



**NATIONAL ORIENTATION DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
 ANNOUNCES
 37th Annual Conference**

DATE: October 13-16, 1984

LOCATION: Marriott Pavilion
 Hotel, St. Louis, MO

THEME

"Orientation: Gateway to . . ."

PROGRAM FEATURES

Variety of Professional Presentation
 Orientation Publications Contest
 Campus Program Idea Exchange
 Keynote Address
 Sharing of Common Concerns
 New Developments in Orientation Programming

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

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Glenn C. Smith

INTEGRATING ACADEMIC ADVISING WITH ON- GOING ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

This article is the culmination of research intended to address the integration of the faculty academic advisement process with the need for an on-going orientation program for incoming freshman. In this article I will outline a proposal based upon the basic goals of new student orientation. Those goals include the attempt to clarify challenges, the reduction of anxieties associated with entering a new school, the connection of students with relevant parts of the campus, the assertion of the individual's uniqueness while maximizing contact with his/her peers, and instilling the student with a favorable attitude toward learning.

Much of the literature in the area of retention points out that orientation and academic advisement are major factors determining whether or not a student remains at a particular college. The literature further suggests that good advising and orientation programs result in better student attitudes, self-concept, and intellectual and interpersonal development.¹

Assisting college students develop competence, manage emotions, achieve autonomy, develop interpersonal relationships, clarify purpose, find identity, and develop integrity is the shared responsibility of all educators on a college campus. When I refer to educators, I mean faculty, staff and administration. Each of these groups affect the student in a diverse, yet profound manner.

The factors which make up a student's intellectual and personal development imply the need for specialized programming. The goals of this proposed program are:

1. To assist the student develop intellectually and personally
2. To help new students and faculty develop the advisor/advisee relationship
3. To clarify challenges and reduce anxiety associated with the first year of college
4. To assist the student in developing competencies which impact his/her ability to do college level work
5. To clarify career possibilities related to a liberal arts education

PROPOSAL SUMMARY

During new student orientation, all new students will be divided into groups of 10 to 15 based upon academic major. This group will be

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facilitated by peer (small group leader) during the orientation period. A faculty advisor from the corresponding academic major will team with the small group leader to provide leadership to the group in six one-hour sessions subsequent to orientation.

GROUP FORMATION

Groups will consist of 10 to 15 students with the same academic major. Undecided majors will be put into homogeneous groups or integrated into the 'major' groups. During the orientation week, the group will be facilitated by a small group leader. (See Appendix I for job description.) The small group leader will be trained in interpersonal skills, group communications, knowledge of the college, and will have a working awareness of the goals of new student orientation. The small group leader will guide the group through orientation exercises including an in-depth campus tour, a physical stress course, and some basic academic advisement information. The group leader will also be the prime information source for new students. The group will meet formally four times during orientation.

The faculty member will join the group for the first time on the last day of New Student Orientation. This faculty person will be from the academic department which corresponds with the academic major of the group. The group will decide on a meeting time, one per week for six weeks. The faculty members will be the primary facilitator with the small group leader assisting with logistics and other duties assigned by the faculty member.

CURRICULUM

One of the primary agendas or "curricular tasks" of the group will be to provide support for group members. The transition from high school to college is very difficult for some students. The facilitator must be sensitive to the support needs of the group members when holding a session. Other curricular areas may possibly include:

1. Group academic advising
2. Coping with loneliness and separation from family and friends
3. What careers are available as a result of the particular academic major
4. Study and learning skills
5. The developmental process of maturing personally and intellectually
6. The establishment of a mentoring relationship (personal growth contracts)
7. Stress management
8. Time management
9. Note taking
10. Goalsetting

The facilitator can draw on his/her knowledge, use curriculum provided by the orientation office, or bring a guest presenter. The group can also decide to meet just before mid-terms, pre-registration, and other times deemed crucial.

