Sydney Welcome Orientation and Transition Program

SWOT 2009

Report on 2009 Orientation Activities
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Sydney Welcome, Orientation and Transition (SWOT) Program

Purpose
The Sydney Welcome, Orientation and Transition (SWOT) Program is designed to facilitate the academic, cultural and social adjustment of first year commencing students. Program activities are linked to the Key Strategic goals of the University, namely enhancing the Student Experience, and developing excellence in Learning and Teaching.

Development of the Program was ongoing in 2009, with the Project Group continuing to work cooperatively in developing the integrated SWOT Program for Orientation Week activities on the Camperdown and Darlington campuses. Links continued to be provided to orientation activities on the other campuses.

In 2008, for the 2009 cycle, the Project Group membership included representatives from Faculties, the Student Centre, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), the University of Sydney Library and key student support services. Membership was expanded with the addition of representation from Internal Communications. The role of Convenor was resumed by Jordi Austin, Head Counselling Services, upon her return from maternity leave. Project Group membership and Terms of Reference are listed at Appendix B. The management and coordination of the SWOT 09 program was enhanced by the addition of a Student Experience Coordinator, to facilitate all components of programming, marketing and promotions.

The SWOT Program is identified as a process that extends beyond the first few weeks of a student's first semester at university. Orientation and transition activities at the University of Sydney are seen to commence with the University's contact with prospective students, their parents and schools. The process continues in the provision of the intensive SWOT Program run in Orientation Week, and extends through to specialised programs for students during their first year at Sydney. The SWOT Program is closely linked with the First Year Experience activities being developed by the Faculties.

University Welcome to New Students
Each year, The University Welcome to New Students marks the commencement of the SWOT Program. This is a student's first opportunity to experience a formal University event in the Great Hall with the carillon and a large academic procession with accompaniment from the University organist. In 2009, students were welcomed by The Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, The Vice-Chancellor Dr. Michael Spence, the Presidents of the Students' Representative Council and The University of Sydney Union, and the O-Week Directors. Principal Officers and Faculty representation in this year's academic procession numbered 43. The event was very well attended by students with The Great Hall being filled to capacity (700 seats plus standing).
Promotion

Promotion of the SWOT 2009 program included the distribution of the SWOT 2009 postcard and booklet, a SWOT 2009 website linked to the look and feel of postcard and booklet with extensive links from University sites, word of mouth, as well as information included in presentations at University community outreach events such as Sydney Uni LIVE! and Information Day. The Program was highlighted to students accessing assistance through the Student Help Line staffed by Student Ambassadors.

SWOT 2009 Postcard

The postcard was designed in consultation with Digital and Print Media (i.e. image on the first page of this report). The card's design concept and images were also deployed on the 2009 website. Newly enrolling first year students were targeted by distribution to newly arriving International students at Daily Arrival Sessions presented by the International Student Support Unit (12 January-13 March 2009) and to local students at the Student Centre enrolment sites (26 January-6 February 2008).

SWOT 2009 Booklet

The design of the publication continued to be developed with Digital and Print Media in line with other 2009 University of Sydney publications. The content structure of the booklet, as modified in 2007 by the SWOT Project Group, was maintained to reflect core themes identified by students as important issues in transition to University: Creating a platform for academic success, Adapting to life at Sydney, Creating freedom and independence, and Making friends and contacts. Following consultation with the project group, a fifth theme, Cultural Life at Sydney, was developed to direct students to the cultural and intellectual activities outside of the lecture room. SWOT events and information were clustered under these five themes to increase the salience of content to students.

Information regarding orientation activities held on the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (SCM), the Sydney College of the Arts (SCA) and Cumberland campuses was included in the SWOT 2009 booklet.

The booklet was distributed by mail to all newly enrolling first year students (local addresses only). Copies of the booklet were distributed to newly arriving international students at International Student Orientation sessions presented by the International Student Support Unit.

SWOT 2009 website

The website was updated by the Student Experience Coordinator, Student Administration and Support, supported by staff in Digital and Print Media. The website and booklet were developed in parallel with each other, as in previous years, to strengthen SWOT Program identity and provide visual consistency. Downloadable pdfs of the booklet and the SWOT Orientation Week timetable were made available.

A new Orientation 09 web-page, with dynamic feature panes, links and images, was developed in conjunction with Digital and Print Media to provide a landing page for students around Orientation, and to direct students to both the SWOT 2009 and University of Sydney Union O-Week Activities. The content of
the pages was developed in consultation with the USU, the Learning Centre, and the International Student Support Unit.

The Orientation 09 button (and link) featured on the University home page, Future Students (START) and the Services for Students and Current Students (MyUni) pages. Faculties were advised on how to link to the site from their websites. Most Faculties offering orientation to undergraduate students posted the button on their home page.

