

The Student Experience: First-Year Transition and First-Year Experience

**Recommendations to the Provost
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Executive Summary

Enhancing the student experience is Strategic Imperative 1 of Boldness by Design. Key strategies for addressing this imperative include:

- Prioritize the first year of college as the critical time to introduce students to a rigorous and engaged undergraduate experience and
- Enhance the transitional experiences, including welcome activities, for first-year students.

Beyond Boldness by Design, other factors suggest this is an optimal time to focus on the student transition and first year experience. 1) A variety of reasons compels MSU to consider modifications to the academic calendar. These include such things as maximizing opportunities for academic interactions with comparable institutions, inconsistencies in the number of academic days both among MSU semesters and between MSU and other CIC institutions, and the health and well-being of our students. 2) The importance of addressing the social, personal, and academic needs of an increasingly diverse community of students within the context of the Liberal Learning Goals. 3) The national focus on student outcomes and the development of programmatic initiatives that improve student retention and academic success. 4) Research on student development and the transition to college have provided an opportunity to understand more deeply the student transition to college - thus, the opportunity to design and implement more effective programs.

This work, originally conceived as a modification to the current Fall Welcome program, could not be conceptualized without acknowledging the connections to transition events occurring before and after Fall Welcome. Although important, Fall Welcome is only one of many opportunities to address the transitional needs of students as they matriculate. As the student transition was considered, it was critical to set aside the more traditional thinking that AOP and Fall Welcome are the sole opportunities to address the many and varied policies, guidelines, and MSU programs.

This document provides a framework to guide the planning and implementation of a new transition and first-year experience for MSU students. It is not a detailed road map. Implementation will require **ongoing collaboration across units, among curricular and co-curricular activities, between the academy and community, and between faculty and staff in order to provide students with a seamless First-Year Experience that reflects consistent goals and outcomes.**

This document examines research on the student transition and the first-year experience, considers changes at peer institutions relative to this period of time, looks carefully at current MSU practices, and considers input from faculty, staff, and students. Based on this, recommendations are made that will lead to a more coherent and transparent first-year experience for all MSU students. For the purposes of this report, the First-Year Transition is defined as beginning at the point when the student first communicates with MSU and includes the Academic Orientation Program (AOP), Fall Orientation (formerly referred to as Fall Welcome or Welcome Week), and the first few weeks of class. The First-Year Experience includes the First-Year Transition as well as the remainder of the first academic year.

Planning for the implementation of the First-Year Experience must begin immediately given the proposed Fall Semester 2009 start date. The current steering committee of administrators from

Student Affairs, Residence Life, and Academic Affairs should be retained to assure continuity and connectivity across various planning groups.

Within the context of the Liberal Learning Goals of MSU, the following two primary goals were derived for the First-Year Experience and the First-Year Transition respectively:

- Assist students in acclimating to the college environment (Page 14).
- Assist students in addressing the academic, social, and personal challenges inherent in the initial transition (Page 16).

Each goal has an associated set of outcomes that further delineate expectations for students, faculty, and staff during the defined period. Although the goals and outcomes provide a framework for the First-Year Experience, the primary focus of this report is on the First-Year Transition. Importantly, the work of the University Committee on Liberal Learning, residential/living-learning initiatives, programs such as Internationalizing the Student Experience; for-credit Freshman Seminars; Undergraduate Research, and initiatives in Housing, Residence Life, and Student Affairs should link to the work begun during the First-Year Transition.

The following **key findings** should guide planning and implementation:

1. Faculty, staff, and peer mentors must form a critical component of the transition in order to combat the “bigness” of the University.
2. Attention must be paid to the varied needs of students and to transitioning them from the highly structured high school environment to the less structured college experience.
3. Attention must be paid to providing active, and where appropriate, experiential learning opportunities that engage students with the rich diversity of MSU.
4. Initiatives must focus on assisting students, early and often, in developing, reflecting, and refining personalized social and academic goals that are consistent with MSU values and learning goals.
5. Students must be able to see the link between their goals and the curricular and co-curricular programming chosen to help achieve the goals.
6. Programs must provide students with multiple opportunities to form personal and academic networks.
7. All levels of staff interacting and building relationships with students on a daily basis should be provided training in order to encourage additional supportive connections for students.
8. Time must be devoted for students to manage the logistical details of the transition.
9. Changes in structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach should be considered and recommended.

Within the context of these guiding principles, three sets of integrated recommendations should be implemented. Core Recommendations are integral to the First-Year Experience. Fall Orientation and AOP Recommendations focus on the First-Year Transitions and serve as the foundation for programmatic initiatives within the broader First-Year Experience.

Core Programmatic Recommendations (Page 18)

1. Review all current forms of communication and programming to assure consistency with the goals and outcomes of the First-Year Experience, MSU values, and the Liberal Learning Goals.
2. Develop a dynamic and interactive web portal for the First-Year Experience.
3. Develop a not-for-credit “Freshman Transition Seminar” that links all aspects of the First-Year Transition.
4. Provide appropriate professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and students in support of the goals and outcomes of the First-Year Experience.
5. During planning and implementation, design appropriate assessment strategies.

AOP Recommendations (Page 21)

1. Focus on preparing students to succeed as learners.
2. Assist students in establishing and reflecting on their goals and purpose, linking them to the Liberal Learning Goals of MSU.
3. Within the context of establishing goals and purpose, address issues of holistic student development.
4. Provide an opportunity for students to explore more fully courses, majors, and co-curricular opportunities within the context of goals and purpose.
5. Provide more opportunities for students to begin developing community.

Fall Orientation Recommendations (Page 22)

1. Provide significant opportunities for creating a social network, developing community, and continuing elucidation of the students’ role as an interdependent learner.
2. Connect students with individual colleges, faculty, and the larger institution around academic goals and purposes.
3. Provide a culminating experience that celebrates the addition of new members into the Spartan community.

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The Student Experience: First-Year Transition and First-Year Experience

Charge

Associated with the proposed change to the Academic Calendar, develop a plan for a two-day Fall Orientation to be implemented in the Fall Semester of 2009. Given that Fall Orientation results from important collaborations among Admissions, Student Affairs, Housing, Residence Life, other students, faculty, staff, and the Office of Undergraduate Education, these stakeholders should be represented in the analysis of current practice, and the development and implementation of a coherent set of activities designed to introduce students to MSU and surrounding communities. An overarching goal would be to assist students in understanding their roles and responsibilities as learners and important members of a community of scholars. Recognizing that Fall Orientation is only one small but important part of the overall student experience, final recommendations should include a set of outcomes that would guide our work around the first-year experience in general and a Fall Orientation in specific.

Process

The review of Fall Orientation and the first-year experience included: (a) performing an environmental scan of current programs, resources and communications; (b) comparing MSU's programs with peer institutions, and the relevant literature on the student transition; and (c) interviewing key campus constituencies involved in a first-year experience. As a result, a set of goals and outcomes, for both the first-year experience and Fall Orientation were developed that are linked to a set of programmatic recommendations for Fall Orientation. As part of this process, over 200 faculty, administrative staff, and students were interviewed regarding the first-year experience at MSU and a limited subset subsequently reviewed this report. For more detailed information on the process, please refer to Appendix A.

Key Definitions

The First-Year Transition is defined as beginning at the point when the student first communicates with MSU and includes the Academic Orientation Program (AOP), Fall Orientation (formerly referred to as Fall Welcome or Welcome Week), and the first few weeks of class. The First-Year Experience includes the First-Year Transition as well as the remainder of the first academic year.

Review of Scholarship on First-Year Transition

Over the past 20 years, a significant body of research has examined the transition and first-year experience of students entering postsecondary educational environments. The following is a brief review of the scholarship with specific attention to the transition experience of undergraduate students into large research institutions.

1. Students look to mentors, peer or otherwise, for information to combat the “bigness” of large universities.

Research on successful student transitions indicate that many students struggle with their transition into large, research universities (Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, and Jalomo, 1994). In particular, they are challenged by feelings of being overwhelmed as they try to make sense of the scale and scope of the physical, social, and academic/cognitive geography of the institution. Attinasi (1989) noted that successful students were able to engage “guides and interpreters” in helping them make sense of and navigate their new environment.

Key Point: MSU needs to focus efforts on providing effective and easily accessible information to students in multiple forms, including through knowledgeable peers, faculty, and others, to support new students’ development of personal, academic, and professional strategies for success.

2. Successful students develop a degree of transitional expertise that is learned experientially and is unique to their specific institutional context.

Entering a new environment, students require mechanisms to make sense of their situation and to navigate it successfully. Those students who are most successful develop context-specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Hrabowski, 2005; Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, 1997). In other words, “successful college students are those who are in effect ‘experts’ at being successful as students at a specific college or university” (Padilla, Trevino, Gonzalez & Trevino, p. 126) and students report higher levels of confidence in their ability to perform in this environment (Hrabowski). The research points to experiential learning as the most effective manner by which this expertise is developed.

Key Points: 1) MSU should systematically tap into the expertise of current students to uncover what they believe to be the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes gained in their transition. 2) The information gained by tapping into this expertise should be shared with incoming students throughout the transition and preferably via experientially based programmatic initiatives.

3. Students that arrive with or quickly develop personalized goals are able to “scale down” large institutional environments by focusing their attention on the specific resources and supports that facilitate the achievement of their goals.

Frequently students on large campuses are excited and overwhelmed by the myriad academic, co-curricular, and social opportunities. Attinasi (1989) found that successful students were more frequently those that “scaled down” the institution by developing personalized goals and priorities that allowed them to focus on key campus resources and opportunities which supported the attainment of their goals.

