

WHY ORIENTATION?

Aloha, and mahalo for your continued support for the New Student Programs (NSP) Orientation program throughout our time hosting this critical program on campus. We would like to provide you with this resource to help you understand NSP's vision for Vulcan Orientation as well as the innovations we would like to explore in order to add value to Orientation and our new students' first experiences and impressions at UH Hilo.

Introduction

New Student Programs was established in the year of 2013 in order to house the New Student Orientation and Campus Tour services previously provided by other sources throughout the University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo). The purpose of establishing New Student Programs as a resource on the UH Hilo campus was to combat the falling student-retention rate and provide more programs and services for new first year and new transfer students with the focus on: creating connections, promoting academic success, and developing 'ohana. Beginning the Summer of 2015, New Student Programs created and developed the University Concierge service which created a central location for campus information, and the UH Hilo Bike Share Program where students, faculty, and staff can borrow a bicycle for a day for free. New Student Programs has also developed ongoing services such as: the Haumana Hou Lounge, Academic Achievement Awards Cards, Student Appreciation Day, and NSP Weekly Store Shuttles. However, New Student Orientation remains the main function and focus of New Student Programs; each year an orientation is hosted for incoming Fall students and incoming Spring students the week before the respective semester.

Mission Statement

New Student Programs (NSP) is committed to supporting all of the newest members of our university 'ohana (family). Our mission is to build a foundation for student's full academic and social integration into the campus through the development of long lasting connections to other students, faculty, staff and student support resources; to build a supportive learning environment that promotes academic success; and to create a commitment to and understanding of what it means to be a proud member of our UH Hilo 'ohana.

Creating Connections is important for our new student to feel connected. We want to connect students to each other, building long lasting friendships and support networks. We want to connect students to faculty to help them see that professors are people too and thereby making it easier to stop by during office hours or engage more fully in their classes. We want to connect students to all of the many campus resources and staff that run them so that when they're struggling with something, they are aware of what resources are available to them on campus and who the people are that are available to help and support them

By **promoting academic success** we support the main reason that our students are here at UH Hilo. We help them earn higher grades and have the confidence in their own skills to be a successful student. Activities and initiatives that promote strong academics, a connection to their major, developing critical thinking skills, and continued learning both inside and outside the classroom are an integral component of a successful Vulcan graduate.

Developing a sense of 'ohana amongst our newest students, is also a focus area for us. That feeling of pride when you think about how awesome it is to be a Vulcan, that warm fuzzy feeling you have when you feel like this is your home, your community, your family. That means creating traditions that'll last for years to come, supporting Vulcan Athletics and other great Vulcan activities, and helping people fill their closet with nothing but red, black, and white clothes.

Situational Analysis

As admission rates for new students remain steady, the attendance rate for New Student Orientation continues to drop. New Student Programs employees report feedback from students who have attended Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 orientation as mixed - students feel that orientation was a valuable resource to meet friends but not as great of a resource for orientating themselves to UH Hilo. However, concrete data from a Fall 2013 assessment shows overall positive results.

With changing needs and demands of incoming students - the challenge for New Student Programs is hosting an orientation that is equally as valuable and educational as it is fun for students. Additionally, it costs \$75 for a student to attend New Student Orientation and this rate will not change as the profits made from New Student Orientation directly fund New Student Programs throughout each academic year. The fee has led to numerous instances of students contacting the New Student Programs office upset about having to pay the fee to attend orientation and communicating that the fee influenced their decision to not attend orientation.

With fewer students attending orientation there is an increase of students being unaware of what resources and opportunities are available to students, how to do certain things around campus, etc. This increase of unawareness can create a feeling of disconnect between the student and UH Hilo and affect their decision about staying at UH Hilo. Currently, one in five new students at UH Hilo do not return to UH Hilo the following year. UH Hilo hosts a 66% retention rate which is below the United States national average of retaining students past freshman year at 72.3%. Based on this data and observations - the question that must be answered is:

HOW CAN WE CREATE ADDED VALUE TO NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION AND A STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE AT UH HILO IN ORDER TO INSPIRE ORIENTATION ATTENDANCE AND INCREASE RETENTION?

Current Innovations

NSP is currently exploring the options of:

- Providing an orientation package which will include:
 - Resource Handbook
 - Orientation Schedule (released prior to the beginning of orientation)
 - Possible online orientation
 - Orientation-like workshops throughout the student's first semester (for those who could not attend Vulcan Orientation)
 - Summer Orientation - Still being discussed
- #UHHiloIn100Days
 - An initiative to connect more socially with students prior to their arrival at UH Hilo.
 - A new summer program launching on May 9, 2016
- Financial assistance with the orientation fee

- Increased availability of knowledge of resources to new students via: resources on social media, video advertisements/resource videos, etc.

And more!



Where do you come in?

A student's first impression of UH Hilo falls on every department they encounter, not just their experience at orientation. NSP wants to make sure a student's first impression and experience at UH Hilo is overall positive. To begin to do this, NSP has identified the need for increased communication and collaboration with our campus partners. We would like to do this by:

- Generating input and feedback from different campus partners regarding orientation, its workshops, its activities, etc.
- Partnering and collaborating with different campus partners to host more/improved workshops/activities during orientation and after orientation.
- Collaborate and talk with students to gauge their input on how we can better orient the students during the first 6 weeks of school.

NSP would like to expand orientation for students to the first week of school during the *Week of Welcome*. We understand that there is tabling that happens during that week from 10am - 2pm, however, NSP is looking to collaborate with student groups and departments to put on various night time events.

