

# Celebrating the Last 30 Years of NODA Annual Conferences

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One of the enduring hallmarks of the National Orientation Directors Association has been its outstanding annual conferences. In fact, NODA and NODAC (National Orientation Directors Annual Conference) have been nearly synonymous to many orientation professionals over the years. The annual conferences have been noted for their unparalleled creativity, for building inclusive communities, and for embracing all levels of staff working with orientation and transition programs—from undergraduate students to seasoned professionals, from faculty to graduate students and emerging professionals.

For many past and present NODA members, annual conferences (and their regional counterparts) provide a time of networking, learning, inspiration, and connecting with friends old and new. Indeed, higher education professionals who have worked in other student or academic affairs units are often struck by the collegiality and spirit of camaraderie they find at NODA conferences. For many, NODA has become their professional development “home base,” complete with long-standing friendships that seem to transcend job changes, retirements, and other life transitions.

Members grieve with each other when a death occurs and rejoice with each other on happy occasions such as weddings, commitment ceremonies, and births or adoptions of children. They also provide sounding boards for each other during difficult work situations and career changes, and many a program idea has been hatched over dinner in the conference city or during conversations in conference hotel lobbies or bars. For many, NODAC is the most anticipated professional development opportunity of the year—a time of rejuvenation, of sharing frustrations and successes, of strengthening ties to our profession and renewing our common commitment to serving new students and their families.

On the occasion of NODA’s 30th anniversary, editors Denise Rode and Sheena Williams have taken a look back in time at the past 30 years of annual NODA conferences. While orientation conferences have been held for more than 50 years—the first occurring in Columbus, Ohio in 1948—the editors had access to only approximately 30 years’ worth of conference programs; unfortunately, they were unable to document several conferences. Appendices A and B describe the years, locations, themes, host institutions, speakers, and special features and topics of many annual conferences. Those conferences documented reveal increasing sophistication in programming in tandem with the growth and complexity of the organization.

## Content Analysis of the Last 30 Years of NODAC Presentations

An analysis was conducted on the NODA conference programs for approximately the last 30 years. Because the researcher did not have access to programs for all of last 30 conferences, the review began with the earliest program available (1979) and continued for each year available after that, through 2006. In total, 18 conference programs were reviewed, and 1,279 session topics were classified into the following 13 categories: (a) Program Administration; (b) Program Formats (overall structure of programs); (c) Program Components (specific elements within a program); (d) Staffing; (e) Extended Orientation/Programs (i.e., first-year experience courses, welcome activities); (f) Family Orientation/Transition; (g) Special Populations; (h) Student Development; (i) Professional Development; (j) Technology; (k) NODA; (l) Special Interest; and (m) Trends, Theory, and Research (see Table 1 for data).

The most common session topic was Program Administration, with 181 sessions (14.2% of the conference sessions). Topics covered in these sessions included program changes, budgeting and funding, program evaluation and development, the use of CAS Standards, customer service, program involvement from faculty and other institutional offices, ethics, student-run programs, marketing and publications, general staff supervision and development, and campus crisis management.

TABLE 1

### Number of Conference Sessions by Topic

Session Topics	Number of Sessions	% of Total
Program Administration	181	14.2
Professional Development	175	13.7
Program Components	169	13.2
Staffing	154	12.0
Special Populations	142	11.1
Extended Orientation/Programs	97	7.6
Special Interest	78	6.1
Family Orientation/Transitions	72	5.6
Misc.	47	3.7
Program Formats	41	3.2
NODA	37	2.9
Technology	33	2.6
Trends, Theory, & Research	33	2.6
Student Development	20	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,279</b>	<b>100%</b>

Professional Development comprised 13.7% (N=175) of the conference sessions. Presentations in this category included professional roles, idea exchanges, writing for publication, professional development of student staff, career development/goals, professional associations/involvement, time and staff management, communication skills, diversity awareness, networking, NODA internships, ethics, and leadership development.