Key Points: 1) MSU should provide early and repeated opportunities for new students to reflect upon and develop specific academic, career, and social goals, and connect to key resources and opportunities that could assist them in achieving them. 2) Students would benefit from early and repeated opportunities to discuss key institutional values and learning goals, considering ways they augment their personal goals.

4. Students are supported and guided by a “web of connections” that ease their transition and guide the development of personalized success strategies.

Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, and Jalomo (1994) found that successful students were frequently supported by a “web of connections” during their transition to college. This included individuals within and beyond the institutional setting such as family and friends as well as peers, faculty, academic advisers, and others that helped them create a sense of community and construct personalized transition strategies.

Key Points: 1) Although many faculty and administrators bemoan the hyper-involved “helicopter parent”, MSU would be well served to engage parents and families in a variety of ways to help them understand the appropriate role they can play in supporting their student’s successful transition. 2) MSU should recognize and provide information and training regarding the First-Year Transition to key individuals across campus (i.e., student employee supervisors, custodians, front-line service staff, student organization advisers, etc.) that interact and build relationships with students on a daily basis to encourage additional supportive connections for students.

5. During the initial stage of their transition, students are focused on developing a social support system and are often less ready to focus on their academic and intellectual transition.

Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, and Jalomo (1994) found that many of the students they studied were worried about being “lost in the crowd”, and as a result focused primarily on developing social connections that eased their transition. The researchers hypothesized that the academic transition might have been less intimidating than the social transition because of students’ lifetime expectations that the next logical step after high school was college. An important caveat is that the academic transition into postsecondary environments is often more challenging for non-traditional and first-generation students.

Key Points: 1) The first priority of the initial transition period should be to create opportunities for students to develop meaningful connections to peers, staff, and faculty. These connections will provide a foundation of support for students and increase their likelihood of feeling a sense of social integration. 2) The Fall Orientation schedule must provide students ample time to adjust to a new roommate, find their way around campus, buy books, and take care of all the “business” associated with transitioning to East Lansing and MSU. 3) Academic information and resources should be shared early in student’s tenure and through multiple avenues including Academic and Fall Orientation, in traditional first-year courses, through targeted emails/websites, and informally through resource fairs and residence hall staff.

6. Institutional success related to the first-year experience stems from a broad commitment to developing “organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated approach” that are “seamless and coherent”, “promotes the attitudes, behaviors, and skills that are consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education”, and aligns with the mission of the institution.

A significant body of research has led scholars to recommend that the following “Foundational Dimensions” (www.fyfoundations.org) be used by institutions as they develop a road map for promoting student success in the first year (Reason, Terenzini & Domingo, 2006):

1. Have organizational structures and policies that provide a comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated approach to the first year.
2. Facilitate appropriate recruitment, admissions, and student transitions through policies and practices that are intentional and aligned with the institutional mission.
3. Assign the first college year a high priority for the faculty.
4. Serve all first-year students according to their varied needs.
5. Engage students, both in and out of the classroom, to develop attitudes, behaviors, and skills consistent with the desired outcomes of higher education and the institutions philosophy and mission.
6. Ensure that all first-year students encounter diverse ideas, worldviews, and people as a means of enhancing their learning and preparing them to become members of pluralistic communities.
7. Conduct assessment and maintain associations with other institutions and relevant professional organizations in order to achieve ongoing first-year improvements.

Additionally, Barefoot (2005) noted the importance of taking a wide look at the transition experience beginning with the admissions process and carrying through the entirety of first-year programming. She also recommended that institutions would be wise to empower a single individual or office with broad oversight of coordination efforts to ensure consistency and follow-through on efforts.

Key Points: 1) MSU should review how the current organizational structure supports or thwarts efforts to improve the First-Year Experience. 2) The scholarship on best practice in first-year success initiatives should guide the formation and assessment of current programs and policies and the development of future endeavors at MSU.

Summary of the Literature

In summary, much of the transition literature concludes that successful students develop personalized and context-specific transition strategies. Scholars note that first-year students often look to peers, family members, staff, and faculty to serve as guides who mentor them through an often anxiety-filled and for some, overwhelming transition process. Additionally students in transition rarely develop expertise in any systematic manner, but learn by trial-and-error experiences, and as a result, struggle more than is necessary along the way.

Scholars have found that students benefit from the development of personalized goals. Awareness and setting of goals allow first-year students, alongside guides and mentors to seek out specific resources and opportunities, and thus scale down the campus in pursuit of their unique goals. As a result, students transitioning into a large research institution benefit from “expert peer”, faculty, and staff mentoring. This is particularly true when the interactions focus on encouraging students to reflect on

why they are in college, how they might achieve their goals in the specific institutional context, and where are the resources and supports needed to begin moving forward. Finally, the framework developed by scholars associated with the Foundations of Excellence in the First College Year provides institutional characteristics of highly successful first-year experience initiatives.

Fall Orientation Across the Big Ten

Between May and August of 2008, the large, public institutions in the Big Ten were reviewed with the goal of learning about current efforts to help students transition to campus with specific attention to the fall orientation program. We spoke with staff at the following campuses: University of Illinois, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Purdue University, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. Using internet-based resources, we gathered additional information from Indiana University, The Ohio State University, and the University of Iowa. No information was available on transition programs at Pennsylvania State University.

Information from peer institutions included specific programmatic initiatives with attention to (a) the fall orientation period – mission, goals, and guiding programmatic outcomes; (b) key offices, departments, and individuals involved; (d) the current organizational structure and staffing pattern that support the programs and initiatives; (e) funding sources; (f) key future initiatives; and (g) current assessment activities. Appendix B includes a synopsis of the data gathered from each institution.

The following were identified as current trends across the Big Ten:

1. The majority of institutions are ramping up efforts to support students' academic and social transition into and throughout their first year. Additionally, many of these efforts are marked by increased integration across academic affairs and student affairs with the goal of supporting holistic student success.
2. Numerous institutions are increasing the degree of programmatic coherence by coordinating their transition and first-year experience programs within a single office. The organizational location, structure, mission, and charge of this office varied based upon the history, context, and priorities of each institution.
3. Beyond the structural changes occurring at many institutions, most are now clearly articulating common goals and outcomes across programs and initiatives such as summer orientation, fall orientation, and programs that seek to support students during their first year.
4. Fall orientation initiatives across the Big Ten generally share similar goals and programmatic components.
 - a. Common goals include: (a) acclimating students to the campus and local community; (b) helping students feel comfortable and safe on campus; (c) conveying values and expectations, (d) helping students connect to available resources and opportunities; and (e) encouraging social interaction and the development of social networks.
 - b. Programs and initiatives often include: (a) a celebratory residence hall move-in experience; (b) large and small-scale social activities; (c) an introduction to academic resources; (d) a convocation-type event; (e) opportunities to experience and learn campus traditions (often connected with athletics); (f) interactions within academic departments or colleges; (g) a common reading; (h) open houses in cultural centers, libraries, unions, campus recreation centers; and (i) targeted opportunities to learn

about co-curricular and social involvement opportunities including student organizations.

5. Increasingly, successful returning students (200-500) are being employed as guides/peer-mentors assigned to small groups of new students through the fall orientation period. The most well developed programs provide multiple opportunities for these peers to meet with and talk about key issues with students throughout the initial transition period.
6. Institutions are considering how they might use technology to supplement current programs focused on supporting the student transition experience. Efforts include rethinking the timing of information dissemination to occur when students are not overwhelmed by transitional events.
7. Across the majority of institutions, there is a belief that the orientation program should extend beyond the fall orientation by offering activities that link to defined first-year outcomes. This effort also includes supporting the marketing of traditional events that occur during early parts of the academic year (e.g., study abroad or job fairs), and providing students and their families with information about resources.

MSU Environmental Scan

General Strengths

1. As a major research institution, Michigan State University provides a rich array of opportunities focused on the academic, co-curricular, and social needs of undergraduates.

One of the major strengths of the MSU experience is the vast opportunities available to students. Faculty, administrators, and students alike point to the rich array of offerings ranging from research opportunities, to the diversity of academic disciplines, to the largest study abroad program in the country, to the over 550 student organizations on campus. In addition, there are a number of support services available to assist students while at MSU, e.g., Writing Center, Olin Health Center, MSU Counseling Center, to name just a few. As a result, students have numerous opportunities and resources to craft a successful undergraduate experience.

2. The concept of the “Spartan Family” is an espoused ideal of the community.

In our conversations with various campus constituencies, nearly all respondents indicated that part of what defined the MSU experience was the concept of the “Spartan Family”. Although articulated in different ways, there was a consensus that during one’s time at MSU there is an implicit message to the community about developing into a body of individuals who are connected through this experience, are proud of the university, and rooted in the land grant philosophy.

3. There is a sense of pride about being a Spartan, particularly among students.

From the moment a student is admitted to the institution, they are inundated with images and messages about “being a Spartan” through both formal and informal channels. Currently these messages represent an array of definitions; however, the majority of the communication focuses on spirited support for the institution, and in particular, the athletics program. Attendance at Spartan Spirit, an optional Fall Orientation event hosted by athletics, is high and promotes school pride.

4. Michigan State University provides multiple programs that are perceived to provide excellent support in the transition of targeted student populations.

There are a number of academic programs that provide scaled-down, targeted orientation experiences for their students in lieu of some of the university-wide orientation events. For example, the residential colleges, Honors College, Office of International Students and Scholars, along with others provide intensive orientation experiences connected to their respective communities. In general, interview respondents pointed to these programs as successfully supporting the transition experience of their students. Cited reasons for their success include: (a) smaller number of students allow “high-touch” experiences; (b) significant faculty and staff involvement; (c) link to living environments; and (d) extension of program into students’ curricular experience.