Within the SWOT 2009 site, University services and information were highlighted by links to key websites including START, the MyUni student portal, ICT Computer Access Labs, IT Assist, Services for Students, Student Life, Getting Around (campus maps) and Security Services (safety on campus). The Contact Us page provided direct email links and phone numbers to enable undergraduate students to directly contact Faculties, University services and the RTA transport information site.

In the first weeks of Semester One, information regarding the MyUni student portal, was provided from a number of points on the SWOT website and directly referred students to MyUni as their new information source. The SWOT 2009 website provided information regarding activities on the SCM, SCA and Cumberland campuses by providing links to these campuses websites.

Promotion to University staff
Principal Officers of the University, Deans, Heads of Schools, Heads of Residential Colleges and key administrative staff were provided with information regarding the Program and invited to attend the Official University Welcome to New Students.

Role of Convenor in other promotional activities
The SWOT Convenor and the Student Experience Coordinator continued to have responsibility for liaison with the O-Week Directors from the University of Sydney Union; the mail out of the SWOT booklet plus the O-Week 09: Flashback Fastforward flyer; the promotion of information regarding the Faculty and School Welcomes; and the organisation of the University Welcome to New Students. Staff from the Graduations Office, Student Centre assisted with the organisation of the Official Welcome. Student Ambassadors from Marketing and Student Recruitment were employed for the SWOT mail out and as ushers at the Official Welcome.

SWOT 2009 Evaluation

Evaluation of the SWOT 2009 program and promotional materials was conducted through the Web Report, as well as a survey to undergraduate students.

The Web Report indicates strong continued use of the website as a source of information for commencing students. The website is live from December, in time for the January Open Day, and remains accessible
through the SWOT campaign, coming down after the first few weeks of semester. The Web report indicates users were directed to the site from the University home page, bookmarked the site, and returned to the site. Usage of the site rose steadily from enrolment in January, peaking in the days leading up to and during the SWOT campaign. Visitors to the site were local and international. The website will remain a key marketing and information tool for the SWOT program. A copy of the full Report is available in Appendix D.

After the project meeting in 2008, a working party was established to discuss conducting an online survey of the orientation programs. The survey was designed to enhance evaluation and feedback on the program, to contribute to program planning. Members of the project group contributed to the development of the content of the survey, along with USU Marketing personnel. More than 1100 first year undergraduate students took part in the online survey, representing approximately 20% of the incoming cohort. Please see Appendix C for a full copy of the Orientation 09 report. Recommendations stemming from the student survey will be included in the overall recommendations and planning for the 2010 cycle.

**Links with the University of Sydney Union (USU) and other student groups**

In the week proceeding Semester One, the SWOT 2009 Program continued to be provided in parallel with USU O-Week 09. This parallel programming continues to recognise the value of the total University of Sydney experience and the importance of the integration of academic and social, cultural and sporting activities in student life at the University. The Orientation 09 webpage served to highlight the two programs running in parallel.

To facilitate the programming of activities, key USU representatives are invited to attend SWOT Project Group meetings. Each year the Convenor of the SWOT Project Group liaises with USU staff as well as the O-Week Directors to ensure effective collaboration between SWOT and O-Week activities. The staff from University services and Campus Infrastructure Services are also closely involved in facilitating and supporting SWOT and O-Week activities.

In 2009 and under the banner of **O-Week 09: Flashback FastForward** stalls were available on the Front Lawn and Eastern Avenue for three days (Wednesday-Friday) while other activities were held at Manning House. Other entertainment events were held in the evenings throughout the three days.

The USU worked cooperatively with the SWOT Project Group to ensure cross promotion of events through the Semester One orientation period. The SWOT 2009 booklet and website included promotion of O-Week 09 activities. The SWOT website included information on all student organisations and provided links to the USU, the Students’ Representative Council, Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association and Sydney University Sport

Similarly, the **O-Week 09** website included links to the SWOT 2009 website. The promotional mail out to first year students was jointly funded by the SWOT Program and the USU. During **O-Week 09**, the USU
distributed additional copies of SWOT booklets from Information tents on the Front Lawn and to USU Student Point of Contact (SPOC) volunteers at O-Week training sessions.

**Specific Programs**

The intensive orientation to the University (SWOT 2009) program was provided over three days, 25–27 February 2009, and included the Official University Welcome to New Students, Faculty Welcomes and Information Sessions, and *Skills for Success* seminars. A full description of the programs offered can be found at Appendix A.

The University Welcome, and the Faculty and School Welcomes continue to be integrated into the SWOT program due to the key importance of commencing students feeling connected with the academic staff of their Faculty and Departments and being integrated into the academic life of the University, and to positively impact upon student retention. The Faculties of Arts, Science, Economics and Business, and Veterinary Science continued to provide extended orientation activities held in addition to their Faculty Welcomes. The faculties of Health Sciences, the SCA and SCM run independent orientation programs containing Faculty welcomes.

