

New Student Orientation Summer 2012 Practicum BGSU Firelands

BGSU Firelands New Student Orientation Background Information

As one of Bowling Green State University's seven undergraduate colleges, located in Huron, BGSU Firelands began requiring students to attend new student orientation within the past year. They orient about 97% of their student population. In the past, BGSU Firelands used to hold one large new student orientation session prior to the start of Fall semester and one prior to the start of spring semester. These sessions were large in size. Now orientation sessions are conducted throughout the year and academic advisors serve as orientation facilitators. Sessions are smaller in size (approximately 25 to 30 students per session) and orientation lasts approximately 2.5 to 3 hours. Students first apply to the college and then orientation is the next step in the enrollment process. After orientation, students then make an appointment with their academic advisor and register for their first semester of classes. The content of orientation consists of financial aid, university policies, student policies, student resources, academic advising information, academic probation information, and how to navigate the BGSU portal and register for classes. In addition, an evaluation was recently created for students to complete and this data is now being collected and analyzed.

My Informal Theory / Personal Hunches About New Student Orientation

Prior to my meetings with other institutions I wrote down the following thoughts about new student orientation. Students need to feel that they matter and new student orientation is a forum to reinforce this idea and to acknowledge students for the choice they are making to attend the institution and further their education. New student orientation can allow students an opportunity to connect with other new students and current students and begin building relationships on campus with faculty and staff. Orientation can provide a forum for students to ask any burning questions. I see orientation as a chance to make a great first impression and a way to get students excited about returning to campus. I would like to see the content of orientation presented in meaningful and interactive ways by actively involving/engaging students in the process. I would like to see orientation include ongoing evaluation/assessment for continuous improvement by seeking both quantitative and qualitative data about how the content is delivered and whether or not the students have an increased understanding of the content. I would like to see orientation involve actual students in the facilitation or delivery of the material. In addition, peer-led tours would provide an opportunity for new students to ask current students additional questions. I would like to see the content tied to some type of central theme that brings the content together (i.e. Top 10 Things You Need to Know to Have the Best BGSU Firelands Experience).

New Student Orientation Observation BGSU Firelands- Wednesday, May 9- 5:30 -8:30 pm

When I observed new student orientation at BGSU Firelands my initial thought was that the session included a lot of great content and valuable information. Students were checked in by student workers and were given orientation folders with pertinent information that would be reviewed throughout the session. I liked the use of PowerPoint to structure the

presentation. In addition, two advisors facilitated the session and this helped to break up the content. The tables in the room were arranged in rows and with almost thirty students were in attendance, making it difficult to move among the rows. Students did not have name tags and there was very little conversation among attendees prior to the start of the orientation session. The session began with a short welcome and introduction of presenters, a brief overview of the session, and a discussion about financial aid that did not include a PowerPoint presentation.

During the second portion of orientation, another facilitator reviewed the mybgsu portal with students by asking them to follow along as the presenter touched on key points and links such as class search, degree audit, Falcon mail, sky drive, Blackboard, BG1 card, bookstore link, parking, campus events, academic calendar, logging out, etc.

During the third part another facilitator discussed the academic calendar, withdraw (W), withdraw fail (WF), shared information on an academic advisor's role, and discussed the DARS report. In addition, students learned about degree check sheets, pre-requisites and co-requisites, grading, policies and procedures, student activities, and student resources. At the conclusion of this portion of the presentation, just prior to the required campus tour, students were given a five minute break. No assessment/evaluation tool was being used at the time of my observation.

Bowling Green State University

Bowling Green, OH

www.bgsu.edu

Andy Alt

Director of New Student Orientation & First Year Programs

Orientation Website Link:

<http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/newstudent/page102499.html>

Background / Overview of Institution

U.S. News and World Report named BGSU as one of the top 100 public universities nationwide with a strong commitment to first-year programs that lead to success. BGSU was founded in 1910 and is a 1,338 acre residential campus with 119 buildings. More than 20,000 students attend BGSU, including 2,000 at BGSU Firelands in Huron, Ohio. BGSU employs more than 800 full-time faculty, nearly 80 percent with the highest degree in their field. Students from 50 states and 70 other countries attend. The average ACT for entering freshmen is 22 and the average high school GPA is 3.23.

Meeting / Orientation Overview

Orientation at BGSU's main campus has gone from a multiple day event to a one day event called SOAR, which stands for Student Orientation Advising and Registration. We had the opportunity to meet with Andy Alt, the Director of New Student Orientation and First Year Programs, but did not attend an actual orientation session. Peer educators are hired in the fall semester and enroll in a 2-credit hour leadership and group development course. The student orientation leaders also participate in 30 hours of training and the position is paid.

Andy shared that empowerment from above has been an important part of being able to make a positive impact on the new student orientation at BGSU. Being empowered by his direct reports has helped tremendously in implementing changes in how new student orientation is facilitated and what content is shared during new student orientation. In the past, they would have representatives from different departments share for a pre-determined amount of time about their respective departments and now he uses a different approach with trained new student orientation staff facilitators who share the information from various departments. They keep the information general enough that a staff member from a respective department does not need to be the one presenting the information.

Andy talked about how he feels that orientation needs to feel like the "place to be," but at the same time students need to feel that they have an opportunity to connect with others in small groups. When orientation is too small, you can lose the feeling that it is the "place to be." When orientation is too large, it can feel impersonal and make students feel as though they do not matter. BGSU intentionally breaks student into smaller groups so they can make connections with other students during orientation. Orientation is required and Andy touched on the fact that students don't "do" optional.

Andy said that he is very intentional about planning for new student orientation with a purpose. They are very intentional about what information gets shared during orientation. They have clear goals and learning objectives and outcomes for new student orientation and

use assessment to measure learning and get feedback on the facilitation. He wants orientation to be a process/experience that includes a curriculum instead of simply an event. For example, after completing SOAR students later attend Opening Weekend activities just before classes begin each fall semester. They build the content for orientation around a framework/theme they call "The Four Pillars to Student Success." The pillars are academic success, career development, leadership and engagement, and personal and fiscal responsibility. Throughout orientation they are frequently tying the information they share with students back to one of these four pillars. The four pillars are key components for student to be successful in their college experience. Andy shared with us a copy of a very professional brochure for orientation that students receive describing in detail the 4 pillars. The four pillars are based on students' needs- academic preparation, career goals, affinity to the institution, leadership skills, and financial responsibility.

Andy said that one of the goals of orientation is for students to develop an affinity to the institution. They want student to form an affinity to the college, their major, their specific department, the faculty, etc. They try to begin engaging students as soon as they apply to BGSU. They do targeted outreach through e-blasts called "New2BGSU," which are short e-mails that can be read in less than five minutes and include information about a variety of topics of interest to students. This is a low cost way to do outreach and e-mails are sent on a weekly basis leading up to new student orientation. A graduate assistant writes the copy for the e-mails. Topics covered in the e-mails include the BG1card, the summer common reading, dining on campus, falcon mail, finances, the learning commons, mybgsu portal, orientation pillars, writing placement, etc.

Andy shared that BGSU is in the process of developing a "true" online orientation. In addition they use a wiki on the website called "Orientation Station," which houses all kinds of detailed information about orientation and getting started as a student at BGSU. Andy mentioned that the University of Minnesota developed something called "One Stop," an online portal where there is information about registering for classes, finances, study skills, degree planning, and A to Z links. He said that in the future he wants to do something like this on BGSU's website.

According to Andy, the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) has grown in popularity in his office and BGSU orientation has its own Facebook page. He said that it is very easy to do status updates with a link on Facebook to stay connected with incoming students. Again, a graduate student handles these updates.

Students take both a pre and post-assessment and Andy shared copies with us (See appendix.) The pre-assessment assesses what students know before they arrived at orientation and the post-assessment measures what they know when they leave orientation.

We spent time talking with Andy about ways he goes about making orientation more engaging. He said that he makes a point to avoid having "talking heads" where content is shared by simply delivering content in lecture-style format. He said that they intentionally involve actual students in a panel Q & A session. In addition, during presentation he has presenters tag team the presentation. In other words, several different presenters are sharing on the same topic during a session and play off of one another.

Andy said that he and his team continually ask the following question about every piece of content that is included in new student orientation- Do students need to know this right

now? If the answer is yes, then the content is included. If the answer is no, the content is removed. He shared that he considers orientation as a way to get students the information they need to successfully do business with the University. They are always looking for ways to improve the way they do business. Any they recognize that students have choices in where to go to college and they want to acknowledge students' choice to choose BGSU as their college of choice.

