



First Islander Scholars' Academy (FISA)
Policies and Procedures

MISSION AND VISION

The First Islander Scholars' Academy (FISA) is committed to giving first-generation students academic, social, and community support to enrich their college experience, enhance their learning opportunities and improve their ability to persist and graduate.

Successful completion of a baccalaureate degree is attainable for all FISA participants. Our vision is to increase the number of first-generation graduates to levels equal or higher than the retention of continuing generation students.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

FISA will engage in an active recruitment period for the Fall and Spring semesters. Although students are welcome and encouraged to apply over summer and winter break, we do not offer meetings or social events during these breaks. Students who apply over the summer will be part of the Fall cohort and those who apply over winter break will be part of the Spring cohort.

During our recruitment period, we will participate in Islander Launch Orientation events to attract incoming students. Our recruitment period will extend for the first four weeks of each semester. During this time, we will host social events that allow potential members to learn about the program and get to know some current members.

Recruitment events will be listed on the FISA website as well as advertised on FISA's i-Engage page. During this recruitment period, FISA events will be open to all students and FISA mentors will be running meetings to allow both existing members and new members to start progressing on their semester requirements.

FISA APPLICATION

Students who are interested in joining FISA should find our online application which can be found on our website or [here](#). All students who meet the first-generation college student definition are eligible to join. There is no GPA requirement for our members. This table shows the general timeline for the application:

Semester	Application will Open...
Fall	By the first date of Islander Launch
Spring	After the Fall commencement ceremony

Potential members will hear from FISA staff within one week of the submitted application. All eligible members will receive a welcome email detailing information including the tier they qualify for, the mentors who are assigned to that tier, and their mentor's office hours as well as any information about upcoming recruitment or social events that they can attend.

See the Reapplying to FISA section for special circumstances and situations.

TIERS AND MENTORS

FISA uses a tiered system to ensure that members are receiving new and relevant information each semester. Each member will be assigned a tier, which has 2 available mentors for meetings. Tier 1 focuses on teaching and building Basic College Skills. Tier 2 focuses on helping students Prep for the Future; Tier 3 provides students with Professional Support as they transition from their undergraduate career into their professional or graduate careers. A member's tier is dependent on several factors, including your classification, how close you are to graduating, and your future plans. If you have questions about what tier you belong to, reach out to casa.fisa@tamucc.edu or zaira.garcia@tamucc.edu.

There are two mentors assigned to each tier to provide students an opportunity to meet with the one that best fits their schedule. Mentors are available for both in-person and virtual meetings to accommodate student needs. To schedule meetings with your mentor, members should use Starfish. This link is available to students on our [FISA website](#). Mentors will also provide students with links via email and other forms of communication throughout the semester.

SEMESTER REQUIREMENTS

Each semester, students will be informed of the semester requirements. These requirements are set according to the total number of opportunities students will have in the semester. The three areas of requirements include: meetings, social events, community service hours (for Tiers 1 and 2) OR supplemental events (for Tier 3). These areas are further explained in this handbook. Only members who meet semester requirements will be eligible for scholarships and/or awards at our End of Semester Celebration. Semester requirements can be found on the [FISA website](#) and can be requested from FISA staff at casa.fisa@tamucc.edu.

If students are unable to meet semester requirements, their membership will be extended for one more semester. If that member is not able to meet semester requirements for a second semester, they will be dropped from the FISA roster and won't be able to reapply to the program for one long semester. Since FISA services are not available during the summer, we do not count the summer as a semester. For example, if Student X did not meet requirements for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, X would not be allowed to rejoin until Spring 2024. See the [Reapplying to FISA](#) section for additional guidance.

FIRST MEETING REQUIREMENT

All members are required to complete their first meeting within the first five weeks of the semester. Members are encouraged to set up this appointment as soon as possible. This will allow members to get any updates for the semester and ensure that members start off strong on their requirements. Members who have not completed this requirement by the end of the recruitment period (the fourth week of classes) will receive a notification from their mentors. Members who have not completed the first meeting by the end of the fifth week will be dropped from the FISA roster and will not receive the benefits of a FISA membership for the rest of the

semester. See the Reapplying to FISA section of the policies and procedures to see what the member's options are.

MEETINGS

Meetings occur during mentors' office hours and typically occur one-on-one. Mentors are available both in-person at the lounge in GSSC108 or virtually via Zoom. During these meetings, mentors may cover specific topics that are relevant to members depending on the academic timeline. For example, mentors will discuss registration issues prior to registration time and FAFSA prior to the priority deadline. Members can also request that specific topics are covered when scheduling their appointments. Members are encouraged to come to meetings with questions or concerns that mentors can help manage.

Members that complete meetings with other groups (such as SSS-STEM, SSS-Teacher Prep, GTF Island Scholars Program, McNair Scholars, and select others) may be counted towards their FISA meeting requirements for a maximum of three meeting credits. To submit outside meeting credits, please complete **THIS FORM**. Attendance will be verified with the appropriate group. Additionally, meetings that members complete with FISA mentors may count towards requirements in these other groups. To see if this is applicable for you, please speak to your mentor and to Zaira Garcia, program coordinator.

SOCIAL EVENTS

FISA will host social events throughout the entire semester. During our recruitment period we will host at least one per week. After our recruitment period, we will host them approximately every other week. These events allow students to connect with other first-generation students and build a network of support here on campus. All our events are come and go and you are NOT expected to stay for the entire time listed on the events. Please be sure to sign in to each event to ensure that you receive credit.

