

Spring 2016

Not Just a Watered-Down Version of a Freshman Orientation

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NOT JUST A WATERED DOWN VERSION OF A FRESHMAN ORIENTATION

EMILY SKIBSKI

HONORS PROJECT

Submitted to the Honors College
at Bowling Green State University in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

PRESIDENTIAL HONORS

Jodi Devine, Honors College, Advisor

Margaret Weinberger, Sociology, Advisor

Jessica Huddleston, New Student Orientation, Advisor

Introduction

For my Honors Project, I developed and piloted two 40 minute sessions for Bowling Green State University's (BGSU) Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) Program. After developing facilitation guides for these sessions, I trained a group of eight Orientation Leaders (OLs) to facilitate sessions for nontraditional and transfer students during SOAR, which occurred on January 8, 2016. Depending on how a student self-identified, the student attended among sessions for nontraditional, transfer, or traditional students. A facilitator's guide for a session for traditional students was already developed and in use. The facilitation guides created for this honors project were designed using both student development theory and qualitative data, and addressed the needs typically expressed by transfer and nontraditional students.

While this is not a complete restructuring of SOAR nor a comprehensive solution to addressing the limitations of SOAR for transfer and nontraditional students, my hope is that this project can serve as a starting point for more comprehensive future changes. Nontraditional and transfer students are of growing importance for colleges and universities throughout the country. My project addressed their specific concerns by prioritizing their needs in the creation of orientation materials.

Definitions

Some of the terms used throughout this project are either specific to BGSU or can be used interchangeably and need to be defined for clarification.

SOAR is a one-day intensive orientation program that all incoming first year students at BGSU are required to attend. Parents and other guests are welcome to attend with students. During this orientation, students and guests receive information from various offices across

campus, including the Bursar and Financial Aid, Residence Life, Nontraditional and Military Student Services, Off-Campus Student Services, academic advising, and more.

OLs are undergraduate students hired for the purpose of welcoming and mentoring new students attending BGSU. OLs receive a semester of general leadership training through a two-credit hour course during the spring semester, two weeks of intensive training in May, and daily summer staff meetings. For summer SOAR dates, 20 OLs are hired, including four returning OLs. For January SOAR all OLs have previously worked for SOAR the summer before and are asked back for this day, and go through a one-day refresher training session.

Transfer students are students who previously attended a higher education institution different from BGSU. These students often transfer from universities, colleges, and community colleges. Not included in this group were students who had prior college credit from high school, College Credit Plus programs, or Advanced Placement courses. Transfer students are marked in the registration system for SOAR.

Nontraditional students are defined at BGSU as being 23 years of age or older, and have not followed the “traditional” path of attending college directly after high school. Nontraditional students are sometimes referred to as adult learners. Nontraditional students are not marked in the registration system for SOAR.

Literature Review

What follows is a review of the literature, divided into two distinct categories: student affairs based literature on orientation programs and student affairs based literature on nontraditional and transfer student populations. There is some overlap in the literature on orientation programs and how orientation specifically affects nontraditional and transfer students.

Overview of Orientation

New student orientation is focused on helping incoming students transition to the role of being a college student. In *The Freshman Year Experience*, Upcraft and Gardner identify four goals for orientation (Upcraft and Gardner, 1989). Orientation programs should support student academic success, encourage involvement within the institution, assist with parent and family transitions, and gather information about incoming students both formally and informally (Upcraft and Gardner, 1989).

While all four of Upcraft and Gardner's goals are important to developing orientation programs, my sessions for nontraditional and transfer students focused on academic success and involvement with the institution, though the other two goals were considered. In both the session for nontraditional students and the session for transfer students, materials focused on academic support services at different institutions, such as comparing campus tutoring services for transfer students and exploring Canvas, the online learning management tool for both groups. The discussions about Canvas and campus tutoring services helped inform students about the importance of utilizing campus resources to enhance academic success. Involvement with the institution was addressed differently in the two sessions. For transfer students, we discussed organizations and opportunities as they compared to what was offered at their previous institution. For nontraditional students, we discussed options to get involved for the first time on campus, and different opportunities that may appeal to nontraditional students, such as bringing children to family weekend events. Campus involvements were highlighted to help these populations of students become more familiar with ways to be a part of the BGSU community outside of the classroom. Other sessions throughout the day addressed the remaining two goals of orientation, so those goals were not a focus of the breakout sessions. The overarching goal of

orientation and both of these sessions was to help the students have a smoother transition to being a part of the BGSU community.

A key transition theory that relates to the concept of being a part of a community is Schlossberg's theory of marginality and mattering (Schlossberg 1989). In places where one feels a sense of comfort and establishment, there is "mattering", or in the mindset of a college student, the idea that they belong at a particular institution. Marginality is presented as the opposite of mattering, which is the concept of not belonging within a particular group; this feeling of marginality may be a transitional or a permanent state (Schlossberg, 1989).

This theory is applicable in the context of orientation, because the underlying goal is to make incoming students feel as though they belong to an institution. Mattering is particularly important to consider for nontraditional and transfer students who are entering a situation in which most representations of the "ideal" incoming college student is an 18 year old who is coming to college right from high school. That representation can impact how nontraditional and transfer students feel and experience college in terms of mattering and marginality.

Nontraditional students can experience marginalization as they negotiate shifting roles and uncertainty in their new roles as students. This feeling of marginalization may transition to mattering can once they define and balance their new roles with their existing responsibilities. Transfer students can experience a sense of marginality as a result of transitioning from their previous institution to taking on new roles at BGSU. Schlossberg describes the experience of marginality where "a bicultural person feels permanently locked 'between two worlds'" (Schlossberg, 1989). This type of "bicultural" experience may be a more persistent form of marginality, which transfer students face as they are connected to their previous institution as well as trying to establish a connection to BGSU. Orientation programming should acknowledge

and address this experience for transfer students, instead of simply focusing on assimilating students to BGSU.

The Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education publish lists of standards and guidelines (CAS standards) for programming in different functional areas. For my project, I specifically looked over the CAS standards for orientation programs, which were developed by orientation professionals and experts in the field of higher education. They provide details about what orientation programming should do, as well as what orientation programming must do, for new students and their family members.

CAS standards do not say how to implement the changes, but rather give a standard of what should be achieved. This means they allow for some flexibility at different institutions, while also creating guidelines for what information needs to be included, such as information about educational opportunities and student expectations. The standards provide a benchmark for assessment of the sessions I developed, and allowed me to ensure the information presented was on track with what is expected in the professional field of student affairs.

Overview of Nontraditional and Transfer Students

One key piece of research I found focused specifically on how community college transfer students transition to large state universities and the concerns they faced in their orientation process. Townsend and Wilson (2006) interviewed 19 students who transferred from community colleges to a large, four-year, state research university. They asked several questions related to the orientation process, such as the support students received in their overall transition, from their community colleges as well as their new university. They found orientation programming at the state research institution did not meet the specific needs of the students who were transferring. Transfer students were not receiving critical information because there was an

underlying assumption that they had been through a college experience before, so they did not need any help.

The research by Townsend and Wilson (2006) relies on convenience sampling and therefore may not be representative of all transfer students. Still, while not applicable to all institutions or transfer students, it does provide some valuable insight into what transfer students believe they are missing from their own experiences. While quantitative data could give more information about how many students need what resources, the qualitative data provides insight on actual transfer students' experiences and the specific information they feel they are missing from their own orientation.

Though there are limitations in this piece, I used the expressed feedback of transfer students to help decide what information to present in the transfer session. There is an underlying assumption in the current orientation programming that transfer students simply want to get their schedule and leave, but the research by Townsend and Wilson indicates that may not be the case for all or any transfer students. Rather, from this research, I can gather that it is not possible to generalize the transfer student experience, and that we need to acknowledge the diversity in transfer students and their needs during our orientation programming.

As it is difficult to generalize the transfer student experience, it is much more difficult to generalize the nontraditional learner experience. Nontraditional students, whom are sometimes referred to as adult learners, are a much less clearly defined group of students. Though definitions of nontraditional undergraduate students vary, the most unifying factor in defining nontraditional students is age. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that there was a 51 percent increase in the number of students from the ages of 25 to 34 between 1997 and

2011, and that this population of students is expected to increase by 20 percent from 2011 to 2022 (Hussar and Bailey, 2014).

Nationally, the number of students who can be defined as nontraditional is increasing, and universities like BGSU should adapt their services to better suit the needs of this student population. Nontraditional students are at different stages in their lives compared to traditionally aged students, and student affairs professionals should work to develop programming to fit their specific needs, both before and during their time as a student.

The Public Agenda (2013) conducted a comprehensive study of adult learners and their expectations for returning to or starting college gives a greater understanding of the needs of this growing population of students (2013). One of the primary findings was that traditionally aged prospective students exhibit different concerns than nontraditionally aged prospective students. These concerns can stem from a variety of sources, such as the additional responsibilities prospective adult learners have, or their level of access to information about the college transition. The Public Agenda found many nontraditionally aged students had less of a concrete understanding of the college experience. Expert information about higher education, such as college guidance counselors, financial aid advisors, and books or websites with college information, was reportedly used by a higher percentage of prospective students ages 18 to 24 compared to prospective students ages 25 to 55 (Public Agenda, 2013). This can cause problems with expectations for college when students attend their orientation date. If students are getting more information from reliable sources, as opposed to family or friends, they may have more realistic expectations for their college experience. If not, some information presented at orientation may be surprising to them. For example, one student in the nontraditional session was surprised by the fact that attendance was taken and necessary to perform well in classes. While it

is difficult to know what caused the assumption that attendance is not important to classroom success, part of the problem could have been a lack of access to accurate information.

Research Problem

The applied portion of my project was focused primarily on how to utilize research to better support nontraditional and transfer students who are transitioning to BGSU. The questions came out of my previous experiences working with incoming students at orientation, and research supported the intentionality of planning effective sessions. The problem I noticed was a gap in information for different student populations at SOAR, specifically how different life experiences impacted the concerns of incoming students. The gap became apparent to me during a summer SOAR day, when I had a nontraditional veteran student in a group of traditional first year students. The information covered in our discussion primarily focused on moving away from home and transitioning to living on campus, which alienated the nontraditional student. I spoke with him after the session, to see what questions he had, and was able to assist him more in the one-on-one conversation focused on his needs. This experience sparked my interest in providing information that is more relevant to nontraditional students in a larger group setting in order to assist them with transitioning academically and socially to BGSU.

Once I recognized the problem, I developed goals for the project, which guided the design of the new sessions. I had three major goals for this project. First, I wanted the project to help nontraditional and transfer students who attend SOAR in January to become more successful as students at BGSU. I hoped the sessions would provide them information about services transfer and nontraditional students are more likely to need, such as career services and academic support, instead of information about living in residence halls and being homesick. Second, I wanted the project to provide alternative options for SOAR when considering how to

best address the needs of nontraditional and transfer student populations, ideally creating a framework for future sessions for these student populations. Third, I wanted OLs to have more training and knowledge about how to best approach assisting nontraditional and transfer students and their guests. In my specific instance with my nontraditional veteran student, I was somewhat underprepared to provide information to him. Ideally, OLs would be equipped to handle these situations on their own in the future.