With 169 sessions, Program Components made up 13.2% of the total conference sessions, making it the third most frequent session category. Components represented in this category included peer advisement, program publications, academic advising and placement exams, games and icebreakers, student characteristics surveys, academic planners, student-faculty interaction, educational planning, college simulation, community service projects, multimedia components, diversity awareness, and educational components. Sessions given on educational components were about integrating educational elements about drugs, alcohol, sex, STDs, sexual assault, relationships, debt/credit education, and general social issues into orientation programs. These sessions comprised 21.9% (N=37) of the total Program Components presentations.

Conference sessions on Staffing totaled 154 (12% of the total). These sessions included topics such as orientation staff recruitment, selection, and training; supervision, evaluation, and development of professional, paraprofessional, and student staff; team building and team dynamics; staff diversity; conflict management; and ethics and sensitivity training.

There were 142 sessions given on Special Populations, making this category 11.1% of the total. Populations represented included nontraditional, returning, and adult students; students with disabilities; commuter and off-campus students; international and minority students; transfer students; student athletes; high-risk students and students admitted conditionally; mid-year entry and reentry students; students undecided about a major; graduate students; online students; first-generation students; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students.

Sessions covering Extended Orientation/Programs comprised 7.6% (N=97) of the total conference sessions. Programs discussed in these sessions included first-year experience and orientation courses, freshmen seminars, preview/welcome weeks, peer outreach, new student convocation, pre-orientation programs, reading programs, and freshmen interest groups.

Special Interest sessions made up 78 (6.1%) of the total conference sessions. Primarily, this category was comprised of the conference caucus and network meetings, which concerned the interests of such groups as undergraduate and graduate students; two-year and community colleges; minority and multi-ethnic students and members; re-entry, adult, and nontraditional students; new and seasoned professionals; Canadian institutions and members; small and large colleges; LGBT students and members; parents; and transfer students. Social justice was also a topic covered in the special interest sessions.

Sessions that discussed parent, family, or sibling programs; bilingual family programs; educational components to family programs; and parent listservs comprised the Family Orientation/Transitions category. This category had 72

sessions, making it 5.6% of the total conference presentations.

With 41 conference sessions, Program Formats made up 3.2% of the total sessions. Overall formats discussed in these sessions included 2-day programs; summer workshops; advising, orientation, assessment, and registration programs; 4-hour orientation programs; off-campus programs; video conference programs; and online programs.

Some conference sessions were very specific to the National Orientation Directors Association and, therefore, comprised the NODA category of conference presentations. Thirty-seven sessions (2.9%) were categorized as being NODA-related and included meetings for conference planning or hosting, professional involvement in the association, information on the NODA Data Bank, presenters' meetings, Board of Directors' meetings, committee meetings, and meetings for strategic planning for the association.

Technology sessions made up 2.6% (N=33) of the total conference sessions. Topics included multimedia productions (many being "how-to" presentations), computer assistance in orientation programs, computerized academic placement tests, computerized orientation reservation systems, Web sites, campus computer use policies, data base development, online student support, Blackboard, and online communities (such as Facebook).

Conference sessions concerning Trends, Theory, and Research also comprised 2.6% (N=33) of the total. These sessions covered the following topics: (a) appropriately supportive academic orientations, (b) research on student study habits and attitudes, (c) factors present when students choose institutions, (d) orientation's role in enrollment management, (e) orientation's impact on grade point average and college, (f) trends in orientation, (g) implications for control-mastery theory in orientation, (h) trends and theory for academic support, (i) theory for enhancing the first-year experience, (j) theories surrounding the appropriate "home" for orientation—student or academic affairs, (k) organizational and developmental theories, (l) student learning outcomes, (m) trends in parents' expectations, and (n) Millennial theory.

There were 20 sessions (1.6% of the total) that fell into the Student Development category. Topics covered in these sessions included student and leadership involvement, decision-making and time-management skills, involvement of orientation leaders (both during and after orientation programs) as a vehicle for student development, developing responsible citizens from college students, and graduate internships.

Forty-seven (3.7%) of the total conference sessions did not fit directly into one of the 13 categories. These sessions were labeled as "Miscellaneous" and included such diverse topics as student services, student-faculty interactions, retention and recruitment, personal development, academic affairs, student characteristics, student transition, and federal laws and regulations (such as FERPA).