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- Build an affinity not only to BGSU Firelands, but also to BGSU's main campus. Acknowledge students for their choice to attend BGSU Firelands.
- Consider adding an orientation resource website for new students that can house detailed policies and procedures so that this content can be removed or not focused on as much during new student orientation sessions. BGSU's main campus calls their website "Orientation Station" (<http://nso.bgsu.wikispaces.net/>).
- Orientation is a process and an experience, not simply an event and can be tied to first-year programming, the first-year seminar course, and opening weekend activities.
- Consider calling BGSU Firelands new student orientation SOAR, to better tie to main campus.
- Consider using and training peers as facilitators, tour leaders, table leaders, etc. during orientation
- Continually review content of orientation and ask the question, "Is this something students need to know right now?"
- Build content for orientation around a theme or framework such as the "Four Pillars of Student Success."
- Consider the best location and group size for new student orientation. Allow students opportunities to make connections with current and other new students during orientation.
- Continue to meet with Andy and his team on a regular basis to tweak and improve orientation and it's tie in to BGSU's main campus
- Develop an orientation curriculum with clear goals, objectives, learning outcomes, etc.
- Incorporate assessment as part of the new student orientation process
- Utilize social media and e-blasts to communicate with new students frequently and with low cost to the institution.
- Utilize graduate assistants as part of the new student orientation team
- Consider using a tag team approach when presenting content. Avoid a format focused largely on lecturing to students. Look for ways to make orientation engaging and interactive.
- Consider making orientation mandatory because students are not inclined to attend orientation if it is simply optional.

**Lourdes University
Sylvania, OH**

www.lourdes.edu

Becky Tobias

Director of Student Activities & Orientation

Orientation Website Link:

<http://www.lourdes.edu/nso.aspx>

Background / Overview of Institution

Beginning in 1943 as an extension campus of the College of St. Theresa (located in Winona, Minnesota), Lourdes Junior College was founded in 1958. Originally established to educate sisters of the Franciscan community, Lourdes College began to admit lay women in 1969 and lay men in 1975.

Lourdes received its certificate of authorization from the Ohio State Board of Education in January, 1958, and was accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in 1964. It was independently incorporated as Lourdes College in 1973 and transitioned to Lourdes University on August 19, 2011.

Lourdes University, rooted in Catholic and Franciscan traditions, provides a values-centered education that enriches lives and advances academic excellence through the integration of the liberal arts and professional studies.

Meeting / Orientation Overview

We had the opportunity to meet with Becky Tobias, Director of Student Activities and Orientation, but did not actually attend an orientation session. Lourdes holds a new student orientation for transfer students and a separate new student orientation for first year students. The orientation session for transfer students is a condensed evening session for students with 19 or more credits held in a theater-style room. Throughout the evening, students have the opportunity to hear from various campus representatives (Provost, Student Activities Staff, etc.) and the session is required. Students learn about the background and values of Lourdes and get to mingle with faculty and staff. The new student orientation approach with transfer students is more streamlined. Orientation for students who are attending directly from high school, are under the age of 24 or are transferring into Lourdes with 18 or less credits are required to attend the first year orientation, which is four-day experience. In the past, it was only one full day. All first year students must also attend a registration day prior to orientation. At registration day, students attend sessions, discuss the common reading, meet with advisors and faculty, etc. They also offer an orientation program for parents.

They are very intentional about their programming for new student orientation and are continually trying to gain a better understanding of the needs of the incoming student population and they want orientation to appeal to students. They distribute a resource booklet to students that includes much of the more mundane information that is important for students to know. This resource booklet is time consuming to prepare and update on a continual basis, but students really like having pertinent information in one booklet. Becky

feels that her biggest goal in orientation is to empower students so that they feel more a part of the Lourdes University community. She said it is one thing to say it, but it is another thing entirely to want students to feel it. Orientation incorporates a number of team building activities.

Becky said that the Lourdes is committed to orientation and first-year programs and recently hired a full-time director for the first year experience programming. If they can retain a certain number of students as part of the first year programming it more than makes up for this staff member's salary. In addition, they utilize students as orientation leaders and the students are all volunteers who do not get paid to be orientation leaders. Orientation leaders attend a five-day training session and a four-day orientation class. Orientation leaders go through an application process and the roles and time commitment are clearly defined during both the application process and the interviews. One orientation leader is assigned to every ten students and they often work in pairs. Orientation leaders must sign a contract. Lourdes does a social with the orientation leaders, as well as a common read.

Becky shared that Lourdes recently went from being an entirely commuter-based campus to a campus that now serves commuters and approximately fifty live-in residents who live in apartments that have been converted into residence halls. Lourdes serves approximately 1,500 students overall at the institution.

Attending a National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) regional conference and/or a first year conferences through Foundations of Excellence (developed by John Gardner) are suggestions Becky shared for learning more about best practices in new student orientation. Lourdes has committed to sending two different staff members per year to the first year conference.

Lourdes offers a First Year Experience (FYE) class that all first-year, first-semester students attend. The class begins on the first day of orientation. All students with 18 credit hours or less must enroll in the FYE course. She said that faculty buy-in for first year programs was critical.

Also of interest was the fact that we met Becky in the newly renovated student lounge area at Lourdes. Some of the walls in this space were painted using chalkboard paint and students use this area to promote and advertise upcoming student activities and events.

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- Consider building into new student orientation opportunities to meet and mingle with faculty and staff.
- Consider whether or not students would prefer hearing from representatives throughout the campus or if it would be better to coordinate orientation with facilitators who relay information from key stakeholders/departments on campus.
- Consider hosting a separate orientation evening for parents only.
- Be intentional about programming for new student orientation and consider the needs of incoming students on a continual basis. Use qualitative and quantitative feedback to make changes to the programming.
- Consider having one staff member be the point person for new student orientation, the curriculum, the facilitation, implementing changes, strategically planning, etc. Gain faculty support for the first year experience class.

- Consider sending staff to professional training and development opportunities related to new student orientation (National Orientation Director's Association (NODA) regional conferences, Foundations of Excellence first year workshops and webinars, etc.).
- Consider orientation as a retention strategy to build community and a sense of belonging and connection as well as a recruitment strategy. Acknowledge student's choice to attend the institution and communicate how glad you are that they chose your institution.
- Recruit and train student orientation leaders to assist with orientation.
- Consider using chalkboard paint in student lounge to advertise/promote student activities, clubs, and organizations.
- Consider requiring the first year seminar class and making it an extension of the orientation experience.
- Incorporate team building / icebreaker activities into new student orientation so that students leave feeling more a part of the campus community and excited to return to campus for classes.
- Consider creating a resource booklet and putting one staff member in charge of keeping it updated on a continual basis.

**Terra Community College
Fremont, OH**

www.terra.edu

Kristen Taylor

Director of Admissions & Enrollment Services

Orientation Website Link:

<http://www.terra.edu/AdmissionsandFinancialAid/ApplyRegister/EnrollmentChecklists/StudentOrientation.html>

Background / Overview of Institution

Terra Community College's roots go back to September 1968, when the Vanguard Technical Institute opened to 78 full-time engineering and business students. The institute was a night school, using the facilities of Vanguard Vocational Center.

Today, Terra Community College sits on a 103-acre site, offers more than 100 degree and certificate programs and is a source of information and support to the entire community. Terra Community College is a two-year accredited, state-supported, commuter college located in Fremont, Ohio. Terra has a long history of service to the community and providing students with an education that is both accessible and affordable.

Orientation Meeting / Overview

At Terra, I had the opportunity to meet with Kristen Taylor, the Director of Admission and Enrollment Services and I attended a new student orientation session. Terra serves approximately 3,400 students. They do three or four orientation sessions per week during peak times and orientation is required. They cap attendance at each session at approximately 25 to 30 students.

Terra's orientation is called CORE, which stands for Complete Orientation and Registration Experience. Prior to attending new student orientation, students have applied to the college, completed placement testing, and have met with an admissions advisor to discuss financial aid status and overview, goals, life commitments, review of prior transcripts, interest in transferring, online course interest, program review, next steps and referrals, and course recommendations. During the meeting with an admissions advisor, the student registers for a CORE session.

