Sparking Student Success
The Strategy, Goals, & Outcomes of UConn’s Orientation Program 3rd Edition
INTRODUCTION

The Orientation Program at the University of Connecticut is a critical experience for a student in transition.

It is a time when we welcome the student to our campus and our community and demonstrate through words and actions that UConn is the right choice. It is also a time when we provide support and guidance. More importantly, it is when we as a community of staff, faculty, and student leaders, ignite the spark within each student that will hopefully lead to their success and eventual graduation from the University of Connecticut.

Contained within these pages is the mission, goals, and outcomes for our program, which annually works with more than 4,000 students and thousands of parents. This is the pre-enrollment transition strategy that our office has developed over the last 30 years. I thank you for taking the time to learn more about how my staff and I are Sparking Student Success.

Maria A. Sedotti
Director Orientation Services/
Liaison UConn Parents Association
Division of Enrollment Planning and Management
University of Connecticut, Storrs
“Orientation is the college’s best opportunity to introduce a strong learning environment, build the foundations for academic success, welcome students and families to the campus community, promote student interactions with faculty and staff, and convey the values and traditions of the new institution.”

(Mullendore & Banahan, 2005, p.391)
MISSION STATEMENT
The orientation program is a collaborative effort to facilitate the simultaneous integration and transition of new students and their parents/guardians into the academic, cultural, and social climate of the University of Connecticut. This program’s intent is to introduce students and their parents/guardians to key services, resources and opportunities, as well as prepare students for their scholarly pursuits. Orientation aims to provide a structured program where sessions help students and their parents/guardians understand the collegiate experience, University expectations, and empower students to take personal responsibility for their social and academic choices.

Orientation must be (a) intentional, (b) coherent, (c) based on theories and knowledge of learning and human development, (d) reflective of demographic profiles of the student population, and (e) responsive to the needs of individuals, special populations and communities (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006).

Through the quality and integrity of the leadership training program (See Appendix A and B), Orientation Leaders will have the skills necessary to effectively facilitate groups to ensure that every participant will have the information and support needed to succeed at the University of Connecticut, which includes but is not limited to the following:

• To help students become aware of the academic requirements, available courses, and nature of the advising process within their college or school and to assist them in registering for classes.
• To provide students with the opportunity to meet informally with faculty and staff.
• To introduce students to the variety of support services available to them on campus.
• To introduce new resident students to their rights and responsibilities as a member of the UConn residential community.
• To introduce commuter students to the services and programs available to them at UConn and help them feel like part of the UConn community.
• To introduce new students to the variety of activities and programs the University has to engage students in a vibrant co-curriculum.
• To increase new student’s awareness of public safety on UConn’s campus.
• To introduce University policies to new students such as the Code of Conduct, The UConn Creed and the Alcohol Policy.
• To assist students in becoming familiar with the physical layout of campus.
• To provide programs for parents/guardians that introduce them to the support services available to their students.
• To design programs that help parents/guardians explore the changes that may occur in their relationship with their child.
• To provide an enthusiastic and competent staff of student leaders.
• To inform new students and parents about the diversity on campus and the University’s vision and expectations of an inclusive community that embraces diversity.
• To introduce and communicate the importance of technology such as the Student Administration System, HuskyCT, and the University’s student email system.
• To finalize the recruitment of prospective students.
(Sedotti, 2010)
"Orientation is viewed by most as an important tool for continued student recruitment and retention."

(Council For Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2006)

**FOUNDATIONS**

Studies show that higher education institutions which provide a strong support system to new students during their early contact with the university greatly enhances his/her chances of success. Over the years results have illustrated that effective orientation programs have had a significant influence on students’ ability to socially and academically integrate into the institution (Overland and Rentz, 2004). “The single most important move an institution can make to increase student persistence to graduation is to ensure that students receive the guidance they need at the beginning of the journey” (Forrest, 1982, p. 385). In addition, the type of support offered to new college students must reflect the student’s background and needs. As a result, separate orientation programs have been designed for specific populations (e.g. freshmen, transfer, international students and parents/guardians).

2013 Orientation Leader Goetti Francois speaks with a student as the check-in for orientation.
CORE VALUES
As a University community, we are committed to freedom of academic inquiry and expression as well as dedicated to excellence as demonstrated in the national and international recognition of our faculty, students, and programs. We create and disseminate knowledge by means of our scholarly and creative achievements and outreach to the community. Through teaching and learning, we help students grow intellectually and become contributing members of the state, national, and world communities. Through research, teaching, and service, we embrace diversity and cultivate leadership, integrity, and engaged citizenship in our students, faculty, staff, and alumni (Office of the Provost, 2009).

