

## Editor's Note

Denise L. Rode

This 2008 Spring/Summer edition of *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* brings a variety of articles to enhance the work we do as graduate students and professionals in the field of new student orientation and transition. "Theory and Practice" might be an appropriate theme for Volume 15, No. 2, as the articles contained in it blend both of these essential elements for effectively serving first-year students. Although summer is not a leisurely, relaxed season for most orientation/transition staff, my hope is that you will find some time for professional reading. This issue of *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* is packed with articles that provide a great place to start!

We lead off with "The Use of Ritual and Ceremony in Strengthening Institutional Affiliation" by Michael J. Siegel. As we welcome new students to our campuses across the country, this article will help us understand how institutional culture influences students' connections with the college or university at the critical point of entry. This article may lead us to consider how we can incorporate aspects of institutional culture into our orientation and welcome programs, especially in convocation and induction events.

Siegel's article is followed by four more full-length articles that make for provocative reading. Jennifer Miles, Michael Miller, and Daniel Nadler present and discuss their research on the methods that orientation directors perceive to be effective in increasing student involvement in self-governing activities—surely an important topic as higher education institutions strive to increase student engagement and "high impact" initiatives for students which lead to greater satisfaction, learning, and retention.

"Managing the Transition to College: The Role of Family Cohesion and Adolescents' Emotional Coping Strategies" by Vanessa Johnson and colleagues treats the often overlooked topic of pre-college family environment on first-year adjustment through a longitudinal study of adolescents' emotional transition during the first college year. The importance of family dynamics in the success of students' ability to manage emotions cannot be disputed. This article could provide the basis for a fascinating discussion among those on any campus who are concerned with the affective domain as it relates to new student transition.

John W. Lounsbury and his co-authors examine the role of extracurricular activities in identity development through their research with a sample of 330 students enrolled in a First-Year Studies course at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Readers who are grounded in the psychosocial theory of Chickering and Reisser (1993) will find implications for several vectors of development within this article, which connect identity development with personal activities, extracurricular involvement, and leisure pursuits. Lounsbury et al. remind us that the first year of

college is a critical time for identity development.

Carla Abreu-Ellis, William Knight, and Jason Brent Ellis describe the outcomes of their research comparing the characteristics and retention rates of students attending longer and shorter (and later) orientation sessions at a Midwestern university. Findings from this study will be of great interest to professionals who deliver orientation in multiple formats.

Our “Campus Notes” section, as usual, offers new ways of thinking about orientation and first-year practices, and the Book Review section features a look at two student subgroups—sophomore students and sorority women—along with a review of *Made to Stick*, a resource which could be useful for anyone who makes presentations to new student and family groups or teaches first-year courses.

“Emptying the Nest,” our “Perspectives” piece for this issue, takes a humorous and candid look at the process of “letting go but staying connected” for those who are launching their students off to a new educational experience (or for those who work with family members of new students). As the parent of a soon-to-be college freshman, I thought this article was written just for me!

Looking back one year ago, the preface to the Spring 2007 issue of *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* expressed the condolences of our entire profession to Virginia Tech University on the tragic shootings which occurred in their midst, reminding us all that our academic communities are not immune to unfathomable violent acts. As the first anniversary of that day was marked in April, the world witnessed the resilience of this academic community and the healing which has begun there.

Four months ago another psychologically disturbed shooter struck again, this time on my home campus of Northern Illinois University, killing five students and wounding 16 others before taking his own life. On a very personal note, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our friends at Virginia Tech as well as those across the country and around the world for their outpouring of concern and solidarity. As those at Virginia Tech can attest, a campus can be changed forever in a matter of minutes, and the reverberations continue to be experienced long after. Recovery from a tragedy of this magnitude does not happen easily or quickly, but we are inspired by the strength and support we’ve found in our students, colleagues, and profession. We at Northern Illinois University are forever grateful.

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Editor

## Reference

Chickering, A.W., and Reisser, L. (1993). *Education and identity* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.