Institutional Challenges

1. The MSU transition experience is a series of discrete and finite events.

Currently the transition experience of first-year students consists primarily of two loosely connected events: AOP, and Fall Orientation. Consistent with literature on the first-year experience (Barefoot, 2005; Reason, Terenzini, & Domingo 2006), a significant number of respondents recommended that MSU should broaden its conceptualization of student's transition to include efforts extending throughout the entire first year. Furthermore, these two programs should be aligned thematically with admissions and recruitment efforts, and present a coherent framework to which first-year programming can connect. At present, no series of goals or themes, and no clearly delineated and measurable outcomes form the basis for the programmatic initiatives that makeup AOP, Fall Orientation and the First-Year Experience.

2. The size of MSU presents a significant challenge for creating a coherent and supportive transition experience for new students.

MSU's size presents a significant challenge for the transition of new students to the institution. Although MSU appropriately espouses pride in familial ideals, respondents were unable to point to systematic sets of initiatives that engaged students in thinking about and developing these ideals early in the transition period. This lack of apparent coherence in transitional programs may account for some students' inability to connect meaningfully to the institution. Although the espoused ideal of community becomes real at some point in the undergraduate experience, a set of linked transitional experiences would assist students in making connections early.

In addition, the size of MSU also makes supporting students through their transition difficult. As one respondent articulated, "it is easy to get lost in the bigness." Although some students seek anonymity, all desire to connect in various ways with available resources. Due in part to the diffuse nature of programs, students often struggle to identify opportunities during their first-year. Furthermore, individuals committed to assist students (e.g., academic advisers, Resident Mentors, faculty/instructors)¹ serve large numbers of students. As a result, the ability of these individuals to intervene can be limited.

3. The participation at some Fall Orientation events is low.

The current Fall Orientation consists of many large events. Students are strongly encouraged to attend certain events (e.g., Convocation); however, attendance is not mandatory for many events nor is it enforced for events where students are expected to attend. Some respondents indicated that many events, as currently structured, could not accommodate all of the students targeted for the event (e.g., College Colloquia). Further, some respondents indicated that the size of the events is not conducive to encouraging students to attend. Thought should be given to how we can most effectively expose students to the most critical information and experiences given the size of the institution and its inherent limitations.

¹ For example, Resident Mentors have a mentor to student ratio of approximately 1:40-75; academic advisers have an adviser to student ratio of approximately 1:300-500.

Current Transition Experience

1. Many activities are more reminiscent of the structure of K-12 education than the relatively unstructured environment of college.

The transition into college is marked by a significant change in the structure of students' environment. For example, students have more discretionary time than classroom time; instructors monitor students' work at less frequent intervals; students have significant autonomy in setting personal goals and choosing behaviors that will (or will not) contribute to their success. Students are often ill prepared to navigate this more self-determined environment. As it is currently structured, the initial transition period is more reminiscent of the rigidity of the K-12 experience where information is transmitted to students. Although some structure is undoubtedly necessary to manage events of this size, most students participate passively, receiving information in highly structured environments. As one respondent commented, it is "far removed from a typical learning experience", and therefore does not begin to prepare students for what will be expected of them when they arrive on campus. The First-Year Transition represents an excellent opportunity to prepare students for the less-structured experience that awaits them as they begin fall courses.

2. Many activities fail to communicate a clear ethos that links to a larger first-year framework or the institutional mission for undergraduate education.

The current transition experience lacks a common purpose to which each activity is intentionally linked. Although some activities articulate a mission or set of goals, it is unclear to what extent the goals align with institutional priorities for undergraduate education and other first-year programming. In comparing the perceived takeaways articulated by student respondents with those who plan the activities, there is an apparent disconnect. Further, the array of foci among program planners for the various student transition activities underscores the lack of coherence in the current experience. Any major events like AOP; Convocation; One Book, One Community; or the current Engagement Sessions should be framed within a cohesive transition strategy. Further, the transition experience should highlight and begin to frame the student experience within the larger context of the Liberal Learning Goals.

3. The current message regarding the change in academic environment is framed negatively and covered superficially.

There are a number of opportunities for a conversation on differences in the academic environment between high school and college during the initial transition period. Currently a combination of faculty, administrative staff, and peers tackle this issue within presentations with multiple purposes. However when the issue of academic expectations are addressed, the tenor tends to be framed negatively and may serve to unintentionally norm certain behaviors. For example, students are warned that the work will be hard so make sure that you do the reading; it is important to not skip class, although you will be tempted to do so; you will be forced to think in ways that you have not previously. In some ways, the current framing may reinforce the negative behaviors of the student body like skipping class or not completing class readings. Although these messages are important to communicate, the current framing is too brief and diffuse throughout the programming, doing little to convey excitement about the learning process and the experience of becoming a scholar.

4. There is a lack of consideration for the timing and prioritization of programming within the current transition experience.

Related to the point above (see #2), the First-Year Transition experience should provide a coherent set of activities for students that address the needs of the students at the appropriate time. There are a number of activities that distract from the core transitional issues facing students. For example, the study abroad information session at AOP comes before students are clear about their academic goals; the alumni association presents “Being a Spartan”, including messages about alumna/ae expectations prior to the student’s enrollment in classes. These are two examples in which the more pressing issues for students (e.g., orientation to the MSU community, clarifying academic goals, etc.) are not prioritized. Although messages about study abroad and alumni participation are important, their place in the current schedule does not address a pressing need, nor place it logically in the students’ experience. The initial transition period should not be viewed by departments as the sole opportunity to communicate with students. As noted in the charge, AOP and Fall Orientation comprise a relatively small amount of the total student experience but are critical to the student transition. Therefore, it is clear that messages need to focus on student transitional needs.

5. Many students feel under prepared to make academic decisions within the current transition timeline.

Currently students are encouraged to select a major prior to AOP. After a group presentation from their department, students generally complete a worksheet of course options based on the requirements for their program. The next day, students use the worksheet to enroll in classes during a brief meeting with an academic adviser. Many respondents, especially the students expressed concern about the lack of academic clarity among first-year students prior to selecting and attending classes. This series of events does not include a structured opportunity for students to reflect on their academic goals and the disciplinary options at MSU prior to making these important decisions.

6. There exists no clear, easily accessible place for first-year students (or their families) to access needed information.

The large student body makes personal contact and “high-touch” interactions between faculty, staff, and students difficult. It is critical for students to be able to access information easily. In the current environment, respondents cited the internet and their peers as the most common sources of information. Many suggested the MSU web sites were not helpful due to their lack of content, navigability, and accessibility in serving the changing needs of students. In general, student respondents felt that it was unclear where to turn for reliable information. As a consequence, outstanding resources developed for students (i.e., Degree Navigator, the Fall Orientation website, the FYI website) are generally underutilized, particularly as the academic year progresses.

7. Although the College Colloquium is an important opportunity to introduce students to their College, it is unclear what the purpose of this session is and how it ties to a coherent process of orientation.

In most conversations with students, faculty and staff, the purpose and structure of the College Colloquium were questioned. Faculty and staff appreciate the opportunity to welcome students to their College, and viewed the Colloquium as an important part of the academic and social integration of students into their College. Students expressed interest in connecting to their college and meeting the faculty. However, the current framework makes accomplishing these goals difficult. Many of these sessions involve information dissemination through presentations to large groups of students. Many faculty and staff report that it is difficult to interact meaningfully with that many students.

Further, it remains unclear what role the College should play during this time of the orientation process. The Colloquium should be considered a seminal opportunity to connect new students with the faculty. Within this context, consideration should be given to the purpose and desired outcomes of the colloquium to provide a framework for these sessions, while continuing to empower Colleges to decide how best to manage the experience.

8. Although the potential impact is considerable, One Book, One Community has not yet gained optimal traction with first-year students.

A common concern raised among campus constituencies is the level of engagement with One Book, One Community. In particular, most faculty and staff respondents indicated concern about the level of participation and engagement in the program. This sentiment was echoed strongly by the students with whom we met. At the same time, there is significant support for the program across campus, especially as an outreach to the community. There exists great potential for this program, but consideration should be given to how to increase student engagement and therefore programmatic impact. Efforts to incorporate the book into the curriculum (e.g., through WRA) should continue to be explored and encouraged.

Challenges Facing Students

1. Students must learn quickly to engage in a relatively unstructured environment.

Most students struggle with the more autonomous nature of college life (see *Feedback on Current Transition Experience #1*). This task is even more difficult because most students come to MSU with undefined goals in an environment where there is no single, defined path to success. While pre-professional students benefit from a relatively prescribed set of experiences and students in specialized programs benefit from additional guidance and support (e.g., Spartan Advantage, Residential Colleges), most students lack structured opportunities to reflect on their educational and professional goals.

Without a guide or mentor through the self-exploration process, many first-year students struggle to develop personal goals. This lack of goals makes it difficult to craft a plan of curricular and co-curricular opportunities that will promote learning and competence. As a result, this lack of goal definition has negative consequences for retention, time-to-degree, future employability, and the ability to gain admission to graduate school. Although many resources exist to support this transition, many students are unaware of them, do not know where to access them, or to whom to turn for assistance. This is especially challenging at a large institution like MSU.

2. Student expectations of the college experience often differ from that of the institution; frequent feedback to students is necessary.

One of the major obstacles facing students is the adjustment to a new set of expectations. Students are expected to navigate a significant paradigm shift in terms of making sense of their educational experience with little to no clear communication around these differences. One example is the disparity in study expectations between faculty and students. Faculty expect students to spend between two and three hours preparing for class for every hour spent in class. In comparison, students' practice is significantly less. Data from the National Survey of Student Engagement shows that 10% of MSU students study more than 25 hours per week while 65% study 15 hours or fewer.

