



UNIVERSITY CENTERS

## UNIVERSITY CENTER/UC SATELLITE

Student Fees Advisory Committee (SFAC)  
Base Augmentation Request FY 2012-2013



UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**  
DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS



## THE CAT'S BACK BASE AUGMENTATION REQUEST FY 2013

The University Centers (UC) is presenting this base augmentation request to the Student Fee Advisory Committee (SFAC) to provide financial assistance for the annual Cat's Back event. Entering its tenth year, the Cat's Back has annually boasted crowds often in excess of 6,000 students in a single afternoon. The Cat's Back is one of the University of Houston's largest single events with a wide array of activities and services occurring throughout the event, including:

- A large pep rally traditionally filling the UC Arbor to the brim
- Countless activities and attractions over the last few years including an outdoor beach, a roving magician, a caricature artist, laser tag, and much more
- Complimentary food and t-shirts while supplies last for actively enrolled students
- The largest student organization fair of the academic year

During last year's SFAC report, the University Center identified a number of areas of growth for the annual Cat's Back event:

- Improving turnout for, and the overall quality of, the "Cat's Back Preview" event held on the Sunday before classes start
- Enhanced advance publicity for the event including publicity to incoming freshmen during orientation or other events
- Improved volunteer identification through identifiable badges and/or uniforms
- Continued "off the beaten path" attractions like the "beach" during the Cat's Back 2009 event
- Larger quantities of food and t-shirts to allow a greater percentage of attendees to experience all The Cat's Back has to offer

In all five identified areas, The Cat's Back 2011: BE ONE showed strong growth:

- The Cat's Back Preview, held during residential move-in, helped build a strong brand presence with incoming freshmen.
- Cat's Back yard signs with QR Codes posted on them enabled students with smartphones to instantly gain access to comprehensive information about The Cat's Back.
- Designated volunteer t-shirts made it much easier for students to identify volunteers at the event and to coordinate interaction between volunteers.
- Sponsored attractions such as paintball target practice (sponsored by the Campus Recreation), lounge/oxygen bar (sponsored by the Student Program Board), and a car bash (sponsored by SGA) were extremely popular.
- By consolidating food stations, improved food options were available to a greater number of students than ever before—including thousands of servings of complimentary Pinkberry frozen yogurt.

Goals for The Cat's Back event moving forward include:

- Integrating "The Cat's Back" into a larger "Weeks of Welcome" framework to fully encompass a wide variety of activities during the first two weeks of classes
- Relocating the event from its current home in the University Center (which will be unavailable due to the UC Transformation Project) to the Campus Recreation and Wellness Center
- Expanding the event even further to become a cornerstone of the Cougar experience

In the past, The Cat's Back has relied primarily on donations from on-campus departments to fund the event. For example, in FY2011, over 80% of the money donated came from on-campus departments. For FY2012, The Cat's Back event was funded by a one-time allocation from the Student Fee Advisory Committee, which greatly simplified the Cat's Back planning process and allowed for a stronger event. Knowing that core aspects of the program were already funded allowed the committee and on-campus departments more freedom in planning and executing the event.

Given that many of these participating departments are already SFAC-funded and contribute extensively to this event, last year's move toward a direct allocation from SFAC simplified the process significantly and provided The Cat's Back with dedicated cash reserves well in advance of when contributions tend to come in traditionally. With a climate of frugality and increased budget cuts on the horizon in FY2013, funding The Cat's Back separately aids departments in supporting their own core functions without impacting one of the University's most vibrant and engaging traditions. While university departments would still be welcome to donate, having certain fixed costs completely covered by SFAC would allow any contributions that do come in to be used in a manner to improve the overall quality of the event from year to year, as opposed to simply being used to provide a static level of service.

For the 2011 Cat's Back event, the one-time allocation from SFAC was used to fund the following expenditures, which comprise the core cost of the event, as follows:

Food	\$10,000.00
T-Shirts	\$9,769.70
<u>Marketing Materials</u>	<u>\$4,464.74</u>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>\$24,234.44</i></b>

In order to continue to provide the same or greater level of service that this event has provided in the past, the University Centers is requesting the Student Fee Advisory Committee provide continued and ongoing financial support for the above listed expenses as a Base Augmentation Request for FY2012-13. Each of these items accounts for a base cost which will remain relatively static from year to year. Having SFAC cover as many of these costs as is financially

tenable at this juncture only serves to enhance the overall quality of what is easily one of the strongest events at the University of Houston—and for many students, the first real taste of what life at the University of Houston is all about.