

Extended Orientations: Enhancing the Sense of Belonging of First-Year Students

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Presentation Outline

- Purpose of the research
- Research questions
- About the University of Minnesota
- History of Welcome Week
- Overview of Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Resources and references



Purpose of Research

- Few empirical studies have attempted to address orientation programs and their influence on college students (Mayhew, Stipeck, & Dorow, 2011, p. 54).
- Inconsistencies in research findings with regard to academic benefits.
- Strayhorn (2008) argued that “comparatively few empirical studies estimate the influence of various factors on students’ sense of belonging in college” (p. 307).
- This study is examining academic AND social benefits for extended orientation

Research Questions

- Do first-year students who participated in an extended new student orientation/Welcome Week (compared to students who do not participate) have:
 - a greater sense of belonging
 - higher fall and spring cumulative grade point averages
 - higher first-to-second year retention rates
- Do observed differences in sense of belonging, grade point average, and retention hold when controlling for additional factors? (i.e gender)



New Student Orientation

- 64.7% of responding institutions reported more than 75% of first-year students completed an entire orientation program (College Board, 2011)
- 96% of higher education institutions offer new student orientation (Barefoot, 2005)
- Benefits of participation can include:
 - increased participation in activities
 - increased use of student services
 - enhanced social integration and adjustment (Mayhew, Stipeck, & Dorow, 2011).



Snapshot of the University of Minnesota

- Five separate campuses, main campus (Twin Cities) is located in Minneapolis and St. Paul
- Twin Cities campus has approximately 30,000 undergraduate students with 5350 new first-year, first time students and 2600 new transfer students each year
- Both Minnesota's Land Grant institution and its flagship institution
- Home of the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA)



U of M First Year Experience Components

- Orientation (on-campus)
- Freshman Seminars (topical)
- Welcome Week (extended orientation)
- Class of 20xx E-newsletter series
- Freshmen view of the University Web Portal
- Kick-It! Online resource activity
- @Home in MN, Photo Project
- Assessment plan



Orientation & First-Year Programs (including WW) Objectives

- Begin to build a sense of community by encouraging a first-year class identity
- Fostering institutional pride and respect
- Acknowledging individual responsibility to the community
- Ownership and responsibility for college experience
- Assist students in their adjustment to the campus environment and campus life through academic and student development programs that enhance the capacity of students to lead and work among students from diverse cultural, ethnic, national, socio-economic and religious backgrounds and of different sexual orientations and physical abilities.



Orientation & First-Year Programs (including WW) Objectives

- Provide students an opportunity to have and maintain meaningful relationships with students, faculty, staff and surrounding community that will encourage academic and personal success during their first year and throughout their college experience.
- Allow students to navigate the campus while discovering and accessing the multitude of resources and opportunities available at the University that meet the ever-changing and diverse needs of students so they may be intentional in creating a successful college experience.



History of Welcome Week

- Campus-wide discussions began in 2002 around the need for a common, first-year experience for all students
- Actual planning began in 2003 with the formation of a Welcome Week Committee
- Consultation with all freshman admitting colleges and almost every unit on campus took place to assess the impact of a 6-day program on campus and to address any issues or concerns
- The first Welcome Week was to begin fall 2005, but was delayed due to the University-wide Strategic Initiative process
- Planning recommenced in 2006 for both the program aspect and how we would the assess the impact of the program



Welcome Week

Welcome Week is a six-day, on-campus experience prior to the start of the fall semester, required of all first-year students. This program is designed to complement the Freshman Orientation experience (extended orientation), and provide opportunities to enhance academic and personal success for first-year students.