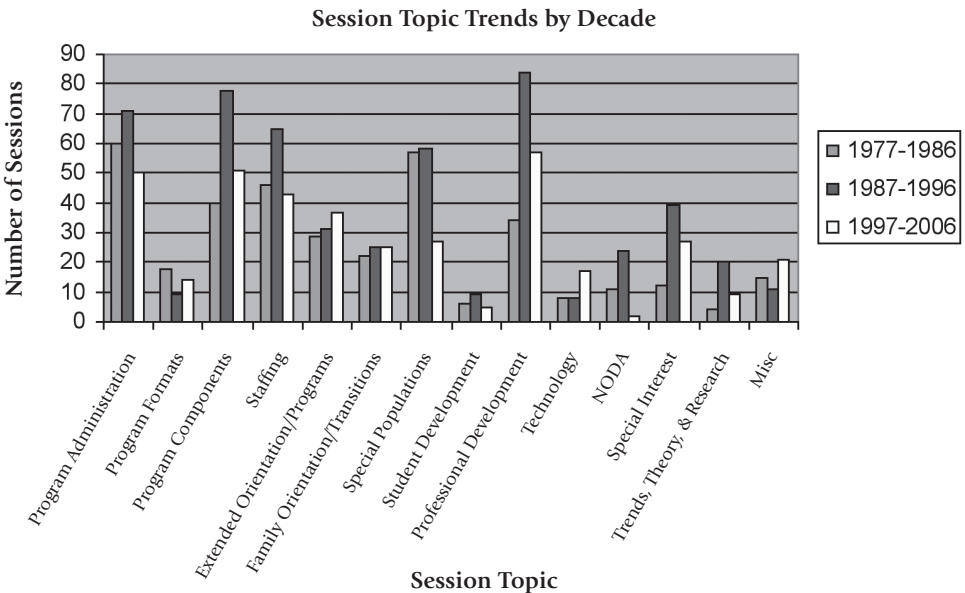
## Noteworthy Trends Across Three Decades

In order to take a broader look at the data gathered during this study, the researcher broke down the 30 years of conferences into three 10-year periods: 1977-1986 (Decade 1), 1987-1996 (Decade 2), and 1997-2006 (Decade 3). During the first decade, the most common session topics were Program Administration (N=60; 16.6% of the total presentations for Decade 1), Special Populations (N=57; 15.7% of the total presentations for Decade 1), and Staffing (N=46; 12.7% of the total presentations for the first decade). In Decade 2, the most frequent session topics were Professional Development (N=84; 15.8% of the total sessions for the second decade), Program Components (N=78; 14.7% of the total for Decade 2), and Program Administration (N=71; 13.3% of the total for Decade 2). From 1997-2006, the most common session topics were also Professional Development (N=57; 14.8% of the total presentations for Decade 3), Program Components (N=51; 13.2% of the total for the third decade), and Program Administration (N=50; 13% of the total for Decade 3).

There were other notable trends in the conference session data collected for the last 30 years. The category of Technology showed the largest rise in session numbers during the third decade (going from 8 sessions in each of the first two decades to 17 sessions in Decade 3). Special Populations had the largest decrease in session numbers in Decade 3, going from 57 to 58 sessions in the first and second decade, respectively, to only 27 sessions in the third decade (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

### Topic trends observed over three decades of conference sessions.



It should be mentioned that the comparative trends indicated in this section may not show *significant* differences, as there was not an equal number of sessions reviewed for each decade, nor was there an equal number of conferences reviewed per decade. As seen in Table 2, the researcher only had four conference programs to review for Decade 3, as compared to seven conference programs reviewed for each of the first two decades. The number of sessions reviewed per decade also differed across the decades, but not necessarily in direct correlation with the number of conferences reviewed. Decade 1 and Decade 3 had more similar session numbers, with 362 and 385 sessions reviewed, respectively. The second decade, however, had 532 sessions, despite having had an equal number of conference programs reviewed as Decade 1. Because of these variances in available data, caution should be used when comparing the overall trends in numbers of sessions by decade.

