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## A Model for Surveying Student Apprehensions Prior to Orientation

### INTRODUCTION

The process of orientating a new student to the campus can involve a variety of approaches. Assessment of the particular institution and the varying population that it serves should guide the planning of a program.

Barry Morstain suggested:

... the attitudes and orientations a student has at entry to college not only mediates how he perceives the college environment, but also the manner in which he interacts with that environment. (Morstain, 1972)

He also stated that large institutions rarely think in terms of the individual in the system and his individual development.

Several options are available to the institution in regard to program type: a summer program, the orientation week—generally the week prior to the beginning of school, a combination of summer programs and the orientation week, and continuing orientation.

This author contends that one primary source that is often overlooked in planning an orientation program is to survey the apprehensions of the prospective students who will be oriented. Research was done at X University in an effort to use the results of what students considered to be their fears as one of several major guidelines in planning a program. The data is provided for use as a model in doing a similar study at your own institution rather than for use of the answers that were given at X University. It is also suggested that items be interchanged with those used in this study which are appropriate for the given institution. The university surveyed is not identified since the apprehensions of students at that university may or may not be the same today as they were the year the study was done.

### Survey of Apprehensions

Authorities in the field of orientation repeatedly express the need for minimizing the anxieties of incoming students. Aside from mailings, recruitment at the high school level, counselor assurances, and the media, orientation and pre-registration offers the institution an opportunity to relieve some of the anxieties felt by prospective students.

Identification of the anxieties and apprehensions felt by new students is the phase of the program planning that cannot be overlooked. The orientation director should not assume what students fear, but should work from a base of student input and survey the feelings of prospective students. Also, the client population at each institution is representative of a unique combination of factors and should be treated as unique in program planning.

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In determining what should be included in the program for each clinic at X University, a random sample survey was sent to 100 students who had made application to X University for the fall term. In February the Computer Center provided a list of 574 students who fit into this category. Every fifth student was used as a subject until the 100-subject population was selected. No consideration was given to race, sex, or ethnic background.

A survey was developed by the researcher which attempted to define areas of apprehension possibly felt by prospective students. The results of this survey would later serve the researcher as a guide in developing sessions for the students that would best serve their adjustment needs.

The Survey of Apprehensions was comprised of twenty items and could be answered either yes or no. The items are listed below and will be referred to at various times by the numbers appearing to the left of the items.

1. I am concerned about being able to pass college work
2. I am concerned about how I will be accepted socially
3. Registration procedures concern me
4. Money for college and/or personal expense will be a problem
5. Finding my way around the campus concerns me
6. Making religious affiliations are of concern to me
7. I am concerned about knowing how to get involved in extra-curricular activities
8. Terms such as "cuts," quality points, graduate assistant, semester hours, grade point average, etc. are confusing
9. I am concerned about having a stranger for a roommate
10. I would like to meet counselors and advisors before Fall Quarter
11. I would be interested in having an additional individual appointment to discuss career development prior to Fall Quarter, since I am undecided on a major
12. Vocational-Interests tests during the summer would assist me in deciding on a major, or make me feel more confident about the major I have stated
13. I am interested in taking a placement test in at least one of the following areas: mathematics, chemistry, a foreign language
14. I am concerned about being able to talk to deans and professors as an adult
15. Race relations in a college "live-in" community are hard to visualize
16. I am concerned about the cost and quality of food service at the University
17. I am concerned about making friends and dating when I get to college
18. It would be helpful to locate the dry cleaners, branch banks, barber and beauty shops, and "personal needs" businesses prior to Fall Quarter
19. I would like to discuss campus dress, customs, and student life with an upperclassman in a small group during summer orientation
20. I am concerned that I will not know the University rules and regulations.

Of the 100 persons in the sample, 75 returned completed survey instruments. However, it should be recognized that various members of the sample omitted certain survey items, thus causing the number of responses for the individual items to vary.

### The Chi-Square Design

75 of the 100-subject sample responded.

3 of the surveys were returned undelivered

3 of the surveys were returned after Mini Quarter had begun.

**Hypothesis:**  $H_0 =$  The responses of prospective students will not be significantly different between the frequency of students that are apprehensive and those that are not apprehensive in regard to the twenty statements.

**Formula:**  $X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$

E

The Yates correction for continuity is applied in cases where there is one degree of freedom.

N = 75

P = 6.64 at the .01 level

**Degrees of Freedom:** Number of cells - 1 = 1  
df = 1

### Discussion of Table 3

Prospective freshmen expressed a significant concern in regard to academic ability, registration procedures, involvement in extra-curricular activities, academic terminology, meeting advisors and counselors, and career guidance.

