

# Orientation Change Team Recommendations

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The Orientation Change team met for the past year to discuss and research various aspects of orientation at NECC including: the in-person orientation program, technology and online orientation, ways to mandate student attendance at orientation, and creating different sessions based on specific cohorts of student populations. Methods and research used to develop these recommendations are as follows: comparing current models at local colleges of similar size and mission, the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS Standards), and the Association for Orientation, Transition, and Retention in Higher Education (NODA). Additionally, Student Development Theory including; Schollossberg's Transition Theory (1995) and Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development (1981) were applied to the needs of our student population.

## **Recommended Structure of Orientation:** (Option 1)

This orientation program should be designed to be an engaging program where students are able to choose aspects of their own experience based on their interests, needs, and goals. Students should hear from a variety of offices, services, staff, faculty, and students so they begin making connections immediately. Presentations should be interactive in nature and scheduled in many different locations, encouraging students to engage with their surroundings. New students should be invited to orientation based on their meta-major, and thus the entire session should be pointed to their specific academic area.

### Prior to Orientation:

Students are signed up for an orientation session with an advisor while they sign up for their first classes at the institution. The orientation session is added to their schedule with the print out of their first semester classes.

### Orientation Sample Schedule

#### *Welcome & Keynote Speech:*

Focused on goal achievement, resilience, and with immense value placed upon taking advantage of student success resources

#### *Student Support Services Workshops*

Students are able to choose two 30-minute workshops that are applicable to their specific needs. Options may include financial aid, tutoring, PACE, academic coaching, career exploration, advising, veteran's services, student life, etc.

#### *NECC Community Wellness Presentation*

Interactive presentation regarding; academic confidence, Title IX, recognizing opioid addiction, becoming an active bystander, coping with stress in college, and any other pertinent wellness topics

#### *Fundamentals of College Presentation*

Orientation Leaders present on the fundamentals of college; locations of buildings, reading a class schedule, working out on campus, parking passes, NECC student technology, etc.

### Meta-Major Center Breakout Session

Created and run by faculty within the meta-major centers. This session is an interactive experience for students and focuses on the following: classroom expectations, reading a syllabus, communication with professors, expected workload, and specific field information pertinent to each meta-major center.

Pros	Cons
This model is currently in place and has proven to be successful for the past year it has been in effect	Students are not required to come to orientation, thus attendance will most likely remain stagnant
It is a collaborative effort between many different areas of the college	Students receive a lot of information and may not be able to retain all of what they learn
This model can exist without many additional resources	Students do not get all of the transactional assistance they should in order to be better prepared for classes

### Recommended Structure of Orientation: (Option 2)

With the college moving to a meta-major model, student's academic trajectory will be predetermined, thus lending itself to group academic advising at orientation. Students will attend orientation based on their chosen meta-major, and faculty as well as professional advisors will enroll students in classes. After group-advising, the student would be handed a course schedule and then taken to a computer lab and shown how to enroll in classes online.

Students will also hear presentations from various support services, learn about technology used on campus, and activate online accounts. The emphasis of this option would be focused on career, academic, and transfer goals facilitated by student support areas, advisors and faculty members. For students who may be undecided, career exploration sessions and a career inventory could be offered as a breakout session.

Pros	Cons
Orientation would be required because students would enroll in their courses, attendance would increase	Changes business of different offices around the college, most significantly, advising
There would be a captive audience to relay important information to	Requires additional time and resources from faculty and staff
Students would begin to take ownership of their academics by learning how to sign themselves up for classes online	
Orientation would remain informational, but shift towards allowing students to complete transactional necessities prior to the start of classes	
This could mitigate the loss of students who fill out an NECC application and then never enroll in courses because application data would be used to invite students rather than those taking six or more credits.	

**Additional recommendations:**

1. *Technology & Online Orientation:* Online orientation will be sent out to all new students enrolled at NECC for the first time, including students taking non-credit courses. For now, this platform will be housed within Blackboard in order to track metrics. Softchalk will be utilized to create accessible and engaging games, videos, and text for all kinds of learners to absorb the information. The below chart outlines the suggested resources to acquire, set up and maintain the technological components needed for New Student Orientation. Please note that NECC currently has access to all resources, but that assessment of available resources in terms of personnel was based on early Spring 2018 numbers. A further assessment may need to be made when this plan is implemented.