The SWOT 2009 Program included extended activities by the University of Sydney Library and the Learning Centre and Counselling Service as outlined in Appendix A. Disability Services organised a mentoring program at both the Camperdown and Cumberland campuses to discuss transition issues with newly commencing students with a disability. Students were encouraged to drop into one of the ICT Computer Access Labs for free essential computing skills courses, activate their UniKey account to access email and explore the *MyUni* student portal.

The Koori Centre held an Indigenous Australian Student Welcome, and performed a formal welcome to Country. The Financial Assistance Office, and the Careers Centre offered information sessions. The Mathematics Learning Centre held an open day. The International Office provided seminars on Student Exchange opportunities whilst studying at Sydney. The International Student Support Unit offered a session for International students within the SWOT program, in addition to the *Daily Arrival* sessions conducted for students from early January 2009 as international students arrived on campus and *International Student Orientation Program*.

**Outcomes and future directions**

The SWOT 2009 Program contributes significantly to the University’s welcome to new students. Attendance at all SWOT activities continues to be strong, and has increased at a number of activities. Feedback from students attending SWOT workshops indicated a high level of satisfaction with the Program. An outline of the
various activities involved and the level of attendance at SWOT 2009 activities, where available, is provided in Appendix A.

A review of the SWOT 2009 Program by the members of the Project Group was held on 9 April 2009. The review indicated a successful outcome for SWOT 2009, looked at ways of taking forward the support of students during 2009, and identified a number of areas for further development in SWOT 2010.

Combining recommendations from the existing feedback mechanisms and the new information gleaned from the Student Orientation 09 Survey, we recommend

1: The SWOT 2009 (Re)Orientation be provided online as experience only as previous years’ programs indicates there is no demand for face to face activities at this time. ISSU will provide Daily arrival sessions for Second Semester newly arriving international students.

2: Continuing liaison between the First Year Experience development in Faculties and the SWOT Program was reaffirmed by the SWOT Project Group as a key issue in enhancing the successful transition and retention of students at the University. A number of Faculties, including Arts, Economics and Business, Science and Veterinary Science, are providing on-going high quality Faculty based support programs for commencing students. Liaison and discussion across faculty groups enables dissemination of best practice.

3: Mentoring programs be established to assist students making social and peer connections within their course. Mentoring programs should be structured to enable students to “walk through” the Orientation period together, and to have catch up sessions through the first semester to enable timely information provision and FAQ sessions with senior students.

4: Faculty welcomes should include greater contact with Academic and lecturing staff.

5: Information sessions and skills for success seminars be repeated in the SWOT program, as well as embedded into the first 3-6 weeks of semester

6: Increased promotion of the SWOT program, to include improved visibility of the program, as well as highlighting the importance of early master and skills acquisition.

7: Consolidating seminars and information sessions into one location.

Further dialogue with other campuses may assist the development of orientation and ongoing transition support at these campuses. The SWOT Program will remain an undergraduate program at this time. The
SWOT Project Group affirmed the value of the continuation of the SWOT Program to meet the needs of undergraduate students in transition to tertiary study at the University of Sydney.

The Student Administration and Support budget continues to have funding for the convening of the SWOT Program for commencing undergraduate students. SWOT 2010 will be offered in parallel with the USU O-Week unless a substantial change is made to the O-Week activities schedule in 2010. The SWOT 2010 Program will be developed in a similar time frame as in previous years as this time frame has been effective, depending the rollout of the Branding project. The SWOT Program will be promoted by Marketing and Student Recruitment Unit in their contact with schools. SWOT will also be promoted at Sydney Uni LIVE!, Information Day, and at Enrolment. It is anticipated that the direct mail out to commencing local students will continue in 2010 in conjunction with the USU. The Orientation 10 and SWOT 2010 websites will be further enhanced to provide students with the best possible access to information and to facilitate students' participation in SWOT activities.

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Convenor 2009 Sydney Orientation and Transition (SWOT) Project Group

September 2009
Appendix A

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

In 2009 Library staff welcomed students and introduced them to the Library as the starting point for information and research.

- 13 multidisciplinary libraries had welcome banners and balloons and lollies at each information desk. The Library has a new credit card sized Express Student Guide which provides information about the University of Sydney library using a location map to direct students to the appropriate library.

- The O-Week stall at Camperdown Campus was staffed by many of the Library staff who wanted to put a human face on the library and to meet as many new students as possible. The web quiz to try to win one of 3 I-Pods was as popular as ever.

- Students were encouraged to visit the libraries related to their faculties or subject areas and were provided with information about the different libraries in the system. Several thousand students attended introductory sessions in libraries. Tailored classes, aligned with Units of Study and specific information skill sets, also began in O-week and will continue to run throughout the year. SWOT week tours were offered in most libraries and were well attended.