COMMUNITY SERVICE (TIER 1 & 2)

To connect our members to the TAMU-CC and Corpus Christi community, we require that our Tier 1 and Tier 2 students complete at least 5 hours of community service. While students only need to complete 5 hours per semester, they are encouraged to complete more. Additional hours completed will be taken into consideration if students decide to apply for FISA scholarships. To find ways to gather hours, use GivePulse and I-engage to find events happening on campus or around Corpus Christi. FISA will also create service events that are only for FISA members. These events will be listed on the FISA website and will inform members of these opportunities via email and Remind.

Members should complete [this form](#) to provide proof of community service hours that are done outside of the FISA events. Members are asked to submit a photo that shows them at the community service event. They can also submit signed community service logs. Members are

allowed to count any service hours they completed for other groups or organizations (such as for an honor society or for sorority/fraternity requirements).

SUPPLEMENTAL EVENTS (TIER 3)

Members who are looking for professional support (Tier 3) will be asked to attend at least three supplemental events. Supplemental events allow members to learn about professional roles and explore a variety of careers. These events are created to meet the needs of individual students. Members will be asked about their professional goals or interests and supplemental events will be created around member feedback. These events may be in a group or one-on-one setting depending on the needs described by members. Examples of these events could be a presentation given by a professional in the Corpus Christi area or a lunch/sit down meeting with a professional.

Other events that may be accepted as supplemental events include Career Fairs, Resume Workshops, and other workshops put on by the Office of Career and Professional Development. Attendance at these events will be verified with sign in sheets used by the event.

TRACKING/UPDATES

Mentors oversee the tracking of requirements for their assigned students. Members will be asked to sign-in to all social events and mentors will track meetings independently. All members will get at least three updates regarding their progress towards their requirements per semester. These updates will come from the mentors via email and Remind. Members are welcome to request updates outside of the scheduled ones by emailing their mentor. Members should stay aware of their requirements. If members feel there is a discrepancy between the events they've attended and they tracked requirements, they should reach out to Zaira Garcia, program coordinator at zaira.garcia@tamucc.edu

SCHOLARSHIPS

FISA students who meet semester requirements will be eligible to apply for the book and tuition scholarships offered by FISA. If students are interested in the scholarships, they should complete the application by the decided due date for the semester. Scholarship winners are decided by a committee made up of the program coordinator and the FISA mentors. Winners are chosen by their responses to the application essay questions. The panel will also consider the number of meetings, community service hours or supplemental events that were completed within the semester when choosing the winners.

Winners are announced at our End of Semester Celebration and are meant to be used in the following semester. The number of scholarships as well as the amounts vary by semester. Specifics will be announced approximately one month before requirements are due.

CONNECT 2 SUCCESS LOUNGE

The Connect 2 Success lounge is in GSSC108 and houses three programs: FISA, Island Harbor, and the Greater Texas Foundation Islander Scholars Program. This space is meant to allow all three programs to host events and provide students with a space to enjoy. All students are welcome to use the space when there isn't a private event happening. Students are asked to sign in using the QR code located at the front desk and around the room to allow us to track room usage. Students are welcome to use the monitor and computers that are in the room but are asked **not** to use the FISA mentor computer, which is labeled.

PRINTING

FISA members get the benefit of free printing. Students can start to use this benefit after they have attended their first meeting. Students are also limited to 50 pages of printing per week. It is recommended that members space out their printing needs throughout the semester. Members should use the Qualtrics form that is available on the FISA website to submit all documents. The form will allow members to make printing specifications including, black and white, color, printed front and back, etc. Please note if documents are sensitive and FISA staff will make extra effort to keep these documents protected. Members should wait at least 15 minutes before picking up documents. All printed documents will be held in the lounge in GSSC 108 until member is ready to pick up.

Students may be asked to schedule an additional meeting before they can continue to use the printing benefits if they are significantly behind on their semester requirements.

FISA GRADUATION AND MEMORABILIA

Our FISA Graduation is an event meant to honor not only the first-generation student who is graduating, but also the support system who helped get them to that point. During this graduation, students will be allowed to choose up to two people in their support system to walk the stage with them. These individuals could be family members, friends, educators, etc. Students will also be asked to write a short thank you note which will be read as they walk the stage.

Details about the event will be provided towards the end of the semester. To participate, the graduating senior must have met the semester requirements for the two previous semesters. For example, if a senior is graduating in Spring 2023, they must have met requirements for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 to participate. These are also the requirements for receiving a FISA stole and medal that can be worn at the campus-wide commencement ceremony. Stole and medal will be presented at the FISA graduation. If you meet the requirements but cannot attend the graduation event, contact the program coordinator to collect your memorabilia at zaira.garcia@tamucc.edu.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

FISA understands that sometimes students experience hardships and that members have responsibilities outside of academic and organization requirements. If you feel you are unable to complete FISA requirements due to personal circumstances, we encourage you to communicate that with your mentor as soon as possible.

Members who communicate extenuating circumstances may get alternate requirements or have certain requirements waived depending on individual circumstances. Updates or changes to your requirements will be communicated within one week of the initial conversation with your mentor. It is important to note that meeting requirements are unlikely to be waived due to the availability of mentors online and in person. Additionally, it is important to communicate these issues as soon as possible as adjustments will not be made in the last month before requirements are due.

REAPPLYING TO FISA

Once you've applied to FISA, members are asked to meet the semester requirements to maintain their membership in the group. Members who do not meet semester requirements for two consecutive semesters will be removed from the roster and will not be allowed to apply for one semester. Members who do not set up their first meeting within the first five weeks of the semester will be dropped from the roster but will be allowed to apply the following semester. Members who want to take a break before continuing their membership (this could be due to personal reasons or due to circumstances like studying abroad, etc.) will not be asked to reapply. If you are not sure whether you need to reapply, please reach out to Zaira Garcia, program coordinator, at zaira.garcia@tamucc.edu.