Description of Project

SOAR is a highly recommended orientation program for all new students at BGSU, but it is not required for transfer or nontraditional students. Some students in these populations do attend SOAR, both in the summer and in January, and breakout sessions led by OLs are typically divided by major instead of student status (see Appendix A for a sample portion of a SOAR student schedule from summer 2015, the particular session I focused on is “Meet Your Orientation Leader”). Therefore, transfer and nontraditional students are placed in the same groups as traditional first year students. The same sessions occur each SOAR day, and while it is beneficial for transfer and nontraditional students to meet other students in their majors and find academic similarities, they often have different needs logistically and socially. Transfer and nontraditional students have different questions compared to traditional first year students, and these needs are not always addressed in heterogeneous group sessions. For example, transfer students have a larger concern about prior credits transferring to BGSU, and nontraditional students have concerns about being students while working or potentially having caregiving roles, while also transitioning back into being a student. Other sessions in the day focus on academic issues related to intended major, so it is not necessary to separate students by college.

Separating groups by self-identified student status of nontraditional, transfer, or traditional first year student can provide an opportunity for students to ask questions that are more specific.

The structure of the OL facilitated breakout session for the day is always the same, even on transfer-only days, and survey feedback indicates it does not provide adequate information to transfer and nontraditional students. Along with research of the literature and my own personal experiences, I feedback gathered from summer SOAR sessions to determine what changes were needed to address the differences in these populations. At the end of every SOAR day, students are required to fill out an online survey before leaving campus. Transfer students fill out a specific survey, seeking their input on the day and allowing them the opportunity to provide suggestions for improvements. Nontraditional students do not fill out a specific survey. While there was a large number of positive responses, there was some constructive criticism. Most criticism was pertaining to the repetitive nature of SOAR, given that most students came from another university, which presented similar information to them. One student commented that they expected transfer SOAR to be specific to their needs, and “not just the watered-down version of a freshman orientation.” This input helped with the development of facilitation guides for transfer students based on their specific feedback, while for nontraditional students I had to look for resources based on the research of nontraditional students as a population.

When developing nontraditional and transfer student facilitation guides, I referenced the existing facilitation guide for the “Meet Your Orientation Leader” breakout session that occurs during SOAR (see Appendix B for facilitation guide). This facilitation guide has been used and modified by New Student Orientation professional staff and had proven successful with traditional first year students. However, the reasons the session is so successful with traditional students limit its effectiveness with nontraditional or transfer students. For example, the bulk of

the time in this session is dedicated to icebreaker activities to help traditionally aged first year students connect with their peers, which is an important goal of orientation (Upcraft and Gardner, 1989). However, this follows the assumption that all incoming students need the social connections more than the information about campus resources they need to transition to college. Traditionally aged first year students have greater access to information about college, compared to adult learners, and they may value those social connections more, as those come from experiences with their peers at orientation instead of the sources of information they receive in the admissions process (Public Agenda, 2013). In making new facilitation guides for nontraditional and transfer students, I focused less on the social aspect and more on the information needed to make a successful transition (see Appendix C for the facilitation guide for transfer students, and Appendix D for the facilitation guide for nontraditional students). Some of the elements in both sessions were the same, but some were different for each specific student population. The specifics of each session are broken down in the following sections.

Transfer Student Session

For transfer students, a common theme from both student feedback and the literature is that they already know how to transition to college. Instead, they need more information about the specific university they are attending, as well as support to get answers to questions about their new institution (Townsend and Wilson, 2006). In designing a session specific for transfer students, I decided to remove the icebreaker activity and replace it with an intentional “think-pair-share” activity. For the activity, the facilitator asked experience-based questions about transfer students, including where they would be living for the upcoming semester and what type of institution they transferred from before coming to BGSU. These questions gave information to the facilitator so they could best address the needs of the group while still introducing students to

each other. For example, if a group was primarily students who would be living on campus, the facilitator could focus on residence life at BGSU, or if not, they could discuss commuter resources. The activity also served the purpose of creating connections between transfer students who had similar experiences.

After the think-pair-share activity, there was a discussion about campus resources, and the facilitation provided information about campus resources that are important to transfer students. Townsend and Wilson (2006) found that transfer students were closer to starting their careers, and needed more information about internship availability and the job search process compared to traditional first year students. This information, along with information about comparable campus resources, such as the Career Center, was provided.

Finally, the session involved a demonstration of online services available at BGSU. Specifically the online myBGSU portal, and Canvas, the learning management system used by BGSU were highlighted. Students who had directly transferred from an institution were likely familiar with online learning systems, but may not have been familiar with the systems in place at BGSU. Walking through the key features of these systems served the purpose of easing the transition by limiting the marginality students with a limited understanding of the “language” of BGSU in terms of technology may feel (Schlossberg, 1989).

Finally, the session ended with an overview of the rest of the day and an opportunity to ask questions. Students were reminded of two options in the afternoon, one for commuter students and one for residential students. After this session, all students met with their academic college and were no longer split by self-identified student status.

Nontraditional Student Session

As mentioned, the nontraditional session involved some of the same aspects of the transfer student session, but they both started differently. Instead of doing a think-pair-share activity with nontraditional students, the facilitator began the session with introductions, and then a question and answer session, leading the group with some guiding questions. The facilitator sparked conversation by asking what concerns the students have about transitioning to being a student from their other roles in life. Some topics of conversation included transportation and parking, childcare, finances, and academic support for returning to school.

After the conversation about resources, nontraditional students had the same conversation about myBGSU and Canvas as the transfer students, but with slightly different reasoning. While transfer students may have been aware of online resources and would need to learn how to use BGSU's specific services, nontraditional students might not be aware of the online component of courses at all, depending on the amount of time they have taken off from being a student. Presenting a tutorial of myBGSU and Canvas served the purpose of making college coursework more concrete for nontraditional students (Public Agenda, 2013).

Finally, they ended the session with the opportunity to ask additional questions, as well as an overview of the rest of the day, including a mention of a later session from Nontraditional and Military Student Services, which was facilitated by a professional staff member in that office.

