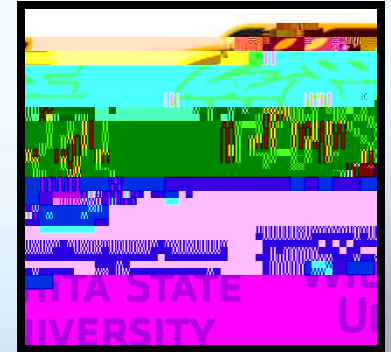


# WSU's NEW Student Orientation

Focus Group Research  
December 2014



Presented by:

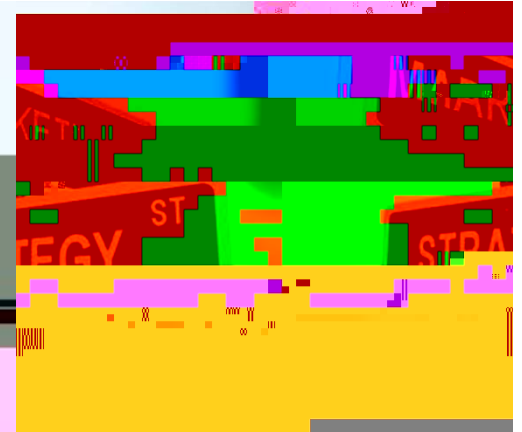


Bob Ross, Ph.D., Esther Headley, M.B.A.,  
& Robin Mishler, M.B.A.

# Objectives and Methodology

A close-up photograph of a wooden pencil lying on a white surface, with a red highlighter pen visible in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue and pink gradient.

# Objectives



1. To obtain an evaluation from students regarding the **orientation experience**. This included:
  - a. How **comfortable** did the student feel with the **whole process of the orientation**, and what would make the process more comfortable?
  - b. Upon the completion of the orientation, did the student feel **comfortable with the campus itself**.
  - c. Did the orientation make the student **FEEL LIKE A SHOCKER**, and why or why not?
  - d. Did the orientation provide all of the **information** the student desired regarding Wichita State?
  - e. Did the orientation allow the student to **make connections** with other students outside their circle of friends, and what would be the student's reaction to a **group bonding event**?

# Objectives Continued

1. To obtain an evaluation from the students regarding the **orientation experience**. This included: *(Continued)*
  - f. Did the student find the **orientation leader(s)** to be **relatable**?
  - g. Did the student feel the **delivery of the overall message** was appropriately focused for them?
  - h. What did the student particularly **like** about the orientation?
  - i. What aspects of the orientation would the student recommend be **modified** or **deleted**?
  - j. How did the **orientation compare to other orientations** the student may have experienced?
  - k. Did the *student* enjoy **meeting** with faculty, and did they perceive this meeting to be valuable.

# Objectives Continued

2. To explore if WSU created a **welcoming environment** for the student throughout the orientation session. Specifically probed were the following:
  - a. Did the student perceive **faculty and staff to be welcoming** while they were on campus?
  - b. Is there anything WSU could have “done better” to make the student **feel more welcome** during the orientation session?
  - c. What aspects of the environment of the orientation had the **most positive impact** on the student?
  
3. To evaluate the **current marketing materials**

# Objectives Continued

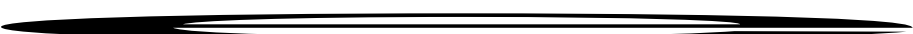
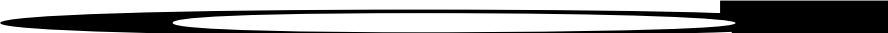
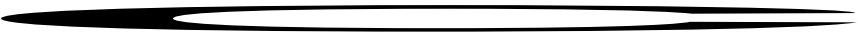
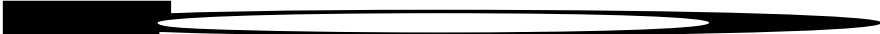
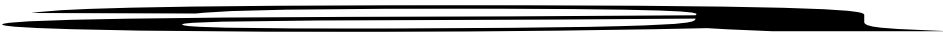
4. To determine the following regarding the ***orientation staff communicating with the students***:
  - a. How does the student want to be communicated with (*e.g. email, snail mail, etc.*)? Does this differ for communication ***prior*** to the orientation as compared to during the first semester?
  - b. What type of information does the student want communicated to them?
5. To provide a ***demographic profile*** of those participating in the research.



