



The University of Akron  
Division of Student Success

**The University of Akron  
Division of Student Success  
Report to the Board of Trustees  
June 2015**

**Office of New Student Orientation (NSO)**

**Executive Summary**

This report provides an overview of New Student Orientation (NSO) and the three-tiered approach used to help students successfully transition to The University of Akron: 1) Advising & Registration, 2) New Roo Weekend, and 3) Akron Experience: University 101 course. At The University of Akron, New Student Orientation is directed by Associate Director, Carly DeBord, and reports to Associate Vice President for Student Success, Fedearia Nicholson.

Transitioning to a college environment from high school or another life situation can be challenging for many students, so it is crucial that the orientation experience equips students with the tools to ease that anxiety (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995). Through the summer Advising & Registration program, New Roo Weekend, and the Akron Experience: University 101 course, students receive information needed to be successful at the moment it is needed as opposed to just having one orientation experience. In 2013, New Roo Weekend was added to complement a shortened traditional summer orientation program. In 2014, the Akron Experience: University 101 course was added to address transition issues throughout the first semester. This three-tiered approach provides a comprehensive experience for our incoming freshmen class. NSO also works to ensure a successful transition to The University of Akron for the transfer, adult, veteran, and College Credit Plus students through specialized programs tailored to their needs.

NSO provides the following strategic priorities and direction:

- Works toward enrolling learners in degree and certificate programs, and works to improve the year-to-year persistence to graduation through the three-tiered approach;
- Works toward academic and inclusive excellence by having diversity in its orientation programming and by ensuring that all programs equip students with the knowledge needed to continue at The University of Akron through graduation;
- Recruits a diverse student staff and promotes opportunities to study abroad and explore issues in diversity through New Roo Weekend and the Akron Experience: University 101 courses;
- Engages with the campus and community to showcase the campus, programs, and activities to all incoming students and their parents. NSO also partners with the City of Akron for service projects, New Roo Weekend, and the First-Year Lecture.

Initial projections for the Fall 2015 class are positive. As of April 15, 2015, for all admit types, the applicant pool is up 17%, the admit pool is up 12%, and the confirmed pool is up 14%. With an increase in Spring Break Advising & Registration programs (four in 2014 vs. five in 2015), the enrolled pool is up 19%. Through 27 freshman programs during summer 2015, approximately 4,311 students will participate in NSO with over 100 advisors (contract professionals, faculty members and graduate assistants.)