If students do not receive early and frequent feedback on academic work, they can easily find themselves behind in a class with little time to take corrective measures.

Another example is the expectation that students will construct a set of experiences in and out of the classroom that will prepare them to compete for graduate admissions or employment after college. Many students are unaware of this expectation; often students are expecting that the institution is preparing them in this way. Currently the institution does little to prepare students for these stark changes, particularly for first-year students. Any communication of these changes in expectations is limited to brief mentions in large information sessions, which make them difficult for students to internalize.

3. Students must determine their social niche i.e., where they fit in.

For many, the move to campus can be tied to identity development in which establishing a social group is linked to their sense of self. As many respondents indicated, this dominates the concerns of first-year students upon arrival on campus. Although college represents an exciting opportunity to develop a new social network, the task can be difficult. This is particularly challenging for non-traditional, first-generation, international, out-of-state students, and students from diverse backgrounds. It is critical for students to establish a network of support, but it takes time to develop trust and confidence in this new environment. Unless addressed, this pressing need may inhibit students' ability to hear and process other vital information related to academics, policies, and important programs and services.

As numerous respondents noted, the programs and support systems at Michigan State University must focus on providing an immediate sense of welcome and points of connection for our diverse student population. New students quickly observe the intentional and unintentional messages and consequently attention should be paid to both in order to promote an inclusive environment that supports all students.

4. Many students lack the advanced academic skills to succeed during their first year.

Regarding students' transition to college-level academic work, many faculty and administrative respondents indicated a gap in academic skills including the ability to write, analyze, and conduct research. In particular, students need to learn important research skills, understand and apply the concepts of academic integrity, find resources both online and in the library, and identify legitimate sources. Many students require additional training in these areas to perform the academic work expected of them.

5. Students must navigate their relationship with very involved parents.

Students arrive having experienced significant structure in their lives with parents who tend to be more involved and protective of their children than ever before (DeBard, 2004). As a result, many students struggle to make their own decisions because their level of autonomy has been developmentally delayed. Parents often continue a high level of involvement during the college years in ways that can be detrimental to students' long-term success and frustrating to faculty and administrators. Although the university has a strong Parent Orientation Program in place, MSU should consider how to support parents throughout the transition process and the first-year.

Reframing the Scope of the Proposal

The interviews with campus constituencies articulated the need for a plan that spans individual initiatives including AOP and Fall Orientation. They also echoed the literature's call for a focus on the timing and placement of activities corresponding to students' preparedness. Further, these interactions should relate to a broader set of institutional priorities for the first year.

Thus, it became evident that the scope of this report needed to extend beyond recommendations for Fall Orientation. In order to address the need for a coherent transition experience this report has been expanded to include recommendations for the entire transition period extending from the recruitment and admissions period, through AOP and Fall Orientation, and into the first year.

Proposed Goals and Outcomes

In light of the research on the first-year experience and interviews with campus constituents, it is clear that the outcomes for any initiative should be conceptualized within a broader framework relative to timing and student need (Barefoot, 2005). Consistent with "serv[ing] all first-year students according to their varied needs" (Reason et al., 2006), the first year should be an ongoing and coherent process tailored to the diversity of the MSU community (Schroder, 2005). Considering this, the goals and outcomes should be neither narrowly defined, nor confined to the activities of a finite period (Schroder; Siegel, 2005). The focus should be on broad goals and outcomes that have relevance for the diversity of students at various stages of intellectual and personal development, while guiding students toward institutional priorities for the learning experience.

We have identified two sets of goals and outcomes: (a) a set for the broader First-Year Experience; and (b) a set for the shorter First-Year Transition. These goals and sets of outcomes are not mutually exclusive. They are constructed in such a way that the short-term outcomes for the First-Year Transition build into the longer-term outcomes for the First-Year Experience. Further, the outcomes lay the groundwork for additional conversations about the Liberal Learning Goals and outcomes for the entire undergraduate experience.

Mission

Michigan State University strives to support the successful transition of all new students into our learning community by marking this significant period with a series of coherent events and activities. First-Year Experience programs are designed to enhance student success by supporting students' development of a rich understanding, appreciation, and commitment to engage in curricular and co-curricular opportunities. The programs serve to introduce students to the idea that a Spartan is both an interdependent learner and an effective citizen.

Goal and Outcomes for the First-Year Experience

We propose that the primary goal for the First-Year Experience is to:

Assist students in acclimating to the college environment.

Although a simple concept, the goal frames the basic focus of supporting students' transition to college life. The transition process involves navigating a new set of expectations for: (a) how

students understand their role as learners, (b) how students understand their place within a new community, (c) how students understand their role as effective citizens of this community. The following outcomes are linked to this primary goal:

1. Role as learner: Becoming an interdependent learner.

As students enter college, it is important that they develop into interdependent learners (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Interdependent learners have the ability to learn independently and take responsibility for their learning, recognize the value of collaboration and multiple perspectives, and give appropriate weight to contrary opinions. Interdependent learners recognize that advanced study is rarely done in isolation.

Some additional key characteristics of interdependent learners include: (a) willingness to seek out and find resources to answer questions; (b) willingness to seek assistance and admit the need for help; (c) willingness to seek opportunities to learn beyond the class requirements; (d) applying knowledge to real-world contexts; and (e) adapting their learning style to different teaching environments.

2. Place in a new community: Develop a network of support.

A key predictor of students' success in college is their ability to develop a support network (Hrabowski, 2005; Tinto, 1993). In particular, it is necessary that this network involve multiple dimensions of support for social and educational purposes (Crissman Ishler & Upcraft, 2005) that promote a sense of social integration (Tinto). For many students, the arrival at college marks a clear separation from previous networks that served these roles. Although some may persist during college, students need to consider, thoughtfully and proactively, how to develop new networks. The most challenging aspect for students is the formation of an educational network. Faculty, advisers, and mentors play a critical role in assisting students in structuring their curricular and co-curricular experiences and directing them toward resources and opportunities that will shape their post-college futures. In addition, this network facilitates improved learning and intellectual engagement.

3. Role as citizen: Uphold and promote shared institutional values.

As part of the transition experience, it is important for an institution to present a coherent message regarding institutional priorities (Schroder, 2005; Siegel, 2005). At MSU, being a member of the Spartan community carries with it an expectation to uphold certain values of the community. Three examples are: (a) students are expected to be engaged scholars, embracing the opportunities to learn through their membership in an intellectual community; (b) each member of the MSU community is expected to uphold the standards of academic integrity; and (c) students are expected to appreciate the diversity within the community and understand, engage, and embrace the myriad opportunities to learn, develop, and grow as a result of interactions with others. These types of institutional values undergird the most fundamental standards of behavior expected of an MSU student. The First-Year Experience should purposefully expose students to these values through explicit discussions and experiences in the community.

Goal and Outcomes for the First-Year Transition

Similar to the broader goal for the First-Year Experience of becoming a Spartan, we propose that the primary goal for the First-Year Transition should be to:

***Assist students in addressing the academic, social,
and personal challenges inherent in the initial transition.***

The prevailing concern articulated by respondents related to the level of student anxiety as they settled into a new environment. Although we recognize that exploring and managing issues related to student anxieties may seem like a lower-order goal, we recommend focusing on the most immediate transitional needs of students during this time. This time is critical for students to understand and engage their anxieties. AOP and Fall Orientation should (a) help students manage logistics, (b) help students develop a sense of community, (c) provide students with opportunities to explore and reflect on goals and purpose, and (d) begin to define what it means to be a Spartan.

1. Managing logistics.

Many respondents (including faculty, staff, and students) noted students often exhibit high levels of anxiety at the start of their first semester, and as a result were unprepared to begin coursework. Instead, students' attention was centered on such things as setting up rooms with a new roommate, paying bills, sorting through financial aid issues, buying books, and finding one's way around campus. Until these lower-order needs are addressed, students are not prepared to manage higher-order processes (Maslow, 1954). Thus we recommend that AOP and Fall Orientation collectively provide, and the institution support, ample opportunities for students to address the logistical challenges of their transition.

2. Establishing, reflecting on, and refining goals and purpose.

A concern raised consistently by respondents was the lack of clarity in goals and purpose with which students embark on their college experience. Many students have not determined what they want out of their educational experience, yet they have enrolled in classes and begun participating in co-curricular activities. AOP and Fall Orientation should facilitate a process for students to begin making sense of why they are here, and through this process, identify goals and make a tentative plan of action for a meaningful undergraduate experience. Additionally, students often struggle with the ability to manage themselves and their time in pursuit of these goals and would benefit from focused and, in some cases, intrusive coaching in personal and time management. With university support during this process, students will be better prepared for the academic year including the need to develop a plan of action, and to be proactive in seeking resources and assistance.

3. Developing community.

It is critical that AOP and Fall Orientation facilitate structured and informal opportunities for students to develop relationships with their peers including roommates, floor mates, and others. Such opportunities are particularly critical for commuter students who have fewer opportunities and less time on-campus to develop social networks during their first year at MSU. For many students, the ease of their transition is marked by the level of success they experience in identifying a social cohort. Students want to answer such question as: "Where do I fit in?"; "What is my niche?", and

“How do I relate to the broader community?” AOP and Fall Orientation should provide opportunities for students to begin answering these questions and to develop interpersonal relationships. This connection to the community is necessary to allow students to consider what it means to be effective citizens.

4. Understanding and manifesting Spartan values.

AOP and Fall Orientation serve as critical junctures in the communication of institutional ideals, values, and outcomes to students. The First-Year Transition provides an important opportunity to develop a set of experiences that will communicate the community values of the University. Spartan values include such things as (a) maintaining academic integrity; (b) embracing the diversity of the institution; (c) developing pride in the University; and (d) becoming responsible and involved citizens of the campus and surrounding communities.

