

The History of NODA

Mary Jo Fabich, NODA Historian

We, the members of the National Orientation Directors Association, in order to stimulate interpersonal and inter-institutional communication relative to orientation and to provide vehicles for that exchange; to provide meaningful services relating to orientation for professionals, institutions, students, and related organizations; and to encourage and assist in the continuous development and improvement of programs and services, do hereby establish these articles of organization and bylaws.

In the attainment of our objectives, we commit ourselves to the general membership of the National Orientation Directors Association, which is the heart of the organization; to the betterment of our organization by focusing special attention on the needs and concerns of minorities and other interest groups; and to the orientation process. (NODA Charter of Incorporation, 1977)

This quote taken directly from the 1977 NODA Charter of Incorporation, laid the foundation for the progressive, complex, and active organization we now have in 2007. Let's take a moment now to return to an even earlier start to our profession...

In the year 1888, the first official orientation program for new students was held at Boston University. By 1925, more than 25 colleges across the nation had such courses, and directors of Orientation began to emerge on various campuses. As the duties became more formalized in the late 1920s, the nature of orientation work prompted those in the positions to correspond with each other to share ideas. Defining the role of Orientation, and techniques to be used, became a common need. Orientation was now becoming the final stage of admission and the start of the retention of new students.

In the 1940s, directors of Orientation saw a need to share ideas in a more structured setting. On December 6-7, 1948, 24 delegates from six states met in Columbus, Ohio, to discuss the theme "Aims and Objectives of Orientation Week." Thus began the annual gathering, and soon the conferences included student leaders, recognizing their central role in orientation programs.

In the early 1970s, a formal structure began to emerge...the beginning of the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA). *The National Bulletin* (the forerunner of the *Orientation Review*), membership roster, Data Bank, and a series of formal committees marked the beginning of the association. Western Michigan University became the organization's headquarters, and in 1976 the Board of Directors began functioning formally. February 1, 1977, marked the

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official “birth” of NODA when a Charter of Incorporation was given to the organization by the Mississippi Secretary of State.

The 1980s brought a regional structure to NODA as a response to increased activity on the local and state level. The first Director of Regions was appointed. The Board of Directors formalized its work by establishing spring and fall meetings. Committees, procedures, and publications of the association continued to be refined. The NODA Journal was also launched in 1982.

Traditions that began in the '80s were the exchange of school stickers at the Kentucky conference of 1983, and the first Student Leadership Award, which was given at regional conferences in 1987.

In the 1990s, NODA earned its place among the other highly recognized national organizations that support the work of professionals in higher education. NODA's goals included improving support to members, increasing the financial security of the association, and reaching out to similar organizations. This outreach resulted in the successful publication of a monograph, *Designing Successful Transitions: A Guide for Orienting Students to College*, published jointly by NODA and the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition. The monograph was unveiled at the 1993 conference in Savannah, and 430 books were sold at the conference.

In 1993 NODA also reached out to its associate/corporate membership and incorporated them into the NODA culture. In 1999 the first Orientation Professional Institute was held—the beginning of a now long-standing commitment to the emergence of new professionals into the field.

As parents and families became more involved in their students' transition to college, NODA progressively added a Parent Services network and published its first “Parent Handbook” in 2000.

Approved in 2001, the mission and core values set the basis for future growth of NODA:

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

Core Values: Community, Diversity, Integrity, Learning, Scholarship, Service. (Strategic Plan Perspective 2002, 2002, p.1)

Also set in 2001 was “Vision 2007” which included four strategic priorities (adopted in 2002) designed to move the association forward:

1. NODA seeks to expand collaboration and partnerships with both internal and external communities.
2. NODA seeks to provide greater learning opportunities and services to students, staff, and faculty in the areas of student transition and retention.
3. NODA seeks to centralize the association's business operations and services.
4. NODA seeks to maintain and expand the stable, diverse funding base for the association's current and future needs.

Many changes occurred as the association moved through the process of accomplishing these goals between 2001 and 2007. In 2002, the NODA Board of

Directors voted to support the first ever "Transfer Institute" to be held at the University of North Texas. With continued support from NODA, the Institute has proved to be an invaluable resource for professionals working with transfer students.

In the early days of NODA, it made sense to appoint many of the positions, since NODA was a growing organization. With the establishment of a strong regional structure, it became evident that the Regional Coordinators should be elected by the membership, and this practice was formalized for the first time in 2004.

Since 2002 when Strategic Priority # 3 was set with the goal to "centralize the association's business operations and services," dozens of people involved in the process have been developing, discussing, and dreaming of a permanent home office. At the fall Board meeting in 2006, the University of Minnesota was selected as the location of the first permanent NODA Home Office. During the spring of 2007, a specific location was identified and a very happy and excited group of Board members crowded into the office to check out the furniture, take pictures, shed a tear, and share a very special moment in NODA history. During the summer of 2007 the search was in place for the Home Office Executive Director, finally bringing the dream to a reality!

From the wisdom of the 1977 group who took the important step to incorporate the Association, to now in 2007, NODA continues to live the initial hopes of the Charter of Incorporation:

"to stimulate interpersonal and inter-institutional communication...to provide meaningful services relating to orientation for professionals, institutions, students, and related organizations..."

In 2007 and into the future, NODA continues to be committed to "...the general membership of the National Orientation Directors Association, which is the heart of the organization...and to the orientation process."

References

- National Orientation Directors Association. (1977). *NODA charter of incorporation*. Jackson, MS: Author.
- National Orientation Directors Association. (2002). *Strategic plan perspective 2002*. Flint, MI: Author.

Key Points in NODA History

- 1948 First national conference of orientation professionals held in Columbus, Ohio, with 24 people in attendance
- 1974 Norman K. Russell, Western Michigan University, agrees to serve as Secretary/Treasurer/Membership Coordinator, and WMU becomes the first headquarters for orientation directors
- 1977 NODA Charter of Incorporation approved by the State of Mississippi on February 1
- 1980 NODA becomes active participant in the Student Services Personnel Accreditation and Certification Conference, later known as the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS)
- 1982 First Director of Regions named, solidifying the importance of regional participation in NODA
The *NODA Journal* launched (but ceases publication in 1986)
- 1983 Tradition of exchanging school stickers and placing them on nametags begins at national conference held in Kentucky
- 1987 First Student Leadership Award given at regional conferences
- 1993 Associate/Corporate membership defined and incorporated into NODA culture
Joint NODA/FYE monograph published
- 1996 NODA's scholarly journal reestablished with a new name, *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition*
- 1999 First Orientation Professionals Institute held
- 2000 Parent Services Network added to provide support to Parent/Family programs
Parent Handbook published
- 2001 New mission along with core values of Community, Diversity, Integrity, Learning, Scholarship, and Service adopted by NODA
The NODA Board adopts "Vision 2007" which includes four strategic priorities designed to move the association forward
- 2002 NODA Board of Directors votes to support first "Transfer Institute" to be held at the University of North Texas
- 2004 Regional Coordinators elected, rather than appointed, for the first time
Handbook for Families of Commuting Students published
- 2006 University of Minnesota selected as location for first permanent home office
- 2007 Search begins for first NODA Home Office Executive Director