ACPA National Convention 2006
Best Practices in Orientation Roundtable (778)

The transition from high school to college, and even from college to college, can be a difficult one for students. The Commission for Admissions, Orientation, and the First-Year Experience developed this roundtable to provide participants with tools to enhance their current orientation programs.
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Please see below the notes/resources from this roundtable discussion. Thirteen participants were in attendance.

The following were identified as ‘hot topics’ for points of discussion related to the area of orientation.

- Technology/media use in orientation
- The constant need to be the “gatekeeper” of resources and ‘face time’ with students throughout various orientation programs
- Challenge of increasing faculty involvement in programs
- The desire to learn of ‘best practices’ from other schools
- Discussing ideas for transfer orientation
- Planning tips for new professionals in orientation
- New ideas to infuse academic programs into fall week of welcome
- Expanding the content of orientation at the community college to reflect more of the 4-year orientation model
- Introducing change to established programs

These areas were addressed as time allowed, and discussion notes, including ideas or ‘best practices’ follow.

Faculty involvement

- Financial compensation for involvement in orientation. For example, utilizing faculty who are teaching during the summer session to provide a faculty expectations panel, and advise students in the summer. (Coastal Carolina)
- Provide a “Professors perspective” session during orientation, as a mini lecture and tips for parents and students. Faculty are carefully selected and invited to participate based on reviews to provide students with their “first class” during orientation. (Indiana University)
- Target faculty who have been recognized through faculty teaching awards to become more involved
- Faculty/peer advisor lead small groups (University of Notre Dame)
- Involve faculty during orientation by facilitating a small group which then continues as the freshman seminar course in the fall as well.
Faculty invited to transfer social event (Cornell)
During the first week of classes, faculty volunteers are paired with student leaders to help direct new students on campus. They wear a ‘uniform’ shirt, and are positioned throughout campus with a map and highlighter to direct students and answer questions (Indiana University)
Invite faculty to participate in “Faculty/staff move in” to help in the actual student move-in process to the residence halls during welcome week (Saint Louis University)

Technology/media use in orientation
- Online orientation registration, utilizing an internal or external company (George Mason)
- Online course registration during orientation (Grand Valley State University)
- Virtual tour of campus and resources
- Online reservation for orientation, copying parents via e-mail on a confirmation letter (student must input parents names/e-mail at time of registration)
- E-mail/login info out to students prior to orientation week, in order to get students in the communication loop BEFORE orientation (University of Waukesha)
- Push incoming students to e-mail for main communication, so you can begin further communication with them prior to their fall semester
- Education on cyber safety from students and staff
- Training orientation leaders to represent themselves well on the web (i.e. facebook profiles – provide a sample profile and have students critique the content, monitor orientation leader profiles on an ongoing basis)
- Assessment of orientation efforts electronically via web-based survey (Student Voice orientation benchmarking survey was indicated as an example of such assessment)
- Connect students over the summer by creating a game which promotes students to navigate campus websites to get connected with campus resources (with a prize of course)
- On-line essay writing contest on Freshman reading
- Streamline a website for 1st year students and branch off to other related sites

Transfer student orientation – what is done?
- Timing of the sessions varied from late Spring, summer, through August right before classes; and included ½ day or full day sessions.
- General content included basic information to maneuver campus resources, and register/meet with advisor
- Transfer seminar course – University 201 model to meet transfer needs (Saint Louis University)
- Transfer family sessions
- Involve student leaders who have transferred previously in the orientation sessions for transfers
- Welcome week – provide social atmosphere for transfers to meet other transfers; and perhaps a session on how they can get involved and connected
- Offer an evening session – good time for non-traditional
- Build in a tour as transfers walk from the welcome session to the next session (the idea being that transfers won’t often choose to take an optional tour, but if they automatically get one included in a group walk to the next session, you still meet the same goal)
- Welcome week events – they can attend all; but special sessions for them too
- Consider orienting students before they come to your college/university, by partnership and targeting specific ‘feeder’ schools (Slippery Rock University)

Welcome Week- infusing academic components, and general thoughts
- Culture Fest
- Academic open houses
- Freshmen summer reading
- Social (dance, talent show, coffee house, square dance)
- Speakers
- Plan enough activities so students do not have time to have negative influences of alcohol and off-campus activity