**The University of Akron  
Division of Student Success  
Report to the Board of Trustees  
June 2015**

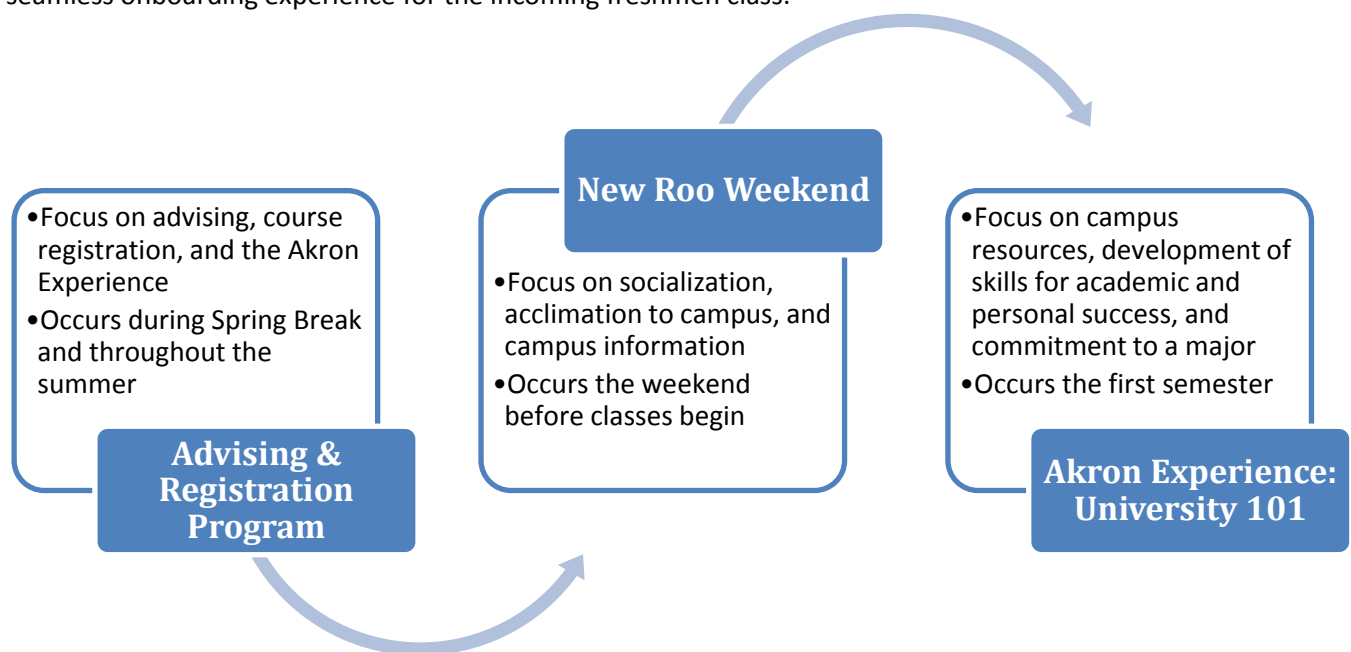
**Office of New Student Orientation (NSO)**

**New Student Orientation**

The purpose of the Office of New Student Orientation (NSO) is to create programming that assists in developing the Akron Experience for UA students and families. Through orientation programming, NSO seeks to enable students and parents to become more independent, make connections across campus, and begin to feel a part of the UA community. Through additional first-year experience programming, NSO seeks to enhance those connections for students by exposing them to additional experiences on campus allowing for meaningful integration into the campus culture, thereby increasing the retention of those students.

**The Three-Tiered Approach**

As students embark on the college journey, there are many factors that can attribute to their success. Students are encountering a major transition in their lives, and according to Dr. Nancy Schlossberg, there are four major factors that determine how a person copes with a transition: situation, self, social, and strategies (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). Through Chickering's research, another crucial component to a successful college experience is identity development (Evans et al., 2010). These two theories help shape the orientation experience. Through the summer Advising & Registration program, New Roo Weekend, and the Akron Experience course, issues related to transition and the development of identity are intentionally addressed. All three components work together to create a seamless onboarding experience for the incoming freshmen class.



## 1) New Student Orientation: Advising & Registration Programs

### Freshmen Advising & Registration Programs

Freshmen attend a full day Advising & Registration program. There is also a Family Focus component to these programs that runs concurrently with the student schedule. NSO hosts 27 freshman programs during the summer, focusing on academic advising, course registration, and timely campus information. The main goals for these programs are for students to: feel like The University of Akron is the right fit for them; be more informed about campus resources; feel more connected to The University of Akron; and be better prepared for college. Many of these programs also include an Honors component (eight programs) and an ADVANCE (multicultural) component (nine programs). To help make these programs a success, over 100 advisors (contract professionals, faculty members, and graduate assistants) assist incoming students. NSO has two contract professionals and one departmental records specialist. Additionally, NSO hires over 30 Orientation Leaders (OL's) who go through a semester-long training program prior to working. OL's range in experiences from freshmen to seniors; students that live on campus or commute; students from a variety of backgrounds; and students involved in a diverse set of campus organizations.

