friends.

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 outdoor or adventure activities and traditions continue to be the most popular responses. The students who wrote a response for the “other” option stated campus tours and nothing. In comparison to 2016, the interest for many of the options increased.

<b>What types of activities would you like to see in an extended orientation experience? (select all that apply)</b>	<b>2018 Frequency Percentage [n=161]</b>	<b>2016 Frequency Percentage [n=283]</b>	<b>2014 Frequency Percentage [n=369]</b>
<b>Outdoor/Adventure (rope course, hiking, kayaking, etc.)</b>	59%	65%	61%
<b>Tradition (education on the history of your University, traditions, etc.)</b>	56%	55%	59%
<b>Leadership Development</b>	48%	41%	42%
<b>Service (service project in the community)</b>	45%	35%	52%
<b>Peer Mentoring</b>	42%	33%	44%
<b>Arts and Culture</b>	35%	30%	37%
<b>International Travel</b>	26%	40%	38%
<b>Other</b>	3%	4%	2%

Table 4: Desired Activities in Extended Orientation Programs

When asked if they attended MSC Open House to learn about student organizations, 46% reported they attended in the fall semester only, 4% indicated they attended in the spring only, and 18% stated they attended both semesters. Additionally, 19% said that they knew about it, but did not attend, and 13% indicated they were unaware of the event. This is an increase in students attending MSC Open House when in 2016, 59% reported they attended MSC Open House, 24% knew about it but choose not to attend, and 17% did not know about the event. In 2016, the non-participant survey was sent out before the spring MSC Open House was held, therefore that was not a response option.

Furthermore, students were asked if they joined any Texas A&M student organizations. Two-thirds (67%) said they had joined an organization and 33% stated they had not. This was an increase of students joining organizations compared to 2016 when 55% reported they had and 45% had not joined an organization. One possible reason for this increase could be the timing of the survey this year being sent out after the spring semester began, compared to the end of the fall semester in 2016. Students indicating they had joined a student organization (n=120) were asked how many organizations they had joined. Almost half (41%) had joined one organization, 30% had joined two, 21% 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, on the following page, indicates that freshmen felt welcomed at Texas A&M and had developed friendships with their peers. However, just over half the freshmen were not as much in agreement about finding an upperclassman mentor. Students were less positive for many of the statements this year compared to 2016.

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2018 Mean (sd) [n]	2016 Mean (sd) [n]	2014 Mean (sd) [n]
<b>I feel welcome and accepted at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	41%	41%	9%	5%	3%	4.14 (.97) [181]	4.26 (.91) [315]	4.32 (.84) [394]
<b>I have developed friendships with other freshmen.</b>	44%	33%	10%	10%	3%	4.04 (1.12) [181]	4.14 (1.00) [316]	4.12 (.94) [394]
<b>I feel prepared to be successful academically at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	37%	41%	13%	7%	3%	4.01 (1.02) [181]	4.07 (.94) [316]	‡
<b>I feel comfortable using campus resources.</b>	28%	46%	19%	6%	2%	3.91 (.94) [181]	4.11 (.84) [316]	4.12 (.85) [394]
<b>I was prepared to manage the transition from high school to college.</b>	36%	29%	20%	11%	4%	3.81 (1.17) [181]	3.65 (1.18) [317]	3.59 (1.20) [394]
<b>I have a support system at Texas A&amp;M.</b>	27%	40%	22%	10%	2%	3.78 (1.02) [181]	3.84 (.99) [316]	3.70 (1.03) [393]
<b>I feel able to manage my time effectively.</b>	18%	45%	28%	7%	2%	3.70 (.93) [181]	3.69 (.98) [316]	3.70 (1.02) [394]
<b>I know the traditions of Texas A&amp;M.</b>	22%	36%	25%	13%	4%	3.57 (1.10) [181]	3.82 (1.06) [316]	3.92 (.93) [393]
<b>I have an upperclassman mentor this semester.</b>	22%	22%	15%	24%	18%	3.05 (1.43) [181]	3.17 (1.39) [315]	3.19 (1.45) [394]

Table 5: Freshmen's Fall Semester Experience  
‡ Question not asked

A majority (90%) of the freshmen self-reported that they planned to return to Texas A&M next fall, while 3% indicated they did not plan to return, and 7% were unsure of their plans. In previous years, this survey was administered at the end of the fall semester and asked about students' intent to return for the spring semester; there is no comparable data.

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. Additionally, there were fewer Engineering students and first generation students responding to the survey compared to the population; while there were more White and non-first generation students who took the survey compared to the population.

<b>Demographic Statements</b>	<b>Survey Respondents [n=311]</b>	<b>Survey Population [N=4,283]</b>
<b>College</b>		
College of Engineering	37%	44%
College of Science	12%	9%
College of Liberal Arts	11%	9%
College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Science	10%	7%
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences	9%	8%
Mays Business School	6%	7%
College of Education and Human Resource Development	6%	6%
General Studies	5%	6%
College Public Health	3%	2%
College of Architecture	1%	3%
College of Geosciences	1%	1%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Caucasian/White	48%	42%
Hispanic or Latino	30%	32%
Asian	15%	16%
Black/Multi-Racial including Black	3%	5%
Multi-Racial excluding Black	2%	3%
International	2%	3%
American Indian	--	<1%
Unknown	--	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	--	<1%
<b>First Generation Student</b>		
Not First Gen	76%	66%
First Gen	23%	31%
Unknown	2%	3%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	58%	40%
Male	42%	60%
<b>Classification</b>		
Freshman	83%	87%
Sophomore	14%	9%
Junior	4%	4%
Senior	--	<1%
<b>Top 10 Percent</b>		
Top 10%	52%	49%
Not Top 10%	48%	51%
<b>Residency</b>		
On-campus, in a residence hall/apartment	53%	
Off-campus, in an apartment or house with friends or on your own	32%	
Off-campus, with family member(s)	8%	
On-campus, in the Corps of Cadets	6%	

Table 6: Demographics

## **Organization Background**

According to its website (<http://fishcamp.tamu.edu/>), Fish Camp “welcomes the freshmen class to Texas A&M each year with the purpose of giving them an opportunity to have fun, make friends, and learn more about life at Texas A&M.” 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**

Fish Camp is encouraged to use the results from this survey with some minor caution. There was a fairly low response rate for this survey, and lower than previous surveys with students who did not attend Fish Camp. Additionally, the timing of when this survey was administered changed compared to previous years. In the past, it had been sent out in late November towards the end of the fall semester, but prior to finals beginning. This year it was sent four weeks into the spring semester.

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, Fish Camp Advisor  
Report Prepared by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies  
Report Prepared on: March 11, 2019  
Analysis Prepared by: Lyric Jackson, Student Life Studies  
Surveys Created by: Kelly Cox, Student Life Studies