

Welcome Day LEAP Team



Spring 2019

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Mission Statement	
Introduction	
Event Objectives	
Foundation for Planning.....	5
Guided Pathways Framework	
Student Support (Re)defined Success Factor Framework Six Factors of Success	
Background.....	6
Challenge/Need.....	7
Outside Research to Support Welcome Day Initiative: Impact of Orientation Programming on Student Success Outcomes.....	8
Event Planning.....	10
Step-by-Step Planning	
Proposed Costs	
Completed Tasks	
Remaining Tasks	
Next Steps - Improvements for the Future.....	13
Vision of the Onboarding Experience for Students	
Acknowledgements.....	15
References.....	16

Executive Summary

Mission Statement

Create an inclusive and engaging campus-wide event for incoming students with opportunities to transition into college life, develop social and academic integration, foster relationships and build a sense of community, create realistic college expectations, and gain the skills and knowledge they will need in order to be successful at College of the Canyons.

Introduction

The Welcome Day event evolved as collaborative effort to remedy the gaps that were identified by various work groups including the Institutional Effectiveness and Inclusive Excellence (IE)² work groups, the First Year Promise initiative, and student focus groups. These groups specifically identified the need for students to have an on-boarding orientation experience with various campus departments, faculty and staff available to them.

The event would be different from the online student orientation that currently exists, yet cohesive and complimentary to what is already established as College of the Canyons (COC) culture. Welcome Day will be an in-person, on-campus orientation to prepare students for the college transition by introducing and integrating them with the many resources and opportunities that COC provides. The timing of the event was thoughtfully scheduled for the week prior to the start of Fall semester so as to foster faculty participation and so that information disseminated to students could be retained and more readily utilized.

The planning for Welcome Day was strongly aligned to Guided Pathways and the Student Success (Re)Defined Six Factors of Success as a foundation for the event,

where students can learn about their educational pathway options while also building meaningful connections and fostering valuable relationships.

With a date of August 9th, 2019 currently selected, the LEAP team has worked to create a guiding plan for the campus to implement a successful event, focused around the student and with the collegiate campus environment welcoming them to their educational journey at College of the Canyons.

Event Objectives

- Plan a meaningful, conference-style, campus-wide event for all new students
- Integrate Student Services with Instruction in a collaborative effort
- Recruit campus departments, staff and faculty to participate in the event
- Provide an informational track for parents in English and Spanish
- Market Welcome Day across campus and local community
- Identify funding sources for event staffing, food, supplies, advertising, marketing, etc.
- Develop unique branding to create Welcome Day presence throughout the academic year
- Organize workshops, presentations, informational booths, campus tours and faculty meet-and-greets
- Create a printed program highlighting activities of the day
- Implement Welcome Day

Foundation for Planning

Guided Pathways Framework as a guide for Welcome Day:

Clarify the Path -

- Provide informational sessions about degree and certificate programs, student services resources, academic expectations, and student engagement
- Offer opportunities to establish connections and build rapport with faculty and staff to learn about academic departments and support services

Enter the Path -

- Map and define student Pathways
- Explore academic and career opportunities within their Pathway

Stay on the Path -

- Career exploration and practical applications through Community Based Learning, internships and student employment
- Student engagement, clubs, ASG and volunteering
- Identify support services such as Academic and Mental Health counseling
- Resources such as financial aid and scholarships opportunities

Ensure Learning -

- Introduce academic and instructional support services critical to student success
- Connect students to The Learning Center (TLC) for tutoring, workshops and GLAs
- Reinforce student-faculty relationships to further support engagement in their program

Student Support (Re)defined: Six Success Factors Framework as a guide for Welcome Day:

The RP Group's research indicates that students are more likely to succeed when these six factors of success are integrated into their academic experience. This framework has been adopted by College of the Canyons and the Welcome Day LEAP Team in the planning of Welcome Day:

Directed - students have a goal and know how to achieve it

Focused - students stay on the path — keeping their eyes on the prize

Nurtured - students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed

Engaged - students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities

Connected - students feel like they are part of the college community

Valued - students' skills, talents, abilities and experiences are recognized; they have opportunities to contribute on campus and feel their contributions are appreciated

Background

College of the Canyons is an innovative and creative institution, committed to helping students achieve their academic goals. COC serves approximately 32,000 students, offers 89 degree programs, 80 certificate programs with 2,124 degrees and 2,152 certificates awarded in 2016-2017. The College welcomed 4,068 first time students in the Fall of 2018. All new applicants for Fall 2019 will be invited to Welcome Day with an expected attendance of 650+ students and their families from First-Year Promise (FYP) program alone.

