Fall 2009 Orientation Review

REVIEW & RECOMMENDATIONS (based on student evaluations, student assistant input and CIE staff input)

Student Evaluations

- **Scale**: Overall, the orientation received very positive reviews with almost all of the categories getting a score between 4 and 5. For the most part, the “highs” and the “low” are all within a fairly short range of 4 to 5. In order to distinguish more clearly which programs are favored by students, I will look into changing the survey measure from 1 to 5 to 1 to 3.

- **Necessary**: Even if a program doesn’t get a high score, it doesn’t automatically mean that it will be eliminated because some information needs to be in the orientation regardless.

- **Disparity**: Some sessions such as the Scavenger Hunt, Adjusting to Life in the U.S. and People BINGO elicited strong feedback on both ends of the spectrum. I think this is due to the fact that these sessions require more active participation on the part of the students, which some students will like and others will dislike. Other factors that likely contribute to such disparity include the age of the student (F-1 vs. J-1), and sometimes one or two low responses will skew the results.

**Highs**

- **F-1**
  - SEVIS & Immigration (4.67)
  - Student Health (4.71)
  - Important Topics & Practical Info (4.60)
  - Inside Scoop (4.57)

- **J-1**
  - Adjusting to Life in the U.S. (5)
  - Campus Tour (4.75)
  - Library Tour (4.75)
  - Important Topics & Practical Info (4.71)

**Lows**

- **F-1**
  - Academic Preparedness (4.40)
  - Introduce Your Partner (4.38)
  - Adjusting to Life in the U.S. (4.36)
  - People BINGO (4.27)
  - Scavenger Hunt (4.29)

- **J-1**
  - Shopping (3 - skewed by a score of 1)
  - Historic New Orleans Collection (3.5)
  - People BINGO (4)
  - Inside Scoop (4.25)

Comments from students on evaluations

The students mentioned the opportunity to meet other international students as their favorite part of orientation and the Scavenger Hunt was the most popular activity (although one student also listed it as their least favorite activity). F-1 students overall favored the Student Panel more than the J-1 students. J-1 students requested more local tours in New Orleans including a night outing to see local music, clearer information about the move-in day for the residence halls, and information on the lagniappe activities.

Sessions/Presentations/Activities – Detailed Discussion

**Academic Preparedness**

Dr. Lorenz did a good job at giving an overview to Loyola’s academic environment and answering questions related to GPA, etc. Even though the session received relatively low marks, I think it’s worth keeping in the program as it provides important information to the students. The Orientation Leaders said that some students told them this session was too long, which may be why it received lower scores.

**Recommendation**: I will ask Larry if it’s possible to make the session shorter next year.

**Important Topics & Practical Information**

While this session received relatively good reviews, I did receive feedback from the Orientation Leaders that some students said they would have liked to follow along on a powerpoint.

**Recommendation**: While I generally don’t like to use powerpoint, I plan on creating a presentation for next year’s orientation because I think it would be useful for the students to be able to read along in this session since I cover a lot of information in a short amount of time and they are still getting used to listening to English when they first arrive.

**Adjusting to Life in the U.S.**

This session received high marks from the J-1 students and lower marks from the F-1 students. I think part of that may be due to the different maturity levels of the students.

**Recommendation**: However, the information in this session is important for students, so even if they marked it lower, we need to keep it in the orientation.
The Inside Scoop
This session received high marks from the F-1 students and low marks from the J-1 students. The disparity in the scores seems to be due to feedback that I got from the Orientation Leaders who were on the student panel: they said that the two groups of students have different questions and interests and so it would be better to do a separate student panel for each group.

Recommendation: Next year, I will create a student panel composed of inBUS members and older international students for the J-1 students.

Introduce Your Partner
Most students seemed to enjoy this activity and it was a good way to break the ice initially. However, it did get a few low marks and I did get feedback from Tori that she felt it was a stilted sort of conversation since you have to remember particular things and report back to the group.

