

CREATING MEANINGFUL ORIENTATION EXPERIENCES:

Transforming Orientation Programs at a Private
Liberal Arts College for Women

Previous First-Year Transition Programs

- FYI Program: A partnership between academic affairs and student affairs that was an introduction to various departments and traditions at Agnes Scott
 - Outcome: Faculty felt useless and thought the program lacked meaning

- ASC 101: Staff leaders and student leaders partnered to lead groups, introducing them to various departments, topics and traditions
 - Outcomes:
 - There wasn't enough content to make the "course" feel credible
 - No course credit was given, making it difficult to enforce attendance
 - Required night and weekend events felt overwhelming
 - Students lost interest after the first month

Existing First-Year Programs

First-Year Seminar

- Taught by faculty
- Heavy focus on improving writing skills

Orientation

- A weekend jammed full of events and required activities

First-Year Living/Learning Communities

- Students are grouped according to their FYs class in the residence halls

Transition Program

- Previously ASC 101
- Reorganized in 2010 with the Scottie Sidekick program

Our New Approach to Transition Programming: **Scottie Sidekicks!**

One Scottie Sidekick is assigned as the sole leader of each group



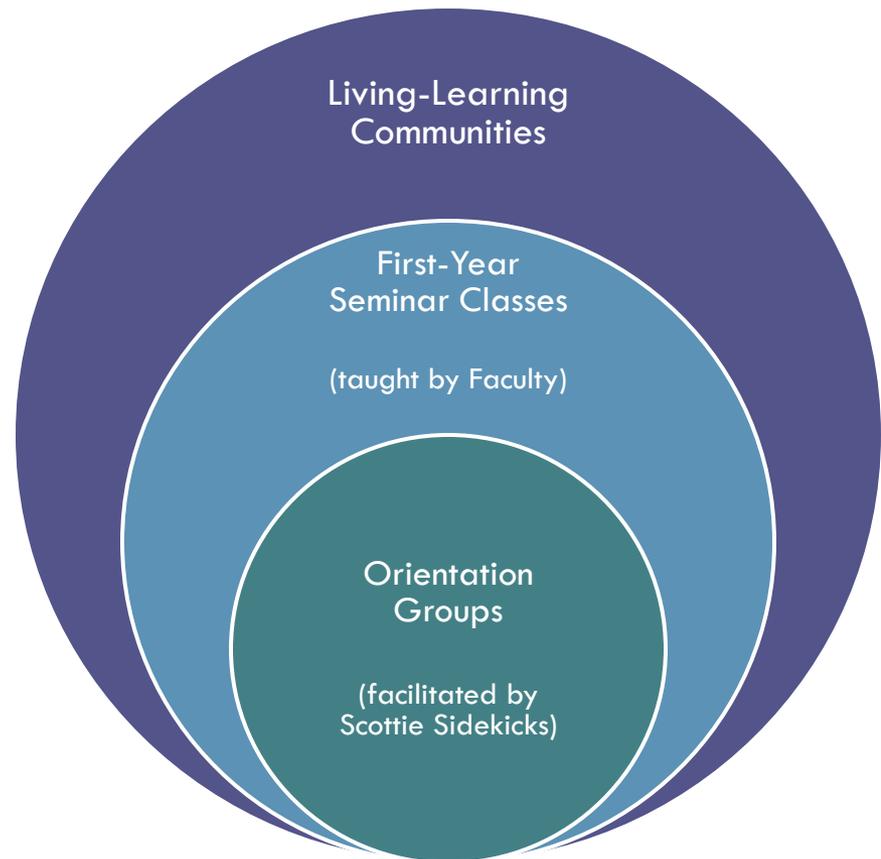
Goals of the New Transition Program

- Connect new students to informed, enthusiastic upper-class students who will be their peer mentors
- Create a comfortable group and instant “niche” for students by being intentional about how we group them together
- Introduce new students to departments and traditions that will be important to their experience
- Simplify and make interaction meaningful