**TABLE 2**

**Number of Sessions by Decade Compared to Number of Conferences Reviewed**

Presentation Topics	1977-1986	1987-1996	1997-2006	Total
No. of Sessions Reviewed	358	512	376	1,246
No. of Conferences Reviewed	7	7	4	18

**APPENDIX A**

**General Information from Selected NODA Annual Conference Guides**

Year	Location	Sponsor Institution/Host(s)	Overall Theme	Keynote Speaker(s)	Keynote Address Title(s)	Plenary Speakers/Conference Highlights
1977	Los Angeles, CA	UCLA & Cal Ply (Hosts: Bruce Barbee & Bob Walters)				
1978	Kalamzoo, MI	Western Michigan University & Lansing Community College (Hosts: Norm Russell & Barry Stearns)				
1979	Washington, D.C.	Howard University (Host: Andrew Coleman)	Orientation and Academics: Where Do We Go From Here?	Dr. Lee Knefelkamp, Dr. Judith Prince, and Dr. Ted Miller	Paraprofessionals and Student Development Theory	
1980	New Orleans, LA	Delgado Community College, others (Host: Ed Kennedy)		Dr. W. Harold Grant	Orientation as a Rite of Passage	
1981	Salt Lake City, UT	University of Utah, Brigham Young University, others (Host: Jim Zakely)	The 1980s: Orientation Still the Key	Dr. James Hurst		NODA divided into 6 regions
1982	Lexington, KY	University of Kentucky (Hosts: George Dexter & Ann Fister)				
1983	Burlington, VT	University of Vermont (Hosts: Corrine Richards & Narbeth Emmanuel)	Orientation - The Significant Difference	Cynthia Parsons		First Timers Handbook published
1984	St. Louis, MO	University of Missouri - St. Louis (Host: Dan Wallace)				

APPENDIX A (cont.)

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1985	Scottsdale, AZ	Arizona State University (Host: Bob Francis)	Orientation in the 80s--Sharpening the Focus	Dr. Gene Chavez	Sharpening the Focus on Special Populations	
1986	Fort Worth, TX	Tarrant County Junior College, others (Host: Suzanne Fields)	Orientation and Academic Advising: Partners of the Future	Dr. Wright Lassiter	Enhancing Achievement Through Creative Orientation and Advisement	Dr. Margaret Barr "Orientation and Advising: Partners in Students' Success" Dr. Thomas Grites, "Retention, 'Undecided' majors, and Academic Advising"
1987	Charlotte, NC	University of North Carolina - Charlotte, others (Hosts: Mary Howard Hamilton & Dick Mullendore)	Orientation in Transition: A Changing Challenge	Dr. Robert Albright - President Johnson C. Smith College & John Gardner - FYE		
1988	Sacramento, CA	Butte Community College (Host: Peggy Jennings-Severe)	Building Connections--NODA: Your Vein of Gold	Dr. James Hirabayashi	Panning for Nuggets or Fool's Gold: Communication in a Multicultural Setting	
1989	Traverse City, MI	Central Michigan University & Lansing Community College (Hosts: Don Holland & Barry Stearns)	Traditions and Tomorrows	Dr. Francine McNairy	Build the Agenda	
1990	Hartford, CT	University of New Haven (Host: Jim Martin)	Images for the Future	Dr. M. Lee Upcraft & Dr. Susan Komives	Upcraft: Are We Ready for the Freshmen of the '90s? Komives: Leadership in the '90s and Into the Century	



