

Orientation Student Advisory Board Proposal

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Introduction

In an effort to make the New Student Orientation and pre-college experience as beneficial and exciting as possible, the Orientation Committee of the Student Advisory Board has evaluated the current Orientation program and identified areas of improvement and additional programs, options, and ideas to make Orientation exciting and rewarding for all future Hoosiers. This proposal will cover our evaluation of the current program and additional programs that we think would be beneficial for students in the future. In addition to collaboration with the Student Advisory Board, we held a focus group with about ten students of different ages, majors, and hometowns to gain a diverse perspective on Orientation and our suggested ideas.

Proposed Improvements

Areas for Improvement

Orientation is a great time to become oriented with Indiana University's campus and the city of Bloomington. However, students often have many questions before, during and after orientation and we would like to see information presented in a more clear and concise way. One example of this is the website. We would like the website to be easier to navigate for new students to find answers to their questions in a timely manner.

Many students opt to schedule their orientation in the beginning of summer in order to ensure they can register for classes before they are filled up and buy football and basketball tickets, which are known to sell out. However, this leaves students that cannot attend an early orientation at a huge disadvantage. We would like to see a program in place where students are pre-enrolled in the typical freshman general education classes or are able to schedule before they attend orientation. Also, scheduling classes for the first time can be very difficult and confusing. Students are left to figure this process out on their own at the library. The assistance provided at the library is consistently ineffective.. We would like to see more help, maybe from advisors, on making your first schedule and how to use OneStart.

The Office of First Year Experiences does a good job of providing freshman with information through emails all year long. However, the emails become very overwhelming and lengthy and often end up in junk mail folders or deleted before they are even opened. We would like to see the information presented in more efficient, clear, concise manner.

Ideas for Logistical Improvements

In addition to some of these areas of improvement, we have identified some logistical improvements which, if implemented, would allow students flexibility in their personal schedule and make orientation a more effective time for students to get acquainted with their campus and their peers.

We propose giving domestic students the ability to choose from a 1 day (fast track) or 2 day orientation program - this allows the flexibility to students who wish to spend an extra day to get a feel of the campus or to some students who wish to explore the campus during the school year.

In addition, we believe having more events for students to mingle with their peers would be beneficial. For example, there could be a night time cookout for students. This could be planned so that students interact with people they will likely be with their freshman year. This could be their potential roommates or even their floor mates, or even during the orientation for students pursuing the same degree also. This gives students the opportunity to build lasting relationships that start the summer before IU and are reinforced all throughout their freshman year.

In addition, we propose that the Office of First Year Experiences keeps students excited about becoming a Hoosier the entire summer before coming to IU. This could mean giving students information on Hoosier athletics, sending students information about extracurricular activities available at IU, giving students glimpses of what their IU experience can be like, etc. We think it is important that orientation is not simply a few days where students get the necessary information, but that orientation is an all-inclusive and spanning program which prepares students for life at IU in every aspect.

Expansion and Development of the IU Bucket List Freshman Program

If you ask any student about the IU bucket list he or she received at orientation, chances are he or she could tell you about some of the activities they have completed: from eating international cuisine on Fourth Street, to studying at the Union, or attending the Little 500 race. We think that we could expand this bucket list to make it more interactive both in orientation and into the freshman year. This provides the opportunity to help create a common experience for freshmen as well.

First of all, we want to make this bucket list interactive. We had one idea for doing so: using the same technology the Crimson Club uses to track student attendance at athletic events. If there were a way to have a small student ID card scanner at the location of some of the bucket list items, then students could scan when they complete an activity. For example, maybe during the free time in the evening at orientation, students decide to go get cookies at Baked, one of the activities on the Bucket List. Our hope is that making the bucket list interactive will get students engaged in activities on campus and in Bloomington.

Obviously all of the activities cannot be completed during orientation. The IU bucket list is meant to span your undergraduate career at IU. If there were a common required freshman class, what if the IU bucket list were incorporated into that class? What if once a week you complete an item on the bucket list for your class, either for credit or maybe extra credit? What if some of the activities are organized by the professor? For example, what if your whole class has a dinner together on Fourth Street, or the whole class goes to read manuscripts at the Lilly Library together. This again would hopefully get students engaged in life outside of classes. Indiana University and Bloomington have so many opportunities available to students. We truly believe if we get students fully engaged and aware of these activities, it will greatly improve their undergraduate experience. In addition, working with others to complete activities in small groups will help build friendships, which are important to new students.

“What I wish I would have known” Hindsight Perspective from Current Students

College orientation can come at a difficult time in a student’s life. New college students have

tendency to feel overwhelmed by the quality and amount of information give. In order to improve Indiana University's orientation program, IU needs to provide concise and important information to its new students.

While the current program lasts a little over a day and a half, students often feel much of this time is wasted, and the information disseminated is not easily accessible to students. To improve the current program it is important to understand the information that students want:

- University tour: The campus is very large and has many interesting places to visit, instead of focusing on locations such as library and class building, it would be valuable to focus on non academic locations to help build a sense of community
- Required Classes: Indiana University needs to focus addressing the required classes so students do not waste credit hours taking classes that are not needed. This can be addressed by sending information home before orientation to allow students to do understand what is needed to graduate.
- Campus Groups: Having a list of clubs and group programs more easily available to students would be beneficial. It would allow students to ask questions during orientation and learn more about groups available to them. This would excite kids and allow them to be better prepared for school already knowing something they want to be involved in.

Focus Group Perspective

After forming our own opinions on how to improve the new student orientation experience, we knew it would be critical to begin getting other students' opinions about both our ideas and the orientation experience as a whole. Although a number of ideas were passed around, there was one common theme: the desire to learn more about the college experience rather than complete required tasks.

Many students expressed appreciation for the musical currently performed at new student orientation, which focuses on some of the choices students face when coming to college for the first time. The students we questioned during our focus group meeting suggested incorporating more programs that deal with "real" issues in college, much like the musical, during their time on campus for orientation. Any required busy work, such as scheduling and obtaining student ID cards, was agreed to be better suited for online completion either before or after the on-campus activities of new student orientation.

The students sampled also extremely appreciated the idea of being placed into teams for orientation. The teams would ideally be comprised of students who would live on the same floor of the dorms, the RA, or anyone else who may have a direct impact on the student's college experience after returning to campus for the fall semester. This, again, would allow students to begin learning about and acclimating to the college experience during their time on campus for new student orientation.

Overall, the students who participated in our focus group were very open to changes in the orientation process, primarily those focused on the college experience and the IU experience specifically. There was a general consensus that any processes that could be moved to an

online format should be converted online as much as possible, so as to allow new students to enjoy campus and the IU experience while on campus.

Conclusion

We, the Orientation Committee of the Student Advisory Board, hope that our ideas will help inspire and bring about improvements in the New Student Orientation. We hope our evaluation of the current program and suggestion of additional potential programs will be beneficial.