- Faculty Liaison Librarians participated in welcome functions arranged by Faculties and departments and for specific programs. There were academic orientations for Architecture, Arts, Engineering and IT, Science and Veterinary Science first year students. Welcomes for Undergraduate and Postgraduate. International Students were also attended. Librarians also made presentations to Postgraduates in Architecture, Arts, Law, Engineering and IT, Science, Sydney College of the Arts and Vet Sciences.

- Information about the Library and its services was included in many welcome packs for incoming students.
ICT COMPUTER ACCESS LABS

Most of our Access Labs were open during O-Week 2009. The new Law building and new Law Access Lab was in transition. From previous years’ experience, as well as seeking feedback from International Students the week before, the most pressing IT need identified was wireless connectivity and the overall desire for a flexible learning platform. In light of this, Access Lab staff concentrated more heavily this year towards the delivery of a one-one free laptop service. This basically involved sitting down with users individually to troubleshoot their connectivity issues with our IT Infrastructure. From initial counts, we serviced close to 60 laptops across three days, mainly examining wireless network connections. We also revised our opening hours schedule to a 8am – 6pm standard to cater for the typical study hours faced by students.

In terms of general numbers of students who used our machines, we had close to 5000 students attending the Access Labs across Main, Health Sciences, Nursing & Sydney College of Arts campuses. Additionally, in moving to our new Active Directory login environment, there was a transition phase for all returning students to update their Unikey passwords before they could use our machines. We were able to cope with this high demand relatively smoothly with the introduction of self-managed “Password Kiosks” installed in each Access Lab. In summary, the majority of our service delivery centred around providing new and existing students’ Unikey account details as well as processing payments for printing and Internet access.

Office 2007 courses were once again offered. Across 2008, we developed an online learning portal for the Office Suite, utilising a series of screen casts to deliver course content. Although the uptake of classes were significantly lower than O-Week 2008, the majority of students opted for the online learning portal as it proved flexible for them. Additionally, working with the Assistive Technology arm of ICT, we assisted with myUNI and webCT classes for students registered (or wishing to be registered) with Disability Services.

CAREERS CENTRE

The Careers Centre ran an Orientation Week stall at Camperdown Campus which was staffed by Careers staff and student career ambassadors who handed out promotional material and offered information and advice on using Careers Centre services. Students were encouraged to sign up for job vacancies through the Job Alert system and those who registered were eligible to win one of several prizes. 880 students signed up for Job Alert and 1500 brochures about Careers Centre services were distributed by roving student ambassadors.

The Careers Centre (with faculty representatives) conducted the following sessions:

• What can I do with an Arts degree? – Friday 27 February, attended by 34 students
• What can I do with a Science degree? – Friday 27 February, attended by 22 students
• Identifying My Employability Skills for first years – Friday 27 February, attended by 36 students

In addition, the Careers Centre ran a general session on our services and specifically promoted the casual employment section of the jobs database each day from 24 to 27 February with a total attendance of 87 students.
The Careers Centre also ran lunchtime drop in sessions for students each day for the first two weeks of semester. These sessions were very popular and we saw a total of 143 students.

Careers staff participated in the Faculty Welcomes for Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources; Science; Nursing and Midwifery; Engineering; Law; Pharmacy and The Conservatorium of Music as well as the Faculty of Science Transition to University, the ISSU session for Study Abroad/Exchange Program, the ISSU session for Full Degree Students Orientation Program, the Dean of Graduate Studies Welcome and Induction Program for Postgraduate Students.

COUNSELLING SERVICE

The Counselling Service presented workshops and seminars across an array of topics and issues relevant to commencing students. Written feedback, in the form of standardized evaluation questionnaires, indicated that the seminars were useful and relevant, in an appropriate format, and that respondents would recommend the seminars to future commencing students. The majority of students found out about the seminars via the SWOT booklet. There was a mix of undergraduate and postgraduate students in all seminars. Approximately 20% of students were international, with the notable exception of the “Have I made the right choice” seminar, where more than 60 % of attendees were international students. In terms of attendance and feedback the general experience is that approximately 50% of audience members provide feedback while the remainder rush to the next event.

