

FRESHMAN ORIENTATION EXPERIENCE (FOX)

Executive Summary

This highly structured, focused orientation for new students was highly successful in its first year of implementation. A far greater number of students were advised and enrolled early for the fall term, a very high percentage ‘showed up’ and attended in the fall term, and enrolled for the SDV 100, one-credit student success course. Their fall to spring retention rate was also higher than a comparable group.

Development and Implementation

Several years ago, MECC determined that a “drop-in” individual enrollment-advising approach would better serve its population so the college stopped offering a formal pre-enrollment orientation program for new students. After literature review and months of discussion of current successful retention strategies, it was decided in a meeting with the AtD facilitators in March 2007 that MECC would pilot a new student orientation program for Summer/Fall 2008 enrollment.

The Development and Implementation Timeline is below:

March 2007

- Identify FOX Advisory Committee members—Lisa Butcher, Chair; Carolyn Reynolds, Ross Santell, Roger Bullock, Sharon Fisher, Pat Brown, Gary Bumgarner, Norma Calhoun, Stephanie Dean, Robert England, Jacquie Hill, and Vickie Ratliff

April 2007

- Hold first FOX Advisory Committee meeting
- Begin to identify subgroups (and tasks) needed for FOX
- Begin to list issues
- Brainstorm process for gathering data and measuring pilot programs
- Review CARDS materials & other summer orientation programs
- Begin to project budget needs

April-August 2007

- Collect data on current process
- Collect data on pilot sessions
- Continue to identify tasks and issues (by email and informal discussion)
- Contact colleges about attending their summer orientation program

September 2007

- Schedule second advisory committee meeting
- Analyze collected data
- Review operational details/tasks and identified issues
- Select personnel for subgroups (often determined by job duties)

October-December 2007

- Schedule monthly (or as needed) advisory committee meetings.
- Identify Best Practices related to formal advising/registration programs
- Determine desired student outcomes of program
- Establish a schedule for the day
- Outline an overview of each sub-session of the program (time, major topics, materials)
- Determine number of sessions and tentative dates
- Prepare materials needed for sessions

January-March 2008

- Identify specific personnel for each session
- Have final run through
- Finalize method of measuring desired outcomes

Based upon a successful program in Mineral Springs, Missouri, the program goals were to facilitate the transition of new students into MECC by

- Informing new students, as well as their families, about the availability of services and programs
- Assisting new students in becoming familiar with the campus
- Preparing students for MECC's educational opportunities and student responsibilities
- Assisting students in the selection of appropriate courses and course levels, making use of relevant placement examinations and academic records
- Providing information and opportunities for academic and personal self-assessment
- Assisting new students with the electronic and information resources available and expectations for their use
- Providing new students with information about laws and policies regarding educational records and other protected information
- Offering opportunities for new students to interact with fellow new student, continuing students, faculty, and staff

A committee with college-wide representation met to plan each session and to make adjustments, as needed, to the agenda and the content of the sessions. Beginning in April and continuing through August, the college scheduled 8 orientation sessions for new students and their families.

These desired outcomes for the orientation program were identified during the planning:

- Students will have earlier contact with advisors.
- Students will be better prepared to begin school.
- Students will leave each FOX session with a printed schedule, student ID, and Parking Permit
- Students will be able to access their email accounts, login to the SIS and review their financial aid awards, grades, etc.
- Students will be aware of support systems in place to assist with overcoming barriers to their success
- Students will be able to articulate MECC's expectations of them

- Students will be able to make well-reasoned and well-informed choices about their options at MECC
- Students will be able to discuss and clarify education, career, and life goals and develop short-term and long-term plans
- Students will persist toward their educational goals at MECC

Findings

A total of 437 students participated in the six FOX sessions. The effect of these sessions can be seen in a comparison of the previous summer. As of June 18, 2007, only 45 first-time students had enrolled at MECC; as of June 19, 2008 (after three sessions), 281 first-time students had enrolled. Eighty-three percent of the FOX participants were between the ages of sixteen and nineteen; 44 % were first-time students at MECC, and 37 % were previously dual enrollment students.

Ninety percent of the FOX participants attended MECC in the fall after enrolling during the FOX sessions; considering summer and spring attendees, this percentage rose to 93%. Of the 392 Fox participants who attended in the fall semester, 68% enrolled in the one-credit student orientation course. Approximately 61% made an A in the course; however, 26% made an F, W, or I grade. This high percentage of non-successful grades in SDV 100 has been found in previous years and appears to be a reflection of student motivation, or lack thereof!

Table Describing Student Outcomes

The fall to spring retention rate for full-time-first time students attending FOX is much higher than the retention rate for the AtD first-time cohort by more than 10 percentage points.

Fall to Spring Retention Rate of FOX Participants/Attendees

Full-time, first-time beginning fall	130 of 160 students	81.3%
Part-time, first-time beginning fall	21 of 34 students	61.8%
Full-time previous dual enrollment	117 of 144 students	81.3%
Part-time previous dual enrollment	12 of 18 students	66.7%
Full-time, first-time beginning summer	9 of 18 students	50%
Part-time, first-time beginning summer	6 of 8 students	75%
Full-time, other	8 of 9 students	88.9%
Part-time, other	0 of 1 student	0%

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Start-Up and Continuing Cost for the Intervention

Description of Expense	Unit Cost (exact or range)	Total Units	Cost
Stipends for faculty members who conduct FOX sessions	\$200 each	72	\$14,400
FICA for FOX sessions			\$1,071
Diplomat assistance for sessions			\$1,403
Supplies for FOX			\$4,087
Food for FOX			\$3,849
Total			\$24,810

What we learned while implementing this intervention

- This intervention required a campus-wide effort, leadership, structure, and organization. The campus community stepped up and participated and outstanding leadership came from the Student Services and Enrollment Services directors and their staffs.
- Improvements can always be made. Following each session, a formative evaluation was conducted and revisions were made, as needed, allowing each successive session to go more smoothly.
- It is important to establish expectations. Students and their parents/family responded to this opportunity

Faculty, Administration and Student Conclusions Regarding Outcomes and Faculty and Administration Conclusions Sustainability

Surveys of the FOX participants, their guests (mostly parents), and MECC faculty and staff showed overwhelmingly positive responses to the FOX experience. FOX had been scheduled for the spring and summer of 2009 to begin enrollments for summer and fall terms.