



RESEARCH BRIEF

OIR

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives

14-15

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Implementation of Mandatory Student Orientation: Fall 2014

As part of NOVA's efforts to increase student success outcomes, NOVA enacted six policy changes in Fall 2014, one of which requires all GPS students to participate in a student orientation program.¹ From Fall 2013 to Fall 2014, the total number of NOVA students who attended student orientation increased from 2,721 to 6,158, an increase of over 100 percent. However, not all students who attend orientation are classified as GPS students. For example, some students who attend orientation are transfer students from other colleges or universities and others are returning NOVA students.

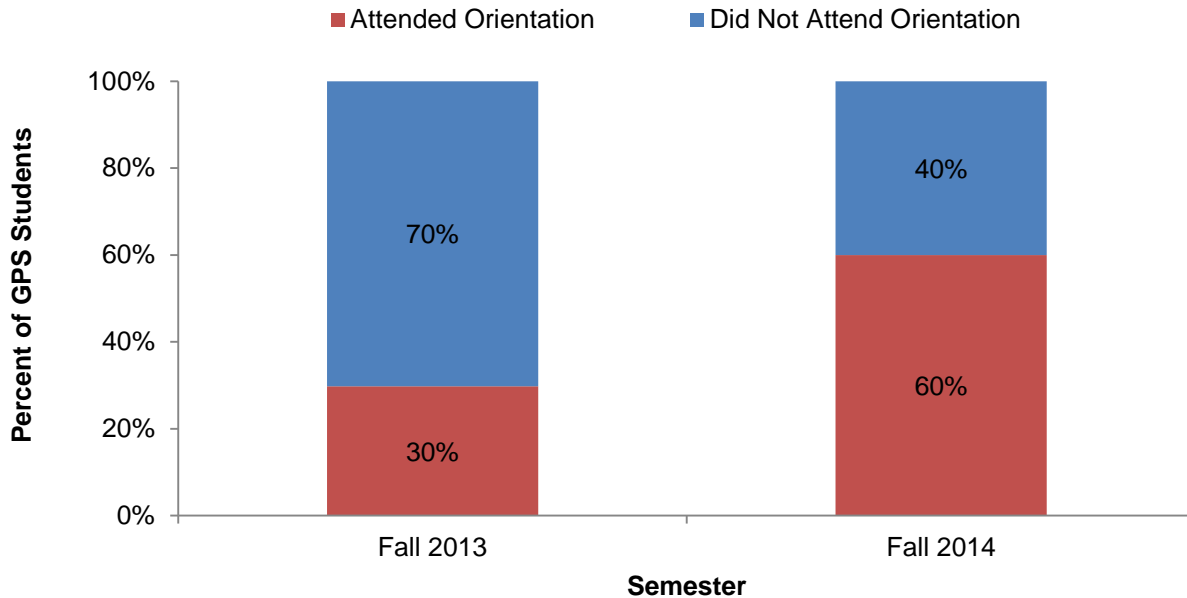
After implementation of the policy, the percentage of GPS students who attended orientation doubled between Fall 2013 and Fall 2014 (see Table 1 and Figure 1, next page). Sixty percent of Fall 2014 GPS students (4,428 students) attended student orientation compared to 30 percent of GPS students in Fall 2013 (1,962 students). While the entire GPS population grew by 12 percent, orientation served an additional 2,466 GPS students in Fall 2014 compared to Fall 2013 (126 percent more). The increase in the percentage of first-time students who attended orientation from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014 is indicative of increased attention and emphasis on orientation as a result of the new policy. These data speak to successful adjustments to the infrastructure and capacity necessary to accommodate increased demand due to the policy. Since less than two-thirds of all Fall 2014 GPS students attended, however, the data show that mandating attendance was not enough to have complete compliance, and enforcement of the policy may be an issue that needs to be addressed.

Table 1. Orientation Attendance of GPS Cohort: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014

GPS for Success Students	Fall 2013		Fall 2014	
	#	%	#	%
Attended Orientation	1,962	29.8	4,428	60.0
Did Not Attend Orientation	4,622	70.2	2,953	40.0
Total Students	6,584	100.0	7,381	100.0

¹NOVA's GPS population: Recent high school graduates or GED recipients between the ages of 17 and 24 who have never previously attended college (unless it was dual enrollment during high school), who are not members of the College Pathway Initiative program and are not transient students.