In 2009, seminars were provided on the following topics:

- Friends and Contacts: to help students establish a support network by developing new friendships, joining clubs and societies, and liaising with University staff. Evaluations forms were filled in by 24 students, more than 50 attended
- Have I made the right choice?: to help students clarify their decisions about university, course choice and to provide transfer information. Evaluations forms were filled in by 21 students.
- Succeeding at Sydney: to help students develop realistic strategies for coping with the transition to independent study, and to develop skills for success. Student feedback was very positive, with 37 students filling in evaluation forms.
- Coping with Stress: to help students recognise sources and signs of stress and to help them develop effective coping strategies. This seminar was evaluated by 23 students.
- Finding your feet in Sydney: is specifically designed to assist country and interstate students adjust to life in Sydney, independent living and homesickness. Student services available are highlighted. This seminar was evaluated by 8 students. Consideration for 2010 may be to expand the marketing of this program to highlight support for rural and remote students.
- Counselling Service staff participated in Faculty Welcomes at most undergraduate faculty welcomes. Counsellors introduced students to issues that they may confront through their studies, and directed them to the range of support services available on campus, including Services for Students, Careers and Scholarships.
- Presentations were provided to the Residential Colleges. Most Residential Colleges were visited by a Counsellor during the course of the SWOT Program.
- Residential Advisor training was provided to some residential Colleges where invited.
The SOAR (Success, Opportunity, Access, Resources) Student Welcome, rebadged from the ‘Broadway Welcome’ to include Commonwealth Learning Scholarship students, was provided by the Counselling Service for the eighth year. All commencing students entering under the Broadway and CLS scheme were contacted individually via postcard and email. Over 50 students registered, with 39 evaluations provided on the day. The SOAR program is held in the week before SWOT to ensure privacy, as students have expressed concern about being identified as a Broadway or CLS student by other commencing students. Student Ambassadors gave presentations to commencing students about their experience in accessing university resources and seeking help along the way and were also available to talk informally to the new students. Other presentations through the afternoon included addresses on coping with transitions and time and stress management from the Counselling Service, along with information from the Learning Centre, Financial Assistance Office, and the Students Representative Council. A “Q and A” panel also included participants from the Library, Scholarships and Prizes and the Student Union. Students were given the opportunity to meet other students through organized activities and social events built into the day’s program.

The mature age/part-time students’ seminar was run for the fourth year, and all feedback from students was highly positive. Students were contacted individually by letter and were invited to attend an information seminar and social activity. Presentations were provided by Student Services (including Counselling, the Learning Centre and Financial Assistance) as well as the SRC and Student Union. A panel Q & A also included a representative from Fisher Library. In addition, a senior year mature age student shared her experiences and strategies for coping at University. Over 70 students participated in the event. Evaluation forms were provided by 60 students (82% of attendees). Feedback was highly positive, with 100% of respondents indicating that they would recommend the event to future mature age students. The University of Sydney Union provided a social event after the Welcome.

Program innovations based on previous years feedback for SOAR included a reduction in the time scheduling of the Program. Facts sheets for the Mature Age seminar were uploaded onto the Counselling Website. In the case of Mature Age students, the Student Union also established a Facebook site in order to further facilitate social networking.

**EQUITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Disability Services**

Disability Services ran the pilot Mentoring Access Program (MAP) on 24 February. Forty-two mentees (new students with disabilities) attended, along with ten mentors (existing students with disabilities) and 8 staff members from various faculties, Student Administration and Support and the SRC. This event consists of three consecutive meetings with the final formal meeting takes place in week 4 of Semester 1.

Further, ICT staff (a Support Specialist and an Access Labs Manger) provided students with a session on MyUni and Assistive Technology. This focused on assisting students with disabilities to navigate the site, and an introductory session on the software and technology available in the Assistive Technology Lab.
MAP has not been formally evaluated, however, the improved attendance would indicate that this program format is more desirable for students.

**Financial Assistance Office**

The Financial Assistance Office provided two information sessions called Money Matters. These sessions were well attended, with 19 students attending on Thursday 26 February and 24 students attending on Friday 27 February. These sessions covered financial assistance available at the University and information regarding Centrelink assistance. The sessions also covered budgeting and debt management with a particular focus on credit card debt. The Financial Assistance Office also gave presentations at the SOAR Welcome (for Broadway Scheme students and Commonwealth Learning Scholarship students), Mature Aged/Part-time students Welcome, and the Rural and Interstate students Welcome.

**INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

The Study Abroad and Exchange Unit of the International Office participated for the fifth year in the SWOT seminar series for new students. The SWOT seminars have now become an integral part of the Unit's semester promotional schedule for the International Exchange Program. The aim of the seminars was to explain the opportunities and requirements available under the International Exchange Program and to encourage students to consider participating in the program to broaden their academic horizons.

Each March semester, these seminars are run in conjunction with a stall during the Union's O-Week which is serviced by Exchange staff and student helpers. This year, attendance on Wednesday 25 February was about 65 and on Thursday 26 February was about 50. We believe attendance would have been better if we had a better stall location at O-Week to promote the talks on the day.

The University's Strategic Directions 2006-2010 incorporates international placements and experiences as part of the student experience, an opportunity to promote these activities is important when students are first welcomed at the University. The International Office is committed to participating in SWOT to ensure students are aware of these opportunities.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT UNIT (ISSU)**

The International Student Support Unit ran Daily Arrival Information Sessions and Housing Information Sessions every day during the SWOT period and delivered seminars on 25 and 26 February. The Daily Arrival Information Sessions covered information on student services, accommodation, personal safety, transport, banking and taxation, student visas, trips and activities, overseas student health cover and adjustment to life and study in Sydney.

