

# Executive Summary-Passages Orientation Program

## **Strengths:**

When looking at the overall assessment results, a few of the areas that showed the greatest strengths were in the areas of Mission (82%), Leadership (84%), and Campus and Community Relations (85%). The program has a well-defined mission in place and it is reviewed consistently based on the changing needs of the students and the institution. These changes have had a domino effect on the leadership of those involved in the program from top administrators to faculty/staff. The growth of the program has also had an impact on campus communication. It is critical that the entire campus is aware and involved in this university event because everyone participates on all different levels.

## **Areas needing improvement/change:**

The assessment results suggest that a couple of key components needing improvement are Assessment and Evaluation (57%), and Organization Management (51.2%). CAS has proven to be the first step in assessing the Passages Program. However, further evaluation and assessment are still needed on a consistent basis. There is also a need to expand the evaluation process for new students participating and returning students participating as orientation leaders. As for organization and management, the program is not structured purposefully within the University structure, which can have an impact on the overall program such as reporting relationships and functional work responsibilities.

## **Inhibiting factors:**

One inhibiting factor for the committee was assessing orientation only on the basis of Passages alone versus orientation programs as a whole across campus. The instrument is built for a comprehensive orientation program that encompasses many facets beyond fall orientation. Another factor is that the assessment was primarily based on the freshmen program, rather than all three programs as a whole.

## **Recommendations**

### **How to bring the program into compliance:**

The results of the assessment point to obvious themes to bring the program into compliance. These themes would include a need for putting information into writing including but not limited to: expectations and responsibilities, educational objectives, and goals and objectives of the program by the advisory board. Another theme was community involvement on two different levels- campus and Bloomington-Normal. The welcoming of more than 5000 students should be apparent not only on campus but should also extend past University property. If students are to make this place their home, they need to be introduced to all that the larger community has to offer at the onset of their collegiate experience. A third theme that became apparent is the notion of leadership roles within the program and its need for academic support. The last theme is to make sure that policies, procedures, and changes in law are made known to the people involved in the planning process so that they make educated decisions.

- 1) Clearly define the academic goals of the freshmen program.
- 2) Clearly establish the goals for the transfer and graduate program.
- 3) Expand collaboration efforts with the Bloomington-Normal area to include a more welcoming environment for new and returning students.
- 4) Develop a new planning structure and develop new accountability standards.
- 5) Explore opportunities for recognition and rewards for faculty, staff, and students involved in all steps of planning and execution of the program.
- 6) Develop clear channels of authority for planning committee members.
- 7) Develop and write a systematic decision making procedure and share it with committee members, especially chairs of sub-committees.
- 8) Develop an appraisal for committee evaluation of the planning process.
- 9) Develop an instrument to be used to evaluate orientation leaders.
- 10) Improve efforts and collaboration with key offices and student organizations to recruit a diverse pool of orientation leaders and volunteers.
- 11) Brainstorm creative solutions for the use of rooms and buildings throughout the campus for events and activities.

- 12) Disseminate information on policies, procedures, laws, and regulations pertinent to the planning of the program (may be as simple as handing out a web address with this information).
- 13) Increase the collaboration efforts with other academic and student affairs departments well in advance to recruit more quality orientation leaders.
- 14) Review concurrent training sessions of student leaders and collaborate among trainings so not to compete for leaders based on training schedules.
- 15) Review the NODA ethical standards with committee members when planning for the Passages Program.
- 16) Add one or more questions to the student evaluation targeting the goals of the program (Did we meet our goals?).
- 17) Explore other alternatives to paper evaluations, perhaps exploring one-on-one, web based, or e-mail sent evaluations.

**How to enhance the program beyond compliance:**

The growth of the program has allowed for more participation by many departments and offices across campus. However, the program needs to be viewed by all campus units as a University-wide program and not a Student Life program. Thus communication of the program's goals to the entire campus community is imperative so that faculty and staff are aware of what is offered so that the freshman, transfer, and graduate experience can become more seamless post Passages. Also, the budget has small increases each year but not enough to provide three top-notch, high caliber programs including all elements needed to truly introduce and acclimate all new students to Illinois State University and its surrounding community. Programs of this magnitude need proper funding. It is not in the best interest to raise the student fee money allocated to the program but rather to find monetary investment from other departments.

- 1) Create a campus newsletter about the Passages program to be disseminated in the fall, spring, and summer. It can also be used to hand out to community area businesses involved with the Passages program.
- 2) Clearly articulate to students in writing the mission of the program and its value to their freshmen year experience.

- 3) Make sure committee members are aware of the written expectation to use the results of the freshmen evaluation when planning events and activities.
- 4) Include an ethics discussion with orientation leaders in their training.
- 5) Collaborate with other offices and student organizations to recruit orientation leaders representative of the student population.
- 6) Create a campus kick-off before Passages for faculty, staff, and students.
- 7) Create an excitement across campus for welcome week through verbal and written communication.
- 8) Create a better understanding among new students that not all program activities are required (could be done through a different format for publications).
- 9) Develop a professional training manual for volunteers in conjunction with the Human Resources Office.
- 10) Review the current leadership structure within the overall University structure.
- 11) Explore the possibility of an orientation office housing Preview, Passages, Parent Services, Transfer Services, and Connections.