For students, the schedule for these programs is as follows:

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Description</b>
7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Check In	Students and parents check in for the day and receive materials
7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Explore UA Involvement Fair	Tabling event with representation from numerous campus departments and organizations
8:35 a.m. – 8:50 a.m.	Welcome to UA!	Brief welcome message from the Office of New Student Orientation
8:55 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.	Start Strong, Stay FIT!	Presentation covering UA's Finish in Time model, brief Career Center information, FERPA, and a Title IX statement
9:35 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	Zip Cards	Students get their pictures taken for their ID cards
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Academic Advising & Class Registration	Academic information, meeting with an advisor, course registration, and My Akron navigation
1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch in Rob's Café	
2:10 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.	Your Gold & Blue Preview	Information about the Akron Experience and Zip Tips from UA's Orientation Leaders
2:55 p.m. – 3:25 p.m.	Getting Real About the Bill	Presentation explaining the realities of paying for college with advice on making it possible to do so
	Student Success Panel	Personal accounts from UA students that have had to struggle a little to make it and the resources that they used to become successful
3:35 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	Final Roo-Minders!	Reminders for tasks that need to be accomplished over the summer and a chance for parents and students to share a story from their days

3:45 p.m.	Optional Programming	Residence Life & Housing information; visit Off-Campus Student Services; Center for Service & Leadership Open House; campus tour; Student Services Center is open; PNC Bank is open; Barnes & Noble Bookstore is open
-----------	----------------------	---

For parents and guests, the schedule for these programs is as follows:

<b>Time</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Description</b>
7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Check In	Students and parents check in for the day and receive materials
7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	Explore UA Involvement Fair	Tabling event with representation from numerous campus departments and organizations
8:35 a.m. – 8:50 a.m.	Welcome to UA!	Brief welcome message from the Office of New Student Orientation
8:55 a.m. – 9:25 a.m.	Start Strong, Stay FIT!	Presentation covering UA’s Finish in Time model, brief Career Center information, FERPA, and a Title IX statement
9:35 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.	Zip Cards	Students get their pictures taken for their ID cards
10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Academic Information	Academic information provided by the college/advising unit to which the student has been admitted
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Academic Advising for Parents	Presentation explaining the role of an academic advisor, campus services for students, and resources for parents
11:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Campus Safety	Information from UAPD about campus safety features in place on campus
12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Student Perspective	Orientation Leaders talk about their experiences on campus; open question and answer session
	PNC and the Bookstore	Information about PNC banking and UA’s Barnes & Noble Bookstores
	Connecting Your Student to Career Success	Presentation about how the Career Center can help their students through various programs and how parents can support students on their career journey
	Residence Life & Off-Campus Student Services	Information for both resident and commuter families about programs and services for each population
1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	Lunch in Rob’s Café	
2:10 p.m. – 2:40 p.m.	Your Gold & Blue Preview	Information about the Akron Experience and Zip Tips from UA’s Orientation Leaders
2:55 p.m. – 3:25 p.m.	Getting Real About the Bill	Presentation explaining the realities of paying for college with advice on making it possible to do so
	Student Success Panel	Personal accounts from UA students that have had to struggle a little to make it and the resources that they used to become successful
3:35 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.	Final Roo-Minders!	Reminders for tasks that need to be accomplished over the summer and a chance for parents and students to share a story from their days

3:45 p.m.	Optional Programming	Residence Life & Housing information; visit Off-Campus Student Services; Center for Service & Leadership Open House; campus tour; Student Services Center is open; PNC Bank is open; Barnes & Noble Bookstore is open
-----------	----------------------	---

### Additional Orientation Programs

Transfer students, College Credit Plus students, Adult/Veteran students, and students enrolling late in the summer (August) attend half-day programs focused primarily on meeting with academic advisors and registering for classes. Students also see “Your Gold & Blue Preview” to equip them with additional campus information prior to the start of classes. The brevity of the programs allows time for specific needs to be met. There is no Family Focus component to these programs; if parents or guests attend, they are with the student for the duration of the program.