The feedback received from students attending these sessions was positive in terms of delivery and content.
The seminars held during SWOT focused on adjustment to study and life in Sydney and emphasised strategies to assist with this adjustment and support services available. The presentation emphasised participation and allowed for a question and answer session. Thirty-two students attended the seminars. While this does not appear to be a large number it should be noted that about two-thirds of these students had not attended a Daily Arrival Information Session or the International Student Orientation. ISSU staff believe these late arriving students are a high priority in terms of delivering the information emphasised during the SWOT seminars and the other information sessions and activities provided in the SWOT program and USU O-Week 08.

Two orientations were run for late arriving students on the Tuesday and Wednesday of the second week of semester. It was decided to run these ‘catch up’ orientations as feedback from the ISSU on-line questionnaire for evaluating orientation indicates a large number of students arrived too late to attend the International Student Orientation, and because students who arrive late are generally disadvantaged. In order to improve attendance, as the number who attended last year was significantly lower than the number who had indicated they would attend, each session was run at lunch time over two days with the same program so students could choose which day to attend or attend part of both. This proved to be a successful model as 102 students attended.

**LEARNING CENTRE**

The Learning Centre gave nine introductory Learning to Learn lectures over the three day Orientation period, one of which was repeated. Over 2500 students from a wide range of Faculties attended these introductory lectures and student evaluations were very positive. Lecture notes were made available for students to download from the Learning Centre website.

The Learning Centre SWOT lectures and attendances were:

- Strategies for Successful Learning c 180 students
- Lectures and How to Use them c 250 students
- Successful Essay Writing in First Year c 550 students
- Developing Critical Thinking Skills c 400 students
- Collaborative Learning c 150 students
- Report Writing Skills c 440 students
- Learning about Plagiarism c 400 students
- Developing Oral Presentation Skills c 140 students

SWOT funded activities provided for first year students were:

- Twenty seven hours of academic skills workshops specifically targeting first year students in the LC’s Central Program in first semester.
In addition, the LC provided the following support for first year students:

- Orientation programs for new students in a number of Faculties and other Units, such as ISSU, Mature age and the SOAR Program.
- An Academic Skills Program for new International students at Cumberland Campus in February.
- Teaching and materials for the Koori Centre Academic Skills Program in February.
- Additional study skills resources (Understanding Yourself as a Learner, Being a More Effective Learner, Using Planners and Plans) published by the Learning Centre made available on the LC website for downloading.

Finally, as part of the Learning Centre’s Faculty Program, a range of learning and teaching activities were provided for first year students. These are supported by Faculty funding on a cost recovery basis for teaching and marking:

- Diagnostic assessment of students’ writing, using the MASUS procedure developed by the Learning Centre. The total first year Semester 1 cohort of 330 students in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies was assessed using MASUS. Follow up teaching sessions on academic communication skills, designed and delivered by LC staff are being embedded into two Units of Study: ENG1803 and ENGG1805.
- LC staff participated in the Staying on Track seminars conducted in March 2009 at both Camperdown and Cumberland campuses.

MATHEMATICS LEARNING CENTRE
The Mathematics Learning Centre, together with the School of Mathematics and Statistics, organised mathematics bridging courses during February. In 2009, approximately 260 students attended these courses. The Mathematics Learning Centre invited students to drop-in and meet the Centre’s staff during an open day in SWOT. Mathematics Learning Centre staff participated in the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources orientation program.

ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICE: Alumni Mentions in 2009 Faculty Welcomes

Goal
This program was built on the 2007 initiative to introduce the concept of alumni and its significance to new students as soon as they are on campus, and using the SWOT Faculty Welcomes was an ideal opportunity. We aim to lay the groundwork for a range of alumni familiarisation and student-alumni engagement programs, on which we could build as students progress through their university career, so that by the time they graduate they are a committed and hopefully active University of Sydney alumni.

Strategy
The ARO contacted all Faculties with the request to use the following text in their official Orientation Week welcomes:
"As a newly-enrolled student, you are now part of the University of Sydney community, and when you graduate you will become a life-long member of Sydney's alumni community ('alumni' is Latin for 'graduates'). Through the Alumni Relations Office, this community offers a worldwide network of friendship, support, services and benefits, which I hope you will take advantage of over the years."