# Methodology

To achieve the objectives, **four** focus groups were conducted in Wichita, KS as follows:

| Group Description                   | Day/Time                          | Number of Participants |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Traditional Students                | November 11, 2014<br>at 4:00 p.m. | 9                      |
| Traditional Students                | November 13, 2014<br>at 4:00 p.m. | 10                     |
| Non-Traditional Students            | November 18, 2014<br>at 6:30 p.m. | 10                     |
| Non-Traditional Students            | November 20, 2014<br>at 6:30 p.m. | 6                      |
| <b>Total Number of Participants</b> |                                   | <b>35</b>              |





# Methodology Continued

Participants were screened to meet the following criteria: (*Continued*)

## Non-Traditional Students:

- a. Were *transfer students* or *returning adult students*
- b. *Fall 2014*, was their *first semester* as a *transfer* or *returning adult student*, and they were *currently enrolled* at WSU.
- c. Participated in the *in-person* WSU orientation.
- d. There was a *mix of genders*.
- e. There were 2 to 3 individuals of *ethnicity*.
- f. Each group included some representation of *out of state, outside of Wichita* and *residents of Wichita*.
- g. Each group included some representation of transfer students from *Butler, Hutchinson* and *Cowley Community Colleges*, as well as, *KU and K-State*.
- h. There was a mix of *freshmen, sophomores, juniors* and *seniors*.
- i. Participants and their immediate family members could not currently work for an *advertising agency*, in *marketing research* or in *higher education*.

# Results

# Orientation Evaluation

Participants were asked to project, if they had a friend getting ready to attend the WSU Orientation – ***“What would you tell your friend about your experience at the orientation?”***

## Traditional Student Responses Included:

- **Day one is mostly outdoors** so dress appropriately, be prepared for walking. **Day two is mostly indoors**, wear something warmer.
- **Bring questions** (*It is hard to think of things to ask at the time*).
- Don't feel shy/awkward – **break out and get to know new people**
- (*If from out of town*) make



# Orientation Evaluation Continued

Non Traditional Participants were asked to project, if they had a friend getting ready to attend the WSU Orientation –

# Orientation Evaluation Continued

## Non-Traditional Student Responses Included: (Continued)

- Participants were **surprised there were no directional signs** on campus telling attendees **how to find orientation**. *Since many students have little or no experience with the campus, **signs with arrows and banners** directing them where to check-in would have been helpful.*
- Participants did welcome the opportunity to **learn more about services and resources** available for students
- Students would advise future attendees to **get plenty of sleep** the night before, and **bring caffeine**, as it is hard to stay awake and focus through such a long day
- Students felt if **orientation** is required, then it **should be free**

# Orientation Length – **TRADITIONAL** Students

- **Traditional Students** are not accustomed to putting in long days, therefore **day one** of orientation was a “long” day to get through. Several participants felt that **orientation should be** (*and could be*) **done in one day**.
- Most of the information was perceived as being **irrelevant** either because it had already been covered or was not needed. Participants felt much **time was wasted between sessions** and there were **unnecessary activities**.
- Participants felt **cutting out the extra time** going from one session to the next and **cutting out topics** such as **financial aid** could allow for a **one day orientation**. Financial aid should be covered during campus visits and Senior Days
- A **two day orientation adds expense** to those from out of town, requiring overnight accommodations.

# Orientation Length – **TRADITIONAL** Students Continued

- It was suggested if orientation **must be two days**, make the two days **more balanced**.
- Because the first day is so long, many were **tired** and **“zoned out”** by day two. *A shorter first day would help students be more focused during day two.*
- Participants had a hard time understanding how after a two day orientation, they still were **not enrolled**, causing some to feel as if they were **“not yet a WSU student”**.
- Some felt the **campus tour could be optional** because they had toured during Senior Days and campus visits (*this would allow them to leave early*).



