

Annual Report to Senate on Orientation 2009
Senate Orientation Activities Review Board (SOARB)
November 2009

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SOARB recognizes that the success of Orientation depends on communication between all Faculties, Faculty Societies, city and campus stakeholders and SOARB, as facilitated by Orientation Roundtable. The role of ORT Coordinator 2009 was performed exceptionally by David Chou. David's success at improving communication among all constituents has set the standard for future years.

Update from 2008 Recommendations.

- **That Residence Life, Residence Councils, First Years Not In Residence (FYNIRS) and Faculty societies make an effort to improve their collaboration, especially with respect to communication, with the ORT.**

ORT reports strengthened faculty and group relationships during the planning of Orientation Week 2009. There remains, however, a need for clearer direction from the AMS concerning ORT's job description to reduce future possible challenges to authority.

- **That all campus stakeholders and constituents involved with Orientation Week make an effort to improve their own communication with other stakeholders and constituencies.**

Generally speaking, better training collaboration benefited all Faculties. Fall training represented a dynamic and productive relationship between ORT and Residence Life.

The Office of Student Affairs and SOARB collaborated on an orientation event for all incoming student orientation leaders as well as faculty/staff associated with Orientation Week. The event, held in January 2009, provided an opportunity for networking between stakeholder groups while generally reviewing the goals and history of Orientation Week

Improved Communication was especially evident in, and highlighted by, the increased numbers of students participating in NEWTS Orientation Week. Through increased collaboration with Queen's University International Centre (QUIC) and the Registrar's office NEWTS overcame what has historically been a great weakness with record participation and a budget surplus.

Feedback from Campus partners reported a very positive relationship with ORT. The August, Master Logistics Meeting was well organized and productive for staff and students.

- **That all faculties engage in a meaningful charitable community outreach activity with preference to participatory events that engage students and the greater Queen's and Kingston community, rather than solely focusing on fundraising initiatives that rely on student donations.**

SOARB applauds the Faculties for hosting meaningful charitable events that engaged the broader community. Shine Day for Arts and Science students again engaged the downtown community at Confederation Basin. Nursing students were introduced to what is traditionally their first placement, Saint Mary's of The Lake hospital, through the production of greeting cards for patients. PheKin's new event at the Boys and Girls Club had little community turnout, which was disappointing for the students who had spent a lot of time reimagining a charity event, but certainly connected students with a community resource that needs active, interested volunteers. The most significant changed was made by Commerce Executive on Orientation with their Commerce Cares random acts of kindness marathon. Alongside tried and true events like Applied Science's "Go Nuts" partnership with the Rotary Club, these Charity Events were engaging and meaningful for the incoming class.

- **That the Faculty Societies, Orientation Committees, and Faculty Deans/Dean Designates work with the AMS to improve their leader hiring and training process to ensure that all leaders are aware of their responsibilities as representatives of Queen's University and the stated goals of Orientation.**

SOARB reached out to all Deans and Designates to ensure they understood their responsibilities concerning hiring and training. It is encouraging to note that most Faculties require their leaders to attend faculty-specific training in addition to ORT training.

Hiring and training continues to be an area where SOARB sees the greatest opportunity for improvement; the foundation of a good Orientation is the hiring and training of exceptional students.

- **That all Faculties engage in planning activities with intentions to mitigate negative and unsanctioned upper-year involvement.**

One of the best examples of positive upper-year involvement is CompSci's faculty/student High Table dinner. This event provides an opportunity for the entire School, incoming students, continuing students and faculty to meet in a positive setting. PheKin continues their tradition of positive upper-year involvement during their camp days at Camp Oconto. Over the past two years, the Commerce Orientation programme has demonstrated the ability to reduce negative interactions and successfully integrate upper years into several events such as Comm Down and Buddy Brunch. All these events are executed in a manner that promotes a strong and inclusive community of students and makes students feel comfortable in what will be their academic social and environmental contexts.