The ARO is continuing to roll out this program, through:

- Message distribution via Deans/Faculties.
- Alumni text in SWOT publications and on the SWOT website
- Updating of alumni text as new student-alumni engagement programs are launched, most notably the online mentoring program due to be rolled out in 2009.
FACULTY EVENTS

FACULTY OF ARTS

This year the Faculty of Arts welcomed over 2500 new first year undergraduate students into our eighteen degree and combined degree programs, and almost one third of these students signed up to participate in the Arts Network Mentoring Program. The program began this year on Monday 23 February with Arty Starty Day, a wonderful event incorporating activities such as an interactive role-play about the joys and challenges of first year, small group activities for students in the same degree program, and a photographic ‘scavenger hunt’ around campus. Please have a look at http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/artsnetwork for some great photos taken by participants on the day.

The 100 senior Arts students who volunteered as mentors for this program have been preparing for their role since October last year, with both face-to-face and on-line training activities. As in previous years, many of our mentors were those who had participated as first year students themselves in previous programs, and who are determined to continue the tradition of helping new students feel a part of a welcoming and supportive learning community.

After getting to know each other on Arty Starty Day, mentors and first years have continued to support each other over the challenging first few weeks of the semester. We have also worked closely with SASS, the Sydney Arts Students Society, to ensure that new students are aware of the broad range of extra-mural activities and opportunities for Arts students.

Further transition activities have been conducted within lecture and tutorial groups, with tasks designed to orient students to the expectations and standards in particular discipline areas. The online tutorial in information literacy skills, ARTS1000 ‘eSearch to Research’, developed jointly by the Arts Network Team and the University Library, has been introduced to many students in junior units of study as part of their preparation for their first assessment activities.
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

The Faculty of Economics and Business has undertaken a variety of initiatives to assist students in their orientation and transition in the Faculty and the University of Sydney:

   • information for students
   • information for parents/sponsors/agents
   • information about teaching and learning
   • information about Sydney

2: 2 × 3 hour orientation program for Postgraduates and Undergraduates separately covering a range of resources and interests, introduction to the peer mentoring program, informal meeting with academic staff, followed by food and drinks. Topics include:
   • Student Services – Finding your way through the maze
   • Academic Honesty policy
   • Lessons on Blackboard (staff & student intranet platform)
   • Settling in and introduction to the Peer Mentoring Program
   • Accounting Accreditation (postgraduate)
   • Careers Advice
   • Managing Study Expectations – yours and ours
   • Accessing Library Services

3: Program-specific and discipline-specific orientation sessions, ranging from one hour to half a day:
   • Bachelor of Commerce
   • Bachelor of Economics
   • Master of Commerce
   • Master of Human Resource Management & Master of Industrial Relations
   • Master of Organisational Coaching
   • Master of Professional Accounting
   • Business Information Systems
   • Transport and logistics management

4: One orientation lecture during SWOT week:
   • What I wished I knew before…….

5: Five transition sessions during Week 1:
   (http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/learning/student_learning_support/workshops/2)
   • Making the grade - habits of successful students
   • Writing an academic essay
   • Succeeding with group work
• Critical Thinking: A Lecturer’s and a student’s perspective
• Using the Library: how to find what you want

6: Five skills workshops for postgraduate students in week 2 of semester (2 hours to in duration) taught by CET staff:
• Introduction to critical reading
• Plagiarism: Quoting, paraphrasing & summarising
• Successful seminar presentations
• Analysing the Assignment question
• Introduction to critical writing

7: Further workshops - Students are also encouraged to attend workshops available within and beyond the Faculty, including:
• Maths Learning Centre workshops in algebra, working with graphs, sigma notation, etc., week 4
• Learning Centre workshops on examination technique, weeks 9-12
• Faculty of Economics and Business workshops on examination techniques, week 13
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

More than 500 new students and around 120 parents were welcomed to the Faculty of Science at the Student Transition Workshop and Parents' Program on Sunday, 22nd February 2009. This workshop, which has been held every year since 1997, is a wonderful chance for students to meet other new friends and for parents to have those last minute concerns and questions addressed. The event included welcomes from the staff, talks from current students including hints on how to survive and prosper in first-year, formation of peer groups, tours of the campus and a trivia competition that was run by the student science society ‘SCISOC’.

The peer groups were formed on the basis of the students' University timetables, enabling students to meet those who have similar interests and chosen the same subjects in an out-of-class setting. These new peer groups grow usually into an extensive network of friends and contacts during the first semester with students providing each other with support and assistance throughout the first year and the succeeding years of their degree.

The Parents' Program included formal welcomes, a short seminar on the challenges students face in making the transition from school to university, reflections on first year from two senior students, and a presentation about employment possibilities for science graduates from the University Careers Service. These were followed by a very lively question & answer session. The day concluded with afternoon tea in the main quadrangle. Academic staff from the Faculty acted as workshop leaders and support persons, ably assisted by a team of student helpers throughout the day.

The event also introduced the Faculty of Science’s new mentoring and leadership program. This program will provide ongoing support and encouragement throughout the semesters and build active participation and discussion with research staff.