# Orientation Length – **NON-TRADITIONAL** Students

- Many participants felt the orientation was **too long** and should be condensed.
- Non-traditional students resented the fact that they were required to **take an entire day off work** plus **pay for the orientation**. This led some to feel as if they were losing money twice.
- It was felt that some presenters seemed as if they were trying to stretch out their material to fill their allotted time, therefore **time could be cut from several presentations**.
- Another suggestion to save time was to **bring all of the presenters to one location** and then take a few 10 minute breaks rather than having the entire orientation group get up and move locations for every presentation.

# Likes of Orientation

Traditional Students:

# Likes of Orientation Continued

## NON-Traditional Students:

### Non-traditional students liked:

- **Staff that shared stories** (*students felt like they were connecting to real people*)
- **Meeting professors** (*participants wish there had been more faculty at orientation*)
- **Major-specific information** (*learning about their own classes, overall requirements, student groups, etc.*)

# Suggested Modifications to Orientation

## Traditional Students:

- WSU should provide **something better than pizza** (*Could Shocker Hall dining be used?*)
- Have leaders/mentors who **know the campus better**
- Have students **complete enrollment BEFORE or DURING orientation** so they can use the tour to see where their classes will be.
- **Have the tour leaders tell which classes are in a particular building.** *For example, Jabara Hall does not mean anything to new students, but saying this is where your math class will be is helpful.*

# Suggested Modifications to Orientation

Continued

## Traditional Students: (Continued)

- **Have the activities/ice breakers relate to majors** (*this will get students talking about what they are interested in*)
- **Make enrollment part of orientation** (*or done beforehand*) so students can find their classroom buildings on the tour and feel like a WSU student during orientation
- **Focus the scavenger hunt by major** (*for example, finding “**their**” labs, advisor’s office, break areas, etc.*)
- The “**steal the mascot**” game felt childish (*a slight change to “**capture the flag**” would feel more grown up than stuffed animals*)
- Have **more speakers** from groups and organizations to give a better feel for “**student life**” and **activities** in which to get involved
- Make sure leaders **know the campus and buildings** well enough to answer questions

# Suggested Modifications to Orientation

Continued

## Non-Traditional Students:

- Focus more on what is **relevant to non-traditional** students. They need to learn how to be a **WSU student** (*location of classes, resources available, program requirements etc.*) not how to be a **college student in general**. Topics such as **drinking, sexual conduct**, etc. are not needed. ***If these topics are required by law – explain that so attendees do not resent WSU for treating them like freshmen.***
- Really examine where there is **duplication** and cut any information that is not necessary.
- Make sure **all staff is available** and **all departments needed will be open** and ready to serve the students during orientation.
- Do not require students to attend orientation, 157 6255 is available

# Orientation Atmosphere – TRADITIONAL

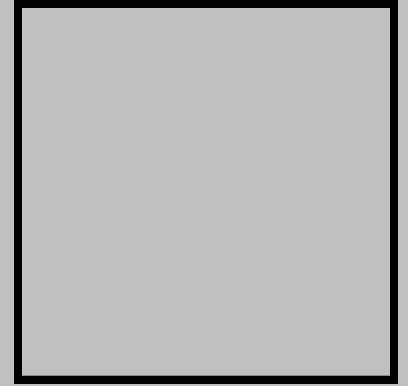
- While **everyone was nice** and the campus was perceived as “homey”, the orientation did not feel overly welcoming. *It felt to many like a campus visit where WSU is still trying to convince potential students to “pick us” and not as if they were a student being welcomed to their new school.*
- Students would have liked something to show that **WSU was glad to**

# Orientation Atmosphere – NON-TRADITIONAL

- Students liked being in groups with others that had **similar fields** of interest.
- The non-traditional students did not feel they were “**talked down**” to, however, some faculty were noted as treating them like kids.
- The non-traditional students would like some **ice breaker activities** to get to know other students, however, they felt “dumb” making something out of pipe cleaners.
- Overall, the orientation felt like they were **already in class**. With **long presentations, lectures, taking notes**, etc. it was not an exciting day-- it was a **long and grueling process they felt “forced” into**.
- Students would like orientation to feel more like an **event**. **Signs, banners, coffee, refreshments** and **lunch catered** (not pizza) all show the students WSU is glad to have them on campus.



