

Student Activities and Recreational Sports

Venture Camps Participant Evaluation

Summer 2022

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 28 – August 5, 2022, and Venture: Base Camp Paddling was July 18 – 23, 2022. Staff planning the Venture Camp programs wanted to understand the students' experiences and how effective they were in reaching the identified outcomes. This was the seventh year of the program with Student Activities and Recreational Sports working with Student Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) to assess the effectiveness of the camp experience.

Key Findings and Recommendations

SAPAR 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, the food, and the planning that went into camp. All participants felt that the Venture Camp programs allowed them to develop positive relationships with other students and that their enthusiasm about attending Texas A&M increased as a result of attending Venture Camp.
- Staff from Extended Orientation and Outdoor Adventures identified learning outcomes for students attending Venture Camp. All participants reported that they could recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University and 83% agreed that they could recognize resources available for support on campus and within the local community.
 - Staff from the two departments have been hosting Venture Camp for seven 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.
- 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.

Method and Sample

The electronic survey was developed in Qualtrics®, a software that creates web-based surveys. The survey contained 38 questions (a decrease of 9 questions compared to 2021); 29 were quantitative and 9 were qualitative. SAPAR evaluated the results using SPSS® (a statistical software), 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. SAPAR sent the survey link through students' email addresses to 17 camp participants on November 11, 2022. Non-respondents received up to five reminders before the survey closed on December 2. Of the 17 camp participants receiving the survey link, seven completed some part of it, yielding a 41% response rate (an increase of 8% compared to the 2021 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 means or frequency percentages of the 2022 data. 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 28 – August 5, 2022) and two-thirds (66%) attended the Paddling session (July 18 – 23, 2022).

When asked how they first learned about Venture Camp programs in a select-all-that-apply format, Table 1 illustrates that Rec Sports and Student Activities website or social media were the most common mode through which students learned about Venture Camp. Resource tables at the New Student Conferences (NSC), emails sent to incoming students, and materials received at New Student & Family Programs were not methods through which 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. This had two respondents, with one being the "website" and the other being "Facebook." The same question was asked to the respondents who selected the option of Student Activities social media or website, and both respondents said website.

How did you first learn about the Venture Camp programs? (select all that apply)	2022 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2019 Frequency Percentage [n=14]
Recreational Sports Outdoor Adventures website or social media	50%	17%	21%
Student Activities website or social media	50%	--	7%
Presentation at New Student Conference	33%	50%	14%
Other	17%	--	--
Friends or family	17%	17%	14%
Resource table during my New Student Conference	--	--	21%
Email sent to incoming students	--	17%	43%
Materials I received from New Student & Family Programs	--	33%	--

Table 1: Marketing

Additionally, students were asked why they wanted to attend a Venture Camp program and six 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 in a smaller group.

Participants were asked how they felt about the size or number of participants at Venture: Base Camp 2022. Out of the six people that answered, five indicated that the group size was just right, and one person indicated that the group size was too small.

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 shows that students were quite satisfied with all areas. They were most satisfied with the group dynamics, equipment, cost, quality of food, staff attitude, communication at camp, and staff organization. Additionally, satisfaction for most areas increased compared to last year, especially the quality of the food.

Please rate the following items with Venture: Base Camp 2022.	Completely Satisfied (5)	Somewhat Satisfied (4)	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied (3)	Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)	Completely Dissatisfied (1)	2022 Mean (sd) [n=6]	2021 Mean (sd) [n=6]	2019 Mean (sd) [n=12]
Equipment	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.50 (.55)	4.83 (.58)
Staff Attitude	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)
Staff Organization	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)
Cost of Venture: Camp 2022 for Experience Provided	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.83 (.41)	4.92 (.29)
Communication at Camp	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)	4.92 (.29)
Group Dynamics	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.33 (.52)	4.83 (.39)
Quality of Food	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	3.33 (1.63)	5.00 (.00)
Staff Driving	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	5.00 (.00)	4.83 (.39)
Safety Considerations	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	5.00 (.00)	5.00 (.00)
Swag Bags	67%	33%	--	--	--	4.67 (.52)	4.83 (.41)	4.83 (.39)
Communication Prior to Camp	50%	50%	--	--	--	4.50 (.55)	4.00 (1.1)	4.75 (.45)

