

A Host with the Most: Reorienting the Campus Welcome

Natalie Dowling, Transition & Orientation Programs, University of Melbourne
Sophie Marsland, Transition & Orientation Programs, University of Melbourne

Many universities run programs at orientation that assemble undergraduate students in small cohort groups facilitated by a later-year student host. They enable commencing students to be personally welcomed to the university community, to connect with peers and to be introduced to the campus. The efficacy of the host has a significant bearing on new students feeling welcome and settled. In response to previous mixed feedback on hosts we regenerated our program this year, within an institutional purview to improve personal connectedness and engender cohort experiences. Innovations included the broader recruitment of later-year students, interviews of all prospective hosts, a revamp of the training, an increase in host numbers and the development of technology to implement the program. New students, hosts and staff have all evaluated the changes very positively. This session will discuss the background, processes and evaluation, along with future possibilities for developing a host with the most.

Natalie Dowling is a project officer with the University of Melbourne's Transition & Orientation Programs and a tutor of first year students in the School of Historical Studies, where she is undertaking postgraduate studies. Her current roles as administrator, academic and student give her an interesting insight into the engagement of new students with the university community.

Over the eight years that Sophie Marsland has been coordinating Orientation at the University of Melbourne she has seen it develop from a boozy party atmosphere to a genuine campus welcome encompassing development of course-based cohorts facilitating new students' transition to tertiary study. Sophie brings a background in Public Relations to her position at the University.