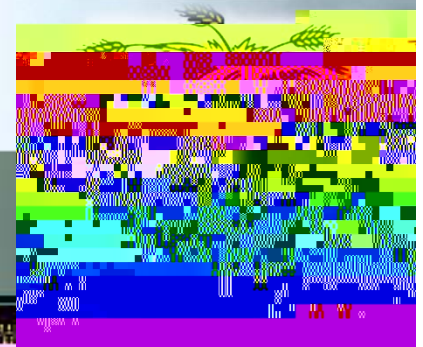
# Feel like a SHOCKER



## Traditional Students:

- The majority of the traditional students agreed that orientation made them more excited to start college .
- Some mentioned they did not feel like a student without being enrolled. After attending orientation there was one more hurdle (enrollment) before really being a “Shocker.”
- Traditional students desired more information on student life and activities to get a feel of what it will be like to be a college student. “What do shockers do? Where do shockers hang out? Where are the best places on/around campus for group meetings?” Students left orientation feeling like they did not understand what college life would be like.
- Again, students wanted to be able to find “their buildings ” to see where they will be spending most of their time as a shocker.

# Feel like a SHOCKER Continued



## Non-Traditional Students:

- Everyone the non-traditional students encountered during orientation **appeared happy to be a Shocker.**
- Most non-traditional students **did not feel as involved in the college life at WSU** as they were at their previous schools. Many were in activities or on teams as freshmen that they will not participate in at WSU. ***This leads many to feel as though their previous school was their “college experience” and WSU is just where they will go to school.***
- The **free T-shirt** helped some students to **“feel more like a Shocker”**. As one participant stated, ***“I did not have any Shocker gear, now I do.”***

# Orientation Results – Traditional Students

N=19

| Statement  | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| a. After attending the orientation, I felt I could find my way around WSU's campus.                                | 2              | 6     | 7       | 4        | 0                 |
| b. After attending WSU's orientation, I felt I knew what resources were available to help me succeed as a student. | 3              | 9     | 3       | 3        | 1                 |
| c. The orientation answered all of my questions regarding being a student at WSU.                                  | 2              | 2     | 3       | 10       | 2                 |
| d. I related to the transition mentor/orientation leader.  | 4              | 5     | 6       | 2        | 2                 |

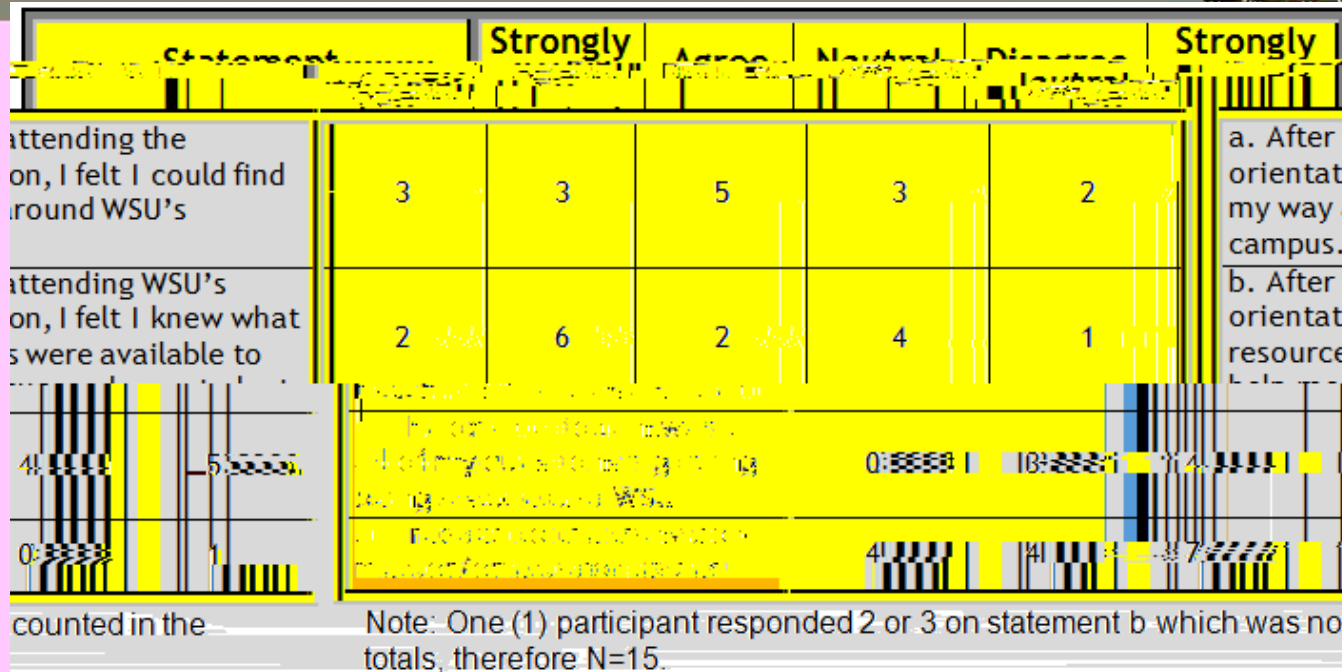
- More students **disagreed** (12 out of 19) with statement c. “*The orientation answered all of my questions...*” than any other statement.
- **7 out of 19** were **neutral** regarding finding their way around campus after orientation, suggesting that with a few modifications the tour could become much more beneficial.
- More students **agreed** (12 out of 19) with statement b. (*they felt they knew the resources available after attending orientation*) than any other statement.