The Science Faculty’s Welcome to New Students was held on Wednesday, 25th February in the Eastern Avenue Auditorium. The hour-long event was packed out with standing room only for over 500 new students. A warm welcome was expressed by the Dean who then introduced the First Year Directors of each School in the Faculty. The Directors presented ‘objects’ chosen to summarize the nature of their disciplines including a Rubix cube race, a levitating magnet and an oscillating chemical reaction. Terry Miu, the president of the Student Science Society (SCISOC) then delivered an inspiring talk on what makes science students special, in and out of the classroom.

The event concluded with Dr Karl who packed life, death and everything in between into his advice to the new students.

After a hearty round of applause for the Dean, everyone made the short walk over to the courtyard at the back of the School of Chemistry for the first SCISOC barbeque of the semester. The smell of sausages (both meat and vegetarian, of course) filled the laboratories for the remainder of the day.

Other events run during orientation week for new and returning students were lunchtime barbeques given by the Schools of the Faculty, a chemistry magic show by the post-graduates students from Chemistry and a series of introductory talks for students planning to be involved in the Faculty’s Talented Students Program.
Terms of Reference

- develop the SWOT Strategic Plan for First Year Academic Orientation and Transition in line with University’s Strategic Directions 2006-2010, Learning and Teaching and The Student Experience, jointly with Faculty Strategic Plans
- develop coordinated, visible and active involvement of the University in academic orientation and transition
- develop timetable of activities including Chancellor’s Welcome, Faculty and Department Welcomes and the activities of central student support services including Alumni Relations, ICT Computer Access Labs, International Office (International Exchange Program), Koori Centre, Learning Centre, Library, Marketing and Student Recruitment, Mathematics Learning Centre, Sydney Talent, The Sydney Summer School and Student Administration and Support.
- develop the SWOT Website and SWOT booklet
- promote the Sydney Welcome Orientation and Transition (SWOT) Program to prospective students and families, enrolled students, and staff of the University
- determine and organise best publicity options for Orientation, including the SWOT booklet and SWOT Website
- liaise with the University of Sydney Union regarding O-Week activities
- develop a (Re)Orientation Program for Second Semester commencers and other First Year students
- develop ongoing orientation, transition and retention support at the University throughout the First Year by central student support services including Alumni Relations, ICT Computer Access Labs, International Office (International Exchange Program), Koori Centre, Learning Centre, Library, Marketing and Student Recruitment, Mathematics Learning Centre, Sydney Talent, The Sydney Summer School and Student Administration and Support, and within Faculties and Departments.
Sydney Welcome Orientation and Transition Program Project Group
Membership - October 2008

Ex-officio members

Head, Counselling Service, Student Administration and Support
(Ms Jordi Austin) Convenor SWOT 2009

Alumni Relations nominee (Ms Hazel Baker)

Faculty nominees
Faculty of Arts (Dr Nerida Jarkey)
Faculty of Economics and Business (Dr Michael Paton)
Faculty of Pharmacy (Dr Lorraine Smith)
Faculty of Science (Dr Adam Bridgeman)
Faculty of Law (Dr Belinda Smith)

Information and Communications Technology nominees
Manager, Support Services (Ms Madeleine Petit)
Access Labs Supervisor (Mr Rishikesh Shankar)

International Office nominee (Ms Veronica Wong)

Koori Centre nominee (Ms Tanya Griffiths)
Koori Centre nominee (Ms Sarina Solar)

Learning Centre Head (Dr Janet Jones)
Learning Centre nominee (Dr Angela Ardington)

Marketing and Student Recruitment
Undergraduate Marketing Manager (Mr Kaveh Ghezel)

Mathematics Learning Centre Head (Ms Jackie Nicholas)

Student Administration and Support

Careers Centre Head (Ms Inta Heimanis) or nominee (Ms Nitsa Athanassopoulos)

Equity Support Services Head (Ms Annette Cairnduff)
Equity Support Services nominee (Mr Ben Alfred)

International Student Support Unit Head (Ms Lidia Nemitschenko)
Student Centre nominee (Ms Charlotte Jackson)

The Sydney Summer School Director (Dr Jillian Stewart)

University Library nominees
Manager, Client Services Law Library (Ms Linden Fairbairn)
Team Leader SciTech, Engineering Library (Ms Irene Rossendell)

Invited:
Faculty of Health Sciences nominee (Ms Cindy Lu)

University of Sydney Union nominees
Programs Manager (Ms Louise Anthony)
Director Marketing (Ms Deanne O’Shea)
Special Events Manager (Ms Anne Leung)

Support:
Student Experience Coordinator, Student Administration and Support (Ms Monique Williams)
Appendix C

Orientation 09 Survey Report

See attached
Appendix D

SWOT Web Report

See attached