NOVA: New Student Orientation

Program Review

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NSO College-Wide Attendance Data

New Student Orientation sessions filled online at least one week prior to the session. The first two sessions filled most quickly and the number of attendees spiked at the beginning and the end of the summer. The online registration system ran more smoothly as Student Services Division staff became more comfortable instructing students to register online.

- On average sixty-eight percent (68%) of the number of students registered for a session attended the session.
- On average 70 students attended each session
- On average 43 guests attended each session
- 74 faculty and approximately 25 classified staff were involved with NSO

* I could not get session specific data from AL and MA at the time of this report. I also averaged the data for MA. All data is available from those campuses
NSO College-Wide Planning Committee Notes

Attendance:
- Inconsistency in attendance versus registration led to confusion for staff and planning concerns. Focus on steps to confirm attendance and create a college-wide program supporting “walk-in” students and guests.

Presentation Content and Delivery:
- Allow for small campus specific changes in Welcoming Address and Closing, but standardize advising and registration content. Inclusion of counseling staff members in the development of advising and registration content slides will reduce conflicts of opinion and encourage familiarity with content.
- Standardize session length for advising and registration sessions.
• Create a standard plan for serving students that registered prior to NSO and supporting Pathways to the Baccalaureate students.
• Standardize receipt of NOVA CARD.

Facilities:
• Reserve facility space early to avoid overcrowding
• Engage facilities, parking, and police services staff in Core Planning team

Communication:
• Campus NSO planning teams need to reinforce the collaborative nature of NSO within all campus departments. Front line staff (Specialists, Counselors, Call Center, Testing Center, and Business Office) must refer students appropriately to NSO sessions. Student Services Specialists and Counselors must refer new students to orientation for advising and registration and be comfortable giving just that information.
• Clear, concise and consistent communication with faculty volunteers via a faculty liaison related to role expectations, assignments, and dates.
• Clear, concise and consistent communication between the DWG and the NSO College –Wide Planning Committee.
  o Refining elements that can be College-Wide, and those that can be campus specific
  o Creation of a College-Wide budget for Orientation Assistants (students) stipends, promotion, and catering.
  o Assessment tools
• Communicate NSO organization with Student Activities Leadership Team

Training:
• College-Wide curriculum for Orientation Assistants training (Campus specific training)
• College-Wide training program for Advising/Registration presenters (Campus specific training)

Follow-up:
• Design post NSO programming/communication with students to encourage transition into FYE events
NSO Registration - Content - Assessment

The 4 ½ hour format receive mixed reviews. Faculty and staff often found their sessions limited by time constraints during the earlier sessions and comfortable as they became more confident with the material. Student responses’ generally described the sessions as long in entirety but short in individual components. Redestribution of the schedule to allow for increased student involvement/activity and reduced allotment of lecture/presentation time may support student learning, and information overload.

The common scheduled created a framework for all campus sessions, but campus staffing, facility, and “culture” allowed for an appropriate level of specialization. Early organization and commitment to standardized college-wide aspects (recruitment/confirmation, advising and registration components, Resource Fair, parent session, and assessment) will allow for campus individualization (student/faculty panels, student club involvement, campus tour process, additional handouts).

Web Based Registration: Online registration allowed for access to student information and data that was not available in previous years. Student registration increased as staff members became more comfortable directing students to the website. Available information provided for:

- Pre and post session email/phone campaigns to students
- Identification of preferred Programs of Study
- More accurate estimations of attendance
- Greater access to students for assessment, registration quality assurance checks, and transition to other FYE programming

Problems encountered with the web based registration system included were most often a result of the participant’s data entry or a lack of clarity in the supporting web pages’ text. The web based registration does not take into account “walk-in” students and did not guarantee attendance by registrants.