Figure 1. Orientation Attendance of GPS Cohort: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014



Campus Variation

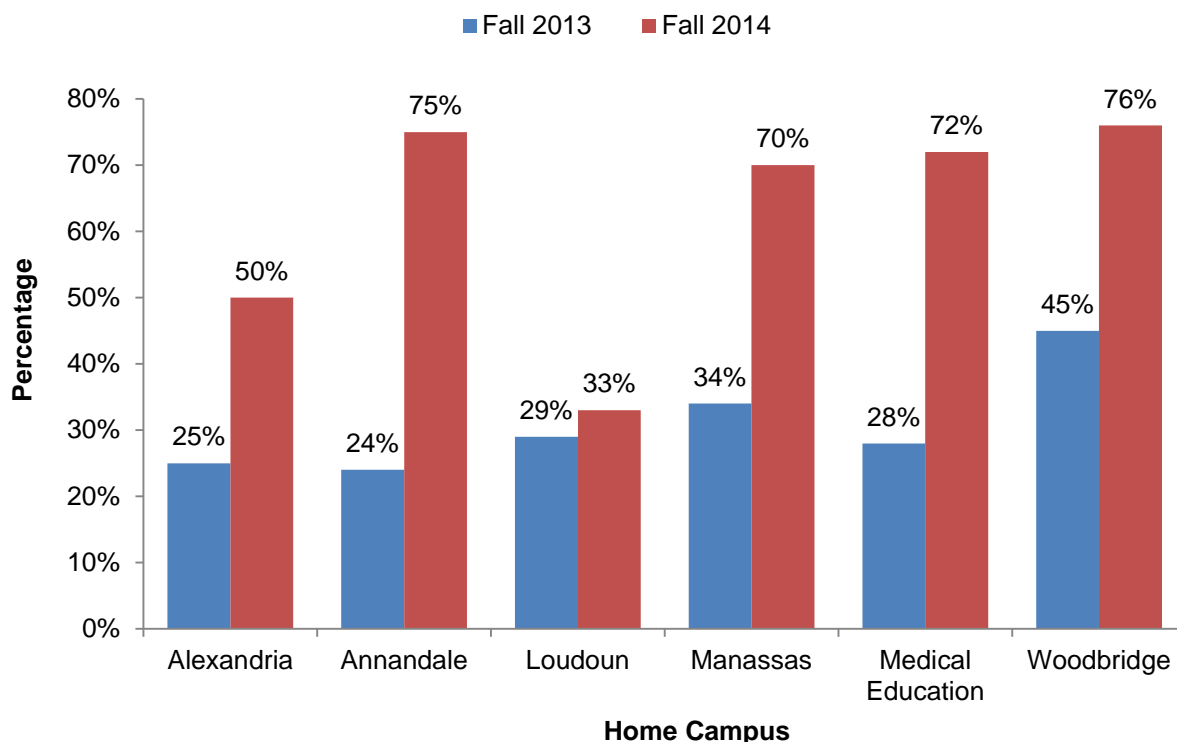
Students whose home campus was Woodbridge attended an Orientation session the most often (816 students, 76 percent), followed by Annandale (1,574 students, 75 percent), Medical Education (48 students, 72 percent), Manassas (823 students, 70 percent), Alexandria (551 students, 50 percent), and Loudoun (616 students, 33 percent) (see Table 2). This level of cross-campus variation warrants further investigation. The data do not indicate whether students typically attended orientation at their home campus, and if so, if there was an inherent difference in the timing of sessions offered at the campuses, where at least seventy percent of all GPS students attended orientation (Woodbridge, Annandale, and Manassas), compared to Alexandria and Loudoun, where half and one-third of required students, respectively, attended orientation.