Technology	Description	Implementation	Ongoing Support	Cost Estimate and Renewals	Hardware
NECC Orientation Hub off NECC website	Orientation website as a hub for orientation related information and activities.	Marketing and MIS staff	Student Engagement will drive content updates; Marketing, and possibly MIS will drive feature updates	\$0	\$0
Mynecc Portal	Use for announcements	Marketing	Marketing	\$0	\$0
Eventbrite	Register for sessions	Marketing and MIS	Student Engagement for maintenance - adding events and wording for events	\$0	\$0
Facebook	NSO page and feed into web site	Marketing	Student Engagement will be responsible for updating posts and responding	\$0	\$0
Instagram	Share photos	Marketing	Student Engagement will be responsible for updating posts and responding	\$0	\$0
Marketing Videos	Market benefits NSO	Marketing with input from Student Engagement	May need periodic updating (2-3 years) Make videos accessible (marketing)	\$0	\$0

2. *Peer Mentor Model:* Implementing a peer-mentoring model would ensure that connections made at orientation are lasting ones. Peer mentors would train in late spring, act as Orientation Leaders throughout the summer, and then remain employed throughout the academic year. Their duties would include: receiving a cohort of new students that they are in charge of communicating with, holding electronic and in person office hours, developing and presenting workshops, creating and running programs, communicating pertinent and timely information, and inviting students to attend various opportunities around the college community. Peer mentors could also become teaching assistants within developmental and first year seminar classes.
3. *Cohort-model orientation sessions:* Orientation sessions should be created for different populations of students. Veterans, Spanish-speaking students, and parent/family sessions are a few examples and explained in more detail below.
  - *Veterans Orientation:* Students that self-identify and/or who use veteran’s benefits at the college will attend an orientation where the focus is specific to the needs of that population.
  - *Spanish Language Orientation:* Students who test into ESL classes are invited to attend a Spanish Language orientation in which documents and presentations are translated and presenters offer all information in Spanish. We suggest the continuation and growth of this offering including:

concurrent sessions for the student's support network as well as consideration for different types of languages offered.

- *Parent, Family, and Support People Orientation*: Should be offered at least once per orientation cycle, or concurrently with each orientation session. Topics can include: campus safety, academic support services, first generation supports, how to be an effective support person for your student, Student Financial Services, and Learning Accommodations.
4. *First Year Experience Staff Member*: There should be a point person who works on the retention efforts of new students beyond orientation. They would be charged with the following: managing a cohort of new students to provide continuous communication and support during the first year, coordinating the aforementioned peer mentoring program, executing programming efforts specific to first year students including: welcome weeks, involvement fairs, new student convocation/accepted student's day, workshop series, and teaching a First Year Seminar section. This person would be housed within the Center for Student Success and have space to meet with new students, as well as space to encourage the congregation between new students and peer mentors.
  5. *First Year Seminar*: First Year Seminar (FYS 101) course is proven to increase student retention and should become a required course for any student who has tested into one developmental course, as well as all undecided students. With the creation of fusion courses, students who would have previously been placed into FYS are no longer meeting the requirement but still need to possess the tools learned in FYS. The FYS career exploration module would provide an opportunity for students who are undecided by helping them to begin the process of exploring the factors associated with their career choice early. If students decide they do not wish to pursue a certain career path, and thus major, they find out before it is detrimental to their path towards graduation.

### **Additional Considerations**

- Orientation is a large program that is extremely labor intensive and time consuming. Moving to a team approach to coordinating orientation would be beneficial and include more voices into the development and execution of the program. Additionally, having proven institutional involvement and support at all levels is key to providing a successful program.
- A First-Year Experience staff member and/or the development of a First Year Experience Office would be advantageous so that the focus on retaining first year students remains after orientation ends and the first year begins.
- Faculty must become more involved with orientation. Participation from faculty is key to garnering meaningful connections between students and the NECC community.
- A team of people across the campus that are integral to the success of first year students should have ongoing meetings to discuss retention strategies.
- Additional funding/resources are needed for: faculty payment (\$35/hour currently), an administrative assistant who handles all communication, mailing, phone calls, emails, and the APEX scheduling software for orientation, a first year experience staff member, providing additional staffing and training for the Peer Mentor program after the pilot year ends, and in the future technological advances to bolster NECC's online orientation option.