

1. Please provide in brief terms: your unit's mission, goals that support your mission, and a justification of your unit's student fee allocation in terms of benefits for students.

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.

2. Please discuss the means that you are utilizing to evaluate your success in achieving the DSA strategic initiatives as well as action steps in contributing to the retention of students. 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 CSE evaluates its success in achieving DSA strategic initiatives through retention and persistence data, program participation metrics, and student feedback. We track GPA, course completion, and year-to-year retention of students engaged in our services compared to non-participants. Learning outcomes focus on students' increased use of academic resources, improved self-efficacy, and strengthened sense of belonging.

To contribute to retention, we implement early intervention programs, targeted advising, tutoring, mentoring, and equity-based initiatives for underrepresented populations. Data is collected through institutional systems, surveys, focus groups, and attendance tracking, allowing us to assess both outcomes and impact while continuously refining our programs to better support student success.

The CSE actively aligns its programs and services with the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) strategic initiatives by incorporating both qualitative and quantitative assessment measures. Success is evaluated through:

- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Tracking retention rates, academic performance, persistence, and graduation data of students served.
- **Program Participation Metrics:** Monitoring attendance and engagement in workshops, mentoring, tutoring, and advising sessions.
- **Student Feedback and Satisfaction:** Collecting survey data at the conclusion of programs and services to measure student satisfaction, perceived impact, and areas for improvement.
- **Collaborative Benchmarks:** Comparing results with DSA-wide goals, such as increasing first-year to second-year retention, closing equity gaps, and enhancing student well-being.
- **Retention and Persistence Rates:** Year-over-year comparisons for participants versus non-participants.
- **Academic Outcomes:** GPA improvements and course completion rates among students engaged with support services.
- **Learning Outcomes:** Students who participate in programs are expected to demonstrate:
 - Increased knowledge of academic resources and strategies.
 - Improved self-efficacy and confidence in managing academic challenges.
 - Strengthened sense of belonging and community on campus.

Methods of Data Collection

- **Institutional Data Systems:** Utilizing student information systems to track retention, GPA, credit completion, and persistence.
- **Surveys and Feedback Tools:** Collecting pre- and post-program surveys, focus groups, and reflection assignments.
- **Usage and Attendance Tracking:** Monitoring tutoring sessions, advising appointments, and participation in workshops.
- **Qualitative Data:** Gathering narratives through interviews and testimonials to supplement quantitative findings.

	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21	FY22	FY 23	FY 24	FY25
<i>Registered Students (Enrollment)</i>	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	1208
CSE Pillar Programs											
(First Gen , Financial Seminar, Academic Workshops, Civic/Leadership, Freshman Programming, Spring Open House, Gobble Goodies)	576	798	929	1,001	419	141	130	45	649	903	689
Outreach and Events											
Workshops/ Trainings	492	254	363	437	185	130	35	NA	210	645	600
Tabling/Events	634	559	1,123	1,033	158	145	21	387	741	731	425
87Walk-In/Advising/ Contacts											
Walk Ins/ Appointment	581	675	832	3,101	1,318	623	564	387	779	1290	725
Contacts	2,100	2,454	3,189	2,941	4,100	2,361	867	387	1,155	1,949	1,317
Total Touch Points	4,692	4,740	6,441	8,527	6,180	4,027	2,181	923	3,870	5,518	3,756

3. Please discuss any budget or organizational changes experienced since your last (FY2026) 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.

Student Engagement and Reconnection

While overall student participation has increased, engagement patterns have shifted significantly since the pandemic, presenting new outreach challenges. Many students, particularly first-generation and commuter populations, continue to experience difficulty connecting with in-person campus services or balancing academic responsibilities with work and family commitments. This has required CSE to rethink its engagement strategies—*offering more flexible service delivery options, expanding evening and virtual programming, and increasing targeted outreach*. However, maintaining consistent engagement across modalities demands additional staff time and coordination, adding to existing workload pressures.

Strengthening First-Generation Initiatives

More than 45% of UH's student population identifies as first-generation, underscoring the continued need for specialized academic and personal development programs. Since FY2026, CSE has expanded its First-Gen Initiatives—including programming, success coaching, leadership development, and outreach—to better serve this critical population.

These enhancements have deepened student engagement and improved retention, but they also required additional staff time and operational resources. While these programs directly align with UH's commitment to closing equity gaps, the rapid growth in participation has created new budget pressures. Sustained investment is needed to maintain program quality and meet rising demand without overextending existing staff.

Support for Students with Special Circumstances

The Center for Student Empowerment (CSE) continues to experience a growing number of students who face extraordinary personal and financial challenges that directly impact their ability to persist and graduate. Currently, more than 1,500 UH students identify as having special circumstances—such as having experienced foster care, homelessness, or severe personal or family emergencies. These students often lack stable housing, consistent financial support, or family networks, placing them at significantly higher risk of academic disruption.

CSE provides comprehensive case management, crisis intervention, and emergency funding support to help stabilize these students' circumstances and keep them enrolled. Our team coordinates closely with Financial Aid, Counseling and Psychological Services, and external community partners to connect students with essential resources, including emergency housing, food assistance, and mental health care. However, the surge in students with these needs has placed increased pressure on our limited staff and financial resources.

Without dedicated funding to expand crisis assistance and holistic support programs, CSE faces difficulty meeting the growing demand. Additional investment would allow the Center to provide timely aid, reduce student attrition, and ensure that UH continues to uphold its commitment to access, equity, and inclusive success for all students—especially those navigating the most challenging life circumstances.