At the heart of our program we value: community, diversity, integrity, learning, scholarship and service (National Orientation Directors Association, 2009).

Community
Admission to UConn means acceptance into a special kind of community, an academic community (Responsibilities of Community Life: The Student Code, 2010). We aspire to have a community that is respectful as well as supportive of the mission and values of our community (Sedotti & Payne, 2010).

Diversity
We strive to create a more inclusive community that recognizes and celebrates individual differences (Office of the Provost, 2009).

Integrity
Each member of our staff endeavors to present information to students, parents, staff, and faculty accurately and without bias.

Learning
We work to introduce new students to our intellectually challenging and diverse learning environment (Office of the Provost, 2009). Additionally, our efforts aim to help students learn the overarching goals of self-direction and interdependence (Overland & Rentz, 2004).

Scholarship
As UConn is part of the top-20 public universities in the nation, we hold in high regards communicating the scholastic expectations of our institution. In addition, we value making connections for students who desire to become engaged in scholarship as well as creative work (Office of the Provost, 2009; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, et al., 2005; Office of Undergraduate Research, 2010; U.S. News & World Report, 2012).

Service
We value serving the needs of new students in the highly consumer orientated environment of the college search process (Overland & Rentz, 2004).
GOALS*

1. To provide participants with information and opportunities to explore academic pursuits and strategies.

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

   1.1 Work with new students and their parents/guardians in understanding the purposes of higher education and the institution.
   1.2 Articulate the institution’s expectation of students: The Student Code (e.g., scholarship, integrity, conduct, ethical use of technology) and provide information that clearly identifies relevant administrative policies, procedures and programs that enable students to make well-reasoned and well-informed choices.
   1.3 Use qualified faculty members, staff or peer advisors to explain class scheduling, advising, registration process, and academic life.
   1.4 Assist students in assessing their interests and abilities, examining their educational goals, making decisions and developing short-term and long-term plans to meet their objectives.
   1.5 Discuss and clarify educational, career and life goals.
   1.6 Provide accurate and timely information and interpret general education and major requirements.
   1.7 Make students aware of and refer to education, institutional, and community resources and services (e.g., internship, study abroad, honors, service-learning, research opportunities).

2. To provide participants with structured time to gain perspective, a sense of purpose and recognize the balance between the demands and opportunities of college life (Strang, 1951).

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

   2.1 Work with new students and their parents/guardians to understand the transition from their previous environment to UConn.
   2.2 Provide information in formal/informal sessions to discuss issues and interact with peers.
   2.3 Provide students and families with the opportunity to reflect on the transition experience.
   2.4 Inform new students, as well as their parents/guardians about the availability of services and programs.

* To see where goals are integrated into the orientation programs see Appendix C.
3. To provide participants with a sense of connectedness within the UConn community.

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

3.1 Provide time for students and parents/guardians to become familiar with the campus and local environment.
3.2 Make students aware of and refer to educational, institutional and community resources (e.g. internships, service-learning, research opportunities).
3.3 Provide intentional opportunities for new students and their families to interact with fellow new students and their families along with continuing students, faculty and staff members.
3.4 Make parents/guardians aware of the Parents Association, which involves parents in the college experience for the purpose of improving and advancing UConn.

4. To provide participants with information about diversity on campus including advantages, challenges and the University’s community expectations.

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

4.1 Provide new students with program information and facilitate discussions of topics, which include services, resources and opportunities for self-assessment.
4.2 Introduce the concept of individual responsibility and community values.
4.3 Communicate the University’s expectations of its students through The UConn Creed and The Student Code. Help new students understand their responsibility in the community, so they can make well-informed personal decisions.
4.4 Provide intentional opportunities for new students to interact with new and continuing students, faculty and staff.
GOALS (CONTINUED)

5. As the UConn campus continues to become increasingly diverse, our program will identify specific populations and design programming to meet their unique needs (Gutierrez, 2010). To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

   5.1 Assist international undergraduate students with understanding the critical dependent relationship between US immigration procedures and maintaining their full-time student status.
   5.2 Assist undergraduates participating in Student Support Services (SSS) – low income and/or first generation college student – with understanding the goals and commitments of their program, which will introduce them to the rigors of university life and develop the discipline and skills required to succeed academically (Center for Academic Programs, 2010).
   5.3 Assist honors students with understanding their challenging academic program, personalized collegiate environment, community and housing, as well as engagement and leadership beyond the classroom (Honors Program, 2010).
   5.4 Assist student-athletes with organizing their academic requirements and athletic commitments/guidelines during academic advising by coordinating with counselors from the Counseling Program for Intercollegiate Athletes (CPIA) to assist them with class registration. (Counseling Program for Intercollegiate Athletes, 2010).
   5.5 Assist students participating in Learning Communities with understanding their new environment and the responsibilities that will become a part of their college experience.