Similarly, it is important that the institution via faculty, administrators, staff, and returning students actively reinforce these Spartan values by creating a “welcoming” environment for first-year students. Campus constituencies should be further encouraged to reach out to students during the First-Year Transition to model good citizenship to students as students navigate the campus. Programming at AOP and Fall Orientation is uniquely positioned to convey these types of messages.

Programmatic Recommendations

Core Programmatic Recommendations

To address the need to broaden the scope of the proposal beyond the discrete orientation events, and to develop a framework for a more cohesive First-Year Experience, we identified a set of core programmatic recommendations. These core recommendations represent essential elements of a new transition experience that extends beyond AOP and Fall Orientation and encourages a more collaborative, seamless student experience.

1. *Cross-unit collaboration will be essential to develop and implement a coherent First-Year Experience.*

In the development of a First-Year Experience, it is important to heed the calls to view the experience beyond a series of discrete events (Barefoot 2005; Reason et al., 2006). Although most of the recommendations that follow are organized primarily around individual events, it is important to note that the revised program for MSU encourages a more interconnected conceptualization of the experience i.e., the purpose and outcomes of one event link directly with those of another. **Thus ongoing collaboration across units, among curricular and co-curricular activities, between the academy and community, and between faculty and staff is critical in order to provide students with a seamless First-Year Experience that reflects consistent goals and outcomes.**

2. *Review all current forms of communication and programming to assure consistency with the goals and outcomes of the First-Year Experience and the institutional learning goals.*

Much of what shapes students' understanding of the culture, norms, and values of Michigan State University are the messages relayed through programs and publications (e.g., admissions information, newsletters, emails, AOP materials, housing information, AOP and Fall Orientation programs, publications and websites). Considerable time and effort has been devoted to developing communication strategies in the absence of a set of overarching goals as articulated in this document. With greater collaboration to develop common language within the context of these goals, we believe that messages to students and their families will be more effective.

3. *Develop a dynamic and interactive web portal for the First-Year Experience.*

We believe developing a comprehensive, easily navigable, and interactive web portal for new students and their families will allow them to make sense of the myriad opportunities and resources available. A First-Year Experience web portal should be developed to engage students with the goals and outcomes, and enhance the quality, consistency, and timeliness of information shared with new students and their families. Students and their families will be introduced to this web portal beginning with acceptance to the University and continuing throughout the students' first year. The site must be a collaborative effort among constituencies such that a single web portal can function for students throughout the First-Year Experience.

The web portal will provide students and their families with the following:

- 1) Direct access to relevant resources;
- 2) An intuitive and easy to navigate interface;
- 3) Short articles that seek to communicate important information to students with the goal of supporting their academic, social, co-curricular, and career success;

- 4) Timely emails that deliver relevant and developmentally-appropriate information to students and their families to help them make sense of and navigate their first year at MSU;
- 5) Interactive experiences that provide virtual learning opportunities and social networking to support the First-Year Experience. For example, information sessions on safety, and health and wellness could be presented via video with an online quiz follow-up, or serious gaming experiences could be developed to address student issues.

4. *Develop a **Freshman Transition Seminar** that links all aspects of the First-Year Transition.*

A primary challenge articulated in the literature and identified in environmental scans and interviews was students' lack of defined goals for the learning experience. To help students understand their goals and their role as an interdependent learner, we recommend that all aspects of the First-Year Transition be connected through discussions around student goals and purposes. **This could be conceived of as the Freshman Transition Seminar - multiple small group sessions for students to begin developing goals, considering purpose, and identifying resources.** In combination with online exercises, the Freshman Transition Seminar would eventually link students to specific curricular and co-curricular experiences to create a coherent set of learning opportunities aimed at achieving the students' academic, social, and career goals. Although the majority of students presumably set personal goals, it is unclear how much support students receive in developing the expertise needed to navigate the physical and cultural geography of their new environment.

This Freshman Transition Seminar would build on the first communications with students, incorporate virtual interactions, continue through AOP with face-to-face reflective exercises, and culminate with meetings during Fall Orientation and the first few weeks of class (see Figure 1). The face-to-face sessions would take the form of small group experiences with faculty, staff, and peer-mentors. Students would adopt the roles of "apprentice scholars"² to individuals who can guide them through the transition process and help them learn about themselves as they prepare to engage college life.

We propose that the Freshman Transition Seminar focus on the following goals:

- 1) Provide a forum for students to reflect on why they chose Michigan State University and what they want to learn and achieve.
- 2) Help students define and set specific academic, co-curricular, and social goals for their first year. Students should gain a sense of how the Liberal Learning Goals benefit them and can serve as a guide as they develop their own goals.
- 3) Develop a framework for students' time management skills and help them understand how to create a plan and map out their unstructured time, including the "open time" during Fall Orientation (e.g., how to think about the time; how to use the time effectively, etc.). In addition, the discussion might also focus on how the decisions students make around issues of their wellness (i.e., sleep, exercise, alcohol and drug use, etc) help or hinder their ability to be successful at Michigan State.

² Term proposed by Kelley Bishop, Director of Career Services, to help conceptualize a way of coming to know for new students. One in which they serve as apprentices to key campus personnel - ones with deeper knowledge of the academy and more advanced abilities.

- 4) Connect students to specific resources, support services, and opportunities that will help them to achieve their personal goals. In particular, the seminars should highlight academic advisers as a critical resource for on-going support and guidance.
- 5) Serve as a foundational piece linked to the existing freshman seminar series.

Figure 1: Freshman Transition Seminar. The Freshman Transition Seminar is connected across time and is designed to assist students in articulating, reflecting on, and refining a set of goals and associated purposes for their college experience. The following illustrates the connections across the First-Year Transition (**Timeline**), links to specific recommendations (**Programmatic Recommendations**), and provides **Developmental Considerations** for each component.

TIMELINE	PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS	DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS
Admission → First Day of Classes	Messages reinforcing goals and expectations for the First-Year Experience (Core #1, #2 & #3)	<p>Framing and Shaping Goals and Purpose</p> <p>Reflecting on and Refining of Personal Goals</p> <p>Personal Assessment and Skill Building</p>
Admission → AOP	Web portal - space and place for sharing information while promoting reflection (e.g., serious gaming) (Core #1, #2 & #3)	
AOP	Face-to-face opportunities for guided conversation and feedback (AOP #2 & #3)	
AOP → Fall Orientation	Website - resources supporting personal exploration of learning styles; information about MSU; other resources (Core #1 & #3)	
Fall Orientation	Floor Meetings; commuter student meetings; College Colloquium; Convocation (Core #1; Fall Orientation #1, #2 & #3)	
First Year	Final Freshman Transition Seminar ; additional first-year experiences through-For-credit Freshman Seminars; UG Research; academic advising; career advising; Residence Life; Student Life; UUD & colleges; etc. (Core #1, #2, #3, #5 & Fall Orientation #1)	

5. Provide professional development opportunities for faculty, staff, and peer-mentors in support of the goals and outcomes of the First-Year Experience.

Providing information and guidance to the numerous individuals across campus that interact daily with first-year students (e.g. first-year instructors; front-line administrative and support staff; grounds, custodial, dining, and maintenance staff; student employee supervisors) will enhance the degree to which the institution supports the First-Year Experience. Often, these individuals are in a

position to address, directly or indirectly, issues students face during their transition to college, assisting them in becoming aware of available resources. By encouraging members of the community to support the First-Year Experience, and providing the knowledge to do so, we will be able to capitalize on existing formal and informal interactions.

6. *During the development and implementation phase of this work, the goals and outcomes should drive discussion and subsequent design of appropriate assessment strategies.*

AOP Recommendations

1. *AOP should focus on preparing students to succeed as learners at MSU.*

Rather than being viewed as the one opportunity to deliver information about all aspects of the institution, AOP should focus solely on introducing students to the college environment and expectations for interdependent learning and effective citizenship. It should be conceived as the first face-to-face component of the **Freshman Transition Seminar**.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; reflect on goals and purpose; effective citizen; Spartan values

2. *AOP should expose first-year students to the process of reflection on goals and purpose.*

As one of the key proposed outcomes for the First-Year Transition, students' reflection on goals and purpose and how they link with the learning goals of the institution should be prominent in AOP. With smaller groups of students, AOP is an excellent environment in which to communicate the difference between high school and college academic environments. We recommend a series of sessions that promote student reflection on educational goals, how to align the goals with those of MSU (e.g., Liberal Learning Goals), and how to achieve these outcomes through participation in a set of meaningful curricular and co-curricular experiences. This reflective process will lead to more focused advising conversations regarding choice of major, course selection, and co-curricular involvement.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; reflect on goals and purpose; effective citizen; Spartan values

3. *AOP should continue to address issues of holistic student development framed by the conversation of goals and purpose.*

Currently AOP tackles a large variety of social issues related to the student transition. We recommend that these issues continue to be part of AOP. However, they should be embedded in discussions and reflections around the goal of becoming successful interdependent learners. All information should lay the foundation for understanding the major transition issues student's face and the resources they can access for support. For example, discussions regarding health and wellness can be introduced during reflections on goals and purpose. Students could be led through a series of sessions that would address: (a) What obstacles can get in the way of your goals? (b) How can you effectively navigate these obstacles? and, (c) What support structures and resources are available at MSU to help you? The underlying focus is to create a felt need among the students to hear and learn this information. Small groups with peer, faculty, or staff facilitators specifically trained to lead this type of discussion can be effective for this purpose.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; manage logistics; reflect on goals and purpose; effective citizen; Spartan values

4. *AOP should provide an opportunity for students to explore majors and departments.*

As part of the Freshman Transition Seminar, AOP can help prepare students to identify their academic interests more thoughtfully. AOP could couple reflective discussions with greater exposure to various majors and with guidance on how courses and co-curricular opportunities link to their individual goals and purpose. Academic advisors would be key in helping students reflect on these issues. This is particularly relevant as student respondents indicated considerable anxiety around the selection of a major, the selection of courses, academic expectations, and their place in the community. Approximately 15% of freshmen enter MSU as no-preference and over the last four years among freshmen, 12% changed their major in the Fall and 19% changed their major in the Spring. With limited familiarity with college-level academic disciplines, students would greatly benefit from opportunities to consider their academic options more fully at AOP.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; reflect on goals and purpose

5. *AOP should provide more opportunities for students to begin developing community.*

Currently AOP promotes student peer interactions in their residence hall and through assigned groups for various activities. These efforts should be continued and we recommend that additional efforts to facilitate these types of interactions be considered. Consistent with the concept of a Freshman Transition Seminar, additional small group interactions, facilitated by orientation leaders, should become more prominent in the programming to promote an emphasis on interdependent learning, perspective taking, and encourage greater interpersonal relationships.