- Multiple registrations by the same participant
- Inconsistencies and inaccuracies related to session dates/times
- The 100 participant cap does not include a tally of guests
- The college-wide 100 participant cap does not take into account the space available at all campuses
- **Pathways** Student registration caused confusion in the head count. Students registered for a non-Pathway session (closing a seat) and then later registered for a Pathways Session (closing another seat)
  - Add clear PTB session notices to the registration page
  - Coordinate PTB specific email to students with PTB counselors regarding PTB session dates before NSO registration site goes live

**Recommendations:**

- Email NSO registration information to all Applied students beginning in April-August
- Email NSO registrants one week prior to their assigned session
- Place NOVA NSO advertisement in local newspapers, and campus “yard” signs
• Go live with NSO online registration and agenda information no later than the beginning of April. January is preferred.
• Create email, telephone, and social networking systems to communicate with students
• Teach Orientation Assistants to organize and facilitate pre and post session communication via phone, email, and social networking sites
• Add the ability to remove students from the online registration

The Schedule: The campuses report varying success according to “day of the week” and the number and distribution of sessions throughout the summer. In general, nine (9) sessions appear to put a strain on campus resources and staff (counseling, financial aid, faculty, facilities). Although the earliest sessions and the latest sessions filled quickly, the data shows that the average attendance remained constant throughout the summer. Earlier preparation and involvement of campus staff (January-May) in presentation practice, document production, handout packaging, and facility arrangements may alleviate some inter-session stressors. Recommendations include:
• Edit schedule to include a mid-late August date
• Addition of Saturday dates (although this will create staffing problems)
• Allow for additional time between sessions

Planning/involvement: Campuses reported disconnect between the expectations of campus staff (Specialists, Counselors, Testing Center, Business Office, facilities, and faculty) and actual participation. Involvement at the campus planning level incorporating the above departments will help improve “buy-in” and communication. NSO coordinators must present NSO as a campus-wide event with implications for all departments. Clear explanation of each member of the campus staff connected to NSO is imperative and should be addressed at the highest levels (Dean/Provost).
• Campuses with Core Planning teams that included faculty, business office, counseling, facilities, etc... reported fewer communication and expectation problems
• Student Activity Coordinators should be added as co-coordinators of the NSO to ensure access to collaborative partnership, student leaders, and transition to first semester programming
• A faculty representative should be utilized to coordinate the recruitment, preparation, and facilitation of faculty volunteers
• Early recruitment, training, and engagement of Orientation Assistants (student staff) is critical for their leadership development and program ownership

Advising/Planning Session: The two step advising and registration process was generally strong with the primary area of concern being the timing of each session. One Student Services Specialists, one Counselor, and two Orientation Assistants supported by faculty volunteers made-up a strong advising team. Early introduction and active creation of the advising and registration presentations will decrease in session stress, improve staff/OA collaboration, and improve NSO participant learning.

Pros:
• The PowerPoint acted as an organizing guide for the presenters
• The Specialist and the Counselor co-led the presentation providing in-depth information and extra supervision
• O.A.’s circulated throughout the room answering individual questions and provided student perspectives
Clear content with clear progression – add questions that the presenters can ask the participants throughout the slide show.

Cons:

- Staff advisors were reliant on the PPT for structure and information
- Counselors edited slides to fit their expectation of content
- Specialists and Counselors were not comfortable co-presenting because they have little experience during the year presenting to large groups or co-presenting.
- Staff do not know how to use student assistants effectively as they present
- Content slides need to be broken up into segments with tasks at the end of each segment to ensure NSO participant engagement, retention, and interaction with each other.

Recommendations:

- Training sessions for staff and O.A. need to occur earlier in semester and should place the presentation team in active role play situations.
- Clear objectives, time guide/schedule, and tasks need to be generated for staff during advising/registration sessions and for O.A.’s throughout the day
- O.A.’s need break periods throughout the day (intermittent during Advising Session) so that they do not lose focus or energy
- Staff presenters need to engage the NSO participants in Q&A or the students lose focus. Create a series of questions related to the material to gage understanding
- Create a series of small tasks (find General Education requirements in catalog, find curriculum guides for your Program of Study, find Course Descriptions) to engage NSO participants

NOVACONNECT Session: In this session students registered for classes. Subgroups were formed before the NSO session: Unregistered, registered, and Pathways students. In order to best utilize time, all students attended the NOVA CONNECT presentation. After the presentation those students who had registered were given time to have their schedules reviewed by a staff member. Then, they were taken to have their photo ID cards created. Registered students who wanted to stay to correct their schedule joined the remaining unregistered students. These two smaller groups registered for classes with the help of Student Services Specialists, Counselors, and O.A.’s.