6. To acclimate participants to facilities, services, resources and members of the UConn community.

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

   6.1 Provide time for students and their parents/guardians to become acquainted with the campus/local environment and meet/ask questions with members of the community.
   6.2 Inform new student and parents/guardians about services, resources, and programs.

“It was really easy for me to appreciate how good your orientation was after attending another institution’s program. The biggest difference was I really felt like I was a part of the community, instead of just being another number.”

(UConn Freshmen Paul DeSalvo on his 2010 summer Orientation experience)
To provide participants with the ability to function safely in the UConn environment.

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

7.1 Inform new students and families about wellness and public safety programs, resources and services.

7.2 Provide time for students and parents/guardians to become familiar with the campus and local environment.

To provide participants with information regarding UConn history, traditions and culture.

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

8.1 Highlight UConn history; presidents, mascot etc.

8.2 Introduce UConn traditions: HuskyWOW, Homecoming, Family Weekend, Winter Weekend, Husky Fight Song, Midnight Breakfast, Rubbing the Husky Dog’s Nose, etc.

8.3 Discuss UConn culture, by covering “in house” terms (UConn-isms) that may not be understood by everyone.

To gather information that provides the University with a better understanding of its student population (Smith & Brackin, 1993).

To achieve this goal, the following learning objectives will be addressed. Orientation programs will:

9.1 Provide evaluations and surveys for orientation programs to allow participants to provide feedback, which in turn will help the University to better understand the needs of the students and families it is serving.

To complete the recruitment process by acting as the bridge, the linchpin, between the last stages of recruitment and the first stages of retention (Shupp, 2006).

[Adapted from California Polytechnic State University, 2010]
2013 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PROFILE**

Fall Entering Freshmen, Storrs
- 3,755 enrolled in fall 2013
- 45% were in top 10% of High School Class
- 82% were in top 25% of High School Class
- 81 valedictorians and 66 salutatorians
- 224% more minority freshmen than in Fall ‘95
- Since 1995: 1,703 valedictorians and salutatorians enrolled at all campuses

Average SAT Scores
National High School 1010
Connecticut High School 1020
Storrs Entering Freshmen 1233

Student Characteristics
Female 50%
Minority 27%
International 4%
Connecticut Residents 80%

All 169 Connecticut towns and 43 of 50 states are represented in the Fall 2013 total undergraduate student population.

** Most up-to-date information available at the time of printing. (UConn, 2013)
LEARNING OUTCOMES

Freshmen
By participating in our orientation program, freshmen students will:

Gain insight, familiarity and appreciate
• That they are important members of the University community
• Campus resources and services available to them
• Campus organizations and how to become involved
• Skills and competencies necessary to be successful academically including listening skills in a large lecture hall
• Residence hall experience

Begin to understand
• The purpose of higher education and being able to identify how it relates to their education goals
• The university mission and values and recognize how it correlates with their education
• The terminology and language used at UConn
• Their academic requirements and expectations
• How to use the Student Administration System, HuskyCT, and the University’s student email system
• Community expectations, requirements and responsibilities.
• Some of the issues they may face as developing adults in a college environment
• The rights and responsibilities associated with being a part of UConn’s campus community
• Identify various resources that can assist in overcoming a social issue that may be prevalent in a college student’s life

Successfully complete
• The class registration process and have a full course load
• The necessary steps to obtain their Husky One Cards (UConn ID)
• Any administrative paperwork pertaining to their matriculation at UConn, as well as have the opportunity to ask any questions regarding their paperwork to the appropriate offices.

Develop a connection to the UConn community through interactions with fellow incoming students, Orientation Leaders, faculty and staff

Identify Orientation Leaders as a support system within the university

Be exposed to some of the transition issues they may encounter (roommates, diversity, choices, time management, relationships, etc.) and develop some strategies to manage these transitions

Begin to feel comfortable on campus and know where certain resources and services are located

Have fun, feel comfortable and be excited about their decision to attend UConn
Transfers
By participating in our orientation program, transfer students will:

**Gain insight, familiarity and appreciate**
- That they are important members of the University community
- Campus resources and services available to them
- Campus organizations and how to become involved
- The rights and responsibilities associated with being a part of UConn’s campus community