Recommendation: Keep Introduce Your Partner, but have the pairs introduce themselves to each other in smaller groups rather than in one big group and then have some other sort of shorter activity that lets students learn each others' names for the larger group.

People BINGO
The students continued with this activity for quite a while and seemed to enjoy the chance to talk with each other. However, it is more of a social activity, so I think this accounts for a couple of the lower scores because it can make some students feel awkward.

Recommendation: Keep People BINGO since the majority of the students enjoy it.

Scavenger Hunt
Most of students said they enjoyed the competition aspect of this activity and getting to work with the other students. It was the most frequently listed favorite activity. A couple students also listed it as their least favorite activity. One student said that we should take away the students' cell phones so that they can't look up the information on their phones.

Recommendation:

Historic New Orleans Collection
The presenter spoke very quickly using complicated words and sentence structure and the presentation was too detailed in its discussion of New Orleans architecture. I gave this feedback to my contact at The Collection, Alfred Lemmon, and he said that he'd work with us next year to put together a better presentation.

Recommendation: Keep the tour, but make the presentation section shorter and get a guided tour of the galleries.

Other Recommendations

Separate vs. Combined Exchange and Degree-Seeking students
We have gone back and forth over the years with combined vs. separate orientations. This year, there were a few combined sections that might have been better as separate.

Recommendation: Continue to bring the two groups of students together on Wednesday morning, but carefully select which sessions will be joint. My current recommendation for joint activities: President’s Welcome, People BINGO, Academic Preparedness, Student Health, Adjusting to Life in the U.S.

New Orleans
I would like to include some sort of presentation/video/session on some of the great things about New Orleans (music, food, culture, architecture, mardi gras Indians, second lines, etc.) as part of orientation.

Recommendation: speak to Leslie Parr of the Center for the Study of New Orleans about doing a session.

Table Organization in Room 311
The U-shape was too small to accommodate the number of students and parents and the row organization is a bit formal.

Recommendation: Organize the tables in Room 311 in groups to encourage students to engage with each other and create a less formal atmosphere. Or, check with Language Dept to see if we can use Mercy 313.

Coordination with NSO
When international students checked into the NSO, some of them were told that they didn’t have to come to the International Student Orientation. In addition, Co-Curricular was supposed to provide the NSO folders for F-1 students and extra copies of the Wolfpack Welcome for the J-1 students, but they did neither despite my attempts to get the information from them. As well, the Welcome Reception wasn’t included in the Wolfpack Welcome schedule.

Recommendation: I will meet with Co-Curricular and make sure that they provide the information we need next year.
Activities the week of orientation through Labor Day
The extra-curricular activities and inBUS activities were popular, especially at the beginning after the students have just arrived.

Recommendation: These activities should be continued next year. In addition, students said they’d like a night outing to see music.

Advance Information
Students now need their ID numbers earlier than they used to. These should be sent in their packet with their immigration document. Students still seem to be confused about move-in day and about which orientation they must attend.

Recommendation: Attach an information sheet on bright paper to their I-20/DS-2019 that has the following information: Day/Time of International Student Orientation and New Student Orientation, Move-in Day/Time for International Students, ID numbers…what else?

Food
For the first day, we estimated 80 mini pastries from Le Boulangerie for the first day and this was way way too much in addition to fruit. Hardly anyone drank the coffee. For the second day, we ordered breakfast for 40 people from Catering and this was way too much (even though there were more than 40 people there).

Recommendation: Get enough food for about half the number of people we expect. Don’t order from Catering. Make sure to let them know we’ll be serving breakfast when we send out the reminder email for the orientation a few days beforehand.

Transportation from Airport
Our office coordinated airport pick-ups along with University Ministry. This was a very popular and successful program.

Recommendation: Next year, be sure to tell students that pick up isn’t guaranteed if they arrive the week before orientation or if their flight arrives too late at night. Also, be sure to tell student workers, leaders, volunteers in the spring about getting certified to drive so that they’re ready to drive in the fall.