Pros:

- Moving registered students out of the registration room allowed for more individual service to the unregistered students and less down-time for the registered students
- On site Quality Assurance checking of schedules by the staff

Cons:

- Students did not always register for the appropriate number of hours for their goals
- Students need more help identifying possible classes
- Students are hesitant about using the NOVACONNECT system on their own
- Students are hesitant to register for classes without their parents

Parent Session: The parent session was facilitated by one counselor and on some campuses co-facilitated by the campus registrar, faculty, and occasionally the Dean of Student Services. A concurrent parent session opposite the student advising and NOVACONNECT session allows students to be
This session can be divided into two parts with three components. The components were:

Part one:
- Counseling: Parent advising following the Campus-wide program
- Faculty Q&A: An opportunity for parents and faculty to speak candidly about student preparedness and success

Part two:
- College Resources Staff: Parents received mini-presentations by the:
  - Developmental Math/English faculty
  - Office of Financial Aid
  - Business Office/Parking Services
  - Bookstore

**Recommendations:**
- Encourage students and parents to review Programs of Study guides online prior to NSO
- Schedule a break between parent sessions

**Assessments:** Waiting on results of surveys.

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**Campus Specific Activities**

**Applied to NSO Registered Conversion:** Students that had applied to NOVA but had not registered for an NSO Session were called by Orientation Assistants. Students were registered over the phone or encouraged to register online.

**Pre-Session Communication:** All NSO participants were emailed twice prior to their NSO. Email addresses were gathered from the NSO Registration site. A mail-merge format using data from the NSO Registration site reminded students their:
- Session Date
- Program of Study with a link to the Degrees and Certificate site to download curriculum guides
- Testing requirements
- Campus Map
- Financial Aid
- Payment requirements
- Charting Success Check List
- Registration Check List

**Post-Session Follow-up Communication:** All NSO participants received post session email encouraging:
- Payment of tuition
- Referring students to NOVACONNECT for class schedule changes
- Purchasing parking passes
- Purchasing books
- Engaging in NOVA Social Networking
- Getting NOVA Card
Quality Assurance Check: Quality Assurance Check of NSO advising & registration process is necessary to avoid student registration problems. The NSO Coordinator identified students’ Empl ID’s., Names, email, and phone #’s and then flagged students that had some scheduling peculiarity. I identified students for the following reasons:

- Heavy First Semester Course Load - 17-18 hours (16 students)
- Part-time Student Course Load – less than 12 hours (16 students)
- Odd course choice: courses out of sequence, numerous courses outside gen. ed. Requirements, etc… (6 students)

Faculty Involvement: The NSO Coordinators in cooperation with a faculty representative created a faculty involvement plan and availability matrix. Faculty was able to engage students in the following areas:

- Registration table
- Pre-Welcoming Event Panel: three faculty members spoke candidly to students and parents prior to the Welcome Event in the theater about their classroom expectations.
- Parent Session Panel: Three faculty members engaged parents in a Q&A session regarding:
  - Rigor of college coursework
  - Problems students encounter
  - Parent to Faculty communication
- NOVACONNECT/Registration assistance for students
- Combined Student, Faculty, and Staff Panel: Three faculty, two staff members, and three current students engaged NSO participants and guests in a moderated Q&A session at the close of the NSO session.

Orientation Social Networking: A Facebook page was created and maintained by the Orientation Assistants to provide a communication point, information dispersal, and future event promotion. The site was updated throughout the summer and will act as an information site for first semester students in the fall.

Parking: Ticketing should be suspended on all campuses during NSO sessions.