**Begin to understand**
- The university mission and values and recognize how it correlates with their education
- The terminology and language used at UConn
- Their academic requirements and expectations
- How to use the Student Administration System, HuskyCT, and the University’s student email system
- Community expectations, requirements and responsibilities of UConn students
- The need and importance for UConn to have all college transcripts from past institutions
- The nature and importance of their UConn credit evaluation

**Successfully complete**
- The class registration process and have a full course load
- The necessary steps to obtain their Husky One Card (UConn ID)
- Any administrative paperwork pertaining to their matriculation at UConn, as well as have the opportunity to ask any questions regarding their paperwork to the appropriate offices

**Develop a connection to the UConn community through interactions with fellow incoming students, Orientation Leaders, faculty and staff**

**Begin to feel comfortable on campus and know where certain resources and services are located**

**Have fun, feel comfortable and be excited about their decision to attend UConn**

“Learning is a complex, holistic, multi-centric activity that occurs throughout and across the college experience.”

(Keeling, 2004)
Parents/Guardians and Guests

By participating in our orientation program, parents/guardians and guests will:

**Gain insight, familiarity and appreciate**
- That they are important members of the University community
- Campus resources and services available to them and their student
- Various campus offices and departments

**Begin to understand**
- The university mission and values and recognize how it correlates with their student’s education
- The terminology and language used at UConn to better communicate with their child about the student’s experience
- Some of the transitional issues their student may encounter (roommates, diversity, choices, time management, relationships, etc.) and develop some strategies to help their student through these transitions
- Academic requirements and expectations
- The changing dynamic of the parental role related to student privacy
- Community expectations, requirements and responsibilities of UConn students
- Strategies to help their student succeed academically and socially by exploring their shifting role as a parent/guardian

**Develop a connection to the UConn community through**
- Interacting with fellow parents, Orientation Leaders, faculty and staff
- Beginning to explore the transitions the parenting relationship will experience by having a student in college

**Begin to develop new ways of communicating with their student**

Feel comfortable as well as confident in their student’s decision to attend UConn

"Parent and family orientation programs are key, high-profile activities that are critical in meeting the needs of an important and influential campus constituency."

(Hower, 2010)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

(Continued)

On right a parent inquires about UConn’s summer sessions.
The Strategy, Goals, & Outcomes of UConn’s Orientation Program
UConn
By developing and participating in our orientation program, the institution will:

Understand the developmental and demographic needs and concerns of new students
Build connections and relationships with various offices and departments across campus
Reflect on our ability to communicate effectively with students and parents
Evaluate the effectiveness of our program through a formal evaluation process
Continue to create an intentional connection between Orientation and the beginning of each semester
Develop and increase awareness of the importance of Orientation to the campus community
Evaluate how the campus community perceives Orientation

[Adapted from SUNY Cortland: Orientation, 2011]
APPENDIX A:
Leadership Training Program*

EDLR 3262 – The Freshmen Student
This 3-credit upper division education course consists of student development theory, group leadership training, diversity training, university information and services, Orientation Program procedures and details, and evening program planning.

Two All-Day workshops on Campus
These two sessions cover diversity training and vignette development for the orientation programs.

Off-Campus Retreat
Demanding two-day leadership and group development experience where Orientation Leaders and staff interact, develop connections, challenge themselves, as well as learn more about orientation.

Final Training
Eight intensive days of final preparation, Orientation Leaders meet with staff, faculty, offices and departments, as well as prepare campus/residence hall for orientation.

*Orientation Leaders are required to attend all sessions in order to serve on staff.
APPENDIX B:

Ethical Standards For Student Staff

Student Orientation Staff are accountable to: students (those serving in staff positions and those in transition), the parents of students in transition, and professionals (faculty/staff members).

Student Orientation Staff with Administrative Responsibility shall:

• Use fair and appropriate processes in the recruitment and selection of staff,
• Strive to recruit a diverse student staff reflective of the institution,
• Acknowledge their unique dual relationship, as both students and as paraprofessional staff members of the institution, and seek support and guidance when those roles conflict.

All Student Orientation Staff shall:

• Model and actively encourage ethical behavior,
• Respect confidentiality in relationships with students,
• Recognize and maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships.
• Ensure that students receive accurate and adequate information necessary for decision-making,
• Ensure that parents receive accurate and adequate information necessary to support students in decision-making,
• Recognize the diversity of experiences of students in transition, and work to meet the various needs of new students,
• Recognize their own limits/boundaries in helping relationships with students, and make referrals when necessary,
• Represent the institution in an honest and positive manner.
• Foster respectful and supportive relationships with staff and faculty,
• Strive to understand training, information, and support sufficiently to assist faculty/staff members in meeting expectations.