BENEFITS

There are several benefits from a program such as this. The student will benefit from the experience by beginning a process of personal and academic growth. The student will also benefit from experiencing the faculty member as a positive approachable role model. The small group leader will develop leadership and interpersonal skills. The faculty

members will benefit from the experience by establishing quality relationships with advisees. This will enable the advisor to have effective communication with the advisee in the early crucial stages of the relationship.

The benefit to the college will be in retention of students. If the program proves successful and the literature related to retention is accurate, the school should see a measurable impact on the retention rate. One other benefit to the institution will be the recognition received for innovative programming in the areas of academic advising and orientation.

EVALUATION

The group facilitator will be the best source of immediate evaluation. He/she can intuitively judge the effectiveness of the six week group experience. Ask for this input at the end of the six week period. A survey of all group participants on their feelings about the experience should prove valuable. Long term evaluation could involve:

1. Selecting a cross-sectional group of participants
2. Interviewing participants in the middle of the second semester and once a year for two years. The intention is to ascertain how the group experience impacted their approach to personal and academic development while in school.
3. Keeping track of all participants to calculate the rate of attrition and compare it to previous freshman classes that did not have the six week experience.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have proposed a model for integrating some components of the academic advisement system with an on-going orientation program. I have also outlined the purpose, structure, curriculum, benefits, and mode of evaluation of the model.

It is my hope that this proposed model will be of assistance to you as you seek to improve your advising and orientation programs. This model is the result of surveying student needs on my campus and an extensive review of the literature both in the fields of orientation and academic advisement. I also sent out a draft of this proposal to several professionals in the field of orientation. Their comments were for the most part positive. I have used some of the suggestions in this article and I wish to extend my appreciation for their input.

I would encourage any orientation director whose school has a similar program or would like to adapt this model to his/her school to call on me for any assistance needed.

APPENDIX I

JOB DESCRIPTION — SMALL GROUP LEADER

Job Objective:

To be the primary guide and source of information for new students during all scheduled orientation exercises.

Job Responsibilities:

1. Leadership of orientation group of 12 to 15 new students
2. Meeting with individual members of the group as necessary
3. Helping new students learn the logistics of the campus

4. Facilitate small group curriculum assigned by the Director of Orientation
5. General academic advising
6. General assistance during orientation
7. General tasks assigned by the Director of Orientation

Requirements:

1. You must be a full-time student in good standing
2. Class standing of at least Sophomore for the year of employment
3. Minimum cumulative G.P.A. of 2.5
4. A willingness to learn basic knowledge of development theory, academic advisement and leadership development
5. A true desire to develop as a person

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Grites, Thomas J. "Improving Academic Advising" Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development in Higher Education, Kansas State University August 1980
- ² Chickering, Arthur W. *Education & Identity* Jossey-Bass Publishers San Francisco 1978

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NODA REPORT

COUNCIL ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF STANDARDS:

ORIENTATION - STANDARDS AND INTERPRETATIVE GUIDELINES

STANDARDS

I. MISSION

The mission of orientation is to provide on-going services and assistance that will:

1. Aid new students in their transition to the institution;
2. Expose new students to the broad educational opportunities of the institution;
3. Integrate new students into the life of the institution.

INTERPRETIVE GUIDELINES

I. MISSION

A structured orientation process based on stated goals and objectives should be provided. This process should serve both the student and the institution. The structured entry process aids students in understanding the nature and purpose of the institution and their relationship to the academic environment. Self growth and learning may occur as students are assisted in understanding their own relationship to the intellectual, social, and cultural climate of the college.

An orientation process should be available to all students new to the institution. Freshmen, transfers, and graduate students should be served as major population groups with specific attention given to the needs of sub-groups with special needs.

The students' immediate support groups—parents, guardians, spouse, children—play an important role in the life of each student, and should be provided with information and orientation experiences as appropriate.

These goals should be applicable regardless of the size or purpose of the institution:

1. To assist students in understanding the purpose of higher education;
2. To assist students in understanding the mission of the specific institution.
3. To assist students in determining their purpose in attending the institution and developing a positive relationship with faculty, staff, peers, and other individuals in the community.