All degree and certificate seeking students attend new student orientation, as well as new transfer students, and readmitting students who attended Terra more than five years ago. Students are unable to register for classes until they attend the CORE session. The content covered in CORE sessions includes faculty and academic expectations, a student services overview, a campus tour, website and student portal navigation, a very brief overview of the student handbook and catalog, and online registration in a group advising format. They have a list of recommended classes to register for from their meeting with their admissions advisor that is placed in their orientation folder they receive at orientation check-in.

Orientation folders include a personal student profile prepared by an intake/admissions advisor, an advising syllabus, financial aid forms (if applicable), a program sheet, a "Supporting

Our Students” (SOS) Campus Tour Guide, welcome week information, a “Supporting Our Students” (SOS) Directory, a guide for success, and meal plan information.

Orientation is approximately 2 to 2.5 hours in length. Session one is approximately 1.5 hours and includes a brief welcome from the Dean of Students, a discussion of faculty expectations facilitated by a faculty member, a campus tour given by a Terra student ambassador, and a short break. Session two is approximately 30 minutes and includes a brief overview of important student policies and a student portal tutorial. Session three includes advising and registration done in a group format and a CORE assessment of learning outcomes.

In addition to the face-to-face orientation, Terra is planning to develop an online orientation. They were familiar with Washtenaw Community College’s online orientation as a model example.

According to Kristen, one of the main goals of orientation at Terra is that they want students to leave feeling connected to someone at the institution. In addition, they want students to feel comfortable with the campus environment and know that there are people at the institution who support them in achieving their goals.

Orientation takes place in a classroom that is set up like a computer lab. Each student is seated at a computer and the classroom is set-up with smart board technology. There was a short welcome by the Dean of Students- Heath Martin. Heath was very energetic, enthusiastic, and caring. He thanked students for being there and shared that he realized they have a lot of choices when it comes to higher education and he is glad that they chose Terra. He told student that it is common to experience some sort of anxiety about getting started at Terra. He shared that one of the goals of orientation is that the students have an opportunity to build community and get to know one another. He asked each student to stand up and introduce themselves and state their name, their anticipated major, where they are from, and what their anxiety level is on a scale of 1 to 10. He talked about differences and similarities among the group and elaborated on the diverse student body at Terra. Heath went on to share his story of being a first generation college student and recalled beginning his collegiate experience with so many questions and so few answers. He encouraged students to utilize faculty and staff as a lifeline and to ask for help when needed. In closing, he told students he was excited to see them at orientation and that their success was important to the faculty and staff at Terra.

Next, a faculty member facilitated a session on faculty and academic expectations. The faculty member shared that there are approximately 50 full-time faculty and 200+ adjunct faculty at Terra. The faculty member’s presentation was very relaxed and conversational. The faculty member moved about the room and called on students to engage in the session. The PowerPoint presentation was very well organized, with no overcrowding of words on slides. The faculty member shared a video about a Polar Bear and another about a Penguin. He asked students to determine which animal most accurately described them as a student. Next, he asked students to consider whether a faculty member would prefer to have a student in their class who is more like a penguin or more like a polar bear. The conversation led to a discussion about faculty members’ desires to have students who are enthusiastic, passionate, excited to learn, prepared, awake, interactive, etc. Next, the faculty member shared keys to being successful such as completing homework and assigned reading, attending class, communicating with instructors when you are unable to make it to class, planning your time, completing assignments in a timely manner, asking questions, seeking clarification, visiting faculty during

office hours, etc. The discussion concluded with a brief overview of what a syllabus is and what one looks like and a short question and answer session where students could ask the faculty members any questions.

Next, a student ambassador led a brief tour around campus. During this informal time, students had a chance to ask the student ambassador questions and connect with other new students. Following the tour, Kristen, the Director of Admissions and Enrollment services share her story about dropping out of college three different times before completing her degree. She talked about the importance of risk taking and stepping out of your comfort zone. She encouraged students to seek a mentor and to ask for help when needed. She touches on the importance of connecting with others and getting involved on campus. She showed students how to access the online college catalog and student handbook and pointed out key information in both areas. She very briefly discussed the Terra alert system, the academic calendar and important date, and several important academic and college policies and procedures. She explained the different types of degrees (applied associates, transfer associates, and certificates). She explained that being familiar with important academic and college policies and procedures helps students to advocate for themselves. Lastly, she showed students how to read a course description and did a brief overview of the student portal.

The last portion of orientation, several admissions advisors came in to assist and help students to register for the first semester of courses prior to wrapping up for the day.

During my meeting with Kristen, she shared a PowerPoint presentation that she used to share with faculty and staff information about the purpose and learning outcomes of new student orientation. The PowerPoint presentation also touched on assessment of new student orientation. Kristen also provided a copy of the CORE procedures manual, which includes a purpose statement, learning outcomes, skill outcomes, values, staff responsibilities, etc.

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- At the beginning of the orientation, during the welcome, acknowledge students for their decision to choose the institution, share how excited you are that they are here, acknowledge that many of them may have questions and some anxiety about getting started. Consider asking students to indicate their anxiety on a scale of 1 to 10 and have them explain their answer during an introduction time. If the group is too large, do introductions in smaller groups. Share with students the purpose of orientation and what the agenda is for the orientation session.
- Consider group registration at the conclusion of orientation so that students are registered for classes prior to leaving orientation.
- Recruit and train student ambassadors to assist with new student orientation (facilitation of session, leading tours, orientation check-in, etc.)
- Evaluate PowerPoint slides and work toward a more streamlined approach to the slides. Fewer words per slide makes the slide easier for attendees to read.
- Consider asking facilitators to share a personal college story/experience. Transparency of presenters helped to establish a rapport among the attendees.
- Review important policies and procedures very briefly and direct student on how to access the information online.

- Review the student portal briefly, but spending too much time on this area tends to cause students to lose focus.
- Consider incorporating faculty into new student orientation- either on a panel or facilitating a session on new student orientation. Even if faculty cannot be included consider discussion faculty and academic expectations.
- Consider discussing common student terminology and acronyms such as a syllabus (show example), FERPA, FASFA, credit hour, etc.
- Consider incorporating a video as part of the discussion. The video helped to keep the attention of the attendees.
- When facilitators moved throughout the room, students tended to be more engaged.
- Consider developing an online student orientation that students could complete prior to or in place of a face-to-face orientation. Washtenaw College has an excellent online orientation.
- Consider asking students to think about a question that the facilitator poses, jot down their response, and then ask them to share with a partners (active teaching strategy- think/pair/share).
- Discuss the importance of getting involved on campus and making connections.
- Gain additional faculty and staff support for orientation by presenting at staff meetings, etc.
- Prepare an orientation procedures manual and have clearly written student learning outcomes, clearly defined staff roles, student ambassador roles, etc.
- Utilize an assessment tool so that you can measure learning and get feedback on facilitation to make changes to positively impact orientation in the future.
- Consider incorporating Smart Board technology and providing students access to computers for registration purposes for group registration.
- Consider hosting events such as Donuts with the Dean to build rapport with students and get their feedback on a variety of things.

Lorain County Community College
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Orientation Website Link:

<http://www.lorainccc.edu/current+students/student+orientations>

Background / Overview of Institution

Lorain County Community College (LCCC) is one of Ohio’s fastest-growing community colleges because of the variety of learning opportunities it provides. LCCC serves approximately 13,000 students annually. LCCC was named as one of the top 120 community colleges in the United States – and the only one in Ohio – by the Aspen Institute, the organization focused on completion, including retention, graduation rates, improvement of completion performance over time and an institutional record for completion outcomes of disadvantaged students.

Meeting / Orientation Overview

At LCCC, we had the opportunity to meet with Amanda Haney, Staff Assistant/VA Certifying Official/Academic Advisement Specialist Enrollment, Financial and Career Services, Krista O’Neill Coordinator of Counseling and Advising Services, and Janice Lapina, Adult Transitions Program Coordinator. We did not actually attend an orientation session. When I arranged the meeting through Amanda, she shared that LCCC is currently in the pilot stages of further developing orientation and working on implementing new student orientation. At this time, they do not require mandatory attendance at new student orientation, but this is something they are working toward changing in the future (possibly by Spring 2013). Students register for new student orientation on LCCC’s website.

They currently use a short assessment at the conclusion of orientation to gain feedback from students. They are hearing from students that they want orientation to be more spectacular and interactive. In addition, they have gathered qualitative data by holding student focus groups to get feedback on the orientation sessions.