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1991	Costa Mesa, CA	UCLA & Cal Poly (Hosts: Bruce Barbee & Bob Walters)	Traditional Patterns - Tomorrow's Designs	Ardenia Terry, Dr. Alexander Astin & Dr. Troy Duster	Campus Responses to Diversity	
1992	Kansas City, KS	Wichita State University (Host: Kathy Davis)	All Jazzed Up	Ms. Barbara Tootle	Creativity Counts	Dr. George D. Kuh, "The Invisible Curriculum"
1993	Savannah, GA	University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Clemson University (Hosts: Gary Morgan & Jeanine Ward)	Set Sail for Savannah	Dr. LeRoy Walker Dr. Sally Kariath	Pursuit of Excellence: Deeds and Declarations Life Is Not a Dress Rehearsal	Lee Upcraft & John Gardner, "Designing Successful Transitions"
1994	Portland, OR	University of Washington, others (Hosts: Michaelann Jundt & Roger Morris)	Blazing New Trails	Lee Bussard	More Alike Than Different	
1995	Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN	University of Minnesota, Mankato State University, Northern Illinois University, others (Hosts: Anne Latsch & Denise Rode)	Beyond Boundaries	Dr. Margaret Barr	Beyond Boundaries: People, Portages, and Pathways	Juan Moreno, "Community & Diversity: Contact, Culture, Complexity, & Conflict"
1996	Providence, RI	Boston University (Hosts: Maureen Hurley & Daniel Robb)	Building Community			
1997	Denver, CO	University of Colorado at Boulder (Hosts: Barbara Margolis, William Swentzell, Kim Guithen)	Go West for the Gold	Dr. Carlos E. Cortes	Backing into the Future: Opportunities and Challenges of Diversity in the Twenty-First Century	
1999	Tampa, FL	Converse College, others (Host: Kristin Watkins)	Reflect, Rejuvenate, Recommit...	Patricia Russell-McCloud	Now Is the Time: Reflect, Rejuvenate, Recommit	Dr. Walter Kimbrough, "The Responsibility of Student Affairs in the Age of Springer" Bob Foust, "Mouse Magic... The Key to Your Customer Service"

APPENDIX A (cont.)

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2001	Toronto, Canada	University of Guelph & Kent State University (Hosts: Mildred Eisenbach & Brenda McKenzie)				
2002	Baltimore, MD	The Art Institute of Washington, others (Host: Joe Giuffre)	Guiding with Purpose: Experience, Mind, Heart, You	Dr. Steven Lundin	(FISH! Philosophy author)	
2004	Chicago, IL	University of Illinois at Chicago, Southern Illinois University, others (Hosts: Beth Lingren & Melvin McBean)	Destined for Greatness: Achieving by Design	Paul Wesselmann	Finding Your Great-ness: Stone Soup & the Art of Personal Leadership	Dr. Eleni Katararou
2005	Miami, FL	Florida International University, others (Host: April Mann)	Rhythms of Change	Vernon Wall		Dr. Robert H. McCabe
2006	Salt Lake City, UT	Southern Utah University, others (Hosts: Gwen Fears & Jeb Branin)	Mountains of Possibilities	Dr. Joe Martin	Leaving a Legacy	Marjorie Savage, "Scaling to New Heights in Parent and Family Programs!"
2007	Dallas, TX	University of North Texas (Host: Janet Marling)	Big Dreams and Bright Futures	Dr. Verna Comelia Price	The Power of Change	Dr. Charles Schroeder

## APPENDIX B

## Special Features of Selected NODA Annual Conferences

Year	Location	Sponsor Institution	Overall Theme	Special Features/Topics
1979	Washington, D.C.	Howard University	Orientation and Academics: Where Do We Go From Here?	MediaFest Presentations
1980	New Orleans, LA	Delgado Community College, others		Tours of New Orleans, NFL Game at the Superdome, Buffet Jazz Brunch
1981	Salt Lake City, UT	University of Utah, Brigham Young University, others	The 1980s: Orientation Still the Key	Conference Spouse Activities, Park City Shopping Tour, Tours of Mormon Temple Square and other Salt Lake City sites.
1985	Scottsdale, AZ	Arizona State University and others	Orientation in the 80s-- Sharpening the Focus	Tours of the Valley of the Sun and the Arizona State University campus, workshops on using computers in orientation, advising, and retention
1986	Fort Worth, TX	Tarrant County Junior College, others	Orientation and Academic Advising: Partners of the Future	NODA's tenth anniversary conference/"birthday celebration" theme, regional socials, Texas barbecue, Texas-style entertainment, first conference to include extensive association materials in a binder notebook
1988	Sacramento, CA	Butte Community College	Building Connections-- NODA: Your Vein of Gold	First conference to include program symbols relating to conference tracks, strong multicultural emphasis in program sessions, enrollment management becomes a topic of interest at NODA
1989	Traverse City, MI	Central Michigan University and Lansing Community College	Traditions and Tomorrows	Commercial vendors first included in a NODA conference, caucuses and interest groups met, side trips were taken to Mackinac Island, Sleepy Bear Dunes National Park, and Interlochen Arts Academy, first conference to include a statement on appropriate language

APPENDIX B (cont.)