[Adapted from NODA Statements of Ethical Practice]

“The actions of student employees ... in the field of orientation, transition, and new student programs have a significant impact upon their own retention and potential success, as well as that of students whom they serve.”

(National Orientation Directors Association, 2010)
APPENDIX C: Where Goals are Addressed During Orientation

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<td>AOD (Alcohol and Other Drugs Session)* / ♦, pre-advising*, advising*/ ♦ / ■, Vignettes*, VAWPP*/ ♦ (Violence Against Women Prevention Program), Group O-Leaders Discussions*/ ♦ / ■, Wellness &amp; Prevention■, Gender Communication■, Intercultural Communication■, F-1 Regulations Summary■</td>
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<td>1.3 Use qualified faculty members, staff or peer advisors to explain class scheduling, advising, registration process, and academic life.</td>
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* Two-Day Orientation
♦ One-Day Orientation
■ International Orientation
### 3. To provide participants with a sense of connectedness within the UConn community.

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### 4. To provide participants with information about diversity on campus including advantages, challenges and the University’s community expectations.

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### 5. As the UConn campus continues to become increasingly diverse, our program will identify specific populations and design programming to meet their unique needs (Gutierrez, 2010).

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<th>5.4 Assist student-athletes with organizing their academic requirements and athletic commitments during academic advising by coordinating with counselors from the Counseling Program for Intercollegiate Athletes (CPIA) to assist them with class registration. (Counseling Program for Intercollegiate Athletes, 2010).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advising</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.5 Assist students participating in Learning Communities with understanding their new environment and the responsibilities that will become a part of their college experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Communities Meeting</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX C: Where Goals are Addressed During Orientation (Continued)

6. **To acclimate participants to facilities, services, resources and members of the UConn community.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>6.1 Provide time for students and their parent/guardians to become acquainted with the campus and local environment and meet/ask questions with members of the UConn community.</strong></th>
<th>First Year at UConn*, Academic Connection*, Student Affairs: Partnering with Parents &amp; Families*, College Substance Use: What You Need to Know*, Student Life Panel*, AOD*/♦, VAWPP*/♣, Vignettes*, Residential Life and Campus Safety*, Group O-Leader Discussions*/♣/■, Student Services Panel*/♣, InfoExpo*/♣, Tours*/♣/■, F-1 Regulation Summary, Intercultural Communication, Gender Communication, Community Standards, Wellness &amp; Prevention, Student Health Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6.2 **Inform new students and parent/guardians about the availability of services, resources and programs.**


7. **To provide participants with the ability to function safely in the UConn environment.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>7.1 Inform new students and parent/guardians about wellness and public safety programs, resources and services.</strong></th>
<th>InfoExpo*/♣, Tours*/♣/■, Student Services Panel*/♣, Residential Life and Campus Safety*, AOD*/♦, VAWPP*/♣, College Substance Use: What You Need to Know*, Group O-Leader Discussions*/♣/■, Intercultural Communication, Gender Communication, Community Standards, Wellness &amp; Prevention, Student Health Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>7.2 Provide time for students and parent/guardians to become familiar with the campus and local environment.</strong></th>
<th>Tours*/♣/■</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. **To provide participants with information regarding UConn history, traditions and culture.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>8.1 Highlight UConn history; presidents, mascot etc.</strong></th>
<th>Group O-Leader Discussions*/♣/■, Tours*/♣/■, Vignettes*, Vignette Discussions*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>8.2 Introduce UConn traditions: HuskyWOW, Homecoming, Family Weekend, Winter Weekend, Husky Fight Song, Midnight Breakfast, Rubbing the Husky Dog’s Nose, etc.</strong></th>
<th>Group O-Leader Discussions*/♣/■, Tours*/♣/■, Vignettes*, Vignette Discussions*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>8.3 Discuss UConn culture, by covering “in house” terms (UConn-isms) that may not be understood by everyone.</strong></th>
<th>Group O-Leader Discussions*/♣/■, Tours*/♣/■, Vignettes*, Vignette Discussions*, Technology Session*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. **To gather information that provides the University with a better understanding of its student population (Smith & Brackin, 1993).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>9.1 Provide evaluations and surveys for orientation programs to allow participants to provide feedback, which in turn will help the University to better understand the needs of the students and parents/guardians it is serving.</strong></th>
<th>Evaluations are provided at each program for all participants */♣/■</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. **To complete the recruitment process by acting as the bridge, the linchpin, between the last stages of recruitment and the first stages of retention (Shupp, 2006).**

| All sessions*/♣/■ |
Below is the Chemistry Building.
References


On left a UConn Sophomore and her family during Family Weekend

2013.