Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC)

PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FY26

THE CENTER FOR STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

Center for Student Empowerment
Division of Student Affairs

Question 1: Executive Summary

Center for Student Empowerment

Mission Statement: The Mission of the Center for Student Empowerment (CSE) is to empower students with academic, personal, and professional development resources that propels student success.

The Center for Student Empowerment achieves its mission by providing each participant with seamless, personalized support through an integrated approach, from admissions to graduation. This integrated approach bridges students' academic and financial realities, and focuses on retention, graduation in four years, and post-graduation success. Program components include the following high impact activities:

- Student Retention Grants and Scholarships
- First Generation student support
- Summer Bridge;
- Faculty and peer mentoring;
- First-year experience seminar;
- Opportunities for student leadership roles, on-campus student employment, internships, community engagement, and outdoor adventure experiences;
- Graduation preparation seminar;
- Advising and Consultations
- Student Success Workshops

The Center for Student Empowerment supports the University of Houston initiative to propel student success through the use of structured, individualized educational plans for each student based on the student's unique characteristics including career aspirations, nonacademic commitments, expected academic engagement, and financial need.

Center for Student Empowerment is an integral part of the Division of Student Affairs seeks to "champion exceptional opportunities and services to support all UH students," (DSA Strategic Initiative Student Success) and "forge and strengthen partnerships to expand our reach into the university and greater community (DSA Partnerships). To keep pace with the growth of our student population, we are requesting FY 26 base augmentation, as well as additional FY25 and FY26 one-time funds to continue to improve and create programs and services that will assist in "create and foster a cohesive division identity, culture, and community" (DSA Division Cohesion).

CSE would like to thank SFAC for its continued support of our department and our students. CSE serves as the primary UH point of contact for many underserved student groups including: first generation students, low income students, and foster care. CSE assists students in having the ability to compete at the same level as others in a professional environment while ensuring that

each of the many voices that make up our UH community finds its way into our global community.

Question #2
Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate both your success in achieving the DSA strategic initiatives and/or action steps and their importance as compared to others that you might pursue. Where data exists, discuss any assessment measures and/or learning outcomes used to evaluate program success. Please provide the method for collecting this data.

The success of Center for Student Empowerment is evaluated through:
- Student retention rates
- Campus contacts and utilization
- Program, training, and workshop evaluations

CSE by The Numbers (Utilizations) – Moving Forward CSE has kept daily and ongoing tracking of visitors served in and through the office. An event analysis and debriefing is conducted after each social function, program and tabling event.

*(decrease due to large # of cohort graduates)

	FY 13-14*	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY22	FY 23	FY 24
Registered Students (Enrollment)	113	309	388	322 (decrease due to large # of cohort graduates)	449	691	627	564 (decrease due to large # of cohort graduates and COVID)	536	619	933
CSE Pillar Programs											
(Frontier Fiesta , Financial Seminar, Academic Workshops,	102	576	798	929	1,001	419	141	130	45	649	903

Civic/Leadership, Freshman Programming, Fall Open House, Gobble Goodies)											
Outreach and Events											
Workshops/ Trainings	102	492	254	363	437	185	130	35	NA	210	645
Tabling/ Informational & Events	Not available	634	559	1,123	1,033	158	145	21	387	741	731
Walk-In/Advising/ Contacts											
Walk Ins/ Appointment	Not available	581	675	832	3,101	1,318	623	564	387	779	1290
Contacts	2,307	2,100	2,454	3,189	2,941	4,100	2,361	867	387	1,155	1,949
Total Touch Points	**2,624**	**4,692**	**4,740**	**6,441**	**8,527**	**6,180**	**4,027**	**2,181**	**923**	**3,870**	**5,518**

Marketing Outreach Efforts:

Marketing Metrics	FY 14*	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY22	FY23	FY 24
Number of CSE website views	8,464	8,225	8,989	21,541	6,292	34,674	21,426	22,611	17,977	19,384	19,990
Facebook "likes"	32	44	75	125	138	169	182	213	NA*	NA	300
Twitter "followers"	89	219	401	593	718	760	769	741	738	717	717
Instagram "followers"	50	80	103	195	264	372	460	509	670	1192	2000

Question #3

Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2024) SFAC request, their impact on your programs, and your reason for implementing them. SFAC recognizes that some programs did not receive the funds that they requested, that some programs were impacted by additional expenses after the conclusion of the budget cycle, and that some programs may be ahead of or behind their self-generated income projections.