Welcome Week

Tuesday/Wednesday: Move-In Day/Getting Settled

- Move into your residence hall
- Meet Welcome Week leaders and small-group members
- Late night shopping at Target

Thursday: Convocation & College Day

- New Student Convocation (class identity)
- College activities (first day of class for many)
- Pride and Spirit/Fun Zone entertainment

Friday: University Day

- Twin Cities campus: East Bank, West Bank, St. Paul
- Sessions: health/wellness, money management, Strengths, study skills, safety, diversity
- Jermaine Davis speaker: motivation and success
- Entertainment at Gophers After Dark



Welcome Week

Saturday: Community Engagement Day 1

- Service projects or symposiums
- Student organization and vendor fair
- Late night at the Mall of America

Sunday: Community Engagement Day 2

- Explore Minneapolis side trips
- Residence hall meetings

Monday: Prepare for Classes

- Optional activities
- Sponsored organizational activities (i.e. Greek rush)
- Rest and prepare for first day of classes!

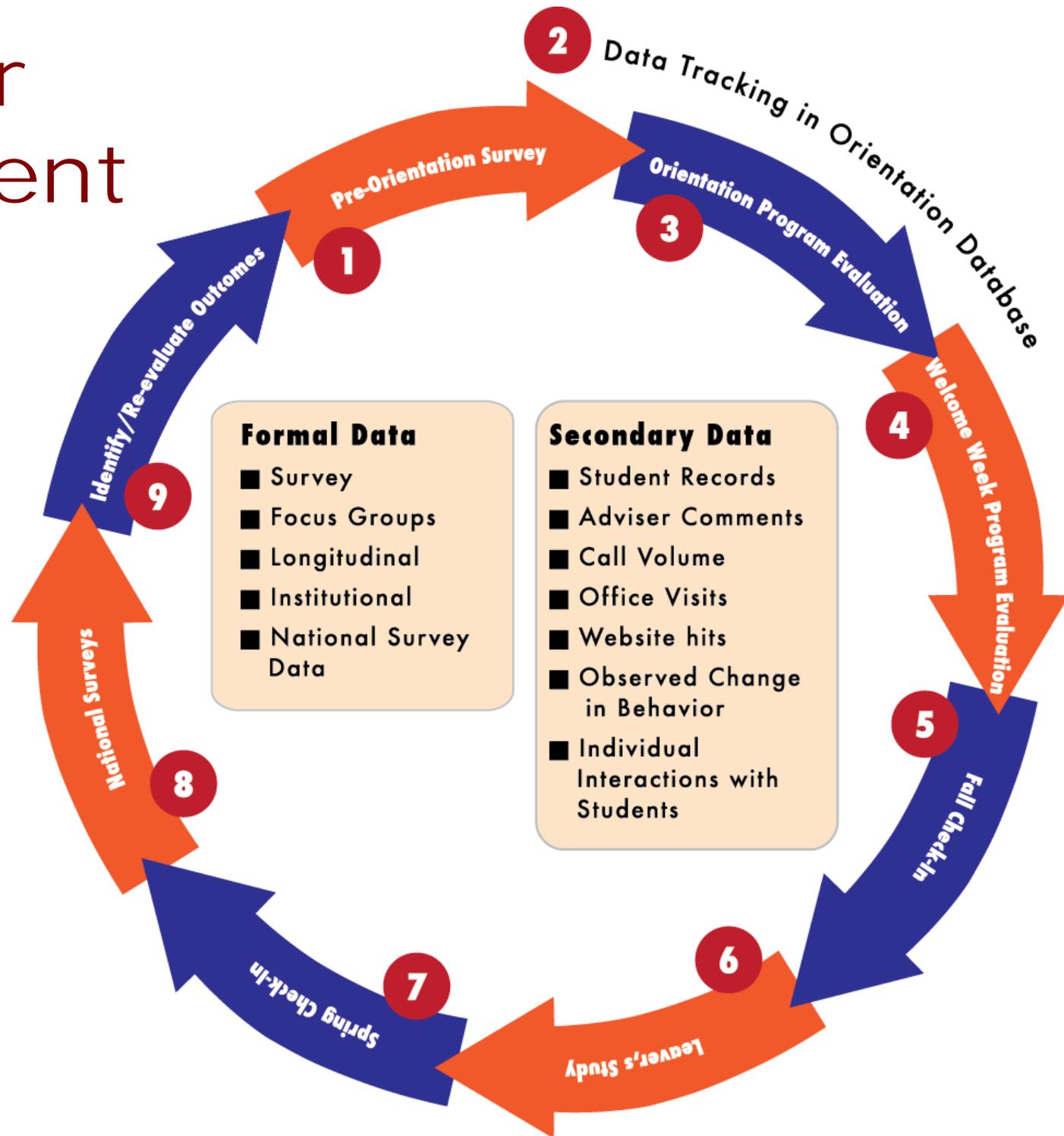


Assessment of Welcome Week

- Developed a first-year assessment plan that included using the 2007 cohort as a baseline – students who did not have the common experience Welcome Week
- Implemented assessment plan in 2007 and each year since – this includes: program evaluations, check-in surveys, a leavers study, student satisfaction surveys (NSSE and SERU), student data (credits, GPA's, graduation rates, etc.)



First-Year Assessment Plan



Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Survey

- Systematic environmental scan of the undergraduate experience
- In-depth analysis of the varied types and levels of undergraduate engagement in research universities
- The survey is organized around five thematic research areas:
 - Academic engagement (core = sense of belonging, academic engagement, research experience, satisfaction, demographics)
 - Civic and community engagement
 - Global knowledge, skills, and awareness
 - Student life and development
 - Wildcard module for the University of Minnesota



SERU Survey

SERU Consortium currently includes 18 universities, including 15 AAU institutions:

- All nine undergraduate campuses of the University of California system
- University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
- University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
- Rutgers University
- University of Florida
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Oregon
- University of Texas at Austin
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Southern California (private)