They also have a strong desire to implement an online orientation. They want to incorporate videos and quizzes into the online orientation to engage students and assess their mastery of the material. For online orientation they recommended Long Beach Community

College as a model institution. They recommended Russell Little, IT guru at Sinclair Community College who would be a great resource regarding developing an online orientation.

They said that they are always trying to consider their audience as they think about orientation design and what content to include or eliminate. They have included videos as part of the PowerPoint presentation. They shared that they are learning that students want to talk to each other. One of the things they ask students to write down is a question they had coming into orientation today. By the end of the session, they make sure all students' questions are answered.

The orientation includes a PowerPoint presentation that is approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The PowerPoint and orientation facilitator's script were both developed by a graduate student. Orientation is approximately two hours and includes a tour lead by a student. The tour portion is optional. Students receive a zip drive with key information about programs and policies. As a follow-up to student attending new student orientation, they receive a "thank you for coming" e-mail. As part of the first year programming, they also offer College 101, a first-year experience course that is mandated by all first-year students and is a degree requirement.

Thus far, they have only oriented 77 students. They hold approximately 11 orientation sessions between July and August. They want students to leave feeling a sense of connection/community, commitment to the institution, and confidence.

In terms of academic advising, LCCC is moving toward an appreciative advising / strengths-based model. They will also be assigning advisors caseloads. Faculty do not serve as advisors at LCCC and all advising appointments are walk-ins. They are considering going to an appointments set-up in the future. They currently have 5 full-time advisors and approximately 15 part-time advisors for approximately 30,000 students. In the near future, they are planning to hire four student success coaches to work with at-risk students. They will be working with the students to develop a career and academic plans. Student success coaches will be resourcing students through the career process

They shared that LCCC is a "Completion by Design" college. Completion by Design is a five-year Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative that works with community colleges to significantly increase completion and graduation rates for low-income students under 26. The initiative provides needed structure to the community college experience. Students are proven to have greater success with completion and graduation when they are regularly given strong and practical guidance, as well as clear information, throughout their academic journey. Selected community colleges in states across the country will implement proven and effective practices that support every student, from the day they step onto campus, until the day they earn their degree or complete their credential. Completion by Design uses findings from previous initiatives, such as Achieving the Dream, to assist community colleges with interventions at key points where they often lose students. As part of the planning process, colleges will examine their own data to identify loss points and develop strategies and programs to address them.

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- Consider offering an online registration option for new student orientation that can generate e-mails thanking student for registering for new student orientation and thanking student for attending new student orientation.
- Consider developing an online orientation and utilize Long Beach Community College's online orientation as a model.
- Consider gather both quantitative and qualitative assessment data (evaluation, survey, focus groups, etc.).
- Consider the benefits of working with students to develop both academic and career plans.
- Further investigate the strengths-based/appreciative advising approach.
- Utilize peers and graduate students in the new student orientation process.
- Continually consider the needs and interests of incoming students.
- Consider giving students a zip drive loaded with pertinent information about academic policies, college procedures, financial aid, etc.
- Consider the idea that students want to talk to each other during new student orientation and provide opportunities for them to do so.
- Consider asking students to write down on a slip of paper any questions they had coming into orientation today. Collect the questions and make sure each question is addressed by the end of the orientation session.

Tiffin University

Tiffin, OH

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<http://www.tiffin.edu/newstudents/orientation/>

Background / Overview of Institution

Founded in 1888, Tiffin University is an independent, coeducational institution with a 110-acre campus. Tiffin University offers on campus and online courses to complete an associate's or a bachelor's in arts, business administration, or criminal justice or a master's degree in business administration or criminal justice. The undergraduate student population at Tiffin University is just over 1,000 students.

Meeting / Orientation Overview

We had the opportunity to meet with Annette Staunton, Executive Director of Enrollment Services and Chief Retention Office and JoElle Hall, Admissions Counselor, Undergraduate Admissions. We did not attend a new student orientation session. Tiffin University undergraduate students are required to attend new student orientation and they have four different orientation dates to choose from in the months of April, May, and June. They orient approximately 425 incoming first year students. The purpose of the orientation is to register students for classes and discuss financial aid. In the past, orientation was a full day event, but it has recently changed to a half day event.

According to Annette and Joelle, a key focus area during orientation is financial aid. Prior to students' arrival at orientation, admissions counselors reach out to student via phone to discuss the enrollment and orientation process and financial aid. They do so because they do not want students to arrive at campus surprised about the cost of tuition. They want students to be planning in advance for how they will cover the cost of tuition. They said that the increased focus on financial aid during the enrollment and orientation/registration process has helped with retention. Academic advisors are also cross trained in financial aid. Fewer students are leaving Tiffin University as a result of not being able to afford the tuition.

Annette and JoElle described orientation as a constant work-in-progress. They said that they are always tweaking and making modifications to the content and format in an effort to make orientation like a "well-oiled machine." They consider orientation an "all hands on deck" experience. Over the years they have worked to "break down the silos" that often exist among

different departments and built an orientation team/process that truly encompasses almost every area of the institution.

At orientation, they intentionally separate students and parents and do different programming, especially during the time when they are assisting students with class registration. For fall semester, class registration advising is more prescriptive. Students are given personalized registration sheets with their suggested schedule for fall based on placement test results and their specific major. They hold a student activities fair during orientation to allow students an opportunity to be exposed to the many ways in which they can get involved on campus. Students at orientation are also provided a flash drive with information, tips, ideas, academic and college policies, etc.

Faculty are involved in orientation and discuss expectations and the curriculum. They said that parents, in particular, comment that they enjoy the opportunity to interact with faculty. Faculty at Tiffin University serve as mentors to students, but they do not do direct advising. In addition, they involve peers/current students in orientation. The student orientation leaders are called student ambassadors. They are very selective in terms of which students serve as ambassadors and what roles they assign to certain students. For example, they place outgoing students in roles where they are welcoming students and mingling with them. In the past, they have included a panel discussion with current students and they found that 30 minutes was too much time for this activity and that often students at orientation did not ask that many questions of the student panel. They use PowerPoint presentations to support the content being shared and they try to make the PowerPoints concise. They also offer snacks and games throughout the day so that students have the opportunity to connect with other current and new students.

When asked what about what they want students to leave orientation with, Annette and JoElle said that they want students to walk away excited to start classes in the Fall. They want students to feel that the staff were helpful, that their questions were answered, and that they were satisfied with their experience and have few remaining doubts about getting started at Tiffin University. They want student to leave orientation with anticipation of what's to come.

Assessment of orientation is fairly informal and much of the feedback from students comes from staff members individual conversations with students. They may do something more formal in the future with assessing and evaluating the orientation.

They utilize social media such as Facebook and Twitter to some extent to communicate with first year students. In addition, they send out pre-mailings to students about orientation. Tiffin University also holds a Freshman Institute a few days prior to the start of Fall semester.

All first-year students are required to attend a freshman seminar class that is 1 credit hour and is held throughout the entire first semester. They shared that it took approximately one year to get the first year seminar course approved. As part of the first-year seminar course, students are required to attend one social/educational campus event. There is a separate course for at-risk students that is three credit hours and students in this course meet regularly with a success mentor/coach. First-year students also read a common reading and this year's common reading is titled "The Naked Roommate."

As a side note, Tiffin University has very cool cards for staff members that are used in addition to business cards. These staff information cards include a color photo of the staff member and a few personal facts about the individual and their contact information.

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- Determine whether or not financial aid is something that keeps your students from attending the institution and based on this data, determine how much time should be spent on discussing financial aid in an effort to ensure that students are not surprised about the cost of tuition and how they will pay for their education.
- Importance of “breaking down silos” that may exist among various departments because orientation has the potential to touch almost every department at a college/university.
- Utilize social media to communicate with students about orientation.
- Consider utilizing a flash drive to include tips, pertinent information such as college and academic policies, etc.
- Involve faculty in the orientation to discuss academic and faculty expectations.
- Consider orientation a continual work-in-progress that is always being tweaked or improved over time.
- Consider utilizing personalized class registration sheets prepared for individual students suggesting courses that they should register for during their first semester.
- Consider strongly suggesting or requiring a first year class as an extension of orientation
- Consider utilizing success coaches to work with students on time management, study skills, career and life planning, etc.
- Consider recruiting and training student workers and graduate assistants as part of the orientation implementation team. Place students in roles according to their strengths.
- Consider both informal and formal means of assessment for new student orientation.
- If utilizing a student panel for a question and answer session, consider having some questions prepared in advance in case attendees do not have many questions for the panel.
- Consider providing a staff information card that can be used in addition to one’s business card that includes the staff member’s photos, a few fun facts about the staff member, and the staff members’ contact information.
- Offer some sort of social activity/snack time where students have an opportunity to connect and mingle with one another.
- Consider having a student activity fair so that new students are exposed to opportunities to get involved on campus.
- Review PowerPoint presentations used during orientation to make sure that they are concise.
- Consider providing a time during orientation where students can register for classes if staff and computer access is available.
- Consider offering activities during the first week of classes for students to get connected and start building relationships on campus.