# Orientation Results - Traditional Students

Continued

# Orientation Results – NON-Traditional Students Continued

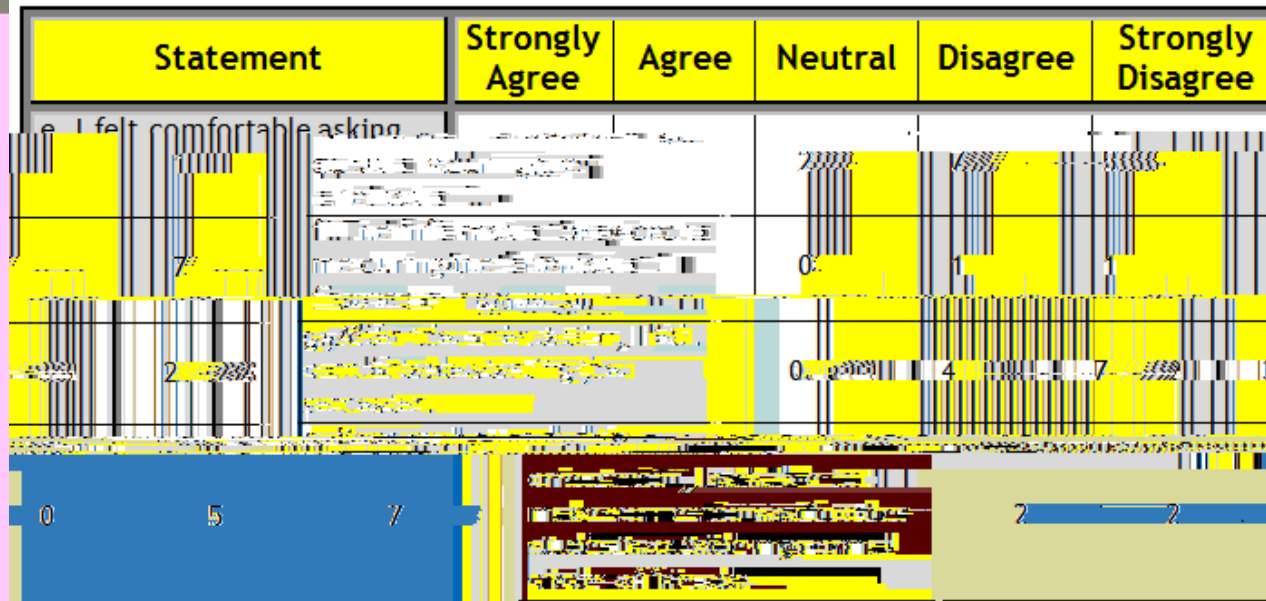
N=16



- Statements **b** (knew available resources) and **d** (related to mentor) each received **8** responses on the agreement side of the scale, which ties for 2<sup>nd</sup> most agrees behind statement **e** (felt comfortable asking questions) with **9** agreements (on next slide).
- Statement **c** (orientation answered all of my questions) received **9** disagree responses. This suggests that while students felt comfortable asking questions (statement e on the next slide), they simply did not know what to ask at the time.