Table 2: Satisfaction with Preparation

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. Like previous years, students would recommend Venture: Base Camp to other students, they were enthusiastic about attending A&M, and they developed positive relationships with other new students. Additionally, agreement with all areas increased compared to last year, especially feeling more prepared to begin college at Texas A&M.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2022 Mean (sd) [n=6]	2021 Mean (sd) [n=6]	2019 Mean (sd) [n=12]
I would recommend Venture: Base Camp to other incoming first year students.	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.83 (.41)	4.83 (.39)
My Venture Camp program helped me to develop positive relationships with other new students at Texas A&M.	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.83 (.41)	4.58 (.67)
My enthusiasm about attending Texas A&M increased as a result of attending Venture Camp.	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00)	4.33 (.82)	4.75 (.45)
I feel I have a mentor as I began my first year at Texas A&M.	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	4.00 (1.27)	3.92 (.90)
I can recall and discuss the traditions and values of Texas A&M University.	83%	17%	--	--	--	4.83 (.41)	4.50 (.55)	4.50 (.67)
I felt more connected to Texas A&M as a result of attending Venture Camp.	67%	33%	--	--	--	4.67 (.52)	4.50 (.84)	4.67 (.49)
I felt more prepared to begin my college career at Texas A&M.	67%	33%	--	--	--	4.67 (.52)	3.83 (.75)	4.58 (.67)
My Venture Camp program increased my knowledge of resources available for support within my first year at Texas A&M.	50%	33%	17%	--	--	4.33 (.82)	4.00 (.89)	4.17 (.94)

Table 3: Learning Outcomes

Students were asked about their experience in their first semester at Texas A&M University. Table 4 displays these results. All students strongly felt that they belonged and felt comfortable at Texas A&M University.

Please respond to the following questions about what Texas A&M University is like for you.	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	2022 Mean (sd) [n]	2021 Mean (sd) [n]
I feel comfortable at TAMU.	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00) [6]	4.33 (.52) [6]
I belong at TAMU.	100%	--	--	--	--	5.00 (.00) [6]	4.33 (.52) [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 reports that most students learned how to interact with professors, manage their time, learned about academic resources, and understood academic differences between high school and college. However, fewer students learned how and where to study from attending camp, which has decrease over the last several years.

How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you academically? (select all that apply)	2022 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2019 Frequency Percentage [n=11]
Learned how to successfully interact with professors/instructors	67%	50%	46%
Learned how to manage my time	50%	67%	27%
Learned about academic resources (tutoring, libraries, Supplemental Instruction [SI] sessions, etc.)	50%	33%	64%
Understood academic differences between high school and college	50%	17%	73%
Learned how to study	33%	--	9%
Found out where to study	17%	33%	73%
Other	17%	--	9%
None of the above	--	--	--

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 reported that some areas helped prepare them. Additionally, 83% of the participants indicated that they gained a greater awareness of each other's experiences and backgrounds coming into Texas A&M.

How did Venture: Base Camp prepare you for your first year at Texas A&M? (select all that apply)	2022 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2019 Frequency Percentage [n=11]
Gained a greater awareness of other's experiences and backgrounds coming into Texas A&M	83%	67%	91%
Learned how to navigate conflict with others	67%	67%	55%
Gained a better understanding of my leadership style	67%	50%	55%
Gained a better understanding of how to interact with people that are different from me	67%	33%	82%
Other	--	--	--
None	--	--	--

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 opportunities to engage in outdoor activities, traditions, and what to expect in college life. Each respondent learned something from the camp.