Link to Outcomes: effective citizen; develop community

Fall Orientation Recommendations

General Notes

In conceptualizing a shortened Fall Orientation schedule, we recommend the following considerations for other related programs on campus:

1. All AOP sessions (including those for international students) should conclude prior to the start of Fall Orientation to allow all students to participate.
2. Flexibility in terms of move-in dates may be necessary for full Fall Orientation participation by international and out-of state students.
3. Consideration should be given to those programs (e.g., Residential Colleges, CAAP, CAMP) that could benefit from time for alternate programming.

Programmatic Recommendations

1. *Fall Orientation should provide significant opportunities for creating a social network, developing community, and continued elucidation of students' role as interdependent learners.*

a. Residence Hall Move-In

The move-in process serves to welcome and introduce students to their living community and provide an opportunity to handle the logistics of setting up their room. This day of events plays a critical role in helping students feel part of the Spartan community. Further, the initial day of move-in allows students to establish their most immediate community in the residence hall where staff model the norms of a safe and supportive living environment. We recommend that the current practice of inviting faculty and staff from across campus to be a part of the move-in process continue and where appropriate be expanded.

The Department of Residence Life plays a critical role in the success of Fall Orientation. As a residential campus, one of MSU's best opportunities to facilitate early "high-touch" experiences is in the living environments. Although the current Resident Mentor to student ratio is too high on average to allow for the development of mentoring relationships, Resident Mentors serve an important role in supporting the First-Year Experience as informed guides. Resident Mentors should be encouraged to focus their attention on relationship building, mentoring that encourages reflection, and pointing students to appropriate resources as a means of developing continuity and support through the first year.

b. Floor Meetings

The next three meetings are conceived of as integral components of the Freshman Transition Seminar. These are co-facilitated by Resident Mentors, faculty, and/or staff. A similar series of small group meetings for **commuter students** should be developed and implemented.

With Resident Mentors as primary facilitators, the initial floor meeting is an opportunity to build on previous transition activities. The initial floor meeting should focus on community building and discussion of values and norms of community living expected of MSU students. Floor meetings should build on virtual exercises completed via the web portal that introduced students to university policies, expectations, and resources. This meeting provides time for a more developmental and interactive dialogue around community norms and responsibilities and how they relate to students goals and purposes.

Link to Outcomes: manage logistics; effective citizen; reflecting and refining goals and purpose, develop community; Spartan values.

A second floor meeting should focus on continuing the face-to-face work on goals and purpose begun during the AOP Freshman Transition Seminar. Additionally, this floor meeting should contextualize the rest of Fall Orientation for students by helping them understand how subsequent programming facilitates their transition process. Floor meetings should be co-facilitated by a faculty or a staff member and a Resident Mentor. By grouping students by residential floors, Resident Mentors establish themselves as guides within these living-learning communities. Discussion will center on such things as developing successful learning strategies, navigating the physical environment, and connecting to resources and opportunities.

To continue the developmental work of the first two floor meetings, co-facilitators should conduct a final meeting within the first two to three weeks of class. This will help deepen relationships and

provide students an opportunity to reflect on their educational goals against the backdrop of their first weeks of classes. These meetings should focus on personalized planning for the fall semester, time management (e.g., reflection on use of time during the past weeks, study habits, effective communication) and discussions on managing their learning environment.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; manage logistics; reflect on goals and purpose; effective citizen; develop community; Spartan values.

c. Open Time

The open time slot serves two purposes: (a) allow students an opportunity to address their most pressing concerns; and (b) introduce students to navigating the unstructured college environment. In response to a primary concern expressed by faculty, staff, and students, this open time would allow students to deal with such things as paying bills, meeting with financial aid officers, and purchasing books. This dedicated time is important as students often struggle to find time to deal with logistical issues prior to the start of classes.

In addition, the open time allows students to begin making decisions related to time management in an unstructured environment. Moving from the seminar in which students will reflect on their goals, the facilitators can frame this time as an opportunity for students to access resources or manage some of their logistical issues based on their individual needs. Facilitators can serve as guides to direct students who have questions. Certain offices, like academic advising departments in the colleges, financial aid, registrar, etc would be encouraged to have flexible hours and drop-in opportunities specifically for first-year students who have newly raised questions as a result of the seminar. **This time would also serve to address the needs of those programs (e.g., residential colleges and other programs) to create programming unique to their students.**

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; manage logistics

d. Evening Community Activities

A traditional component of the Fall Orientation program has been a series of community events that introduce students to the MSU and East Lansing communities. These events (e.g., U-Fest, Moonlight Madness, Big Free Concert) should continue as they provide opportunities to develop community and experience Spartan values.

Link to Outcomes: manage logistics; effective citizen; develop community; Spartan values.

2. Fall Orientation should connect students with individual colleges and the larger institution around academic goals and purposes: those of the students', the colleges', and the institutions'.

A critical part of becoming an interdependent learner is students' perception of the institution as a learning community i.e., understanding (a) the importance of deep content knowledge; (b) the role of diversity in fostering the ability to become critical thinkers; and (c) the importance of integrating learning. A newly conceptualized College Colloquium serves as an important part of the Freshman Transition Seminar by further connecting faculty with students and their academic goals and purposes. This is an opportunity for faculty to convey excitement about learning and becoming a scholar while assisting students in understanding and adjusting to new academic expectations.

It is important to link key orientation events to communicate a powerful message about what it means to be at Michigan State University. Therefore, the College Colloquium should be linked, in time and focus, to the University Convocation. A collective movement of faculty and students from the College Colloquium to the University Convocation provides a visual and experiential opportunity to communicate that we are a community of learners and scholars, distinguished by discipline, but committed to the interdependent learning inherent in the academic enterprise.

The Convocation serves as the official induction of new students into the MSU community of scholars. That we are a community of scholars is underscored by a collective participation in the learning experience of One Book, One Community. Convocation should encourage students to engage fully in the opportunities afforded them as members of the MSU community.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; reflect on goals and purpose; effective citizen; develop community; Spartan values.

3. *Fall Orientation should culminate in a celebration of the addition of new members into the Spartan community.*

The Fall Orientation serves as the marker of a significant life transition for first-year students, representing the induction of new members into the community of scholars. A series of events, including a concurrent President’s BBQ and Sparticipation, links to the Convocation and provides an opportunity to (a) welcome first-year students into the Spartan community, (b) connect students to the community and its groups (e.g., student organizations), and (c) celebrate the diverse Spartan community through showcasing students’ talents (e.g., performing groups, club activities). The evening could conclude with the popular “Spartan Spirit” that generates excitement about being a Spartan and celebrates the role athletics plays in fostering spirit on campus.

Link to Outcomes: interdependent learner; reflect on goals and purpose; effective citizen; develop community; Spartan values.

Sample Fall Orientation Schedule

Although there are numerous ways to implement the above recommendations, we include a sample orientation schedule. This schedule attempts to begin the process of mapping out how these recommendations can be conceptualized within a reduced Fall Orientation period.

DAY	TIME	ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES	DESCRIPTION
1	All day	Residence Hall Move-In	Manage logistics Spartan values	Encourage campus involvement Make the event celebratory in nature Have staff (student and professional) on hand to answer questions
1	7:00pm	First Residence Hall Floor Meeting/Commuter Meeting	Develop community Spartan values	Overview of general floor operations, but focus on social/community event Co-facilitated by Resident Mentors, faculty, and/or staff

1	9:00pm	Evening activities	Develop community	Activities available in residence halls Campus social events for mentors and students to attend, e.g., Midnight Bingo, Bowling at the Union, Skating at Munn Ice Arena
2	10am-12pm	Second Residence Floor Meeting/Commuter Meeting	Develop community Reflect on goals and purpose Spartan values	Co-facilitated by Resident Mentors, faculty, and/or staff Begin mapping Fall Orientation opportunities at MSU
2	Afternoon	Open Time	Manage logistics Develop community Reflect on goals and purpose Spartan values	Time available for Residential Colleges and targeted programs to supplement programming Optional community service projects Open houses of various offices and student services Students encouraged to use this time to deal with any lingering issues (billing, buying books, etc.)
2	7:00pm	U-Fest	Develop community Spartan values	MSU Union event to orient first-year students and introduce them to activities and opportunities at the Union
2	7:00pm	Moonlight Madness	Manage logistics Develop community Spartan values	Meijer shopping opportunity Encourage other businesses to participate Provides an opportunity to interact in the community and take care of logistics.
2	10:00pm	Big Free Concert	Develop community Spartan values	Concert event that students, staff and local residents attend
3	10:00am-12:30pm	College Colloquium	Develop community Reflect on goals and purpose Spartan values	Link to Freshman Transition Seminar Provide boxed lunches for students to eat informally with peers, faculty and staff from college Walk/travel as a college to convocation
3	1:30pm	Convocation (Breslin Center)	Develop community Reflect on goals and purpose Spartan values	Students, faculty and staff enter convocation in procession led by Dean Ceremonial Orientation/One Book, One Community Involving colleges rhetoric (Astin) encouraging students to get involved while at MSU

3	3:00-6:00pm	Sparticipation and President's BBQ (Munn Field?)	Develop community Reflect on goals and purpose Spartan values	Students move directly from Convocation to Sparticipation Student organization fair Encourage cultural/student organizations to perform on stages around the event Invite faculty and staff to attend
3	6:30pm	Spartan Spirit (Breslin Center)	Develop community Spartan values	Athletic department-sponsored event to highlight school traditions

Appendix A

Process of Evaluating Fall Orientation

- 1. Conduct environmental scan of current programs, resources, and communications.**
 - Review mailings, websites, and programs targeting first-year and transfer students.
 - Review any data available from assessments of first-year/transition experiences.
 - Identify missions, goals, themes, and common elements of first-year experience at MSU.