- **ADVANCE programs** – geared towards students of multicultural backgrounds; students attend a one-day program hosted by the Office of Multicultural Development and then attend the traditional Advising & Registration program the following day. Nine ADVANCE programs are hosted during the summer.
- **Transfer Transition programs** – geared towards transfer students; students have a one-hour appointment with an academic advisor, time to schedule courses, and academic information presented by the college or advising unit to which the student has been admitted. Ten Transfer Transition programs are hosted during the summer.
- **College Credit Plus programs** – geared towards College Credit Plus students, these programs equip them with necessary knowledge about the program, allow them to meet with an academic advisor, and provide time for course registration. Nine College Credit Plus programs are hosted during the summer.
- **Adult/Veteran programs** – day and late afternoon options are offered for this population. For the day programs, the adult/veteran program runs concurrently with a freshmen orientation program. The time dedicated to Academic Information and Advising is covered by UA Adult Focus. Late afternoon programs (3:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.) consist of UA Adult Focus information, information about finances or the Military Services Center, meeting with an academic advisor, and class registration. Seven late afternoon programs are hosted during the summer.
- **Late programs** (in August) – students have a one-hour appointment with an academic advisor, time to schedule courses, and academic information presented by the college or advising unit to which the student has been admitted. Additional time is available to take care of unfinished business before the start of classes. Four late programs are hosted in August.

### **Satisfaction Information**

Excellent evaluations were received for the 2014 orientation programs. Students and parents were asked to respond on a paper form at the end of the program. The responses are then recorded and analyzed. Initial data from the 2015 programs (Spring Break only) indicates similar results, if not higher.

- Student Evaluations
  - "I feel like The University of Akron is the right fit for me" - 93% positive responses (4s and 5s)
  - "I feel more informed about campus resources" - 90% positive responses
  - "I feel more connected to The University of Akron" - 87% positive responses
  - "I feel better prepared for college" - 86% positive responses
  - "I feel like I made at least one friend today" - 79% positive responses

- Parent Evaluations
  - "I feel like my student will be supported at UA" - 95% positive responses
  - "I feel like The University of Akron is the right fit for my student" - 92% positive responses
  - "I feel more informed about campus resources" - 91% positive responses
  - "I feel supported as the parent of a UA student" - 86% positive responses
  - "I feel more connect to The University of Akron after attending today's program" - 83% positive responses

### **New Initiatives for Orientation Programs in 2015**

One of the main working goals of NSO has been to create a sustainable model for orientation programming. For many years, the orientation program changed drastically from year to year, making it difficult to collect usable evaluation results. In 2014, NSO began with the basic model that is still being followed to date. Using this basic model for a second year has allowed the department to fix areas that were problematic last year while also finding ways to improve things that were already working.

For 2015, NSO improved on the financial information that is delivered. Last year, students and parents attended a presentation that discussed the FAFSA and paying the bill. The feedback that we received indicated that the information was not timely as many families had already completed the FAFSA, and that it was too technical in showing how to pay the bill. For 2015, the department partnered with an existing presentation from the Office of Multicultural Development that had received excellent feedback in the past, "Getting Real About the Bill". This presentation addressed actual concerns of paying for college instead of the process of making a payment. For some students and parents, though, finances are not a concern, so a Student Success Panel was added as an option for them to attend at the same time. The Panel features stories of UA students that have struggled a little in college and highlights the resources they used to overcome those struggles. Feedback from the 2015 Spring Break programs indicates that both sessions were very well received.

### **2) New Roo Weekend**

NRW began in 2013 and was developed to fill the gap between the summer orientation program and the start of fall classes. In prior years, the summer orientation day was very long (7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.) as it was packed full of all information that students needed prior to starting school. Adding NRW allows for a shortened summer orientation day (8:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m.) and allows for an opportunity to provide campus information in a timely manner. At NRW, students now find out about campus safety and Title IX, involvement opportunities, and have a chance to network and make friends right before the start of classes. The messages and friendships are more meaningful at this time because their minds are those of college students; in the summer, they often were not ready to receive this information or form those relationships.