Washtenaw Community College

Ann Arbor, MI

www.wccnet.edu

Cristina Buzas

New Student Orientation Manager

cbuzas@wccnet.edu

Orientation Website Links:

<http://www4.wccnet.edu/student-services/student-connection/orientation/index.php>

<https://www.wccnet.edu/academics/orientation/online/>

Background / Overview of Institution

For over 40 years, Washtenaw Community College's (WCC) in Ann Arbor, Michigan has had an open-door admissions policy and affordable tuition rates. The student population at WCC is approximately 12,000. WCC's small class sizes offer individualized attention and classes are conveniently offered seven days a week, at night, and online. WCC has agreements with four-year schools throughout Michigan making transfer easy for students interested in going on to complete a bachelor's.

Meeting / Orientation Overview

We had the opportunity to meet with Cristina Buzas, New Student Orientation Manager and attend a student orientation geared toward traditional-aged students. Orientation at WCC consists of an online orientation and an in-person orientation. Students complete the online orientation in advance of attending the in-person orientation. The online orientation includes information about all kinds of opportunities at WCC, both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, students will obtain information about taking placement tests, choosing classes, registering for classes, paying tuition, study skills, and choosing a career.

At the in-person orientation, students get an overview of WCC and how to be a successful college student. All students are required to participate in online orientation and most applicants are required to participate in in-person orientation, unless they have completed 15 or more credit hours from an accredited U.S. college with a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or higher, have previously completed a bachelor's or master's degree, have documentation of an approved apprentice program, or are a guest student. In-person orientation used to be four hours and included folks from many different departments, a mandatory tour, and a pizza lunch.

Face-to-face orientation has been required at WCC for approximately the past 10 years and online orientation has been required since 2008. WCC offers orientation sessions for traditional (21 and under) and non-traditional (22 and older) students, international students,

and parents. Parent orientation is offered periodically and takes place in the evenings for two hours from 6 – 8 pm. If empty seats are available in the traditional student orientation sessions, parents may fill those empty spaces. Cristina said that in many cases parents could become future students so she has no problem including them if space is available. They have a room dedicated to facilitating new student orientation. The room consists of round tables and is seated for 65 students. The round table allow for a lot of interaction with other students throughout the session. Online orientation has a 98% completion rate and incorporates videos and assessments where students are required to achieve mastery. Traditional orientation includes opportunities for students to work in teams, earn prizes, and also includes content on text anxiety and test-taking tips. Both the traditional and non-traditional student orientations include the use of clicker technology to make the session more engaging and interactive for students.

WCC created a very professional full color new student orientation booklet that each student receives. The booklet is updated several times throughout the year and includes information on WCC's mission, the enrollment process, COMPASS assessment, counseling and advising, succeeding in college, scheduling tips, financial aid, academic services, student life, etc.

Traditional student orientation is approximately two hours and non-traditional student orientation is one hour. Both orientation sessions include an optional tour that is led by a student employee. They orient approximately 2,700 students per year.

While staff members were checking in students for orientation there was music playing in the background. They use a free online resource called Groove Shark. It is similar to Pandora, but allows the user to create their own song playlists. They use one playlist for non-traditional students and a different play list for traditional students. A staff member circulated the room encouraging students to begin introducing themselves, sharing where they are from, what program they will be studying , etc. The music playing in the background made the room feel fun, warm and welcoming. Students were also encouraged to help themselves to bottled waters and snack bowls that were located in the center of each table.

They just recently began to incorporate a student ambassador panel into the new student orientation session. Attendees jot down any questions they have on a slip of paper. The questions are then collected and answered by the panel of students. In addition, student ambassadors blog about frequently asked questions they receive during new student orientation.

Clicker technology was used throughout the new student orientation session and seemed to keep the students very engaged. Upon check-in students were given name tags and were divided into tables/teams. They split up students who already knew each other prior to orientation. Each student had a clicker that they used at their table. The cost for this technology was approximately \$2,000 to \$3,000 and software was included and clickers were purchased through a company called Turning Point Technology.

The session began with brief welcome and staff and student ambassador introductions. A dry erase board in the new student orientation room listed important deadlines for class registration and tuition payment. One staff member reviewed these important dates by going over them with the group. A clicker question was presented about which step students need to

complete first in the orientation process. A prize (WCC water bottle) was given to the fastest responder who selected from one of three boxes.

Next another staff member provided a brief overview of the registration process and presented the next clicker question on the screen asking students whether or not registration was handled completely online. The next slide then tallied up the team scores to show which team was in the lead. Throughout the session the facilitators and student ambassadors would “tag team” in sharing pertinent information. In addition to the use of clickers, this “tag team” facilitation style seemed to engage the students with the material because they were not sure which facilitator would be sharing next. The facilitators also did an excellent job of moving throughout the room and acknowledging students by name and thanking them for their contribution to the discussion.

To learn more about the resources available to students at WCC, the teams of attendees engaged in an interactive game called “What if?” Each team had a foam board with a grid listing different scenarios. Each team member had several laminated cards with the name of the resource on one side of the card and a description of the resource on the opposite side of the card. One person at each table read the scenarios and the other team members tried to determine if the card they were holding was the correct resource for that particular scenario. The team who finished first earned the activity points for that portion of the orientation session.

The next activity was called “The BIG Question: Why are you here? What are your reasons for coming to college?” The orientation facilitators asked students to spend a few minutes formulating their answer on paper to these questions. Students worked together at their respective tables to identify the top three reasons from their team for coming to college. Each team then chose a spokesperson to report to the larger orientation group. One of the facilitators created a master list of reasons for attending college on the dry erase board.

Following the “Big Question” activity, a facilitator introduced the On Course Success Principles. On the snack bowl at each team table a principle was listed. Teams worked together to create a definition of their table’s specific On Course Success Principle. Each team chose a spokesperson to share the definition. Student ambassadors described how they have encountered these principles in their day-to-day life on WCC’s campus. Students were cheered on by the entire orientation group for their willingness to be the spokesperson. The On Course Success Principles included accepting self-responsibility, discovering self-motivation, mastering self-management, employing interdependence, gaining self-awareness, adopting lifelong learning, developing emotional intelligence, and believing in themselves.

The next portion of orientation included a discussion about assessment. One facilitator asked students what they think of when they hear the word assessment. Students learned that assessment is about finding out where you are at so that you can be placed in classes where you will be successful. There was a clicker question about assessment and a prize (flash drive) was given to the fastest responder.

Another facilitator then reviewed academic levels and how test scores translate into specific courses that you should take. A five-minute break was provided with a timed countdown on the screen. Music was playing during the break, which made the break seem less awkward and uncomfortable.

After the break, there was a video about procrastination from ingredient.com. The facilitator asked attendees to share On-Course Principles they thought were displayed in the video. After that, there was a short session on counseling and advising that was facilitated by the Director of Counseling and Advising. There was a clicker question regarding what services counselors provide and a prize (travel mug) was given to the fastest responder. The facilitator asked students to share things that might get in the way of being a successful college student during the first semester. Next, was a discussion about general education classes and why they are required for all majors and a brief overview of the online catalog.

At the conclusion of the orientation session, prizes (WCC t-shirts) were given for the overall fastest responder and the top team. Students completed an assessment of their mastery of the content shared during orientation using the clickers. In addition, students were asked to tear off the final evaluation in their orientation booklets and answer the following two questions:

- As you look at the online orientation as a whole, what should we change?
- As you look at the in-person orientation as a whole, what should we change?

Cristina is the only full-time staff member in Orientation, but she does have several part-time staff who assist with orientation facilitation. Orientation has its own budget and Cristina said that she receives a lot of support from the top down at WCC. In terms of how she decides what content to include in orientation, she said that new college changes and policies often impact what is shared. She said that since only 40% of WCC students receive financial aid they don't spend a large amount of time discussing it at orientation.