Survey Results

Following SOAR, I wanted to gather feedback on the sessions, as well as information on the roles nontraditional and transfer students have, in order to recommend changes for future SOAR sessions. I designed a follow up survey and collected email addresses of the participants in the sessions (see Appendix E for survey questions). In order to send out the survey, I determined I needed to seek Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) approval. After applying for approval from the HSRB in February, and receiving a response in late March, I sent out a

survey to the 75 participants at January SOAR via email on April 1. I also sent a reminder of the survey two weeks later. I only received one response, which is likely due to the time lag between the SOAR session and the survey distribution and the proximity of the survey distribution to the end of the semester. The only response was from a female transfer student, who was between the ages of 20 and 39. Her feedback stated she wished SOAR was not three days before classes started, and that the sessions involved too much lecturing. While it is not possible to assume that most students felt this way, this feedback could inform student affairs professionals to bring more interactive sessions into orientation, instead of relying on traditional lectures.

Timeline of Project

I began my academic research in August by reading about successful orientation programs and analyzing what was missing from SOAR. After discovering the gap of information presented to nontraditional and transfer students, I began researching these two populations, including having meetings with the Assistant Vice President of Nontraditional and Military Student Services at BGSU (formerly Nontraditional and Transfer Student Services) to learn about specific challenges these student populations face at BGSU. Throughout the Fall 2015 semester, I met with the Assistant Dean of Students for New Student Orientation, Jessica Huddleston, and the Graduate Assistant for New Student Orientation, Haley Young, to develop the logistics of implementing this session into January SOAR. I also periodically met with my primary advisor, Jodi Devine, to discuss the literature I was reviewing and the process of creating the facilitation guides. On January 7, 2016 I trained OLS on how to facilitate my sessions, and on January 8, 2016 the sessions were piloted with three groups: two transfer student groups, and one nontraditional student group. After SOAR, I began the process of Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) approval, with my secondary advisor Margaret

Weinberger, to send out surveys to students who participated in the sessions and sent out a follow up assessment. I received HSRB approval in late March, and distributed the surveys soon after. In early February, I met with Jessica Huddleston to discuss the future of these sessions and how to plan transition training for these sessions to be implemented in January SOAR in the future.

Limitations

There are some limitations to my project. The sessions were piloted during the January SOAR date, which typically serves fewer students, and primarily transfer students. These sessions are smaller-scale, and typically treated as important for the students, but also as a pilot session for changes to be implemented in the summer. Therefore, information and feedback I gathered from this project will only be assumed to be applicable for January SOAR, since January SOAR typically has a nontraditional and transfer student heavy population, compared to summer SOAR. Another limitation is that it will be difficult to test the long-term effectiveness of the project, because there is no assessment in place beyond the SOAR day. I sent a follow-up assessment after SOAR, but is a convenience sample and does not accurately represent all nontraditional and transfer students. Additionally, this survey was sent several months after SOAR, and only received one response. With a lack of data, I cannot make any conclusions with certainty about the effectiveness of the sessions for the students who attended this particular session.

Discussion and Implications for the Future

Throughout the process of planning and piloting these sessions, I learned from the roadblocks and challenges I faced, but I learned the most from speaking with a nontraditional student who did not actually attend my session. She was late to orientation because she had been

accepted to BGSU two days earlier, and her decision to attend was sudden. Her son, who typically lives with his father, was visiting and the day of SOAR was his last day with her. She had to make the difficult decision of spending her last day with her son or attending SOAR and BGSU for the upcoming semester. With the encouragement of her son, she decided to attend SOAR.

Chatting with her during lunch was enlightening, because it made the challenges nontraditional students face in their transition much more concrete. This conversation put the accessibility of SOAR and other aspects of the college experience into perspective. This woman had to negotiate her various roles, as a mother and a student, and essentially was forced to choose which was most important in that moment. As a traditionally aged student without children, I thought more about how limited access is to certain pieces of the college experience.

An interesting aspect of planning orientation for nontraditional students in particular was the multiple roles students play, and how they affect their ability to attend orientation programming. Students are required to attend one day of orientation, and it typically occurs on the weekdays. This can create a conflict with work, caretaking responsibilities, and preparing for their new role as a student.

One solution would be to offer online orientation programming, which would provide necessary information for students without causing them to have to negotiate the loss of a paycheck or work time to attend orientation. However, orientation is important for making personal connections with current students and the campus, and all online orientation would cause students to miss connections with current students, faculty and staff, and the campus community. I feel confident that the nontraditional student I ate lunch with benefited from hearing my perspective of what being a student means. She certainly felt comfortable enough to

email me a few days into the semester to ask questions, and that personal connection should be a part of the college process, from admissions to orientation to starting classes.

Another lesson I learned from this project is that there is a need for various offices on campus to be more cohesive in the information they provide to students in order to avoid panic at orientation or even later in the transition process. One important lesson I learned was that orientation does not just belong to one centralized office. Rather, orientation is a result of collaborative efforts from multiple departments within student affairs and academic affairs. I had the opportunity to chat with people from both areas, and found some disconnect in goals for orientation.

For me, the opportunity to facilitate the session with nontraditional students and to talk about their specific needs was enlightening. The conversation centered on parking services, utilizing Canvas, and balancing work and classes. One student in particular was concerned with classroom attendance policies and fitting these around work. This interaction required me to step back and consider how higher education is restricted to privileged individuals who can afford to give up time working to attend classes offered during certain times. As a traditional student who has the privilege of attending college right out of high school, it is easy to forget how the structures of higher education are set up to help me succeed while others need to put more effort into getting their education.

My experiences with the HSRB and assessing the project taught me to send out feedback forms much sooner in order to get a higher response rate. While I cannot say that the time is the cause for the low response rate, it would have been better had I sent the survey sooner, when the information was fresher in students' minds. Additionally, I could have sought out alternative assessments, such as interviews to gather information on how to improve the sessions. As a

future student affairs professional, I will need to approach assessment as a priority to improve programming.