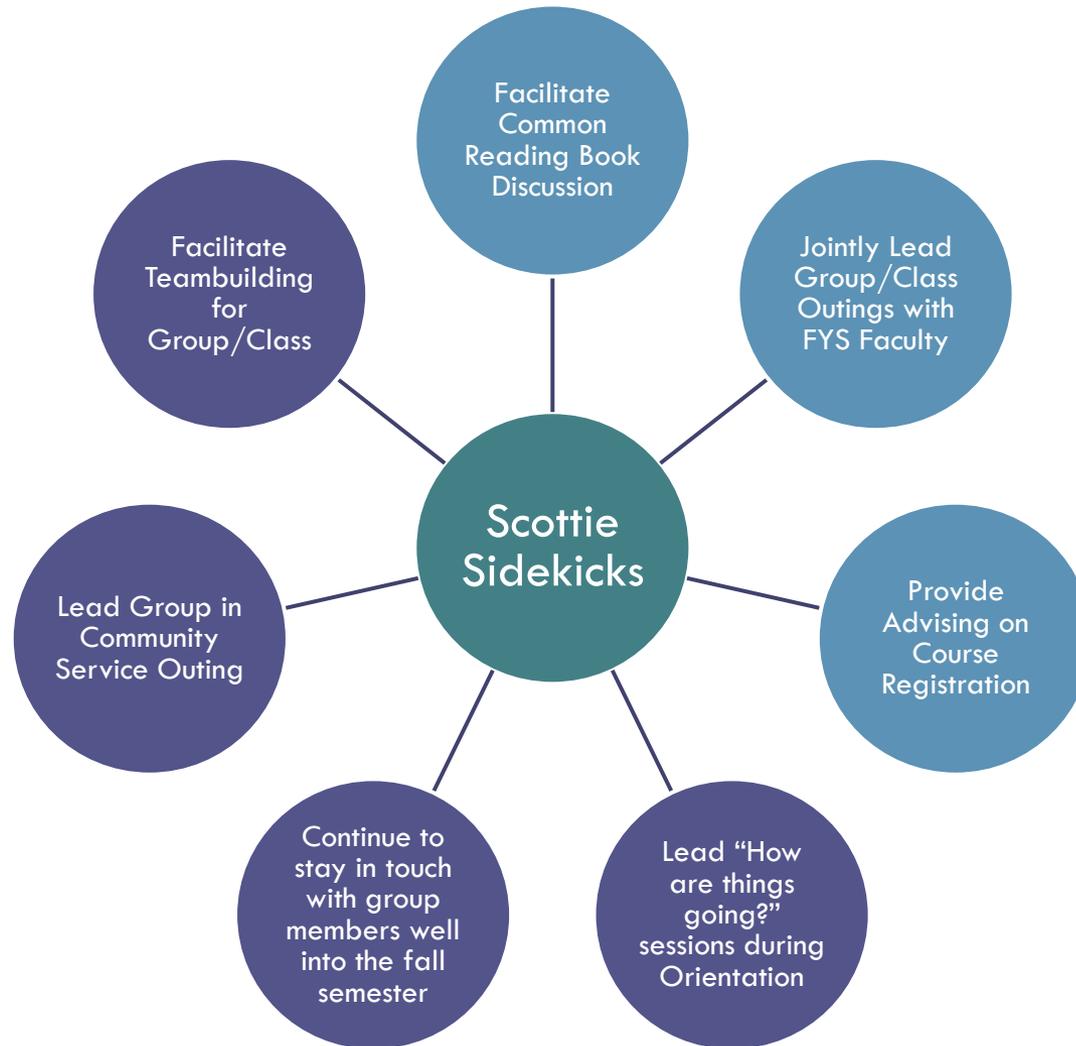
Intentionality Meets Programming

We used the same groups of students for their Orientation Group, First-Year Seminar Class and Living-Learning Communities.

Knowing these same students would spend a lot of time together, Scottie Sidekicks conducted teambuilding with each group during Orientation in order to create a solid foundation for the groups' relationship.



A Scottie Sidekick's Role



*Blue circles indicate functions that are collaborative efforts with Academic Affairs

Positive Differences in the New Program

- ❑ Scottie Sidekicks were trained extensively on a wide array of topics
- ❑ Teambuilding was conducted by Scottie Sidekicks with their groups – groups that would attend class together and live together!
- ❑ Orientation Outings allowed partnerships with FYS Classes and Faculty



- ❑ The Student Leader experience was much more rewarding
- ❑ The Orientation schedule included time for students to meet in groups to ask any questions to their Scottie Sidekick

Assessment of the New Program

- Evaluation sent to all first-year students
- Focus group of Scottie Sidekicks
- Evaluation sent to Scottie Sidekicks asking the same questions as used in the focus group

Key Results

44%

of first-year students contacted their Scottie Sidekick during or after orientation to seek guidance, support or friendship.

100%

of Scottie Sidekicks felt equipped with the right information to answer new students' questions.

100%

of Scottie Sidekicks felt their role was important.