What did you learn from attending a Venture Camp program? (select all that apply)	2022 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2021 Frequency Percentage [n=6]	2019 Frequency Percentage [n=11]
Opportunities to engage in outdoor activities	100%	67%	91%
Traditions	83%	100%	100%
What to expect in college life	83%	50%	82%
Health and Wellness Strategies	50%	83%	46%
Texas A&M's Core Values	50%	67%	100%
Involvement Opportunities	50%	67%	82%
Importance of time management	50%	67%	55%
Campus Resources	50%	67%	55%
Academics	50%	50%	36%
Diversity/Inclusive Environment	50%	33%	82%
Nothing	--	--	--
Other	--	--	--

Table 7: Learning

Camp participants were asked how their original expectations of the trip compared to the reality of the trip. Three of the four respondents enjoyed the trip and two even said that it was better than they expected. Two of the respondents said that they enjoyed the company of the people at the camp.

When asked what they enjoyed most about their Venture Camp program experience, each of the four students elaborated on how they made new friends, connected with, and enjoyed getting to know people at the camp. Alternatively, students were asked for suggestions to improve Venture Camp in the future and four responded to this question. Two of the respondents said that they could not think of any improvements. Out of the other two respondents, one suggested that a bigger van with AC should be used and the other respondent suggested that the camp could be a day or two longer.

When asked if attending their Venture Camp program helped them in their first few weeks of college, five of the six students responding said yes and one said no. The one person who selected the "no" option was given the opportunity to explain why camp did not help. They stated that they had a good idea of how their first day would go, and Venture Camp did not change that.

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 two responses suggested covering how lonely the first couple of weeks will feel and how to get to different places the quickest.

The final question asked if camp participants also attended any other orientation program in addition to their Venture Camp program. Of the six respondents, four attended Fish Camp and two did not attend any other orientation program.

Student demographics of all Venture Camp attendees and the survey respondents can be found in Table 8, on the next page, in descending order for each category by the 2022 survey respondent column. A majority of the respondents were White, male, and freshmen. The college names were changed on September 1, 2022, with the reorganization of the university, which is why the previous year's responses for the colleges are not given.

Student Demographics	2022 Camp Attendees [n=17]	2022 Survey Respondents [n=7]	2021 Camp Attendees [n=18]	2021 Survey Respondents [n=6]	2019 Camp Attendees [n=30]	2019 Survey Respondents [n=14]
Gender						
Male	59%	57%	64%	71%	53%	64%
Female	41%	43%	36%	29%	47%	36%
Ethnicity						
White	71%	71%	73%	71%	67%	64%
Asian	18%	14%	--	--	7%	14%
Hispanic	12%	14%	27%	14%	17%	7%
Multiracial excluding Black	--	--	--	14%	10%	14%
African American	--	--	--	--	--	--
College						
Engineering	35%	43%	†	†	†	†
Arts & Sciences	35%	29%	†	†	†	†
Agricultural	18%	29%	†	†	†	†
Business	6%	--	†	†	†	†
Public Health	6%	--	†	†	†	†
Education	--	--	†	†	†	†
Bush	--	--	†	†	†	†
Architecture	--	--	†	†	†	†
Performance and Visualization	--	--	†	†	†	†
First Generation Status						
Not First Generation	77%	57%	100%	64%	70%	79%
First Generation	24%	43%	--	36%	23%	21%
Unknown	--	--	--	--	7%	--
Classification						
Freshman	71%	71%	81%	86%	77%	71%
Sophomore	18%	14%	9%	14%	13%	7%
Junior	12%	14%	9%	--	3%	7%
Postbaccalaureate Undergraduate	--	--	--	--	3%	7%
Senior	--	--	--	--	3%	7%
Top 10%						
No	59%	71%	36%	29%	†	†
Yes	41%	29%	64%	71%	†	†

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 Affairs Planning, Assessment & Research (SAPAR) 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 SAPAR are funded, in part, by the Texas A&M University Advancement Fee. Results of this project and other assessment projects done through SAPAR can be found at <https://sapar.tamu.edu/>. Additionally, division staff and students can follow SAPAR on Facebook.

To work with SAPAR for future assessment projects, please fill out the Assessment Questionnaire at <https://sapar.tamu.edu/aqform/>.

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