A consistent problem I ran into was the difficulty of classifying nontraditional students. Transfer students are coded by BGSU, and it was easy to determine how many transfer students would attend at SOAR, and if I needed to reach out to transfer students, it would have been easier to search for them. Nontraditional students are not coded in the admissions process, and that made determining the number of students present in the session difficult. When planning, I had to look through all of the students registered for SOAR by birthday, and from there assume they would self-identify as nontraditional in the planning of my session. Additionally, since they are not labeled as nontraditional by BGSU, the only way to seek out nontraditional students would be by finding them from Nontraditional and Military Student Services, and that would not necessarily be a representative sample of all nontraditional students. Coding nontraditional students would express their importance as a population, and would allow the university to gather more data about nontraditional student enrollment.

In general, what I took away from this project is a greater understanding of the systematic barriers faced by nontraditional and transfer students. As a future student affairs professional, I will need to make the effort to include students in these populations in experiences, no matter what functional area I work in.

Conclusion

Overall, this project allowed the opportunity for a more personalized orientation experience for nontraditional and transfer students. While these sessions occurred during a general orientation session, there was a greater chance for these students to find answers to their specific questions. Research on best practices in orientation, as well as research on nontraditional and transfer student populations reveals that one-size fits all generic orientation sessions are not

the best for these students. Instead, more personalized sessions to specific student populations and experiences can make a better experience that is more worthwhile and educational for nontraditional and transfer students.

With a lack of feedback, it is difficult to conclude the new sessions were successful. However, from what research suggests, they were likely an improvement from previous sessions that were focused on traditional first year students. In the future, these sessions will be implemented during January SOAR, as there is not a large enough population of nontraditional or transfer students during the summer SOAR dates to implement them then. If further assessments of nontraditional and transfer students are given, these sessions will be improved upon as they are continued to be implemented. Ideally, if these populations grow as they are projected to, SOAR will become more customized to their experiences beyond these alternative sessions.

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Appendix A: Text from Student Schedule for SOAR 2015

Campus Resource Fair

101 Olscamp Hall | 7:15 - 8 a.m.

Visit with representatives from campus and community departments to learn about the programs, resources and services available to you as a BGSU student.

Music Theory Placement Exam

1031 Moore Musical Arts Center | 7:15 a.m.

For students who passed their entrance audition to be a music major, minor or musical theatre major and wish to improve their original Theory Placement score.

Welcome

101 Olscamp Hall | 8 - 8:30 a.m.

Welcome to SOAR. We're glad you're here! During this session you will hear from current students and key BGSU administrators who will provide you with an overview of your day and a glimpse into your BGSU experience.

Meet Your Orientation Leader

3rd Floor Classrooms, Education Building | 8:30 - 9:15 a.m. Meet your Orientation Leader and connect with your peers in this student only session. Orientation Leaders will lead discussions about your plan for success at BGSU. Your discussions will include perspectives on academics, career development, leadership and personal responsibility as well as answers to your questions about the SOAR process.

Falcon Dollars and Sense

101 Olscamp Hall | 9:15 - 9:50 a.m.

This session provides important information about financial aid requirements, how to make sure your aid is ready to disburse at the start of each semester and resources to help manage your college expenses. Learn about your Bursar eBills, payment options and keeping your account in good standing to avoid being deregistered from classes or having additional fees assessed.

Academic Meeting by College

10 - 11:15 a.m.

This session is designed to introduce you to your college and the academic requirements needed to progress toward degree completion. Your guests are welcome to join you!

- Arts and Sciences, 115 Olscamp Hall
- Business Administration, 117 Olscamp Hall
- Education and Human Development, 115 Education Building
- Firelands Pathway, 223 Olscamp Hall
- Health and Human Services, 113 Olscamp Hall
- Musical Arts, 1004 Moore Musical Arts Center
- Pre-Major and Academic Planning, 223 Olscamp Hall
- Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering, 201 Olscamp Hall
- University Program for Academic Success, 221 Olscamp Hall

Lunch

Carillon Place | 11:30 a.m. - Noon

Reconnect with Orientation Leaders and continue conversations with other incoming students over an all-you-care-to-eat lunch!

Responsibilities and Resources in Your New Home

101 Olscamp Hall | 12:15 - 12:45 p.m.

Living on-campus is a great place to start your BGSU experience. This session will introduce you to the important resources and services designed to help you feel at home, as well as provide you with some important first steps toward navigating the college experience. At the end of the session, information and details about the move-in process will be provided.

A Day in the Life of a Commuter

115 Olscamp Hall | 12:15 - 12:45 p.m.

Identifying interests and opportunities will create a smooth transition and help you remain connected as you begin your journey at BGSU. Focusing on resources, services, and support, this session will help you prepare for your daily experience as a commuter.

Transfer, Veteran, and Nontraditional Students

117 Olscamp Hall | 12:15 - 12:45 p.m.

If you are an incoming transfer, Veteran, or nontraditional student this session is for you! Take this opportunity to visit with staff from Nontraditional and Transfer Student Services to learn about the resources available at BGSU.

Academic Advising and Course Registration

1 - 5 p.m.

Meet with your Academic Advisor at your appointment time to discuss course selection and registration details. Appointments received during the Academic Meeting at 10 a.m.