Budget Changes

Due to the implementation of SB 17, our department has had to revise certain student success initiatives to ensure compliance with the new legal guidelines while also broadening our efforts to be more inclusive of all students. Previously, some initiatives focused on specific identity groups to promote equity and diversity, but now we have restructured these programs to foster a more comprehensive approach that benefits the entire student body. This expansion not only ensures alignment with SB 17 but also enhances access to success resources for a broader range of students, fostering a more unified and supportive environment across the university. Therefore, additional funding is crucial to support the growing scope of these inclusive efforts and ensure we can meet the diverse needs of all students effectively.

Organizational Changes

First Gen Initiatives To strengthen the impact of the Center for Student Empowerment's First Gen Initiatives, it's essential to highlight how these expanded programs directly align with the demographic and strategic needs of the university. More than 45% of our student population identifies as first-generation, which underscores the urgency of offering robust, tailored support to ensure their academic and personal success.

By expanding academic access, leadership development, summer bridge programs, student success coaching, and mentorship for first-generation students, we are addressing unique challenges faced by this demographic, such as limited access to educational resources, financial literacy, and support networks. These new programs will not only boost retention and graduation rates but also foster a sense of belonging and empowerment among first-gen students, equipping them with the tools needed to thrive academically and beyond.

Given the significant first-gen student population, the demand for these services will be high, necessitating increased resources to maintain high-quality programming. Additional funding is essential to scale up these initiatives, ensuring that we can provide more comprehensive coaching, tutoring, financial support, and mentorship opportunities. These expanded efforts will ultimately contribute to a more inclusive and supportive campus environment, benefiting not only first-gen students but the entire student body by promoting a culture of success and empowerment.

Furthermore, these programs will enhance the university's reputation for student success, attracting prospective first-gen students and contributing to higher enrollment rates. Therefore, investing in this initiative is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic one, requiring additional funding to support the growth and sustainability of these vital services.

Scholarship Support: The need for increased scholarship support is more critical than ever, as demonstrated by the significant rise in student applications for our scholarships. This year, the Center for Student Empowerment (CSE) received over 1,000 applications—far exceeding previous years—highlighting the growing demand for financial assistance among our student population. Many of these students are high-need, facing not only financial hardships but also personal challenges that threaten their ability to stay in school and succeed academically. With such a sharp increase in applicants, our current scholarship offerings are insufficient to meet the needs of this larger, more diverse student body. Additional funding is essential to ensure that we can provide these deserving students with the support they need to complete their education and reach their full potential. Without this support, many students may be forced to delay or abandon their academic goals, limiting their future opportunities and success.

Student Population

Increased High Need student support : Due to the significant increase in the number of high-need students requiring support, particularly those facing mental health challenges and trauma-related concerns, it has become essential for the Center for Student Empowerment (CSE) to expand its program offerings. The heightened demand for counseling, trauma-informed care, and specialized support services has placed additional strain on our existing resources. Furthermore, as we have broadened the groups we serve to include a wider range of student demographics, the need for targeted interventions and holistic support systems has

grown substantially. To effectively address these evolving needs, additional funding is critical. It will enable us to expand our mental health services, provide more comprehensive trauma support, and offer a wider array of programs that foster resilience and academic success among all students, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds. Without these resources, we risk not being able to meet the growing demand, which could negatively impact student retention and success.

Unfunded State Mandate Foster Care Program: There is a TX House Bill 3748 and SB 294 states UH needs to identify a department that serves as a campus liaison and Dr. Walker named CSE. CSE was designated as the foster care liaison office in FY 16 CSE and in turn CSE created a new student success initiative for students who formerly were foster care and/or adopted. In FY 17 CSE enhanced those efforts, and expanded support and programming for foster care, and now homeless students at UH. This program provides a campus-wide network of support to assist students who grew up in the foster care system achieve educational success by focusing on recruitment, retention, and graduation. Students who identify as orphan, ward of the state, former foster youth, unaccompanied minor, and/or experienced homelessness has increased to over 325 students as of Spring 2024.