First year feedback indicated that NRW was too long and students were burnt out before classes began. A program overhaul was done for 2014 and provided more positive feedback. In the overhaul, Friday was cut down to ¼ of the day, Saturday was all day, and Sunday remained the same. The schedule has remained relatively the same for 2015 with a few improvements based on student and administrator feedback. The main goals of NRW are for students to: acclimate to campus; form relationships with classmates; understand campus safety issues; discover involvement opportunities; meet current UA students and get advice on the transition to college; and feel a part of The University of Akron. Students are grouped into random "troops" so that they can meet a range of students and not just those in their majors. NRW is planned by a seven person Operations Team. Major events have a committee of about 20 people from a broad array of departments.

Over 100 volunteers are utilized to staff the weekend and over 150 NRW Leaders are hired to help bring the experience to life. The NRW Leaders represent a wide variety of majors, backgrounds, and experiences on campus. The leaders receive a day and a half of training prior to the weekend.

For 2015, the schedule for NRW is as follows:

- **Friday, August 28**
  - 5:00 p.m. – **Campus Cookout** – Laid back, social event for students outside of InfoCision Stadium; made to feel like game day with music, food, and inflatables; NRW Leaders and others from campus mingle with students
  - 6:30 p.m. – **NRW Kickoff** – Energy-filled event in InfoCision Stadium to start the weekend off on a high note; the UA band performs; the football team runs out onto the field like it's game day; Coach Bowden delivers a brief message to the incoming class
  - Evening events on campus are promoted
- **Saturday, August 29**
  - 9:30 a.m. – **Troop Meetings** – Students are assigned to a random “troop” with two leaders; during the meetings, leaders answer questions, share their experiences, and team build with the group
  - 11:00 a.m. – **Involvement Breakout Sessions** – Students can choose from over 15 breakout sessions on topics ranging from study abroad, service-learning, intramural and club sports, and student life (many others are included)
  - 12:00 p.m. – **First Year Speaker** – Yet to be determined for 2015, the first year speaker should be engaging, energetic, and deliver a positive, uplifting message for students.
  - 12:50 p.m. – **Lunch** – Boxed lunches are provided for all students
  - 2:00 p.m. – **Campus Safety & Title IX** – Students receive crucial campus safety and Title IX information prior to the start of classes
  - Afternoon and evening events are promoted
- **Sunday, August 30**
  - 12:15 p.m. – **Troop Meetings** – Leaders give final pieces of advice and exchange contact information with students
  - 1:15 p.m. – **New Student Convocation** – Students are inducted as members of the incoming class; historically, this event has included brief speeches from the President of Undergraduate Student Government, the Provost, and the President
  - 2:00 p.m. – **Roo Fest** – Almost every student organization is represented at Roo Fest, held in the Student Union; students get a chance to explore them all in one place
  - 2:00 p.m. – **Class Schedule Tours** – Provided by NRW Leaders, students get the chance to walk their class schedules for the fall semester (class schedule tours are also offered on Saturday)

### **New Initiatives for New Roo Weekend in 2015**

Just as with the orientation programming, NSO strives to find a sustainable model that would allow for assessment of the program. Based on the feedback received last year from the NRW Leaders, the students, and the administrators that played a part in the weekend, the department determined that overall, the weekend was very successful. Therefore, there have not been major changes for 2015. Listed below are the improvements for this year's NRW:

- **Check In Process** –check in process has been revamped to include Fast Pass lanes at each gate of the stadium, Zip Card scanners have been purchased for accurate tracking of student attendance.