According to an article written by Julie Mayfield and Lindsey Mayfield for USnews.com, the Mayfields mention that much of college learning happens outside the classroom, so make sure to take advantage of the opportunity to inform students of these opportunities. The Mayfields list the following *5 Reasons for Getting Involved in College - And How to Go About It*:

- **It allows students to become connected to their school:** Colleges are full of resources, but the responsibility is on the student to seek them out. Being involved helps them to do that.
- **It helps them build community:** Since they're leaving their family and sometimes their friends behind, getting involved helps them discover new friends with similar interests.
- **It allows them to discover their passions and strengths:** These will follow them all through life. It allows them to discover what they don't like, too.
- **It's a resume builder:** Freshman year is not too soon to begin thinking about positioning yourself for future employment.

Sometimes, busier kids do better in all areas: This will vary a lot by students, of course, but more free time does not always equal better grades. Being involved will require some organization and time management on the part of the student - and that's a good thing.

As you can view from the first two points, it's NSP's hope to continue to create connections, promote academic success, and develop 'ohana. But creating the various programs and initiatives isn't something that NSP can accomplish on it's own. NSP sees the value in collaborating with departments, divisions, faculty, staff, and student organizations/groups for the same target audience: students of UH Hilo.

There has been continued feedback from new students about the lack of services available to them before orientation begins, and the absence of activities during their first few weeks of school. And, they feel a sense of neglect coming from a week of orientation to a week of nothing. NSP has conducted research on student feedback via post-orientation surveys, surveys throughout the semester, focus groups, feedback received during post-orientation NSP events, feedback from current/non-new students, feedback collected from Student Ambassadors via the students they serve etc. NSP has taken the initiative to study student needs in order to help develop and improve the programs and services NSP provides. According to the *ellucian service for higher education management*: "by anticipating the needs of our students, we can reach out with appropriate

resources—perhaps a study group, or a peer support program—rather than expecting our students, who may not know that such support even exists, to stumble into it on their own.” This is exactly what NSP is trying to do in order to redefine the success of retention at UH Hilo.

NSP’s standards of **creating connections** and **developing `ohana** fall under these student needs. By collaborating with our campus partners to provide more services during a student’s first two weeks at UH Hilo, we can create those connections more effectively between our students and the organizations that serve them. Through increased exposure and received service from these students will feel a sense of belonging to UH Hilo and truly develop `ohana. Additionally, it will help students understand and know more about what resources and opportunities are available to them by experiencing it first-hand through interacting with NSP and our partners, rather than just reading about it on the UH Hilo website, tabling event, or informational material.

Increased knowledge about campus resources and **creating those connections** will ultimately inspire a student’s retention **and academic success** at UH Hilo as they will feel welcomed and knowledgeable about their campus, making them more likely to be involved on campus or simply utilize the resources they have learned about.

The *ellucian service for higher education management* lists the following in order to implement strategies that make a difference in student retention:

- ***Establish a shared vision of student success***

Through this informational document, and continued work with campus partners, NSP is establishing a shared vision of student success. It is NSP’s goal to increase effective communication between our office and our campus partners, as well as increased collaboration in order to promote student success, create connections, develop `ohana, and inspire retention. NSP cannot take on such big tasks on our own, and UH Hilo is not made up of solely NSP. We have identified these facts and are reaching out to inspire our partners.

- ***Focus on what successful students do***

In order to relate to the Division of Student Affairs, we can determine that successful students are students who are involved on campus and utilize the resources available to them. This is why NSP strives to focus on the need for students to know of what opportunities and resources are available to them.

- ***Determine an intervention strategy***

Our intervention strategy is what you are currently reading!

- ***Start small and grow***

NSP does not want to drive full force into these innovations, we are handling these first steps with care in order to develop these innovations into lasting functions for student welcoming activities.

- ***Use data—don’t just collect it***

As noted earlier, NSP has gathered data from students as well as numerical data from admissions records and orientation attendance records.

Some collaborative ideas NSP is exploring are:

- Presence of athletics, and student athletes, and Orientation and Welcome Week activities.
- Store shuttles and food service provided to students during their arrival to University Housing in the days prior to orientation.
- Take-over of sports and excursion-related events during Orientation by Student Life Center,

Outdoor edVentures Program, etc.

- Week of Welcome activities every day of the week through the collaboration between NSP, CSOs, Campus Center, and other campus partners that host services for students.

NSP, in collaboration with campus partners, are continuing to develop new ideas in order to add value to a student's first experiences at UH Hilo.

Conclusion

In order to increase attendance for Vulcan Orientation, NSP needs to create added value to the orientation experience as well as the UH Hilo experience in order to increase retention at UH Hilo. However, New Student Programs' small and inelastic budget will make it hard to accomplish these tasks. There is definitely room for collaboration between New Student Programs and other offices/organizations within the Division of Student Affairs.

While other offices/organizations have larger budgets, New Student Programs is faced with hosting fundamental and critical programs to UH Hilo enrollment and retention with a budget reliant on profits made from New Student Orientation - which has had a significant decrease in annual attendance.

By collaborating with other offices/organizations there can be a larger budget for Vulcan Orientation and subsequent welcome programming. As a result, NSP will be able sustain the orientation program and other programs such as the Campus Tour Program. By collaborating with other offices/organizations, they can have a direct input on the planning of Vulcan Orientation and all organizations within the Division of Student Affairs can communicate more effectively on the plan and goals for Vulcan Orientation.

By accomplishing the recommended operations, UH Hilo can create the added value needed to influence increased attendance for orientation and increased retention for new students. These operations can be accomplished with proper funding and effective collaboration between the different organizations UH Hilo houses.



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