Fish Camp 2006
Pre-Survey

Background
Fish Camp, an extended orientation program for incoming freshmen, is coordinated by a group of trained students. The Fish Camp Director Staff wanted to get a sense of what new students knew about Texas A&M University before coming to Fish Camp in August. This is the second time this project has been done, and nine questions were added from last year to get more background information on students. In fall 2006, the freshman class included 7,500 students—the largest ever.

Method
All students who registered for Fish Camp received an e-mail confirmation of their session on July 19, 2006. In that e-mail, students were provided a link to take a thirteen-question survey; one question was qualitative. Out of the approximately 5,044 freshmen who were sent e-mail, a total of 3,702 students responded by August 15, 2006, which is a 73% response rate (up from 16% last year).

The survey was developed using Perseus®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The data was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft® Excel.

Results
Results will be reported as means, standard deviations (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the question. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent.

The results are provided in Table 1. The scale was 3=Very Familiar, 2=Familiar, and 1=Not Familiar. Students thought they were most knowledgeable in the area of Aggie values and least knowledgeable about involvement. The responses to “Aggie traditions”, “Services A&M provides to students”, and “Involvement/leadership opportunities at A&M” were very similar to 2005. The other questions were new to the 2006 survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How familiar are you with…</th>
<th>Very Familiar</th>
<th>Familiar</th>
<th>Not Familiar</th>
<th>Mean (sd)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggie Integrity</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2.31 (.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods to achieve academic success</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2.03 (.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggie traditions</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>1.97 (.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services A&amp;M provides to students</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>1.76 (.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement/leadership opportunities at A&amp;M</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>1.65 (.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1—Familiarity with Texas A&M (n=3702)
Students were asked to share what they hoped to learn and what their expectations were about Fish Camp. Most of the students answered the question. Overwhelmingly, freshmen wanted to learn about the traditions, meet new people, and have fun. A few students revealed that they were from out of state, first generation Aggie, going into the Corps, etc. and one person admitted his/her parents made him/her go. Several enlightening comments included:

- After attending Fish Camp, I hope to get a better feeling of setting your priorities in college and learning the traditions of Texas A&M. I expect to meet a myriad number of people and begin friendships that will last a lifetime.
- After leaving Fish Camp, I hope that I feel like a real Aggie, that I belong. I hope Fish Camp will provide such a spirited atmosphere so that I will get excited about going to school and doing well. I just think that Fish Camp will be the experience that begins the quest we all long to take, the quest for friends, the quest for knowledge and success. I think Fish Camp will be great fun.
- First of all, I anticipate meeting a variety of types of people and engaging in an overall, interactive social experience. Also, I hope to learn anything from the entire experience that would help me grow as a person, understand more about the University, and develop a profound appreciation for the people I meet. I expect Fish Camp to be exhilarating (sic) and enriching, and I highly anticipate the experience!
- From Fish Camp, I hope to meet my peers, learn how to live my life to the fullest in College Station, and learn how to get ahead and stay above the line academically.

In terms of demographics, 58% of the respondents were female, 67% were living on campus (non-Corps), 27% off campus, and 6% in the Corps. About 90% of them had already attended their New Student Conference, and 5% were Regents Scholars. About 19% were a first generation college student and 60% were the first in their family to attend Texas A&M.

In terms of ethnicity, 83% of the respondents identified as Caucasian/White, 9% as Hispanic/Latino, 3% as Asian American/Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% as African American/Black, 1% as Multiracial/Biracial, 1% Other, and less than 1% Native American/American Indian. About 2% of the respondents checked “prefer not to answer.” The people who checked Other had the opportunity to write in a description: 24 freshmen indicated their ethnicities, typically as a biracial identity.

The official university demographic report will not be prepared until the 12th class day through the Office of Institutional Studies and Planning. Based on their fall 2005 report, the freshman class included 49% female, 77% White, 14% Hispanic, and 29% first generation students. The demographic data for those who actually attended Fish Camp was not available for this report.

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

Students seemed to be most familiar with “Aggie Integrity”, which is interesting since Fish Camp implemented a video and educational program this summer led by CREW (the support/logistics part of Fish Camp) about academic integrity at Texas A&M. It would be interesting to follow the Class of 2010, particularly those who attended Fish Camp, to see how many are reported to the Aggie Honor System Office.

This class also seems to be confident in their academic ability. This, too, was a focus of an educational session at Fish Camp 2006, also led by CREW. Another recent survey done through
Student Life Studies with students completing their first year indicated that some students did not have to study in high school and were not prepared for a different study environment and course structure. It might be interesting in the Fish Camp follow-up survey to have students reflect back on their first semester’s academic effort and achievement.

In terms of traditions, about two-thirds of the students seemed familiar with them; the rest were split almost evenly between very familiar and not familiar. Because this question did not address specific traditions, it is not clear if students knew all, most, some, or few traditions and the depth of their knowledge for each tradition. This year, both Traditions Council and Class Councils spoke at Fish Camp, so following Fish Camp the vast majority of students should express knowledge of the traditions.

The Camp Programs activity at Fish Camp addresses services and leadership opportunities, so it will be interesting to see the responses from the participant evaluation. Hopefully, students will not only be familiar with the resources, they will take advantage of them. The end of the semester/follow-up survey will hopefully gather some of that information. One of the questions could ask freshmen whether they have joined an organization or gotten involved in some way.

Student leaders, staff, and administrators sometimes make the claim that students come to Texas A&M because of the reputation for student involvement and leadership. From this cursory survey, it appears that only a few people are very familiar with the opportunities and almost half are not familiar at all. It could be that new students have heard about the opportunities in general, but may not be “familiar” with the specifics or know the process of getting involved.

Based on the 2006 Fish Camp schedule, it looks like the topics asked in the pre-survey were covered at Camp. Although over half of the respondents in each question indicated at least a familiarity with the topics, by the end of Fish Camp hopefully participants will have a greater grasp on the topics. They may have had some of the concepts solidified, or they may have realized that they did not actually know as much as they thought they did. For the first generation or first in their family to attend Texas A&M students, Fish Camp may have been very eye-opening as a follow up to their New Student Conference experience.