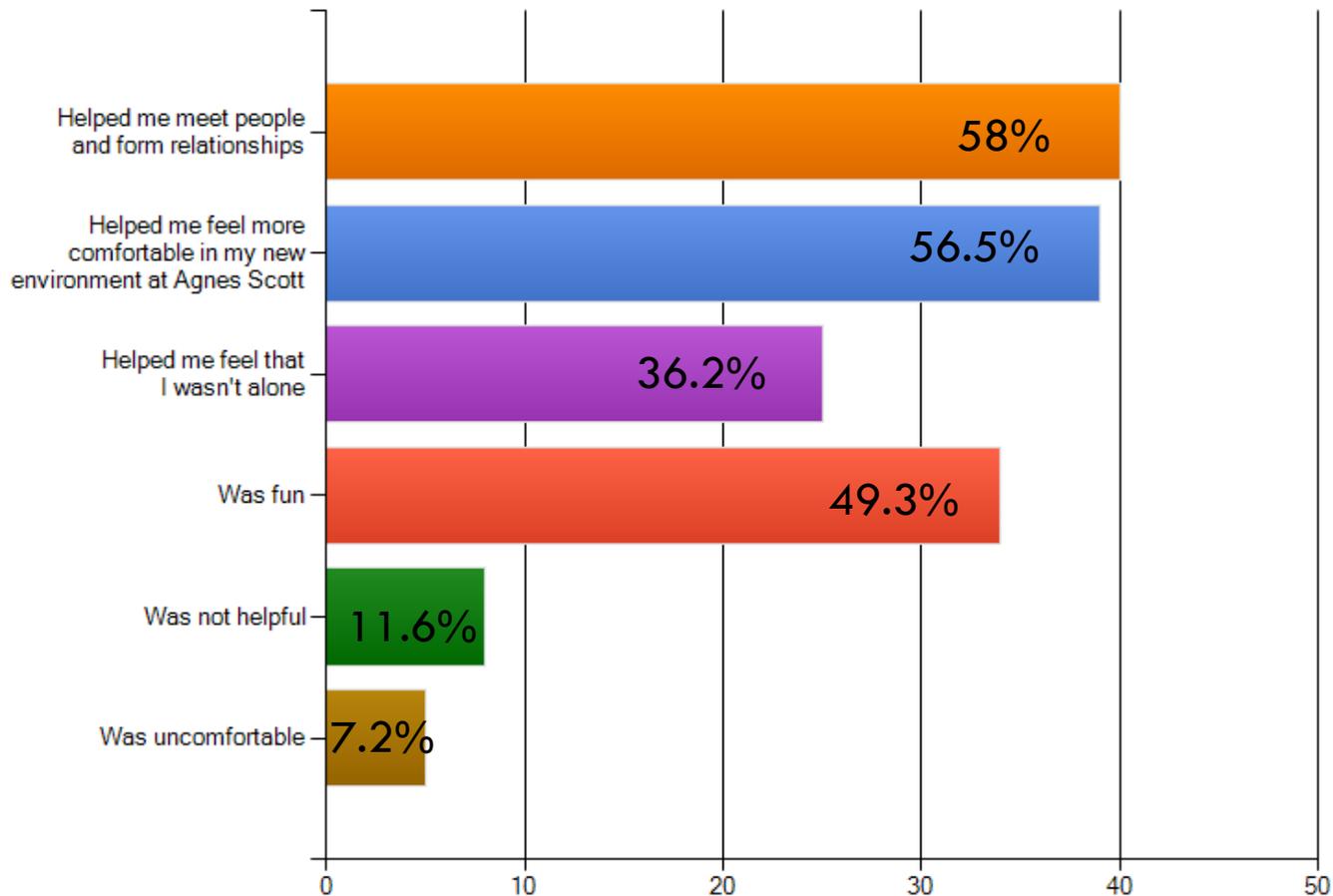
84%

of first-year students said their Scottie Sidekick made them feel more comfortable and/or excited about attending Agnes Scott.

Those Student Leaders that served as leaders in the previous program and the new program found the new experience much **more rewarding and enjoyable.**

First-Year Students Say, “Meeting in Orientation Groups...”

Meeting in Orientation Groups at various points throughout Orientation...(Please select all that apply)



Conclusions



- Student leaders, first-year students and FYS faculty directly benefit from the new design of the Scottie Sidekick orientation program.
- When student leaders are trained thoroughly and equipped with the appropriate resources, they can and will succeed when given the responsibility of being the only leader of a group. In addition, being the only leader of a group empowers student leaders to take initiative and ownership and makes the experience more meaningful to them.
- Creating cross-over between orientation groups and FYS classes enhances the overall experience and creates better working relationships for group projects in the classroom. It also provides the opportunity for interaction between students and faculty members outside of the classroom.

Goals for the Future



- ❑ Partner more with Residence Life on programming in the Living-Learning Communities
- ❑ Cross-train Scottie Sidekicks and Residence Life staff in order to best serve first-year students
- ❑ Find more ways to intersect with Faculty and the First-Year Seminars
- ❑ Have Scottie Sidekicks conduct sessions about campus traditions and key campus departments