The common factor of these events is that the upper year involvement is coordinated within the context of Orientation and promotes the values and goals of Orientation Week at Queen's. This is in contrast to Applied Science and the unsanctioned and uncoordinated involvement of a faction of their upper year students. Feedback from SOARB observers, campus partners, parents of incoming students, faculty members and City staff cite intimidating, disrespectful, vulgar, and loud behaviour directed toward Applied Science's own incoming students specifically, and the campus and City of Kingston generally. SOARB recognizes that this involvement is not sanctioned by the Applied Science Orientation Committee but notes that the FREC committee did not

effectively discourage upper years from disrupting events and causing harm to students. It is also thought that the Engineering Society could have played a more prominent role in dissuading negative behaviours from those not directly involved in Orientation. Those responsible for the planning and execution of Applied Science Orientation: student organizers, the Faculty Society and the Faculty office, are strongly encouraged to create suitable outlets for upper years to participate in a positive manner. Further, actions taken to mitigate unsanctioned upper year involvement cannot be limited to Orientation week alone. SOARB recognizes the systemic nature of the issue and encourages student organizers, the Faculty Society and the Faculty office to develop a comprehensive strategy to lessen disrespectful and abusive behavior among its upper year students.

Comments on Orientation 2009

This year's Orientation should be viewed as a success when measured against the goals of orientation and the Faculties overall compliance with the recommendations outlined in the 2008 SOARB report. Clearly, countless hours went into planning and organizing the various activities. SOARB would like to commend those individuals who volunteered their time and energy to Orientation Week 2009. While there are still areas where progress needs to be made there is confidence that all parties will continue to work at, and address, any identified concerns.

That being said, a significant issue facing Queen's Orientation is the growth in the number of first-year students and the strain that growth places on Faculties and groups, ORT, Residence Life and related support services such as student constables and Queen's first aid. This year approximately 3900 student were encouraged to participate in Orientation. In addition to finding venues that can accommodate the current number of students, even when broken down into sub-groups and rotated through, the question remains, do Orientation planners need to reconsider the type of events that are planned? The Arts and Science Welcome Forum was divided into two groups of roughly 1,000 students each. The time spent funneling students in and out of the venues was almost longer than the ceremonies themselves. Residence Life faces the greatest challenge as their events must accommodate all on-campus students. Currently they need to run three or more distinct social activities, during Residence Days, to accommodate the number of students in the available venues. Residence Life and other groups are often faced with a shortage of student constables; constables are

assigned relative to the number of attendees and the type of event. SOARB does not have an answer to the problem of logistics but is committed to working with ORT, the Faculties, and Residence Life to look at ways to address this concern.

SOARB speculates that a challenge faced by organizers is the current model of event submission. Current deadlines seem to impede groups from re-imagining events out of concern that all details must be complete in order to secure traditional venues early in the planning cycle. Again SOARB will continue to work with all parties to discuss what changes could be made to the planning process.

At the request of Principal Emeritus Williams, SOARB is continuing to investigate pre and post Orientation parties and will report to Senate in the Winter Term with its findings and recommendations

Recommendations from Orientation Week 2009:

SOARB has a number of recommendations that are individual to Faculties and Schools that will be conveyed to them in writing. Across all Faculties and groups SOARB makes the following general recommendations:

- **Due to the changing landscape of campus facilities, coupled with the increases to student enrolment, SOARB encourages all orientation leaders/planners to review the coordination of their events; the number of participants, space requirements, and the resources required to execute the event.**
- The Jackson Reports of 1990 and 1991 mandated the separation of Orientation Week into two components, University Days and Faculty/School Days. University Days are currently managed by Residence Life. **SOARB, in consultation with University partners, will provide Residence Life with clarification on what elements of orienting students to Queen's University falls under their purview.**
- Over the past few years the Faculty of Arts and Science, has done the most to integrate high quality academic content in to Orientation Week. The Faculty Office has set expectations and requirements for each of the committees under their jurisdiction, including ConEd, PheKin and CompSci, to execute this aspect of Orientation Week. Each planning committee must meet the goals of the Faculty throughout the planning stages. The Arts and Science Faculty office has

shown a great willingness to make clear their expectation and set boundaries for successful Academic orientation.

SOARB encourages all Faculty Orientation Committees to develop more structured relationships with their respective Faculty Offices to better serve the academic requirements of the first year students as they transition to a new academic environment.