# Orientation Results – NON-Traditional Students Continued

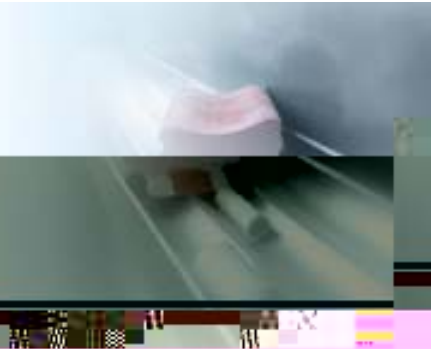
N=16



- Statement **f** (information focused on my needs) received the highest number of disagreement responses with **14**.
- Statement **h** (able to make connections) received **12** responses on the disagree side of the scale.
- NO non-traditional participant responded strongly agree to statements **c** (answered all of my questions), **f** (information focused on my needs) or **g** (felt comfortable starting the semester).



# Bonding Event





# Bonding Event Continued

- Aside from competition themed events, **food** was another suggestion for bonding events.
- **Food festivals** where student groups make and bring food (especially those who can bring dishes native to

# Orientation Comparison – TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

- **Friends University** conducted orientation during move-in and made it fun for everyone
- **KU's** orientation had more of a connection to the town – places to eat, hang out, have fun – life outside of class
- **K-STATE Salina Campus** had a 1 day orientation with a lot of information packed in. There were no games or ice breakers. All presentations were given in one room.
- **Pitt State's** orientation was overnight, but they allowed students to stay in dorms which were described as “terrible.” They took the attendees out to ice cream and everyone sat and talked.
- **K-STATE Manhattan Campus's** orientation was perceived to be about the same as at WSU, however it was conducted in one day.

When asked directly which orientation was better – participants who had attended more than one overwhelmingly felt **WSU's orientation was better.**

# Orientation Comparison – NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

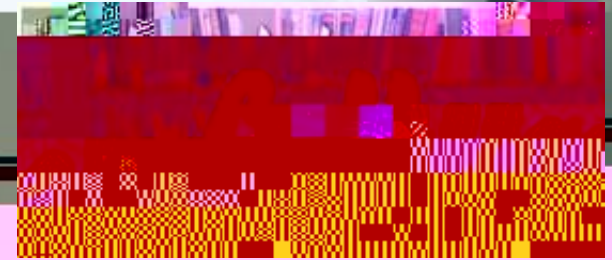
Participants had a variety of experiences with other orientations.

- Some participants reported attending much shorter, more condensed orientations; while others had a semester long orientation class during their first semester.
- One participant commented on the option KU provided to take a **class tour** in which you could bring in your schedule and have someone show you where all of your classes would be for your first semester.
- At Volunteer State in Tennessee, orientations were conducted in groups of 1 to 8 people all from a similar field. The group was led on a 2 hour tour and was given the opportunity to set a time with an advisor.
- Another participant reported being taken to the **cafeteria for lunch** (rather than serving pizza) and having the option to order what you wanted at no cost. Participants would have liked this opportunity at Shocker Hall.

