

Student Leadership Academy + Week of Welcome = Dedicated Orientation Crew

George Brown College's Journey to Redesign Orientation
2006 to 2009

22nd International Conference on The First Year Experience

College Profile

- Public institution in Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Offering certificates, diplomas and applied degrees
- 17,500 full-time students & over 60,000 part-time course registrants
- Intakes:
 - September: 7,200
 - January: 7,600
 - May: 2,700
- Over 150 full-time programs offered in 9 Academic Centres
- Mix of 2, 3 & 4 year programs
- Tuition fees range from
- Programs range from Chef School, Design, Construction Management, Nursing, Community Services & Financial Services
- Multi campus: 2 main campuses; 3 satellite campuses & 20 teaching locations

Student Profile

- George Brown College applicants are typically female, and tend to be slightly older than other colleges. The majority live in the GTA or Metro Toronto, come from low and moderate income families, and plan to commute to school. They are often employed (usually on a part-time basis), and report high school grades between 70% and 84%. They intend to complete a college diploma or advanced diploma, particularly if George Brown is their first choice, often in the Health Sciences.
- 27-30% First Generation
- 34% direct high school entry, 32% transfer from other PSE Institutions
- 11% register with a disability, 6% Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing (Centre of Excellence)
- 12% International, 37% speak another language other than English at home
- 62% from Greater Toronto Area
- 54% are 20 or younger (40% in rest of GTA)
- 37% career preparation, 14% career advancement, 9% career change
- 17% personal development, 12% future university studies

2008 UCAS University & College Applicant Study, Academic Group

- Important to welcome new students
- No outcomes identified
- Wide range of activities, not coordinated
- Competing priorities – social vs. academic
- Limited success with meeting wide range of objectives
- No detailed data or measurement
- Services rely on opportunity to provide information
- Suspect that less than 50% of students attend
- Part of larger budget activity for promotions and programming
- Average cost per division \$8450.00

- Important to welcome new students
- Too much crammed into 1 session
- Had to choose between social vs. academic
- Feeling overwhelmed by information “dump”
- Information causes anxiety
- “Friends orientation was better”
- Inconsistent student experience
- Some academic centres gave out giveaways & others did not (\$ difference felt by students)
- Not all students can attend

- Academic Management Committee commissioned work group
- Director, Student Service & Campus Life asked to lead College-wide effort
- Established Coordinating Committee for College-wide Orientation
 - Every service & academic centre represented
 - Meets 1 time per semester as a Committee
 - Meets 1 time per semester with each Centre
- 1 Contract staff position created in summer 2007
- 6 short-term student staff positions created
- Agreed to:
 - Set College-wide outcomes
 - Pilot Week of Welcome redesign with 1 Centre
 - Develop online Orientation & Student Success tool

- Orientation to be recognized as a process with various elements (not an event)
- New elements to include:
 - “In the City” Open Houses
 - Smart Start Sessions
 - Week of Welcome activities
 - Dean’s Welcome & Service Fair
 - Orientation CD/Online tool
 - Social Orientation
 - Program Orientation
 - Course Climate Setting
 - Student Success Online tool
- Coordinating Committee for College-wide Orientation to design elements; collect data, measure & report on results

- Central (Student Service & Campus Life)
 - Coordinating role
 - Committee leadership
 - Research & measurement
 - Direction and objective setting
 - Targeted activities:
 - Conversion activities
 - CD/online tools
 - Induction ceremony
 - Student leadership program
 - Service fair
 - Student success tool
- Decentralized (Divisions)
 - “In the City” events
 - Smart Start Sessions
 - Divisional Participation in Induction Ceremony/Dean’s Welcome
 - Support for & participation in survey administration
 - Student Association activities aligned to strategy
 - Program orientation
 - Course Climate Setting
 - Student Success activities

Induction Ceremony Model

- Created an Induction Ceremony model to:
 - Create a consistent, scripted event
 - Allow for unique attributes of program to be highlighted
 - Introduce activities that focus on connectedness (student to student & student to faculty/staff)
 - Provide Student Success messaging & reduce anxiety
 - Limit # of speakers & reduce length of academic orientation
 - Stop the information “dump”
- Dean’s Welcome & Service Fair to be consistent across all Academic Centres