- Arts and Sciences, Jerome Library
- Business Administration, 237 Business Administration

- Education and Human Development, Jerome Library
- Health and Human Services, Jerome Library
- Musical Arts, 1031 Moore Musical Arts Center
- Pre-Major and Academic Planning, Jerome Library
- Technology, Architecture, and Applied Engineering, Jerome Library
- University Program for Academic Success, Jerome Library

Honors College Advising Meeting

024 Founders Hall | 1- 4 p.m.

From 1- 2 p.m., Honors College students are required to attend this meeting to talk about Honors College requirements and advising considerations. Your guests are encouraged to attend. Starting at 2 p.m., you and your guests will divide into two groups. You will meet your peers while Honors College academic advisors begin working with you individually to select fall classes. Please note that Honors Learning Community students who are not a part of the Honors College do not need to attend this meeting

BG1 Card Photo

1st Floor, Bowen-Thompson Student Union | 1 - 5 p.m.

Take your photo for your BG1 Card, the BGSU student ID. A valid photo ID is required. You will pick-up your card at the Check-Out session in Hayes Hall.

Money Matters-Individual Q&A for Financial Aid & Billing

228 Bowen-Thompson Student Union | 1 - 5 p.m.

Students and family members may meet individually with staff from Student Financial Aid and the Office of the Bursar to discuss financial aid, scholarships, fees, tuition, and payment options, including Payment Plans.

Veterans Benefits

228 Bowen-Thompson Student Union | 1 - 5 p.m.

The Veterans Administration (VA) provides educational benefits to eligible veterans. The VA School Certifying Officials, located within the Office of Registration and Records, assist students in applying to receive educational benefits by ensuring proper paperwork and applications are completed, certified, and filed with the VA. If you are registering for classes at BGSU and have questions regarding VA benefits, please stop by or visit the Registration and Records Office, 110 Administration Building, between the hours of 8 a.m.

- 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or call 419-372-9636.

Open Houses and Tours

1 - 4 p.m.

Interested in seeing more of campus? Meet at the location designated below.

1. Campus, Classroom and Residence Hall Tour, Jerome Library
2. Career Center and Student Employment Services Open House, 318 Math Science Building
3. Falcon Health Center Open House, 838 E. Wooster St.
4. Library, Learning Commons and Student Technology Assistance Center (STAC) Tour, Jerome Library

BGSU Dining and Meal Plans

1st Floor, Bowen-Thompson Student Union | 1 - 3:30 p.m.

Students and family members may meet with representatives from BGSU Dining to discuss meal plans or make adjustments to meal plan selections.

Go Greek!

1st Floor, Bowen-Thompson Student Union | 1 - 3:30 p.m.

Stop by the table outside the Bookstore to learn how joining a fraternity or sorority can help enhance your BGSU experience by providing a home away from home, building leadership skills, and connecting you to campus. Current members of the fraternity/sorority community will be available to provide information, answer questions, and to help you register for fall recruitment processes.

BGSU Bookstore and Ziggabyte

1st Floor, Bowen-Thompson Student Union | 1 - 3:30 p.m.

Students and family members interested in learning how to save money on textbooks, BGSU spirit wear and technology are encouraged to visit the Bookstore.

U | Belong: Get Involved at BGSU!

208 Olscamp Hall | 1:40 - 2:25 p.m.

With over 300 registered student organizations to meet a variety of interests which include: academic, cultural, honorary, volunteerism, social issues, career preparedness, spiritual, sport clubs and fraternities and sororities, everyone can find where they belong at BGSU. In this session, students and family members will learn how to make the most of their BGSU experience by getting involved outside of the classroom.

Safety First – BGSU Police

208 Olscamp Hall | 2:30 - 3 p.m.

Safety is a shared responsibility between the Police Department, students, faculty, and staff in the various divisions throughout the University. Presenting an inside look at the Department of Public Safety at BGSU, the Police Department will discuss its role in maintaining safety and security on campus. At the end of this session, you can address an officer with any questions you may have regarding public safety.

Multicultural Programs and Services

203 Olscamp Hall | 2:30 - 3 p.m.

All students are invited to learn about retention, mentoring, educational, and cultural programs and services. Students receiving a University Tuition Scholarship for Historically Underrepresented Students are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting to learn about scholarship requirements.

Falcon Internship Guarantee

203 Olscamp Hall | 3:05 - 3:35 p.m.

Bowling Green State University guarantees students who complete the Falcon Internship Preparation Program, and meet the identified criteria, the opportunity to participate in an internship or other experiential learning activity during their undergraduate career. Attend this session to learn more about this program.

Financial Literacy Resources, eRefund, & Student Banking

208 Olscamp Hall | 3:05 - 3:35 p.m.

This session begins with a discussion around the banking features offered to students by the PNC Bank branch located in the Bowen-Thompson Student Union. Questions and directions on how to enroll in BGSU eRefund will be discussed, followed by an overview of the Financial Literacy Resources offered at no cost to all students.

Student Panel: The Real BGSU Experience

Jerome Library | 3:40 - 4:10 p.m.

Still looking for an opportunity to get your questions answered about the BGSU experience?

Come hear from BGSU students as they talk about life on campus. This is a great opportunity to ask questions about getting involved, living on campus, the academic classroom and more.

Learning Communities Social Hour and Info Session

208 Olscamp Hall | 4 - 5 p.m.

Whether you are already assigned to one of our distinguished residential and theme learning communities* or are still considering the possibility of joining one, this fast-paced interactive session will be the ideal conclusion to your SOAR experience. At this meet and greet event, you will have the chance to hear more details about the benefits and particulars of these acclaimed housing and educational opportunities, ask questions of learning community directors and advisors, interact with fellow learning community students, and take the first step in building a sense of community and establishing meaningful friendships with mentors and peers who will share in this common holistic experience alongside of you this fall.

**communities include: ACTION, AIMS, Army ROTC, Arts Village, Aviation, Batchelder Music Community, Business District, Chapman Community, Construction Management, ECCO, EDHD Community, Global Village, Honors Learning Community, La Comunidad, La Maison Francaise, Natural & Health Sciences Community, and/or SEARCH*

TRIO Student Support Services

203 Olscamp Hall | 4 - 5 p.m.

Learn how to become a member of the TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) community! Our program offers advanced holistic advising, instruction and personalized tutoring. Though the

goal of SSS is to ensure the successful completion of your undergraduate degree, we also offer unique study abroad, scholarship and internship opportunities. Be sure to stop by and learn about program eligibility and services.