# Welcoming Environment – TRADITIONAL Students

- To many participants, the environment felt bland and generic. The massive amount of material covered gave orientation the feeling of

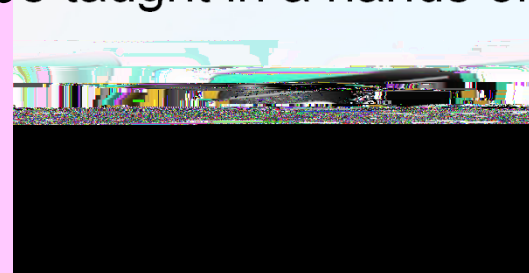
# Welcoming Environment – NON-TRADITIONAL Students



- 8 out of the 16 non-traditional students felt that WSU did create a welcoming environment during orientation.
- The enthusiasm of the first speaker, students and guides all helped create welcome environment.
- More major-specific information would have felt more welcoming. (Help them understand what they need to know and show how the information has been tailored to their specific needs, resources and requirements.)
- While the passion and energy for WSU was apparent, the orientation still felt generic and irrelevant to many participants.
- The lack of directional and welcome signs led some to feel as if WSU did not even know they were on campus – this was also hurt by the inability of participants to get Student IDs and shop at the bookstore because both facilities were closed during their orientation.

# Orientation Presenters

- Students felt the majority of the speakers/presenters were **passionate** about WSU.
- Some presenters gave the impression they were simply going through a checklist of things to say. Students realize the presenters go through this several times, however still feel the **information should be delivered in a fresh and energetic manner every time.**
- **The presentation on Blackboard and MyWSU should be conducted in a computer lab.** Students reported the presenters going through a lot of information very quickly. It was “go here, click this, find this, click this” and it was difficult for students to follow the screen while taking notes. On their own they are unable to find the information they need. The online access to information is extremely important and should be taught in a hands on session.



# Orientation Letter Evaluation – TRADITIONAL Students

- Students loved how the letter was **straightforward** and highlighted the important information in bold for **quick and easy reference**.

# Orientation Letter Evaluation – NON-TRADITIONAL Students

- Participants liked receiving a letter with

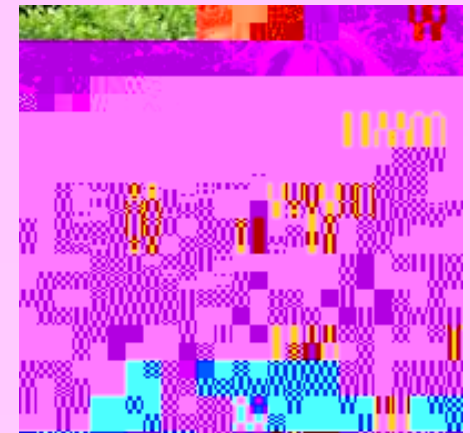


# Orientation Letter INSERT Evaluation – TRADITIONAL Students

- The steps given provided students with **quick, easy to follow instructions**. As one participant put it, “I followed this and now I’m a college student.”
- For students who felt “uneasy”, this was **reassurance** they were doing everything they need to in order to enroll.
- One participant liked the idea of changing the numbers to **check boxes**, so the student could check off what has been completed as they move through the process.
- The boxes made each section easy to find.
- The **contact number for questions** was well liked and some felt at least the phone number and website

# Orientation Letter INSERT Evaluation – NON-TRADITIONAL Students

- The step by step instructions were helpful and well liked by the participants. However, a statement may need to be added that these steps apply to everyone. Several participants suggested taking the housing step off of the transfer/returning adult insert since housing does not apply to them.
- The contact information provided was helpful, but more was desired such as how to contact advising.
- Participants liked the layout of the inset, and the easy to follow information.





# Comparison Marketing Material Evaluation – NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS Continued

The marketing piece from **Arizona** was preferred by **12 out of 16** non-traditional students. **MTU** was chosen by **4** participants.

- Likes of the **Arizona** piece were similar to the traditional students; the calendar can be kept out year round for quick, easy access to a lot of great information.
- The **MTU** material was liked for the following reasons:
  - All of the dates are together
  - Includes easy access to map and key as well as phone numbers
  - Provides a visual of what is coming and makes it appear manageable
  - Includes monthly reminders
  - Has removable information – can take out material as needed

# Best Communication Method PRIOR to Orientation

## Traditional Students:

- On a scale where 1=most desired and 5=least desired, **Email** was given a rating of 1 by **12 out of 19** participants and a 2 by **5 out of 19**. No participant gave email less than a 3-neutral.
- **Phone call** was given a rating of 1 by **10 out of 19** participants and a 2 rating by **6 out of 19** participants.
- **Direct mail** was given a 1 or 2 by **13 out of 19** participants, followed by **text message** with a 1 or 2 by **10 out of 19**.
- The social media options were not well desired with **Facebook** only receiving **4 out of 19** ratings of a 1 or 2 and **Twitter** receiving **6 out of 19** ratings of 1 or 2.