- 2. Comparisons with peer institutions.**
 - Review information available on first-year experience programs at peer institutions.
 - Contact institutional leaders for information, and potentially follow-up with interviews.
 - Review any documents produced by related consortiums, conferences, etc. (e.g., CIC)
 - Review studies conducted by scholars and national leaders on first-year and transfer transition and their recommendations for best practice

- 3. Conduct interviews with key campus constituents.**
 - Meet with constituents regarding their participation and/or view of current practices.
 - List of participants will be derived from environmental scan, but to include:
 - APUE & Student Affairs Joint Staff – Core Steering Team
 - Key Academic Advisors
 - Associate Deans
 - Office of Admissions
 - Fall Orientation Leadership & Student Life Staff
 - AOP Leadership & Staff
 - Student Government
 - Members of Freshman Class Council
 - Members of ASMSU
 - First-Year Assessment
 - University Activities Board
 - Residential College Group
 - Residence Life Staff
 - Housing Staff
 - Celebratory Committee

- 4. Develop a set of goals/outcomes for Fall Orientation.**
 - After reviewing the data collected from the above tasks, develop a set of goals and outcomes to define the aims of the Fall Orientation as an introduction to first-year experience at MSU.
 - Review and revise with key constituents.

- 5. Develop set of program recommendations for Fall Orientation.**
 - Using goals and outcomes, develop a set of programmatic recommendations for Fall Orientation as an introduction to the first-year experience at MSU.
 - Review and revise with key constituents.

Appendix B

Big Ten Fall Orientation Program Synopses

University of Illinois – Welcome Week

<http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/newstudent/>

History of the Program – Unknown

Mission – “The purpose of Welcome Week events are to introduce new students to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During the first few days before classes start, students have the opportunity to adjust to and connect with their new community. Get to know your fellow students by attending these fun-filled events!”

Outcomes – None have been defined beyond helping students transition to the campus.

Staffing/Organizational Structure – Fall Orientation (and summer orientation) is coordinated by a single staff member in the Dean of Students Office. She noted that they previously have had three individuals devoted to their new student programs but recently positions have gone unfilled for a variety of reasons. Undergraduate students also play a significant role in supporting various initiatives during the summer and welcome week initiatives.

Funding – Fall Orientation is funded through the Dean of Students Office.

Key Offices Involved – Dean of Students, Campus Recreation, Illini Union, Intercollegiate Athletics, Alumni Association, Office of the Chancellor & College Deans, Culture Centers and various Student Organizations.

Length of Program – Four days of events and programs

Programmatic Components – Residence Hall move-in; Mandatory, online campus safety video and quiz; Convocation; Spirit event; Some college specific events; Service opportunities; Evening entertainment offerings; A student transition web portal [I-Start], Cultural Center open houses; Campus recreation open house; and a student organization fair.

- Thursday, August 21: Move-In; Evening Social Events; Mandatory Campus Safety Video
- Friday, August 22: Convocation (am); Illinois Sights and Sounds (afternoon)(Similar to Spartan Spirit); Late night Illini Union Event
- Saturday, August 23: Service project in local community; Campus Rec Block Party (evening)
- Sunday, August 24: Quad Day (Student Organization Fair); Cultural Center Open Houses; Outdoor Film in the Evening

Assessment – Minimal assessment of program satisfaction

Indiana University – Welcome Week

<http://www.indiana.edu/~orient/welcomeweek/>

History of the Program – Unknown

Mission – “We will provide you with the information and tools you need to make your college transition and experience a successful one. Participate, discover, and take advantage of all IU has to offer!” The program aims to facilitate the transition of undergraduates to the university by providing programs and services outlining IU’s academic expectations and resources, as well as social and developmental opportunities.

Outcomes – Unknown

Staffing/Organizational Structure – Orientation Programs runs Welcome Week as well as the summer orientation. Reporting structure is not known.

Funding – Unknown

Key Offices Involved – Various Student Affairs Offices, Colleges and Departments.

Length of Program – Six days of events and programs, with some major events occurring after the start of classes (e.g., Student Involvement Fair)

Programmatic Components – Key events include:

1. Freshman Induction Ceremony and Picnic – family event commemorating start of academic experience.
2. Academic Orientation Events – school or college-specific events
3. CultureFest – live music, student group involvement, etc.
4. Required Academic Advising Meetings
5. Campus Open Houses and Fairs
6. Traditions and Spirit of IU
7. New Student Service Days – pre-registration required

Assessment – Unknown

University of Iowa – Welcome Week

<http://welcome.uiowa.edu/index.html>

History of the Program – The history of Fall Orientation and its connection to other institutional efforts to support student transition and undergraduate success are unknown. However, it appears that during the 2007-2008 academic year a series of university-wide initiatives began to emerge under the idea of “Student Success”. The Student Success Initiative included: defining the outcomes of what a successful student experience at Iowa entails, “The Message Project”, [Excel, Stretch, Engage, Choose, and Serve], the “Pick One Program”, One Community, One Book, The College Transition Course, and other programs that are believed to support first-year student success such as learning communities.

Outcomes/Goals - Unknown

Staffing/Organizational Structure – Unknown, but appears to fall under the umbrella of admissions and orientation.

Funding – Unknown

Key Offices Involved – Admissions/orientation, Student Activities/Union; International Programs; President’s Office; Student Organizations [appear to lead much of the programming], and Iowa City

Length of Program – Move-In on Saturday, Classes begin on Monday. Events continue through the first week of classes.

Programmatic Components - Major events include: Residence Hall move-in, President’s BBQ, events Chancellor’s Convocation, meetings within colleges, evening entertainment offerings (introduced to “normal” student life opportunities, focus on residence hall events).

- Saturday, August 23: Residence Hall Move-In; Welcome BBQ Late night interactive event at the “field house”
- Sunday, August 24: President’s Block Party
- First Week of Class: Campus Direction Booths; Various Welcome Receptions; Recreation Services Kick-Off; Student Organization Fair (Wednesday); Taste of Iowa City (Wednesday); Evening Social Events (Wednesday/Thursday/Friday); Student Job Fair (Friday); Football Game (Saturday)

University of Michigan – Welcome Program

http://www.onsp.umich.edu/incoming_freshmen/welcome/

History of the Program – The Welcome Week has remained largely similar in recent years. University of Michigan embraced a significant reorganization to create an Office of New Student Programs (ONSP) located within Academic Affairs reporting to the Provost. The ONSP sponsors orientation for all new undergraduate and parents/families. ONSP was established to coordinate efforts to enhance the cohesion of the first-year experience among decentralized programming including the Welcome Program.

Mission – The U of M Welcome Program exists: 1) to assist students in making a meaningful, smooth, and enjoyable transition to college life; 2) to actively engage the entire University in a coordinated and shared effort in providing a warm welcome to the new members of our community; and 3) to help students become familiar with and feel connected to the campus as a learning environment through its curricular and co-curricular opportunities and challenges. It is billed as “*offers further in-depth examination of the opportunities initially presented to new students during the orientation program*”.

Outcomes – Unknown

Staffing/Organizational Structure – Fall Orientation is coordinated by the ONSP, involving a mixture of centralized and decentralized programming across the schools and colleges. Although the ONSP reports directly to the Provost, other key constituencies are involved in the program, and collaborate through the facilitation of ONSP.

Funding – \$120K funded directly to ONSP from general fund, but most resources come from individual departments who host events.

Key Offices Involved – All schools and colleges; Office of Student Activities and Leadership

Length of Program – Undefined length – programs extend into first semester. Move-In occurs 4-5 days prior to start of classes depending on Residence Hall.

Programmatic Components – Major events before classes start include:

1. New Student Convocation- hosted by President Coleman in Crisler Arena for new students and their parents.
2. Midnight Madness – late night trip to Meijer. We have about 6000 students attend this late night, alcohol free event each year.
3. Maize Craize – pep rally before the Saturday football game
4. Day of Change (*Creating a Healthy and New Generation of Equality*) - A Day of C.H.A.N.G.E. provides ALL students with the opportunity to connect with Michigan's commitment to diversity. Students are invited to attend these events to celebrate and appreciate this central, long-term ethic at Michigan.

University of Minnesota – Welcome Week

<http://www.welcomeweek.umn.edu/>

History of the Program – New in 2008 the program represents a significant institutional commitment to the transition of new students into “the U”. Previously “the U” had a small program that was of an additional cost to students. The current planning and implementation process has been in place for just under 3 years.