Student Athlete Services

206 Olscamp Hall | 4 - 5 p.m.

If you are a recruited intercollegiate student-athlete at BGSU, attending this session is required.

SOAR Check-Out

020, Hayes Hall | 1:30 - 5 p.m.

Connect with Orientation Leaders one more time to wrap-up the day. Complete your required First Year Student Questionnaire and have your last questions answered before picking up your BG1 Card. Students attending a Learning Community meeting can check out before the meeting begins, if time allow

Appendix B: Meet Your Orientation Leader Breakout Session Facilitation Guide (SOAR 2015)

Time: 8:30-9:10 am (45 minutes)

Location: 3rd Floor Classrooms, Education Building (room locations on Placement Schedule)

1. Introductions, Get to Know You Activity, and Overview of the Meet Your Orientation

Leader Session (8:30 a.m.-8:50 a.m.—20 minutes)

- Introduce yourself (name, hometown, major, role as an OL)
- Start with a get to know you activity to learn names

Overview:

- Opportunity for you to connect with some of your classmates and to get some of your questions answered!
- Learn about the Pillars of Success
- Get excited to return back in the Fall for Opening Weekend!

2. The Pillars of Success Explained (8:50-9:00—10 minutes)

- Pillars developed to help you guide your experience while at BGSU
- Direct students to pages 4 & 5 in their booklet
- What are the pillars?
 - Academic Success; Career Development; Leadership & Engagement;
Personal & Fiscal Responsibility
 - *Share how these relate to your own experiences!*
- Academic Success | The outcome of a holistic learning experience and the achievement of goals as a result of the development of a strong foundation of skills, knowledge, routines and actions
 - Take ownership and responsibility

- Utilize available academic support resources early
- Appreciate BG Perspective (General Education) curriculum
- Apply your academic knowledge through research and other experiential learning opportunities
- Career Development | The life-long process of identifying interests, values and skills while seeking and obtaining experiences and opportunities to identify and pursue possible career paths
 - Explore possible career paths
 - Seek part-time employment
 - Gain practical experience
 - Be intentional about your collegiate experience by reviewing and identifying action items from the *Four-Year Career Action Plan*
- Leadership and Engagement | The intentional application of skills and involvement in experiences that support the achievement of personal, academic and career goals while seeking to build stronger communities in our world
 - Involve yourself in organizational and academic opportunities
 - Attend workshops and seminars to gain skills which apply in both personal and professional settings
 - Recognize that leadership is intertwined with classroom learning
 - Participate in activities of personal and civic interests
- Personal and Fiscal Responsibility | The acknowledgment of new freedoms and obligations, and the ability to make choices that result in positive outcomes for oneself and the surrounding community

- Understand that you are responsible for your own success and financial commitments to BGSU
 - Represent yourself and BGSU appropriately and make informed and responsible decisions
 - Be informed, familiar and current with your financial obligation to the university
 - Take pride and ownership of BGSU and the surrounding community by committing yourself fully to your experiences
3. Q & A/ Fear Cards (9:00 a.m.-9:10 a.m.)
- Pass out scrap pieces of paper to students and ask for them to write a fear they may have or question about SOAR/ BGSU in general?
 - Share a couple of examples of fears that you had before entering BG to give ideas
 - Respond to the cards
4. Wrap Up by getting them excited about coming back for Opening Weekend (Aug. 20-Aug 23)!
- Opportunity for you to connect with Resident Advisors, Opening Weekend Group Leaders, and other residents in your residence hall!
 - Remember to think about who is in your group:
 - All Students living on campus (including transfer) will have OWGLS and RAs
 - Commuter students will have OWGLs NOT RAs
 - Performances to look forward to
 - Late night programming

- Share some of your favorite moments!

Make sure to be back in Olscamp 101 by 9:15 a.m.!

Appendix C: Transfer Student Breakout Session Facilitation Guide

Introductions and survey of student group (5-10 minutes)

- Name, major, hometown/previous institution
- Pass out contact sheets/business cards

Introduce this session as for students who are specifically coming from another college or university, with different levels of experiences and needs from traditional first year students.

Before beginning the discussion, it is important to note that not every transfer student group will be composed of the same population, nor will they have the same needs. Do a quick survey, either by a show of hands, or if the group would benefit from moving around, have them stand on opposite sides of the room depending on how they will answer the following either/or statements

- On campus or commuting?
- Directly from previous institution or take a semester or more off?
- Community college transfer or four-year institution?
- New major or same major at BGSU?

Think Pair Share Activity (5-10 minutes)

- Have students take a moment or two to think of and write down
 - A question they have about being a student at BGSU
 - One reason they decided to attend BGSU
 - AND one thing they enjoyed at their previous institution they hope is available at BGSU (a resource or organization)

- Once they have something thought of, share it with another student who had similar answers from the survey- or someone seated nearby
- Have a few groups (depending on the amount of time available) share their answers or ideas the whole group might find interesting or useful

Discussion of Campus Involvement and Success/myBGSU Demonstration

- Before starting this discussion, ask the group if they have any specific questions about BGSU (may have been brought up in the think pair share activity or the student group survey)
- Resources to highlight
 - Career Center: transfer students will have a greater need for resources for their careers or graduate school compared to first years: mock interviews, resume help, WorkNet, job/grad school search
 - OrgSync: Particularly in January, a great way to find out about BGSU's campus organizations
 - Get Involved Fair: January 19 from 11-2:30 in the BTSU ballroom
 - Canvas: May be different than classroom management system used at previous institution (will do a demonstration of it as well)
 - Parking Services: especially if it is a commuter-heavy group, but also mention on-campus if there are any on-campus students: pass \$115/year, \$68/semester
 - Registration and Records: process for transferring credits and appealing, advisor can also help with this