Staff Shortage: Currently, our department is down one full-time staff member, which has placed additional strain on our ability to provide critical support to high-need students and maintain the robust student success programming we offer. This gap in staffing has impacted our capacity to offer timely interventions and personalized support to students facing significant challenges, such as mental health concerns, academic difficulties, and trauma. With the increase in demand for services and the expansion of programming to support a more diverse student population, the absence of this staff member has created service delays and limited our ability to scale key initiatives. To effectively meet the needs of our students and continue driving their academic and personal success, we are actively seeking to fulfill this position as soon as possible.

Question #4
Recognizing that the potential to generate additional Student Service Fee income for FY2026 base funding is extremely limited and recognizing that it is likely that some units will not be allocated the new base budget and/or one-time funds requested. Please provide a narrative of how your unit would accommodate a reduction of 5.0% in your total FY2026 base Student Service Fee budget request and provide a line-item explanation of where budgetary cuts would be made.

At CSE, we are committed to outreach and service that extend our human talent and technological capacity to serve the people in our diverse communities-first generation, underserved, and foster care/students. Providing for these underserved populations will be

central to the decisions on how CSE will respond and adapt to reduced funding support. Below are the strategies that CSE will use to guide the development of budget reduction plans of 5%.

5% Reduction of CSE SFAC budget- $449,058= **$22,452.90**
- Reduce Room Rental Reduction: $6,000

- Reduce Office Supplies Reduction: $4,150

- Reduce Student Workers: $8,000

- Limit out-of-state travel; limit conference attendance; limit professional development spending. Reduction: $4300

Total: **$ 22,452.90 (5% reduction)**

Question #5

What are the other possible sources of funding available to your unit and what efforts are being made to access them (e.g. grants, donations, etc.)? If you receive funds from other sources, please briefly describe the source, purpose, and duration of the funding and report the amounts received in the appropriate rows/columns on the SFAC Spreadsheet.

Currently, the Center for Student Empowerment receives its primary funding from the Student Fee Advisory Committee from student service fee dollars. Center for Student Empowerment is working with the Division of Student Affairs and University Advancement to identify development funding sources to support academic success, first generation and underserved students, foster care and transitional students.

The Center for Student Empowerment (CSE) has demonstrated exceptional success in securing outside private funds to supplement our budget, ensuring we can continue to expand and enhance our award winning programs to students. This past fiscal year, CSE received an impressive $164,200 in private donations and gifts. As in previous years, the Director of CSE takes the lead in development efforts, actively seeking sponsorships and cultivating relationships with potential donors. Additionally, the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) has a dedicated development officer who consistently pursues new funding opportunities.

To further boost our fundraising efforts, CSE plans to engage alumni and donors in a more meaningful way, inviting them to contribute directly to departmental initiatives or support

the creation of additional scholarships. By fostering these relationships, we can inspire greater philanthropic involvement. CSE also aims to explore partnerships with other departments and institutions on grant applications, which will enable us to launch larger, more impactful projects that benefit our students. With a proactive and collaborative approach to development, CSE is well-positioned to continue growing our financial support and making a lasting impact on our students' success.

At the Center for Student Empowerment, we are proud to say that the majority of the donations we receive go directly to supporting students, primarily through scholarships aimed at helping underserved students remain in school and complete their education. These funds are essential in reducing financial barriers, providing students with the stability they need to focus on their academic success. Importantly, the funds we raise are designated solely for student support, ensuring that every dollar donated has a direct impact on the lives of the students we serve. This approach reflects our unwavering commitment to empowering students and fostering equitable access to higher education.

Conclusion

CSE connects with students from the very beginning of their student experience with summer bridge programming to the post graduation seminar to propel student success throughout their time at UH and beyond. CSE also connects its members to the Alumni organization prior to graduation to enhance engagement after college. By actively participating in these initiatives, CSE can foster a campus culture that is inclusive, engaging, and focused on improving the overall student experience, enhancing both academic and personal development. No matter their background every student gets Real Help to succeed. We create Coogs for Life.