Purpose: To have students identify as a member of University of Minnesota community and understand expectations related to community membership. This program is designed to provide opportunities to enhance student success, increase student satisfaction and retention, and improve graduation rates.

Vision: The vision of Welcome Week is to assist students in navigating their transition to college as a member of the University of Minnesota community, while enhancing their opportunities for personal development and academic success.

Mission: Welcome Week is designed to engage the campus community in creating a meaningful University experience for first-year students that will:

1. Begin to build a sense of community by encouraging a first-year class identity, fostering institutional pride and respect, acknowledging individual responsibility to the community, as well as ownership and responsibility for their college experience.
2. Assist students in their adjustment to the campus environment and campus life through academic and student development programs that enhance the capacity of students to lead and work among students from diverse cultural, ethnic, national, socio-economic, and religious backgrounds and of different sexual orientations and physical abilities.
3. Provide students an opportunity to have and maintain meaningful relationships with students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community that will encourage academic and personal success during their first year and throughout their college experience.
4. Allow students to navigate the campus while discovering and accessing the multitude of resources and opportunities available at the University that meet the ever-changing and diverse needs of students so they may be intentional in creating a successful college experience.
5. Provide leadership opportunities for current students to enhance their leadership development and commitment to the University.

Outcomes – (See Student Affairs Student Learning Outcomes)

Staffing/Organizational Structure – Fall Orientation is coordinated by the Orientation and First-Year Programs Office. (8 full time staff; 4 student coordinators; 28 program assistants; 400 welcome week leaders)

Funding – Jointly funded from the general fund and significant additional support from corporate/external partnerships generated by internal staff.

Key Offices Involved – Office of New Student Programs; Academic Colleges; Residence Life; Multitude of others.

Length of Program – 6 days including move-in and a “quiet” day

Programmatic Components – Residence Hall move-in, Convocation, meetings within colleges, daily small group meetings led by undergraduate welcome leaders, evening entertainment offerings, a student web portal with transition information, off-campus trips into the community (State Fair, downtown, Target, Gopher football game, etc), and a day of service and engagement, New Student Newsletter

- Wednesday, August 27: Welcome to the U of M!
- Thursday, August 28: College Day!
- Friday, August 29: Explore the Twin Cities campus!
- Saturday, August 30: Check out the Twin Cities Community!
- Sunday, August 31: Day of Service and Engagement
- Monday, September 1: Relax and Prepare for Classes

Campus/Community Involvement Opportunities (faculty and staff)

- New Student Residence Hall Move-In
- New Student Convocation
- Day of Service and Engagement
- College Days

Assessment

- Welcome Week Pre-Assessment (student preparedness and self-efficacy)
- Leader Reflections (student leaders in focus groups)
- Program Satisfaction Survey
- Focus Groups of Student Participants
- Fall Check-In Survey
- “Leaver Study”
- Student Development Outcomes (Pre/Mid/Posttest for Program Assistants)

The Ohio State University – Welcome Program

<http://welcomeweek.osu.edu/>

History of the Program – Unknown

Mission – The mission of the Welcome Week Steering Committee is to provide programming and information that will assist students as they make The Ohio State University their home and to foster a sense of obligation throughout the entire University Community to take part in a unified effort to welcome new and returning students. It is designed to help students maximize the first year by getting comfortable on campus, connecting with the university, and starting to think of Ohio State as home. In addition, programming is extended beyond the Welcome Week throughout the entire year.

Outcomes – Unknown

Staffing/Organizational Structure – It is unclear what the organizational structure is for the Fall Orientation as it is conceptualized within the broader first-year experience framework. They rely on a steering committee with representatives from more than 50 campus departments, student organizations and other student representatives that is facilitated by a representative from Student Affairs.

Funding – Unknown

Key Offices Involved – Ohio Union, Student Affairs, Student Organizations, and departments and offices from across campus.

Length of Program – Full week prior to classes.

Programmatic Components – Includes over 150 events. Major events before classes start include:

1. Convocation
2. Student Involvement Fair
3. Buck-i-Frenzy: community event with promotions from local business, etc.
4. Community Commitment: community service project
5. Picnic with the Buckeyes: picnic and Columbus Jazz Orchestra during first week
6. Buckeye Book Community: book discussions; different fields read different books

Purdue University – Boiler Gold Rush

<http://www.purdue.edu/SATS/bgr/index.html>

Program Overview - Boiler Gold Rush is a five-day new student orientation program that takes place the week before classes start each year and is open to all new first-year and transfer students. It is not a required event but has a history of high levels of participation. What makes BGR such a unique experience is the small group size and peer-mentor contact, which enable new students to become better acquainted with Purdue and meet hundreds of new students before classes begin.

In 2008 over 5,000 new students and more than 500 student volunteers (who coordinate much of the program) will take part in BGR. Additionally, numerous student organizations, faculty, and staff will contribute their time, effort, and resources. Purdue operates under the belief that it is essential for new students to be in small groups (10-15 students) with current students to help them make the personal, academic, and social transitions from high school to college and to become comfortable with Purdue and make it feel like home.

Mission Statement - The mission of Boiler Gold Rush is to orient new students and their families during their transition to Purdue University by creating a fun and stimulating environment, providing access to opportunities on Purdue's campus and in the Lafayette/West Lafayette community, and by offering meaningful activities and leadership opportunities to encourage student success.

Outcomes [As presented to students]

- Learn your way around campus
- Get information about all of the different resources available to students on campus
- Meet a lot of new people
- Attend programs that will help you succeed at Purdue
- Network with Purdue faculty and staff
- Move into your residence hall room a week early and avoid the rush
- Have FUN!

Staffing/Organizational Structure – Though the program is nested in the Office of Student Access, Transition, and Success at Purdue, it is primarily coordinated by current undergraduate students. Other student organizations, faculty, and offices participate in various components of the program.

Funding – The cost to students to participate is \$320. Some support is offered to those with financial challenges to lower the cost.

Key Offices Involved – Primarily a student run event but nested in the Office of Student Access, Transition, and Success. Myriad other offices on campus participated in the five days of events including the academic colleges.

Length of Program – Saturday, August 16 – Friday, August 22 (7 Days)

Programmatic Components - Major events include: Residence Hall move-in, multiple meetings in small groups (10-15 students); multiple “tracks” of events, meetings within colleges, evening entertainment offerings; significant programs focusing on student life and transition issues

- Saturday, August 16: Family Orientation Session; Welcome Dinner; RA Meeting; Hall Events
- Sunday, August 17: Family Orientation Session; RA Meeting; First Small Group Meeting; Opening Ceremonies (President welcome – 9:45pm); Late Night Speaker
- Monday, August 18: Athletics; Campus Tours; Alcohol/Comedy; Police/Fire/Safety; Small Group Wellness Discussion; 45 Minute Interest Sessions; Union Fest; Recreation Center Events; “Target Run”
- Tuesday, August 19: Various Transition Speakers; Small Group Diversity Discussions (2); 45 Minute Interest Sessions; Union Fest; Recreation Center Events; Meijer Mania
- Wednesday, August 20: Small Group Involvement Discussion: Lunch by College; Campus Resource Fair; Library Presentation; Faculty First-Year Presentations (2); Small Group Academic Success Conversation; Small Group Plan for Rest of the Week; Evening presentations & entertainment
- Thursday, August 21: [Open Time]; International Student Orientation; Optional Free-time activities; Recreation Center Tours; New Student Event (music, food, inflatables)
- Friday, August 22: Community Service Day
- Saturday, August 23: Uptown jazz and blues festival (community event)

Outcomes and Assessment – At this time no specific program outcomes beyond the goals shared with students are used to guide programmatic efforts. In addition, no assessment is done to determine the program’s success.

University of Wisconsin-Madison - Wisconsin Welcome

<http://www.newstudent.wisc.edu/wiwelcome/>

History of the Program – Wisconsin Welcome has been in existence in various forms for over 20 years.

Outcomes/Goals (Focus is on the first year)

1. Gaining confidence and competence as a college-level student
2. Making positive connections with faculty, staff, and peers
3. Engaging in behaviors that promote your personal health and balance
4. Understanding yourself as a member of the socially diverse university community
5. Developing awareness of the impact of your personal choices

Staffing/Organizational Structure – The program is centrally coordinated by the Center for the First-Year Experience. The office is relatively new and was born out of an institutional desire to combine various initiatives into a single unit including the Summer Orientation, Advising, and Registration program, Wisconsin Welcome, a general first-year seminar, support for teaching/learning in the first year, and assessment and research initiatives involving first-year students. The Center for the First-Year Experience has 8 full time staff; 4 student coordinators; 28 program assistants; 400 welcome week leaders in addition to other student staff hired during the summer orientation program.

Funding – Funding has recently switched from a combination of funding sources including their general fund and an orientation fee to being a fully fee based program.

Key Offices Involved – Office of New Student Programs; Academic Colleges; Residence Life; Multitude of others.

Length of Program – 5 Days before classes begin (+ 1 day for move-in) ending on Labor Day with classes beginning on Tuesday. Significant programmatic efforts continue until September 28th.

Programmatic Components – Electronic/online schedule allows students to “build their own Wisconsin Welcome”.

- Friday, August 29: College/Program Orientations AM; Convocation @ Noon; Shopping @ Night
- Saturday, August 30: Football Game; Movie; Live Music at the Union
- Sunday, August 31: University Bookstore Event; Memorial Union Bash; Campus Tours
- Monday, September 1: Rec Sports Open Houses; Alcohol Education Presentation

Ongoing Events throughout the first few weeks of the academic year include: Campus Tours; Open Houses; Receptions; Athletic Traditions; Student Org Fair; Study Abroad Fair; Community Service Event; Job Fair

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