- Piloted with Centre for Health Sciences & Community Services
- Induction Ceremony elements:
 1. Service Fair – 40 minutes
 - Student Association provides critical giveaways (student handbook, health plan..)
 - Services available with giveaways
 2. Induction Ceremony – 35 minutes
 - Faculty procession with piper, academic robes
 - Platform party
 - Role for President, Dean, Associate Dean, Student Association President & Faculty/staff
 - Student Success messaging
 - Student & Faculty pledge
 - Eliminated the information “dump”
 3. Interactive element – 45 minutes
 - Group team building activity
 - Build the tallest, strongest, best looking, free standing structure using materials provided

Activity	Description	Result
Service Fair	Move services away from academic orientation	15 services, over 5000 in attendance
Induction Ceremony	Pilot new format & measure	95% enjoyed ceremony
Orientation Leaders	Hire std. leaders to support College orient. activities	5 students & 1 coordinator hired
Orientation CD	Produce & mail to students	4800 mailed by Aug 18 th
Late Start Program	Package & student contacts	250 packages, 236 calls
Student Success	3 rd week activity	Online tool advertised 3 rd week
Coordination	Surveys, promotion,	1015 surveys, 7 reports



Ceremony vs. Academic Orientation

Induction Ceremony	Question	Academic Orientation
89%	Would recommend to other students	85%
97%	Feel welcomed to George Brown	84%
95%	Feel supported by faculty	63%
88%	Made useful contacts with peers	59%
33%	Were first generation	26%

Note: Data consistent with 2007, 2008 & 2009 surveys

- Model supports key College objectives:
 - Supports investment in recruitment & conversion activities
 - Marketing tool for high school and online prospective students
 - Supports Student Success, retention and attrition efforts
 - Aligned with Ministry, divisional and College objectives
 - Develops student leadership and future alumni base
 - Supports student learning about the College
- Body of research, best practices and proven results in Student Services across North America for past 40+ years
- Increasingly other GTA schools are investing in Orientation
- “Attrition should be addressed at the level of the institution rather than by specific departments or divisions within colleges or universities”

Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation Research on
Retention & Attrition, December 2003



Where we are at in 2009

- Dean's Welcome held for all Academic Centres
- 10 College wide Ceremonies in Fall
- 3400 participants in Fall 2008
- 3 College wide Ceremonies in Winter
- 1000 participants
- Conduct more than 1000 surveys annually
- Orientation CD/online tool mailed out to 6500 students in Fall

How do we sustain the
giant that Orientation
has become?

- Piloted in August 2008 with 56 participants (6 staff & 50 students)
- Student need to attend information session prior to being accepted
- 4 key elements designed to foster:
 - Confidence building
 - Public speaking
 - Team work
 - Inclusivity training/expectation setting
- Average 30 volunteers per Academic Centre
- 6 Centres; 10 Welcome sessions; 3 separate locations
- Average of 30 volunteer hours per student
- Outdoor adventure centre (high ropes, low ropes, rock climbing wall, fields, lake)



Student Leadership Academy Video

- Full implementation August 2009 with 131 participants (13 staff, 10 Senior Orientation Leaders & 108 students)
- Student athlete & student association leader streams (35 participants)
- Students need to attend information session & have a minimum of 10 volunteer hours prior to being accepted
- 5 key elements designed to foster:
 - Confidence building
 - Public speaking
 - Problem solving
 - Team work
 - Inclusivity training/expectation setting
- Cost of \$135 per student absorbed by College to enhance student experience
- Students get O Gear, certificate & appreciation event in September each year
- Return on investment through volunteer hours



Student Survey

Question	SLA
Enhanced self confidence	88%
Meaningful connections with GBC staff & students	88%
Enhanced communications skills	79%
Student Leadership Academy overall	97%
International student	23%
Number of students surveyed	34 of 50 students that attended

Note: data obtained through use of Survey Monkey

“Attending the George Brown Leadership Academy was a wonderful experience, it helped me to grow in my weakest points and to step out of my comfort zone into a place I never thought existed. It also helped me to gain more self confidence and to be a better person in terms of interacting and being a better team leader. It gives you the opportunity to think quickly and out of the box. To round this all up, I must say the SLA is not only for you to have fun but for you to gather the necessary skills to go about in your everyday life. Thanks to all the facilitators for doing such a marvelous and awesome job.”

“I really appreciated the experience for what it was intended. I met a lot of fun and influential people -both students and faculty. The experience taught me to always be myself and take risks. The activities-which seemed simple- were effective in helping individuals overcome fears, for example, heights and public speaking. It also demonstrated the feeling of well being and success one gets when a task is completed. Even though it emphasized the value of team work and inter-personal relationships, it also reinstated the importance of leadership and individualism. As short as the time may seem, I feel a sense of pride in being apart of this experience. I only wish that the retreat lasted longer.”

Q&A

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