TABLE 1

### RESULTS OF A SURVEY OF APPREHENSIONS FOR PROSPECTIVE FRESHMEN

Item Number	Yes		No		N	.01 Level P	X <sup>2</sup>	
	Observed	Expected	Observed	Expected				
1	49	37.5	26	37.5	75	6.64	7.07	reject
2	37	37.5	38	37.5	75	6.64	.03	accept
3	65	37.5	10	37.5	75	6.64	40.34	reject
4	44	37.0	30	37.0	74	6.64	2.66	accept
5	37	37.5	38	37.5	75	6.64	.026	accept
6	31	36.5	42	36.5	73	6.64	1.67	accept
7	50	37.0	24	37.0	74	6.64	9.15	reject
8	55	37.5	20	37.5	75	6.64	16.35	reject
9	30	37.0	44	37.0	74	6.64	2.66	accept
10	65	37.0	08	37.0	74	6.64	45.47	reject
11	25	37.5	50	37.5	75	6.64	8.35	reject
12	24	37.0	50	37.0	74	6.64	9.15	reject
13	26	37.0	48	37.0	74	6.64	6.55	accept
14	39	37.5	36	37.5	75	6.64	.14	accept
15	7	36.0	65	36.0	72	6.64	46.73	reject
16	40	36.5	33	36.5	73	6.64	.69	accept
17	35	37.0	38	37.0	74	6.64	.23	accept
18	47	37.5	28	37.5	75	6.64	4.83	accept
19	42	37.0	32	37.0	74	6.64	1.37	accept
20	44	37.5	31	37.5	75	6.64	2.27	accept

Special sessions should be planned to deal with these specific apprehensions. Some apprehensions were felt by at least one-half of the sample. Although this percentage is not statistically significant, an optional session should be available for interested students. The apprehensions in the "optional" category are: social acceptance, financial problems, campus tours, religious affiliations, making friends for purposes of roommate selection and social acceptance, "rap" sessions with deans and professors, the cost and quality of University food services, locating "personal needs" businesses, rap sessions with deans and professors, the cost and quality of University food services, locating "personal needs" businesses, rap session with facilitators on campus social customs, and University rules and regulations. Little or no interest was evidenced in a seminar on race relations, vocational-interest testing, and placement testing.

An activity is needed that will provide academic information and provide guidelines in regard to course requirements and grading practices.

Social acceptance is an apprehension that is felt by about 50 percent of the population. Social acceptance is an apprehension that is not thought to be a significant problem to the freshmen. Facilitators must constantly be cognizant of reticence in some new freshmen during the sessions. Facilitators should be constantly conscious of the fact that new students should not be left to sit alone at social sessions or "left-out" of activities. Facilitators with different personalities and from different walks of life should be selected to facilitate identification with the campus environment.

Registration procedures concern a significant number of freshmen. A small group session for the discussion of registration and question-and-answer period should be provided. Facilitators should be available in registration to assist group members.

A special effort to discuss budgeting and financial aid is not necessary; free time should be provided for those students needing to secure financial information while on the campus.

Campus tours should be provided as an optional activity or on a "space available" basis on the agenda.

Opportunities for making religious affiliations should be combined with a multi-purpose session.

A resilient session should be provided during orientation to enable freshmen to become members of campus organizations with open membership prior to the opening of school. Information should be readily available in regard to organizations with selective membership, such as honoraries, social sororities and fraternities.

A session on academic terminology and jargon should be structured. The session should include an explanation of university policies in regard to cuts, grade point averages, etc.

Making friends at orientation for the purpose of roommate selection will not be a priority for attendance. It may prove to be beneficial to some freshmen.

Counselors and advisors should be available to make appointments with students on an individual basis during orientation.

Although the difference is not significant in terms of the number of students that would be interested in a Career Development appointment, the actual percentage of the total responses (33.3%) is significant in view of the fact that the total percentage of students that enroll at X University as undecided majors in the freshman year is approximately 18.66 percent. An introduction to the Career Development Center should be scheduled for students that are apprehensive in regard to the choice of a major.

The difference is significant in regard to the number of students that would not be interested in vocational-interest tests. The effort would be worthwhile for the percentage that would feel relieved; however, tests such as the Strong require machine-scoring in any volume of testing, and the results would not be readily available for use until the fall term. An option should be available for students that would like to remain on campus for several extra hours for such testing in order to facilitate career counseling upon their return in the fall.

The placement tests should be offered optionally at a time when a choice of sessions is provided.

The statement in regard to "talking to deans and professors as an adult" was not a significant apprehension, although students indicated a high degree of interest in talking to faculty members. Perhaps "as an adult" caused the responses to be biased.

Absolutely no need or justification exists for seminars or group discussions

on race relations.

A significant number of freshmen are not concerned with making friends and dating at college. Meeting people in various sessions should help those that are apprehensive in this regard.

Time to locate "personal needs" businesses should be provided in conjunction with a choice of activities.

A small group session on campus life is not a major concern. It should be provided on a "time available" basis.

Rules and regulations should be discussed if time is available or presented to students in the form of a handbook.

#### **Development of the Program**

The variables of orientation programs determined from trends at other institutions presented cogent arguments for a variety of structures for the program. These variables, combined with the needs of the students drawn from the Survey of Apprehensions, provide a basis for including orientation and pre-registration in the program. The sessions to be included within the clinic were designed to fit the adjustment needs of prospective X University students and to fulfill the purposes established by the institution for such a clinic. A program was adopted for the experimental pre-college orientation and registration.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The researcher is currently completing a joint research project which will identify anxieties pre and post the summer orientation program. This will provide more concrete data in regard to the value of attendance at the summer program as opposed to other forms of orientation.

It is, however, the view of the author at this writing that in addition to a Survey of Apprehensions, other guidelines that should be used in program planning should include: (1) Evaluations from former student participants of the program, (2) Input from faculty, staff, and facilitators, (3) Needs of the institution, (4) Research from sources such as the Data Bank to give an idea of what is being done at other regional institutions.

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