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Year	Location	Sponsor Institution	Overall Theme	Special Features/Topics
1992	Kansas City, KS	Wichita State University	All Jazzed Up	Strong emphasis on programs related to LGBT students and allies, extensive pre-conference workshop offerings, increasing interest in transfer orientation and extended orientation courses, on-site entertainment included a "fun run/walk," Country and Western line dancing, and an auction with "NODA Bucks," clothing submitted by institutions for the shirt/sweatshirt/jacket judging given to a local charity
1993	Savannah, GA	University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Clemson University	Set Sail for Savannah	In tandem with NODA's first monograph, <i>Designing Successful Transitions: A Guide to Orienting Students to College</i> , the conference offered 11 monograph presentations featuring the book's authors/contributors, regional conference showcase winners were featured, a golf tournament and side trips to Harbour Town, Civil War and Old Savannah sites, and a Savannah Black History Tour
1994	Portland, OR	University of Washington, others	Blazing New Trails	"A Quack Line" (an entertaining look at campus life along the lines of "A Chorus Line" presented by the Student Orientation staff at the University of Oregon), an overnight pre-conference workshop on Mt. Hood, an evening at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, and a Halloween party. Programs followed "tracks," for "roots," "revitalizing," "resources," and "recycling"

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1995	Minneapolis/ St. Paul, MN	University of Minnesota, Mankato State University, Northern Illinois University	Beyond Boundaries	Conference theme centered around the Minnesota Boundary Waters with subthemes of "Building Foundations," Growing and Developing," and "Charting New Territories," an intentional track for graduate students; first NODA case study competition for graduate students; a first-ever service learning project with People Serving People, a homeless shelter; entertainment by ComedySportz improv company; a reception at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul; and a side trip to the Mall of America
1997	Denver, CO	University of Colorado at Boulder	Go West for the Gold	Conference tracks for "Explorers," "Homesteaders," "Settlers," "Anniversary Sessions," and "NODA Networks;" side trips to Vail, the Air Force Academy, and the Rocky Mountain foothills; the unveiling of the NODA Internship program; entertainment by "Chicken Lips," a comedy troupe; and a celebration of 50 years of NODA conferences
1999	Tampa, FL	Converse College; others	Reflect, Rejuvenate, Recommit	Commemoration of the life of Margaret Anliker (a host of the conference who was tragically killed in a car accident); side trips to downtown Disney and Ybor City; and an evening at the Florida Aquarium
2002	Baltimore, MD	The Art Institute of Washington, others	Guiding with Purpose: Experience, Mind, Heart, You	A program track for seasoned professionals; an "Ideas Marketplace" showcasing vendors; program "commercials" to briefly demonstrate orientation icebreakers, skits, and video presentations; "Purpose Panels" for participants to discuss issues uncovered in educational sessions; Orientation Professionals Institute; a fun walk/run around Baltimore's Inner Harbor; side trips to Washington, DC, the Maryland State Capitol, and the U.S. Naval Academy; and first NODA Readership Program based around Dr. Lundin's book on customer service

APPENDIX B (cont.)

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2004	Chicago, IL	University of Illinois at Chicago, Southern Illinois University, others	Destined for Greatness: Achieving by Design	Inauguration of the Graduate Student Symposium; pre-conference workshops on student development theory and advancing professionals in orientation; return of the "Orientation Leader (OL) Skills Track;" side trips included a Chicago River Cruise and architectural tour, a museum campus exploration, and "Amazing Race" Chicago
2005	Miami, FL	Florida International University, others	Rhythms of Change	Pre-conference workshops on grant-writing and community colleges; evening reception at Bongos Cuban Café/disco; community service project to benefit a nature restoration project on Key Biscayne; and side trips to Gator Park in the Everglades, an Art Deco tour in Miami Beach, and an Island cruise along Biscayne Bay
2006	Salt Lake City, UT	Southern Utah University, University of Utah	Mountains of Possibilities	Off-site evening activity at the IMAX Theatre, Clark Planetarium, and Gateway Mall; a service project with "The Happy Factory;" side trips to Snowbird Ski Resort, Thanksgiving Point, and Cabela's (outdoor outfitters)