Canvas/Book Purchasing Demonstration

Facilitator will log into myBGSU and give a brief demonstration of how to purchase books and use Canvas. Ask participants if anyone has purchased books already (this might not be necessary if everyone has already purchased books)

Book demonstration:

- Open class schedule and book list (let them know they need to allow pop-ups)
- Types of books that could potentially be listed:
 - Required
 - Looseleaf
 - Optional
 - Alternate Edition (usually e-book)
- Highlight BGSU options, but also point out the price comparison tool

Canvas demonstration:

- Go back to myBGSU page, and log into Canvas
- Highlight specific features (have a class picked out where you are comfortable showing this information)
 - Inbox/Messaging: email is also used for communication, depends on professor
 - Calendar (all classes on one, go back to December or another month where this is more visually helpful)
 - Assignments: show how to submit a file
 - Readings/Files
 - Discussion Boards

- Grades (not necessarily showing specific page, but let students know where it is located)
- Point out that classes will vary by instructor- some will have certain things posted, while others will not

***If there is any extra time, ask them if they would like to see any resources demonstrated on myBGSU (such as purchasing a parking pass, WorkNet, etc.)

Wrap Up/What they can expect from the day

- Go over schedule for the rest of the day, remind them it is an opportunity to learn more about this campus and all the resources we have to offer- make as many connections as possible since classes start Monday!
- Encouragement to get involved is important- some transfer students may be more practical and career focused, but others may have struggled socially- it is important to address all the needs of students.
- Later session: Commuter, Res Life session for more specific information

Appendix D: Nontraditional Student Breakout Session Facilitation Guide

Introductions (5-10 minutes)

Facilitator introduction: name, major, year, hometown, why BGSU

Depending on the size of the group, have them all introduce themselves similarly- name, major, why BGSU, any other fact or information they want to share (a concern about coming to BGSU?). If it is a small group (1 or 2 people), it does not have to be as formal.

Discussion/myBGSU Demonstration (25-30 minutes)

Explain significance of nontraditional session: different needs, expectations from traditional first years.

Facilitator will lead an informal session- this isn't necessarily an outline of what will be covered, recognizing that all students have different needs. Getting an idea of what student concerns are will help guide the discussion.

Ask the group what concerns or fears they have about coming to BGSU. If this doesn't get them talking, ask them to consider what other commitments besides classes they have, and connect them with resources that can assist them with balancing those commitments. Ideally they will have most of these plans in place (thinking of childcare and transportation) since classes start soon!

***You may not address all these points, but they are a jumping off point.

- Transportation
 - Shuttle services from far parking lots, looping around campus for spread out classes

- Parking lots for commuter students- numbered lots, not lettered, parking maps available online: parking pass: \$115/year, \$68/semester
- Childcare/Family Obligations
 - On campus for children ages 3 until 3rd grade at the Jordan Family Development Center- information online, from 7:30 to 5:30 options.
 - Sibs and Kids Weekend- weekend event in April where kids can come to campus for various activities
 - Students should have conversations about different role now as a student- with spouses, children, other dependents/close family
 - Responsibilities will not just be attending class, but also any out of class commitments (group projects, homework, attending other events on campus)
 -
- Finances
 - Student Financial Aid/Busar
 - Nontraditional Student Services website has information about nontraditional-specific scholarships
- Returning to school after some sort of break
 - Academic support: visiting professor's office hours, but also making appointments to fit your schedule
 - Learning Commons- tutoring available for a variety of courses, first floor of the library.
 - Research resources at the front desk of the library- ask for help in using the library's resources

Canvas/Book Purchasing Demonstration

Facilitator will log into myBGSU and give a brief demonstration of how to purchase books and use Canvas. Ask participants if anyone has purchased books already (this might not be necessary if everyone has already purchased books)

Book demonstration:

- Open class schedule and book list (let them know they need to allow pop-ups)
- Types of books that could potentially be listed:
 - Required
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 - Alternate Edition (usually e-book)
- Highlight BGSU options, but also point out the price comparison tool

Canvas demonstration:

- Go back to myBGSU page, and log into Canvas
- Highlight specific features (have a class picked out where you are comfortable showing this information)
 - Inbox/Messaging: email is also used for communication, depends on professor
 - Calendar (all classes on one, go back to December or another month where this is more visually helpful)
 - Assignments: show how to submit a file
 - Readings/Files
 - Discussion Boards

- Grades (not necessarily showing specific page, but let students know where it is located)
- Point out that classes will vary by instructor- they will have some things posted and others not

***If there is any extra time, ask them if they would like to see any resources demonstrated on myBGSU (such as purchasing a parking pass, WorkNet, etc.)

Go over the schedule for the rest of the day, and encourage them to attend as many sessions and make as many connections as possible, especially since classes start Monday! Remind them of Nontraditional and Military Student Services (16 College Park Office Building) as a resource throughout their time at BGSU.

During the afternoon there will be another session for nontraditional students (during Responsibilities and Resources or Commuter session)

Appendix E: Post-January SOAR Assessment for Nontraditional and Transfer Students

1. I am ___ years old
 - 18-19
 - 20-39
 - 40-64
 - 65 or older
 - Prefer not to disclose
2. I identify my gender as (check all that apply):
 - Male
 - Female
 - Transgender
 - Other (describe):
 - Prefer not to disclose
3. Please describe yourself, in terms of how you identify as a student and other important roles and responsibilities in your life.
4. What was helpful about attending SOAR?
5. Based on your recent SOAR experience, what suggestions do you have for improving SOAR?