Previously, the FYP program hosted mandatory boot camps for their cohort of new students that spanned 16 hours over 4 days. In an effort to expand an orientation

experience to *all* new students, Welcome Day was created. It will complement the FYP boot camp experience as well as benefit all new applicants to the College.

In an effort to align with the Pathways framework, Welcome Day 2019 will offer a conference style orientation event for students to feel nurtured, valued, connected, engaged, focused, directed.

Challenge/Need

The LEAP Welcome Day team was charged with creating a resource day where students can prepare for the transition to college by becoming integrated with the campus, learning about the resources available to them, meet campus staff and faculty, develop a more comprehensive understanding of the collegiate environment and establish a meaningful connection with COC. While new student orientations and convocations are recognized as a best practice for student on-boarding, the need for an in-person student orientation at COC was identified by various campus groups including the Institutional Effectiveness and Inclusive Excellence (IE)² work groups, the First Year Promise initiative, and student focus groups. These groups specifically identified that meaningful connections, continued support and early exposure to valuable resources enable students to enter and stay on the path to success.

Driven by Guided Pathways and the Student Success (Re)Defined Six Factors of Success as a foundation, the goal of the Welcome Day LEAP Team is to create an informative event where students and their families can start their Fall 2019 semester feeling connected and prepared. Various campus departments will participate in this day, providing informational sessions and booths where students can be introduced to the many programs, resources and opportunities available to help them accomplish their educational goals.

Outside Research to Support Welcome Day Initiative: Impact of Orientation Programming on Student Success Outcomes

Research was conducted to further understand the value of orientation programming. California State University Northridge (CSUN) and Santa Ana College were contacted to learn more about their orientation programs including what information is presented to students, how students are informed about the event, what department manages/oversees the event, and the colleges' perceived value of the program.

CSUN shared that campus tours are an essential component of their orientation and are led by current CSUN students. They found that incoming/prospective students are far more receptive of the tour and retained more information because they're being guided by their peers. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to attend tours with their student, which parents report appreciating.

Santa Ana College shared that their program is managed by the Assessment Center and functions as a registration orientation with the primary goal of registering students in classes for the upcoming semester. Their orientation is offered multiple days and times per week to small groups of students in order to accommodate student availability. After completing their placement testing, students are notified of their placement recommendations via mail and encouraged to register for orientation. The College has developed an online orientation to accommodate online students that can be accessed after the student has completed their placement exam(s).

The information gathered from two local colleges proved valuable in helping the LEAP team identify the focus for COC's Welcome Day.

The team also consulted current COC students to gather qualitative data concerning their experiences and learn what campus resources they found most valuable. Students continually expressed the value of The Learning Center (TLC), the Counseling department and club involvement. They expressed the value of feeling supported by staff who exude positivity and happiness. The focus group also revealed the challenge students face in making connections and friends and the importance for future students to learn about the COC community and be provided opportunities to meet people (including peers, support staff and faculty) prior to the start of the semester.

Published research also affirms the value of orientation programming as an article published in *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition* found that “it is critical that students and their families experience programs and services that educate students about the transition to college, increase students’ commitment to the institution, and help students develop realistic expectations for college” (Wolcott). Student and family preparation are critical for student success and retention, which is why the informational sessions for parents is an essential component of COC’s Welcome Day event.

Connectedness is another widely accepted factor that contributes to student success and retention as a study of “incoming first-year students at Michigan State University who felt a connection with the university during orientation were more likely to [report feeling they] fit in and want to stay enrolled at the university, particularly students from ethnic minority groups” (Fain). These findings help to frame Welcome Day as essential component to the student onboarding experience and aligns closely with the efforts of (IE)² workgroups to eliminate disproportionate impact at the College.

Event Planning

Step-by-Step Planning



Phase 1 - Research

- Contact other campuses to learn more about their convocations and orientation days
- Research effective practices for onboarding incoming students
- Connect with campus departments that host outreach and student engagement events for feedback and best practices

Phase 2 - Brainstorming and Planning

- Identify audience
- Budget planning
- Discuss possible event types and topics
- Develop layout and format of event day
- Provide an informational track for parents
- Plan to host multi-lingual sessions
- Identify food options
- Develop unique branding to create Welcome Day presence throughout academic year

Phase 3 - Logistics

- Secure funding - approach various groups on and off campus
- Submit agenda item to Professional Development committee for approval
- Propose FLEX credit for faculty participation
- Gain support from ASG, Student Development and Academic Senate to advocate for participation for event's success
- Establish specific email for questions and support: outreach@canyons.edu