SERU Survey Participants

- In fall 2009, 5,400 non-transfer first-year students enrolled at UMNTC
- 4,629 (85.7%) participated in Welcome Week orientation
- SERU survey response rate was 34.5% ($n = 1,865$).



Methods

- Research Question 1: used survey data (N=1865)
 - Sense of belonging
 - Academic engagement and campus climate
 - Fall semester grade point average and spring semester grade point average

Analyses

- Analysis of variance
- Chi-square test of independence
- Multiple linear regression
- Research Question 2: used institutional data (N=5400)
 - Retention from year one to year two

Analyses

- Chi-square test of independence
- Logistic regression (retention)

Variables

- Demographics: (control)
 - gender
 - race and international student status
 - social class (survey data only)
 - first-generation status (survey data only)
- College environment: (control)
 - participation in Access To Success and first-year seminars
 - academic engagement (survey factor)
 - campus climate (survey factor)
 - living in the residence halls
 - Welcome Week participation
- Outcomes:
 - sense of belonging (survey factor)
 - first and second semester cumulative grade point average
 - retention from year one to year two

Analysis of Variance for Sense of Belonging and Fall/Spring Cumulative Grade Point Averages among Welcome Week Attendees and Non-Attendees

	Welcome Week Attendee		Non-Attendee	
	n	M (SD)	n	M (SD)
Sense of Belonging	1396	.02 (1.00)	167	-.17 (1.03)
Fall GPA	4595	3.16 (.67)	771	2.89 (.91)
Spring GPA	4603	3.18 (.69)	773	2.91 (.88)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Cross tabulation of Welcome Week Participation and First-to-Second Year Retention

	Welcome Week Attendee		Non-Attendee		χ^2
	n	%	n	%	
Not retained	442	9.6	130	16.6	34.93***
Retained	4175	90.4	653	83.4	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$



Results: First Research Question

- Students who attended Welcome Week had statistically significant ($p < .05$) differences in the following areas:
 - Higher sense of belonging
 - Higher fall grade point average
 - Higher spring grade point average
 - Higher retention rates

Non-WW	WW
-.17	.02
2.89	3.16
2.91	3.18
83.4%	90.4%

Discussion



Resources

<http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/en/welcome-week.html>

<http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/en/survey-results.html>

http://www.ofyp.umn.edu/ofypmedia/pdfs/highered/reports/2011_OFYPAnnual.pdf

<http://www.oir.umn.edu/>

<http://www.oir.umn.edu/surveys/seru>

References

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