At the end of orientation, Cristina wants students to leave with a sense of belonging to the WCC community, knowledge of their next steps so that they can register for classes, tips to succeed in college, connections to other students, and awareness that staff/faculty and resources are available to support them on their journey to reaching their goals. Academic advising is only mandatory for at-risk students. Orientation is evaluated on an annual basis with counselors, advisors, and orientation staff and what Cristina frequently hears is that students want the orientation to be more interactive and shorter. That's hard to believe because WCC's traditional student orientation includes many interactive and engaging activities and is only two hours long.

WCC does not offer a first year seminar class. That being said, however, they do have several student success courses that are available to students.

Cristina recommended collaborating with other professional from other institutions, reviewing the research, and attending NODA national conferences. In addition, she suggested checking out some of the following resources/publications:

- Publications from the National Resource Center:
<http://www.sc.edu/fye/publications/index.html>
- The NODA monograph called *Designing Successful Transitions*:
https://s3.amazonaws.com/os_uploads/93999_FYE%20Form%20DST.pdf
- Resources from NODA that are accessible to you when you are a member:
 - The Journal of College Orientation & Transition
 - NODA Orientation Planning Manual
 - NODA Orientation Review

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- Consider having one manager or staff person oversee orientation and serve as the main point person/contact.
- Consider developing an online orientation, in addition to an in-person orientation to share more detailed information on college and academic policies, financial aid, placement testing, registering for classes, etc. Also consider building into the online orientation videos and quizzes to evaluate student mastery of the content.
- Consider holding separate student orientations for transfer students, traditional students, non-traditional students, international students, and parents if you have enough students/parents that it would make sense to do so.
- Determine what percentage of your student population receives financial aid and gear your presentation to include financial aid information to a greater extent if you have many students using financial aid.
- Use interactive learning activities and team activities to make the orientation session more interesting and engaging. This also allows students an opportunity to meet someone new.
- Consider using an online music website to create song playlists that can be played during orientation check-in and during breaks (i.e. Pandora, Groove Shark).
- Provide bottled water and snacks that students can take if they choose to.
- The use of round tables and moveable chairs naturally makes the setting more interactive and engaging.
- Consider using clickers to engage students in the content throughout the entire orientation session and give away prizes to teams, fastest responders, etc., especially for the traditional student orientation. Check into the company Turning Point Technology for cost of clickers and software.
- Consider the idea that parents attending new student orientation could be potential new students at some point.
- Consider dedicating a room/space on campus for new student orientation where all materials and set-up for orientation can remain in place.
- Consider creating an orientation booklet that includes all pertinent information related to orientation instead of using a two-pocket folder to house all of the various information you provide to students.
- Give students name tags and have them introduce themselves to someone sitting next to them and share where they are from and what program they will be studying at the institution.
- Acknowledge students who share answer questions, etc. by using their name and thanking them for their contribution. Focus on doing the little things such as this really well because it makes a big difference in students feeling that they matter.

- Consider using a facilitation style that relies on tag teaming with multiple other facilitators or student ambassadors and move throughout the room as you are presenting content.
- Consider using student ambassadors and a student panel during the orientation session so attendees have the opportunity to engage with current students.
- Allow attendees an opportunity to write down questions that they have and collect the questions and make sure they are addressed throughout the presentation.
- When breaking students into teams/groups consider having students who knew each other prior to orientation split up and be part of a group where they do not know anyone.
- Incorporate videos into the orientation session to make content more interactive and engaging.
- Use think/pair/share activity for teams of students to discuss various orientation content such as why students choose to attend college.
- Consider using some theme or framework like the On Course Success Principles to tie together the content of orientation in a meaningful and relevant manner.
- Provide breaks at appropriate times to maintain student interest in content.
- Use assessment and evaluation to measure mastery of content and get feedback from students on how to improve orientation. This can be done in both qualitative and quantitative ways.
- At minimum, evaluate orientation
- Collaborate with other professionals at other institutions on an ongoing basis about best practices and review the research.
- Read current research practices on new student orientation and consider attending a NODA national conference.

**The Ohio State University at Mansfield
Mansfield, OH**

<http://www.mansfield.ohio-state.edu/>

Ken Sigler

Director of Admissions & Financial Aid

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Orientation Website Links:

<http://mansfield.osu.edu/orientation2>

Background / Overview of Institution

The Ohio State University at Mansfield (OSU-Mansfield) was created through a partnership between Mansfield area citizens and the State of Ohio. In the early 1960s, the Ohio Board of Regents designated Mansfield as a site for an OSU regional campus. The campus is over 600 acres and offers many resources and opportunities that you expect from Ohio State. The student population is approximately 1,400. Attending OSU-Mansfield regional campus is like attending a small liberal arts college with the resources of a major university. Students enjoy small classes and low tuition compared to other institutions in the state university system. The addition of student housing in the recent past has given the campus a more residential-style college feel.

Meeting / Orientation Overview

We had the opportunity to meet with Ken Sigler, Director of Admissions and Financial Aid and attend an actual new student orientation session. OSU Mansfield has seven fall orientation sessions that students can choose from and each session is capped at 90 students. Orientation is one day and takes place from 9:00 am to approximately 4:00 pm. Parents are invited to attend and part of the day they have separate programming for parents. In addition, OSU-Mansfield hosts an orientation in the spring for students who are transitioning to main campus. Staff from OSU's main campus come to OSU Mansfield to assist.

Ken said that he tends to view orientation as both a recruitment and retention piece and he said he wants students to leave orientation with enthusiasm for coming to OSU-Mansfield and also want them to feel well-prepared for beginning their college experience. He said that they try to make orientation as interactive as possible. All traditional and non-traditional-aged students attend the same orientation session. This is the first year that they have incorporated clickers to make the PowerPoint presentation portion of orientation more interactive. Clicker questions are incorporated throughout the entire PowerPoint presentation portion of the student orientation.

Ken said that there is a “push” from main campus to be “one” university. In that vein, they spend time during orientation trying to create institutional pride and discuss OSU trivia and what it means to be a “Buckeye.” At the same time, they also talk about how they are different from OSU’s main campus (i.e. smaller class sizes, classes taught by actual professors and not graduate assistants, etc.).

Buckeye student ambassadors assist with facilitating portions of orientation. In addition they conduct campus tours and do group activities with students throughout the day. Both the student ambassadors and the staff had on matching OSU gear which gave the audience the feeling that the staff was a team.

Each student receives a personalized 3-ring binder with their suggested fall classes based on placement test scores. These scheduling sheets are prepared in advance by academic advisors. The binder also includes the agenda for the day, information on student life, policies, registration, and financial aid. Parents are given a two-pocket folder that includes information about FERPA, a Family Resource Guide, information on doing business with OSU, parenting a college student, and how to send care packages. The Family Resource Guide includes information on OSU’s vision, mission, and values, OSU’s regional campuses, the history of OSU Mansfield, academic advising and student retention, academic resources, athletics, fees and payment, health insurance, residence life, study abroad, etc.

Orientation was held in an auditorium –style room and both parents and students attended the same morning session that began with the OSU Fight Song playing in the background and a discussion of what it means to be a Buckeye. Buckeye student ambassadors introduced themselves and taught the audience the O-H-I-O cheer. Clicker questions about OSU trivia were read aloud by Buckeye student ambassadors. T-shirts were given away through a raffle drawing. At one point during the presentation, attendees were encouraged to stand up and find a new friend. The PowerPoint slide presentation was branded using OSU colors and the OSU logo. Ken shared that they don’t spend a lot of time during orientation going over very specific and detailed academic and college policies. They, instead, pointed out to students where they could find this detailed information.

There was an introduction to academic advising presented by an actual advisor at OSU Mansfield. This staff member reviewed the degrees offered at OSU-Mansfield and the purpose of general education courses. He touched on the requirements for transferring to main campus and reviewed placement test results and what they mean in terms of registering for course. Another orientation facilitator talked about creating a balanced schedule and compared it to creating a balanced meal. Students were told that if a course is written their individualized registration sheet, it is strongly recommended that they take it during fall semester. During this portion of orientation students were shown how to interpret the class schedule.

Next students learned about fees and financial aid. There was a great PowerPoint presentation to support this discussion that included information about important dates to pay fees, payment options, eligibility for aid, an explanation of the difference in student loans, grants, and scholarships, how to view and accept financial aid through the student portal, and direct deposit. They explained to students that they do not have to accept the full amount for loans. In addition, they shared that students should work with a financial aid specialist immediately if they drop or withdraw from a class, fail a course, their household income

changes, they do not show satisfactory academic progress (completing 67% of coursework with 2.0 or higher), or their address changes.