- Friday Evening Cookout –partnered with Athletics to create a game day feel outside of InfoCision Stadium. Faculty members and campus administrators will be asked to participate at the cookout to help welcome new students, allowing for a more social feel and beginning the weekend with the right amount of energy.
- Involvement Breakout Sessions –timing of the breakout sessions is being changed to the morning and will hopefully provide for a higher attendance rate than last year. More breakout options are being offered.
- Saturday Speakers – two speakers for this year and separated by lunch. Students will scan in with Zip Cards to each speaker to allow for an accurate list of attendees.

### **Satisfaction Information**

Last year, information about students’ experiences over NRW was anecdotal and came from our NRW Leaders. For 2015, questions will be included on the MAP-Works survey to allow the department to effectively reach most of the freshmen class. Questions will be tailored towards the goals of NRW.

### **3) The Akron Experience Course: University 101**

Effective Fall 2014, the 1100:101 course formerly titled, the Student Success Seminar (SSS), became “The Akron Experience: University 101” (AE). First-Year Seminars are one example of Kuh’s (2008) High-Impact Educational Practices which have been shown to be beneficial for student success, so one of the most programmatic changes to the AE course was that it became mandatory for all Preparatory and Emergent students, and was strongly encouraged for College Ready students. Due to the mandatory requirement, the number of sections increased from 33 in Fall 2013 to 76 in Fall 2014, a 130% increase. To accommodate the increase in sections, College Ready and Emergent Advisors within the Centers for Academic Advising and Student Success all instruct at least one section which includes advisees from the respective advising centers. This was an intentional decision to foster the advisor-student relationship which was established during the New Student Orientation: Advising & Registration Program.

From a curricular standpoint, much more of an emphasis was placed on providing a common experience and uniform set of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes expand upon academic information learned at New Student Orientation and the social experiences provided at New Roo Weekend. This first-year seminar course is designed to: orient students to The University of Akron, its traditions and resources; facilitate the development of skills for academic and personal success; and assist in the commitment to an intended major and career pathway. The ultimate goal is to aid students in their first-year transition from high school, and provide learning opportunities which are relevant to what they are experiencing in the first semester. The course incorporated a standardized syllabus and textbook with common assignments and group presentations for key topics. Students also participated in the First-Year Lecture & Common Reading Program.

Preliminary data indicators are positive. The percentage of A’s awarded increased from 55.9% in Fall 2013 to 57.6% in Fall 2014; this is the highest percentage of A’s awarded in the past 5 years. This was an increase of 1.7% from Fall 2013 to 2014. The percentage of F’s awarded decreased from 15.6% in Fall 2013 to 12.3% in Fall 2014; this is the lowest percentage of failing grades in the past 5 years. This was a decrease of 3.3% from Fall 2013 to 2014.



## **Conclusion**

NSO strives to provide a comprehensive orientation experience for the incoming freshmen class by utilizing the three-tiered method of the summer Advising & Registration Program, New Roo Weekend, and the Akron Experience course. As of now, the Akron Experience course is only required for emergent and preparatory students and strongly encouraged for college-ready students. In the future, it would be beneficial to have a first-year course for all incoming students, even if it is not the same course across the board.

For other student populations, NSO provides the information needed at the time of the orientation and also allows additional time during the orientation day for individual needs to be met. These populations (transfer, College Credit Plus, and late orientation students) often have unique needs that are better addressed in a one-on-one environment.

Satisfaction data from the freshmen orientation programs is very positive and trending in the same direction for 2015. Data from NRW 2015 will be collected on the MAP-Works survey sent to first-year students during the first semester on campus. Preliminary data indicators for the Akron Experience course are also positive.

## **References**

Chickering, A.W. & Schlossberg, N.K. (1995). *Getting the most out of college*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Evans, N.J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F., Patton, L.D., & Renn, K.A. (2010). Chickering's theory of identity development. *Student development in college: Theory, research and practice*. (2 Ed). (64-81). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Evans, N.J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F., Patton, L.D., & Renn, K.A. (2010). Schlossberg's transition theory. *Student development in college: Theory, research and practice*. (2 Ed). (212-226). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kuh, G. D. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.