As part of First Year Program’s 2018 Sustainable Academic Business Plan, we are focusing our programs on first-generation student success. This plan outlines strategies intended to strengthen the Parent Orientation program while expanding its impact to include students and families who experience inequalities in their transition to college.

**BACKGROUND**

Parent Orientation at the University of Washington was created out of a joint effort between the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity, Student Life, and Undergraduate Academic Affairs as a strategy to enhance the success of students by engaging parents and serving their unique needs. A formal Parent Orientation program was established in the summer of 2007 for parents of incoming first-year students.

Throughout the past 10 years, Parent Orientation has evolved to be a day-long program consisting of large group presentations, conference-style workshops, and campus tours that provide an introduction to the undergraduate experience at the University of Washington.

While parents are satisfied with Parent Orientation, the learning outcomes fall short of supporting all students in their transition to college and may exacerbate inequalities experienced by first-generation students. Greater attention is needed on fostering positive psychological skills and reducing barriers to help seeking.

**A NEW LANDSCAPE**

| 29.6% |

More than one in four first-year freshman students and almost half (45%) of first-year transfer students will be the first in their family to graduate from college.

*University of Washington, 2017*

**Mental Health**

College students are traditionally at the age (18 to 25 years) when depression and anxiety are often onset (Blanco, et al., 2008) and stressors in the transition to college can worsen underlying vulnerabilities to these conditions (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). First generation students are particularly at risk for anxiety and depression because they tend to experience more stressors and have fewer supports in their transition to college (Pascarella, et al., 2004).

**Parental Support**

One of the most important determinants of a successful transition to college is parental support (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). However, optimal parental support is not synonymous with being overinvolved, and helicopter parenting is associated with students having less resilience (Pederson, 2017; Shaw, 2017). Parents can help students develop resilience by supporting autonomy (Fass & Tubman, 2002; Mattanah, et al., 2004; Vivona, 2000; Wei, et al., 2003; 2005) and the use of a growth-oriented coping styles when facing challenges (Campbell-Sills, et al., 2006; Pedersen, 2017; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

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STRATEGIES FOR PARENT ORIENTATION
Given this new landscape there are several strategies we can incorporate into Parent Orientation to help students develop positive psychological skills and reduce barriers to seeking help.

Key Messages
Focus Parent Orientation on behavioral interventions parents can use to support autonomy and growth-oriented coping strategies when their students face challenges.

1. Parental Autonomy Support: The degree to which parents value and encourage problem solving, choice, and participation in decisions (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

2. Growth-oriented coping strategies: Positive and developmental responses to academic or social challenges, such as seeking new strategies, putting forth greater effort, or solving conflicts peacefully (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

3. Year-round engagement: Highlight opportunities for parents to continue engaging throughout the academic year as questions or challenges arise.

Targeted Engagement
Parent Orientation participants come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences with higher education. As a result, a one-size-fits-all program is not an effective model for providing support. Parent Orientation will offer individualized tracks within the program to provide appropriate information for the following populations:

- Parents of first-generation students
- Over-involved parents (helicopter parents)
- First-time parents of college students
- Partners and other family members (i.e. of transfer students)

Increased Accessibility
Increase the accessibility of Parent Orientation outcomes to non-English speakers and parents unable to travel to Seattle by providing translated resources and increased resources online. Further, encourage campus partners to increase the accessibility of their outcomes through similar methods.

Measuring Learning Outcomes
New learning outcomes will continue to be measured in the Parent Orientation program evaluation conducted throughout the summer and the First Year Experience survey conducted during the academic year. Additionally, conducting parent and student focus groups in the fall quarter will provide opportunities to understand why and how parents make decisions, employ Parent Orientation messages, and support their students.
TIMELINE
Implementing these strategies will occur over the course of a 3-year period and will be informed by intentional assessment and seeking feedback from campus partners.

Year 1: 2018
First Year Programs will:

- Promote the Coursera version of University 101 to parents as a way to prepare for Parent Orientation.
- Assess updated learning outcomes throughout the year.
- Determine if certain populations of parents do not attend Parent Orientation and develop a plan to reach out to those populations.
- Promote Parent and Family Programs and the UW Parents Facebook Group through all parent communications.
- In collaboration with the Office of Minority Affairs & Diversity, publish a Spanish-language version of the Husky Guide.
- In collaboration with Parent and Family Programs, develop a Husky Guide page for parents to construct an individualized plan to engage with the University and their student throughout their first year.

Parent Orientation speakers will:

- Adjust presentations to apply key messages to current content and identify behaviors that parents can employ to support these messages.
- Summarize applied messages and behaviors on a slide in their presentation to highlight take-away messages and reminders.
- Integrate strategies to support first-generation parents by defining higher education jargon, acronyms, and other terms that may be new to parents with little to no experience with higher education.

Year 2: 2019
First Year Programs will:

- Sustain and improve efforts from year 1 based on assessment data and campus partner feedback.
- Consider the possibility of developing a parent track in University 101 and Spanish-language translation services for Parent Orientation.
- Apply the flipped classroom model to Parent Orientation by providing information to parents before Parent Orientation with in-person time dedicated to the application of information.

Parent Orientation speakers will:

- Align presentations with new Parent Orientation learning outcomes.
- Determine strategies for restructuring parent messages most appropriate for online, in-person, and printed materials.
- Begin to adjust messages away from simply highlighting services and more toward highlighting ways parents can support their students in the context of their services.

Year 3: 2020
First Year Programs will:

- Sustain and improve efforts from years 1 and 2 based on assessment data and campus partner feedback.
- If appropriate, implement a parent track in University 101 & Spanish-language translation services.
- Provide support to campus partners to further refine and improve flipped classroom model strategies.
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