The next portion of orientation was focused on faculty and academic expectations. A faculty panel took part of this session. Ken shared that based on past evaluations of new student orientation, students shared that they wanted the opportunity to meet faculty during orientation. A four-member faculty panel introduced themselves and shared what they teach, their research interests, and why they chose that particular area of study. Professors were also asked to share key components to being a successful college student. Ken said that if an orientation team is considering including faculty, it is best to be very clear and very specific about what you want faculty members to do during their portion of orientation. Let them know well in advance the questions you will ask them and about how much time you have allotted for this portion of orientation.

Faculty members shared with students how important it is to get to know your professors because they can later serve as references for you. They encouraged students to get involved and to stay involved. They drove home the point that college is not just about academics. It is also about being active in the campus community because college experiences can help students stand out among other graduates when it comes time to search for a job. One faculty member talked about the need for students to have a serious mindset, meaning that the responsibility is on the student to attend class and complete assignments. Another faculty member told students they are not paying for C's. She said, "You paid to be here and not everyone gets to earn a college degree." Another faculty member talked about the importance of a liberal arts education and how college can seem like a full-time job. During the panel discussion, students learned about the difference between college and high school (i.e. you don't spend that much time in class, you must choose a major, you have to pay for it, you get to select your own classes, etc.). One faculty member shared that the biggest difference in college is that you are much more in the driver's seat. He explained why college is valued by so many employers because they are seeking individuals who take responsibility for themselves, are self-motivated, have financial responsibility, take charge, and know how to manage bureaucracy. Lastly, a faculty member talked about the importance of dedicating time to your first year writing course and how writing is needed for all careers. She encouraged students to be curious and engaged, to ask questions and to push back. Students and parents had the opportunity to ask faculty members questions at the conclusion of the faculty panel discussion.

Next the parents and students took a break for lunch and during the afternoon parents and students separated into different sessions. Students were broken down into three groups- O, S, and U and were going to go on a campus tour and register for classes in a group registration format. P attended a session facilitated by the Associate Vice Provost. We observed a portion of the parent presentation, which included information about academic opportunities and academic advising at OSU Mansfield. OSU Mansfield offers the following four-year degrees- early and middle childhood education, English, history, psychology, business, sociology, and social work. The session included information about OSU's academic resources, extra-curricular opportunities for students, the honors program, study abroad, and research opportunities. Representatives from different university departments came and presented information about their respective area and remained available for questions during the break and at the end of the session.

First year students are strongly encouraged, but not required, to take a freshman survey course that familiarizes students with policies, procedures, and degree requirements, online and face-to-face options. There are special sections of this course offered for non-traditional students, first-generation students, students of color, etc. The Convocation & Dean's Picnic is a required assignment as part of the first year course. This picnic is held right before classes begin each fall.

At the conclusion of orientation both parents and students complete their own respective evaluations of their orientation experiences. Ken said that frequent feedback from parents is that they don't enjoy being separated from their child during the afternoon and student feedback usually pertains to confusion about class scheduling.

Best Practices / Recommendations / Take Aways From Our Visit

- Build an affinity to the institution during orientation. Talk about what it means to be a student of the institution. Share institutional trivia, the fight song, the alma mater, etc. Make student feel connected to the institution. Being building pride in the institution.
- Discuss with students the differences between the regional campus and the main campus (i.e. smaller class sizes).
- Consider using personalized binders with student registration sheets if students will register for fall classes as part of their orientation experience.
- Consider including in student and parent folders an agenda for the new student orientation. Also consider separate parent and student folders.
- For parent orientations, consider inviting staff members from various departments to present their respective information.
- Consider providing adequate breaks, snacks, and drinks throughout the orientation especially if it is a fully day orientation.
- Use adequate signage for orientation.
- Consider doing a raffle to give away institutional merchandise such as t-shirts.
- Instead of sharing detailed information on many different and specific programs and policies, explain to students where they can access this information.
- Consider separate programming for parents who attend orientation.
- Consider orientation both a recruitment and retention piece.
- Consider hosting a separate orientation in the spring semester for students transferring to main campus. Work collaboratively with staff from main campus to conduct this orientation session.
- Consider including student ambassadors in the facilitation of orientation and give them ample opportunity to interact with the new students.
- Consider using a PowerPoint presentation that incorporates the university's colors and logo.
- Consider using a PowerPoint presentation for financial aid.
- Consider incorporating a faculty panel to discuss academic and faculty expectations. Students will be able to get a sense that faculty are real people. In addition, give faculty detailed information on your expectation for this portion of the orientation.

- Make orientation as interactive as possible. Consider using clickers to engage students in the content of PowerPoint presentations. Encourage students to get up and introduce themselves to another new student. Break students into smaller teams/groups.
- Consider having facilitators and students where matching university logo wear to look like a cohesive team.
- Consider ongoing assessment and evaluation and make changes accordingly to positively impact new student orientation.
- Strongly encourage students to enroll in the first year experience course as an extension of new student orientation.
- Encourage students to get involved in activities and explain the importance of this when they try to secure a full-time job after graduation.
- Encourage students to attend campus activities such as talks, the Dean's picnic, etc.

**Recommendations for Implementation
of Best Practices in New Student Orientation
at BGSU Firelands**

After visiting seven different institutions to discuss best practices in new student orientation, I learned that there is no “one size fits all” approach to orientation. Below are my recommendations for best practices to implement based on my site visits and having observed several different orientation sessions at BGSU Firelands.

Recommendations regarding content, facilitation, and delivery:

- Consider having one staff member serve as the main point person for new student orientation.
- Consider beginning orientation by acknowledging students decision to attend BGSU Firelands and letting them know how excited we are that they chose this campus. Provide a rough outline of the agenda for NSO. Consider tying the content around a central theme.
- Consider talking about anxiety students may feel as they consider getting started at BGSU Firelands. Discussing anxiety levels and allowing students to share with one another can help to put them at ease.
- Use index cards or Post-It notes to have students write down any burning questions , fears, anxieties, etc. Review these questions at some point during the orientation session. Possibly include a student panel during this portion of orientation.
- Rather than going into great detail about specific academic policies and procedures, consider directing students on where they can locate this specific and important information.
- At orientation, consider building affinity and pride as to what it means to be a Falcon. Include university trivia.
- Consider recruiting and training student workers/ambassadors/graduate assistants to serve as new student orientation facilitators, tour leaders, group leaders, etc.
- Consider revising format of orientation so that the session does not begin immediately with a discussion about financial aid. Determine approximately how many students utilize financial aid at BGSU Firelands and tailor time frame for this portion of orientation accordingly.
- Consider shortening the section on navigating the mybgsu portal as it is difficult to hold the attention of attendees who do not have an actual computer in front of them.
- Consider developing an orientation curriculum with clearly laid out goals, objectives, student learning outcomes, etc.

- Consider encouraging facilitators to use a “tag team” approach when presenting content to keep the attention of the attendees. Also suggest that they move throughout the room to maintain attendees’ interest.
- Consider more closely tying orientation to the first year seminar class and encourage facilitators to strongly recommend that students register for this course as an extension of their orientation experience.
- Consider changing the name of BGSU Firelands’ new student orientation to SOAR- Student Orientation Advising and Registration to more closely align with BGSU’s main campus.
- Build the content of orientation around the “Four Pillars of Student Success” that BGSU’s main campus touches on extensively during orientation. (PowerPoint presentation slides were revised to include this information after our site visit.)
- Consider the pros and cons of having orientation facilitators vs. calling on representatives from the various campus departments to present at orientation.
- Consider using clicker technology to engage students if and when the budget may allow. Clickers can be used throughout the orientation session by individuals and teams.
- Consider asking staff and student ambassadors to where name tags with their name and position and BGSU Firelands matching attire.
- Consider spending more time sharing about the campus resources and student activities
- Consider doing some type of fun and interactive activity with commonly used college terminology and acronyms.
- Consider including a faculty panel to deliver content on academic and faculty expectations.
- Consider doing the campus tour as more of a scavenger hunt and/or have student ambassadors lead the tours. Consider breaking the group of 25 to 30 into two smaller groups for the tour.
- Consider creating a resource booklet or orientation brochure that holds all of the pertinent information that students need to know as part of the orientation process in place of the two-pocket folder with various loose papers.
- Consider asking facilitators and student ambassadors to share a personal story or experience related to being in college.
- Provide students with name tags and ask facilitators to call on students by name and thank them for their question or contribution to the discussion.
- Considering using active learning activities such as think/pair/share, where the facilitators poses a question, ask students to think about it or jot down a response and share with a partner or group. Then the facilitator can ask a few pairs or small groups to report out to the larger group.
- Consider providing students with a zip drive with valuable information about college procedures, academic policies, etc.
- Discuss with students the differences in attending the regional vs. the main campus. Consider incorporating this portion of the BGSU Firelands’ website into new student orientation.
 - The advantages of the educational opportunities at BGSU Firelands include:

- strong and committed faculty
- small class size
- low student-to-faculty ratio
- excellent and caring support staff
- exceptional academic support services

We are a college community that believes strongly in celebrating the fact that our campus is indeed your campus. As a collective group, we work tirelessly to assist our students to meet their individual collegiate goals, semester after semester after semester.