- Create a program for the day's event
- Reserve facilities
- Partner with campus bookstore for student textbook purchases day of
- Design T-shirts for branding and secure production source

Phase 4 - Marketing/Outreach

- Inform campus departments and managers for planning staffing needs
- Outreach to campus for staffing of workshops, informational sessions and tables
- Secure participation
- Develop marketing plan with PIO to market event to students and community

Phase 5 - Implementation

- Host Welcome Day Q&A session for participants questions about event and set-up
- Welcome Day on August 9th, 2019

Proposed Costs

Purpose	Amount	Funding Source
Personnel/Staffing	TBD	FLEX
Marketing	\$10,000	3SP/FYP
Branding - T-Shirts	\$1,000	Innovation Fund
Food/Beverages	\$3,000	ASG/Community

Completed Tasks

	Phase	What's Been Completed
✓	Phase 1 - Research	Contact other campuses to learn more about their convocations and orientation days
✓	Phase 1 - Research	Research effective practices for onboarding incoming students
✓	Phase 1 - Research	Connect with campus departments that host outreach and student engagement events for feedback and best practices
✓	Phase 2 – Brainstorming & Planning	Identify audience
✓	Phase 2 – Brainstorming & Planning	Discuss possible event types and topics
✓	Phase 2 – Brainstorming & Planning	Develop layout and format of event day
✓	Phase 2 – Brainstorming & Planning	Provide an informational track for parents
✓	Phase 2 – Brainstorming & Planning	Plan to host multi-lingual sessions
✓	Phase 2 – Brainstorming & Planning	Identify food options
✓	Phase 3 - Logistics	Submit agenda item to Professional Development committee for approval
✓	Phase 3 - Logistics	Propose FLEX credit for faculty participation
✓	Phase 3 - Logistics	Gain support from ASG, Student Development and Academic Senate to advocate for participation for event's success
✓	Phase 3 - Logistics	Establish specific email for questions and support: outreach@canyons.edu
✓	Phase 3 - Logistics	Reserve facilities
✓	Phase 3 - Logistics	Design T-shirts for branding and secure production source
✓	Phase 4 – Marketing / Outreach	Inform campus departments and managers for planning staffing needs
✓	Phase 4 – Marketing / Outreach	Outreach to campus for staffing of workshops, informational sessions and tables

Remaining Tasks

Complete by		Items Remaining
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 2019	Secure funding - Contact local agencies and organizations for donations and participation
<input type="checkbox"/>	May 2019	Secure COC faculty/staff/departmental participation
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2019	Reserve additional campus facilities (as needed)
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2019	Partner with campus bookstore for student textbook purchases on Welcome Day
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2019	Finalize workshops/sessions
<input type="checkbox"/>	June 2019	Develop marketing plan with PIO to market event to students and community
<input type="checkbox"/>	July 2019	Build program for the day's event
<input type="checkbox"/>	August 2019	Identify strategic dates to continue Welcome Day presence throughout academic year
<input type="checkbox"/>	August 2019	Host Welcome Day Q&A session for participant questions about event and set-up
<input type="checkbox"/>	August 2019	Implement Welcome Day on August 9th, 2019

Next Steps - Improvements for the Future

The LEAP team's vision is for Welcome Day to expand its reach to non-traditional, working, part-time and re-entry students in hosting a weekend or evening event. This will not only bolster community and family participation, but provide non-traditional students an opportunity to attend. The information provided to students at Welcome Day will be valuable in helping students navigate their paths through COC which is why it is essential that barriers of access are reduced.

The addition of an online component, including live streaming and recording breakout sessions, will also remove barriers of access and provide students additional opportunities to access information and connect with COC faculty and staff.

Finally, the Welcome Day event should grow to survey participants' experiences so that they event may continue to be improved. Feedback from students and their families will reveal areas for improvement and help identify interests.

Vision of the Onboarding Experience for Students

Timeframe	Event	Purpose
1 Week Before Semester Begins	Welcome Day	Orientation
First Day of Classes	Navigating COC - Boots on the Ground	Orientation, Student Support
Week 2	Welcome Week	Student Engagement
Week 2	Club Rush	Student Engagement
Ongoing/Throughout the Academic Year	Faculty/Staff wear Welcome Day shirts	Student Support

Acknowledgements

The LEAP team would like to thank Michael Joslin for his guidance and encouragement.

Special thanks and gratitude must be extended to Dr. Jasmine Ruys for her support and in providing the platform to make this event a reality.

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