# Best Communication Method

## PRIOR to Orientation Continued

### Non-Traditional Students:

- **Email** was the **most** preferred mode of communication prior to orientation for **10 out of 16** non-traditional students.
- On a scale where 1=most desired and 5=least desired, **Email** was given a rating of 1 by **11 out of 16** non-traditional participants and a 2 by **5 out of 16**.
- A **text message** received a rating of 1 or 2 by **10 out of 16** participants.
- **Direct mail** was given a 1 or 2 by **8 out of 16** non-traditional participants, followed by **phone call** with a 1 or 2 by **6 out of 16**.
- As seen with the traditional students, social media is not a preferred method of contact. Facebook received **2 neutral** ratings and the remaining **14 participants** were on the **least desired** side of the scale.

# Best Communication Method AFTER to Orientation

- Email was the preferred mode of communication from WSU during the student's first semester of college for 16 out of 19 traditional students and 13 out of 16 non-traditional students.
  - Information on dates and deadlines, events, activities, groups and involvement opportunities were all desired.
  - Ticket information on athletic events, theater and music events and student activities were also desired.
  - Also desired were advanced notice of upcoming plays, games, events and when tickets will be available.

# Recommendations





# Recommendations

1. Roll out the red carpet – welcome new students from their first step on campus
  - Place **directional signs** to orientation in parking lots and along walkways. **Many are not sure where they need to go or how to get there.**
  - Have **music playing** upon arrival and where appropriate throughout the day. **This will assist in keeping the energy level up and making the day go faster.**
  - Hang **welcome signs** and have **black, white** and **yellow balloons** at orientation.
  - Provide **nice refreshments** and **meal options.**



# Recommendations Continued

## 3. Record some of the “boiler plate” presentations for a fresh delivery

- The students felt bored during the long day of presentations. Many felt the delivery from some presenters fell flat. *(It was understood the leaders give the same*

# Recommendations Continued

- 5. Give all sessions the opportunity for introductions and interaction – even the returning adults and transfer students desire the social aspect of orientation.**
  - Not all students are naturally outgoing, many students need an excuse or reason to interact with other peers. Even the non-traditional students

# Recommendations Continued

## 6. Provide “field day” activities for a bonding event

- ***Students bond through competition.*** It fosters interaction and the feeling of togetherness as opposed to a party event where everyone talks to the person they came with. Participants feel more connected to a school when they are representing that school. Putting college against college in activities such as volleyball, bowling, softball, etc. will provide interaction and engagement to one’s college, as well as, bragging rights to the winners! ***Free team shirts and Shocker prizes could be given for participation and victories.***
- For students who do not like to (or can’t) participate in athletic/physical activities, ***a discount meal night at campus dining facilities would include everyone.*** These discount evenings should be conducted by each college (*i.e. all business students eat half price next Thursday*). Ice breakers and specific activities tied to the students’ majors could be conducted during the dinner to provide interaction.

# Recommendations Continued

## 7. Communicate through email

- This was the most desired method of communication for both traditional and non-traditional students. Email allows students to open/read and respond to the email on their own time. Additionally, the email could be kept as a reference, if desired.

## 8. Continue activities beyond the first two weeks of school

- Participants reported being swamped with activities and events the first week of school, and then everything “disappears.” (*This gives the feeling of false advertisement to some – WSU appeared to have a lot of activities, events and entertainment, but once classes start there isn’t anything going on.*) Students feel if they do not have peers to interact with by the first week, they are on their own. ***Activities throughout the first semester to encourage interaction and social opportunities would help newcomers transition into college life with a support system of fellow classmates.***

**Thank you for the opportunity to work  
with WSU's Orientation program!**