Therefore, you are encouraged to explore all that BGSU Firelands has to offer. On behalf of our faculty and staff and the entire undergraduate and graduate student body, we hope that you will consider BGSU Firelands to be an integral part of your gateway to a new, different, and incredibly productive future.

Recommendations regarding using PowerPoint:

- Consider using a BGSU branded PowerPoint template with the college's colors of orange and brown. Use a "less is more" approach when reviewing each slide, as too many words on a slide can make it more straining for attendees to read.
- Consider providing a few PowerPoint slides during the financial aid portion of the presentation to hold the attention of attendees and to reinforce the information being shared.
- Encourage facilitators to refrain from lecturing through the content and reading the slides word for word. Suggest that facilitators pose questions during the PowerPoint presentation to gain student feedback and maintain the attention of the attendees.
- Consider incorporating videos as part of the PowerPoint presentation to hold the interest of attendees.

Recommendations regarding the space/environment and time allocated for new student orientation:

- Consider having music in the background as students are checking in for new student orientation. Consider using an online radio station such as Pandora or Groove Shark.
- Consider arranging tables in pods to allow for students to engage during the check-in time and throughout the orientation. Orientation facilitators can circulate the room and encourage students to introduce themselves, where they are from, what they are planning to study, whether or not they are planning to transfer, their ultimate career goal, etc. The point is to get students talking with one another and engaging prior to the session and perhaps making some connections with students who are majoring in a similar area or share a similar goal for attending BGSU Firelands.
- Consider the best location and group size for orientation and provide opportunities for students to connect with current and other new students. If space allows, perhaps a room could be dedicated specifically to new student orientation.
- Provide adequate breaks to keep the attendees attentive and focused. During breaks consider playing music.

- Consider providing light snacks and bottled waters at orientation.

Recommendations regarding communicating with students regarding new student orientation:

- Consider using e-blasts to communicate with students about specific information leading up to orientation and the start of fall semester. Andy Alt from BGSU provided templates that his office uses to do this called “New2BGSU.”
- Consider using social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with students prior to orientation.
- Consider having a few large new student orientation signs directing folks to new student orientation.
- Consider adding to the new student orientation page on BGSU Firelands website an orientation checklist with important links to financial aid, etc. In addition, review main campus’ “Orientation Station” website to see if this is something that might be good to replicate at BGSU Firelands.
- Consider having a staff information card in addition to one’s business card that includes a photo of the staff member, fun facts about the staff member, and the staff member’s contact information.
- Consider offering online registration for orientation.

Recommendations regarding assessment/evaluation of orientation:

- Before making major changes to the format, review the evaluations currently being used to gain student feedback. Began asking students to complete an orientation evaluation form this summer and Institutional Research will be involved in compiling the results.
- Consider doing a focus group to get students feedback after attending new student orientation. Perhaps a graduate assistant could assist with this.

Recommendations on training and development for staff:

- Consider asking staff members to read a common research article about new student orientation and take a few minutes to discuss the article as a group at the next staff meeting.
- Consider sending staff members to professional development opportunities specifically related to new student orientation. (i.e. National Orientation Director’s Association).
- Continue to collaborate with other area schools regarding new student orientation.
- Continue to meet with Andy Alt and his team at BGSU’s main campus to positively impact orientation.

Recommendations on thoughts to keep top of mind over time:

- Consider orientation a work-in-progress that will change and be tweaked over time.
- View orientation as a process and an experience and not simply an event.
- Consider hosting a parent orientation session if the need arises and the interest is there.

- Consider offering a practicum experience to college student personnel students on an ongoing basis. Recommendations for future practicum opportunities in new student orientation at BGSU Firelands could include a review and report on current research on new student orientation and first year programs. In addition, a graduate student could look at ways to further improve the assessment and evaluation of new student orientation, conduct focus groups, train student ambassadors, create e-blasts for communicating with students on a regular basis, prepare song playlists to be using during check-in and breaks, develop a list of icebreaker activities or interactive games and activities that could be used to deliver content.
- Consider whether or not it would be beneficial to include a group registration time at some point during orientation. If it is included, provide an individualized class registration sheet prepared by the student's advisors with suggested course to enroll in for the semester.
- Consider reviewing all orientation content on a regular basis by asking the question, "Is this information that students need to know right now?"
- Consider developing an online orientation as part of the new student orientation process.

Additional Resources

New Student Orientation Director's Association (NODA)

<http://noda.orgsync.com/home>

Mission Statement

The mission of the National Orientation Directors Association is to provide education, leadership, and professional development in the fields of college student orientation, transition and retention.

Core Purpose

To create a community of practice that defines and enriches the fields of orientation, transition, and retention.

Core Beliefs and Values

- We are an inclusive community of practitioners and scholars; building, fostering and sharing an environment that promotes connections of people and ideas for peer-to-peer learning.

- We value learning and innovation through the research, acquisition, formation and dissemination of scholarly knowledge, and the sharing of new and emerging best practices.
- We value diversity of ideas, institutions, and individuals.
- We practice integrity and model ethical behavior through adherence to professional standards.
- We take pride in the history and future of our services, programs, and resources.
- We practice leadership; providing opportunities for professional growth and development both on institutional campuses and within the Association.

CAS Standards for New Student Orientation

<http://www.cas.edu/>

MISSION

The mission of Orientation Programs (OP) must include facilitating the transition of new students into the institution; preparing students for the institution's educational opportunities and student responsibilities; initiating the integration of new students into the intellectual, cultural, and social climate of the institution; and supporting the parents, partners, guardians, and children of the new student.

OP must develop, disseminate, implement, and regularly review their mission. Mission statements must be consistent with the mission of the institution and with professional standards. OP in higher education must enhance overall educational experiences by incorporating student learning and development outcomes in their mission.

Foundations of Excellence

<http://www.fyfoundations.org/>

What is Foundations of Excellence®?

Now more than ever in challenging economic times, your campus needs an action plan for the critical beginning college experience. Foundations of Excellence® will yield a new vision for enhanced learning and retention of first-year and transfer students as well as priorities for resource allocation. Foundations of Excellence is a comprehensive, externally guided self-study and improvement process for the first year. In 2009 the first year self-study was expanded to include a focus on transfer students. The centerpiece of Foundations of Excellence is a model comprised of a set of principles that are termed Foundational Dimensions®. These Dimensions, developed by the Policy Center on the First Year of College (now John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education) and vetted by over 300 four- and two-year institutions, guide measurement of institutional efforts and provide an aspirational model for the entirety of

the beginning college experience (initial contact with students through admissions, orientation, and all curricular and co-curricular experiences). These Dimensions also provide an intellectual foundation for the entirety of the undergraduate experience.

The engine of The Foundations of Excellence process is a campus-based task force - a group with broad representation from across the campus. The work of the task force begins with a campus audit of the first year for new and transfer students (the " Current Practices Inventory ") and continues with a nine- to twelve-month process of evaluation using the Foundational Dimensions and related performance indicators (P.I.'s), and culminates in the development of a strategic action plan for campus improvement. Institutions that participate in the Foundations of Excellence process will have access to a wide array of services and support.

The Foundations of Excellence process is the signature work of the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. The Institute, founded in October 1999, has enjoyed the support of the following philanthropies for the development of its work: The Pew Charitable Trusts, The Atlantic Philanthropies, Lumina Foundation for Education, USA Funds, and Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.