Table 2. Orientation Attendance of GPS Cohort by Home Campus: Fall 2014

Home Campus	GPS Students	Orientation Attendees	
		#	%
Alexandria	1,105	551	49.9
Annandale	2,105	1,574	74.8
Loudoun	1,851	616	33.3
Manassas	1,180	823	69.7
Medical Education	67	48	71.6
Woodbridge	1,073	816	76.0
Total Students	7,381	4,428	60.0

Each campus saw an increase in the percentage of GPS students who attended orientation in Fall 2014 compared to Fall 2013 (see Figure 2). Annandale saw the largest increase, with only 24 percent of GPS students attending orientation in Fall 2013 compared to 75 percent in Fall 2014. Annandale went from having the lowest proportion of students attend in Fall 2013 to having the second largest proportion attend in Fall 2014. Given this marked increase, a more detailed look at the Annandale Campus may offer insight into effective practices and procedures regarding implementation of the student orientation policy.

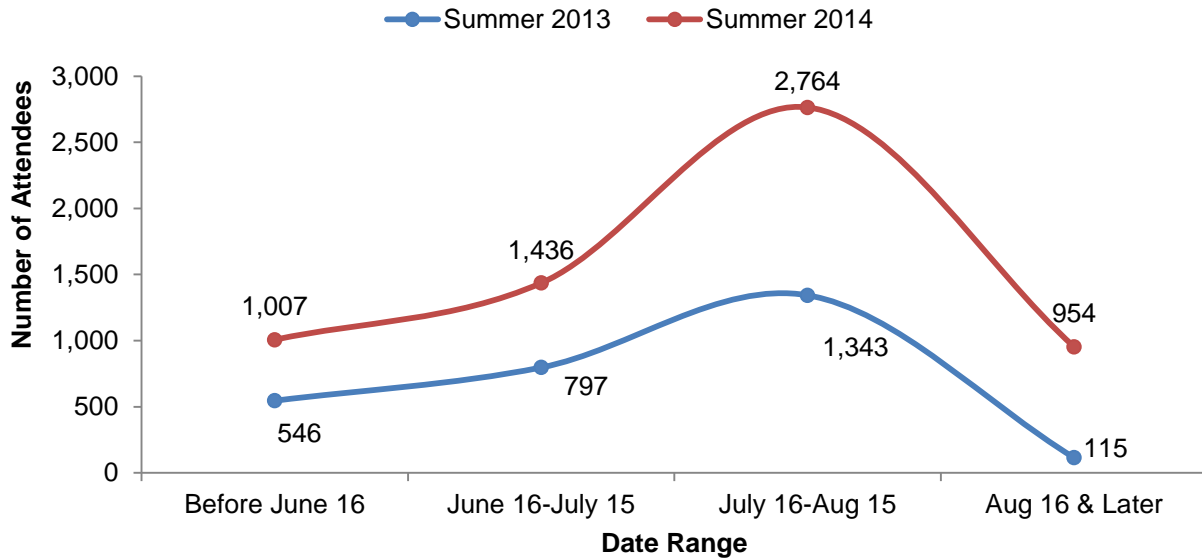
Figure 2. Orientation Attendance of GPS Cohort by Home Campus: Fall 2013 and Fall 2014



Timing of Orientation Sessions

NOVA administrators estimated that three-quarters of GPS students would attend student orientation prior to July 16th. For the Summer 2014 sessions, however, only 40 percent of all students who eventually attended orientation had attended by July 16th, down from 48 percent in Summer 2013 (see Figure 3, next page). NOVA administrators also projected one-quarter of GPS students would attend orientation between July 16th and August 15th, yet closer to half of all attendees (2,764 students, 45 percent) attended during this time frame. Additionally, 16 percent of students attended orientation on or after August 16th, after all GPS students were projected to have attended in the initial timeline. In analyzing these data, it should be noted that the initial projections pertain to GPS students while the comparison numbers reflect all orientation attendees.

Figure 3. Number of Orientation Attendees by Month: Summer 2013 and Summer 2014



Orientation session offerings closely followed the pattern of student enrollment in orientation sessions over time. The majority of Summer 2014 orientation sessions (90 sessions, 35 percent) were offered between July 16th and August 15th (see Figure 4). The number of sessions offered after August 15th increased from 9 in Summer 2013 to 64 in Summer 2014, while other time frames saw only a slight increase or even a decrease in the number of sessions offered. If administrators want to encourage students to attend orientation earlier in the summer, then more sessions need to be offered prior to August 16th. Some GPS students may not have been able to attend orientation due to high demand later in the summer, just prior to the start of the Fall 2014 semester.

Figure 4. Number of Orientation Sessions by Month: Summer 2013 and Summer 2014

